GENTRI-MIGRATION: A CONTEXTUALIZED JOURNEY INTO THE URBANIZATION OF SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May 2020

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

ABSTRACT

As urban neighborhoods are gentrified, urban natives are often displaced and must find other housing. This study will explore the impact migration of urban natives has on suburban school districts. The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore what factors contribute to teachers' continued work at suburban schools as the school demographics shift from urban native migration. The goal of the research is to find themes that can help prepare new teachers to work in diverse settings and increase teacher retention in urban areas. Interviews and journals will serve as a basis for data analysis to compare and contrast themes when the teachers stay during demographic shifts. Through in-depth interviews and journals, the researcher will story her experiences. The researcher will seek insight into what issues, if any, educators faced as diversity in student populations increased, and what is at the heart of the teachers' stories of staying during a shift in demographics. The inquiry will be conducted in the primary school district of a diverse small city, adjacent to a major city in the southwest United States. The researcher will use the participants' stories adjacent to her own to identify common themes as the suburban school district experienced an increase in socioeconomic diversity. The teachers' experiences will be collected through an interviewing process in which they will be asked a series of open-ended questions. Research questions are as follows:

- What effects do gentrification have on surrounding suburban school districts?
- What are issues faced by teachers on a changing demographic landscape?
- What are some elements of stories that act as counter narrative to stories to leave by?

DEDICATION

I dedicate this moment in my life to my grandmothers, Emma Gale & Ozel Johnson. They both embodied a strength unmatched by any other person I have ever met. Their love, power and fortitude created a person like me. I dedicate all that I am to them as they have built the foundation on which I now stand. I will continue their legacy of being and becoming a powerful Black woman.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

'Thank you' is the best prayer that anyone could say. I say that one a lot. Thank you expresses extreme gratitude, humility, understanding. – ***Alice Walker***

My doctoral work has been the most time consuming, demanding endeavors I have ever embarked on. It would have been impossible with the support of my family, friends, mentors and advisor. I am forever grateful for all that they have done for me. Their kind words, along with their "you need to get this done" tone, motivated me to complete my doctorate.

To my first best friends, my brothers, Anthony and Quinton, I thank you for being my backbone throughout this dissertation process. Their constant reassurance that I can do anything as long as I stick to it encouraged me beyond belief. I always want to set the best example I can for you, I hope I have made you proud.

I want to say thank you to my parents Essie Isabel and Anthony Gale. I am only here because of you. Adorned with your wit and perseverance, I know I am intelligent enough to accomplish anything I put my mind to. I strive to make you proud every day. You have been my saving grace in more ways than I can describe. Ken Isebel, I appreciate all that you have done for me on this journey. (Oh, and by the way, I have a job).

Joseph Turner, my rock thank you for your constant support and understanding during this process. I could not have asked for a better partner.

To my esteemed committee members, Dr. Cheryl J. Craig, Dr. Hersh Waxman, Dr. Gwendolyn Web-Hasan, and Dr. Radhika Viruru thank you for your time, for reading my work, for making suggestions, and for pushing me to produce quality work.

Dr. Craig, you have been a guiding light for me throughout this process, especially during the darkest of times. I appreciate you for being understanding and allowing me to make the best decisions about my work and for always putting students first. I know that without you obtaining this degree would have been nearly impossible. Thank you.

Dr. Gayle Curtis, only grace could have brought you into my life. You always appear when I need you the most. I thank you for your mentorship and guidance through this dissertation experience.

To my community of friends thank you all for being understanding of my absences, encouraging me to do my work, and providing much-needed laughter when I needed it the most. I feel blessed to be part of such a strong community. Thank you all!

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

This work was supported by a dissertation committee consisting of Professor Cheryl J. Craig, Professor Hersh Waxman, and Professor Radhika Viruru from the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, and, Professor Gwendolyn Web-Hasan from the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development.

Funding Sources

Graduate study was supported by a fellowship from Texas A&M University, the University of Houston, and a graduate fellowship from Gates Foundation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. **Narrative Beginnings and Wonderings**

My 11th-grade Advanced Placement (AP) English class was filled with students whom I had now gone to school for almost all of my educational career. Most of us were friends and had taken the majority of our junior high and high school courses together. We were so well acquainted with one another that it was the teacher who needed to gain access to our circle. Once permitted entry, maintaining our trust was a fundamental component of a functioning classroom. That year, our desks in the AP class were organized in a U-shape to promote face-to-face discussion. Honestly, we liked it because it made it easier to read each other's facial expressions. Our teacher, Ms. Ashton (pseudonym), was an older White woman, close to her sixties in age. She was petite in stature, only about 4'9" tall. Small as she was, she tried to make the class entertaining. But the class lacked the flare we students were looking for in English class. One reason for this was that Ms. Ashton's branding of American literature did not fit the books we were reading at home. Reflecting back on the situation as one who is older and also an experienced teacher, I understand now that the reading list was likely set by the school district and that the upcoming book selection may not have been in her hands. Up next on our literary agenda was *Huckleberry Finn*.

Ms. Ashton slowly handed out the books and explained that we would read the book out loud in class and that we would have a group project to do at the end. Everything seemed normal; we went along with the plan.

The AP English class was very diverse: five Black students, two Asian students, two Hispanic students, and six White students. This diversity was a normal classroom setting for me. We lived in a middle-class suburban community in a large metropolitan area in the American

mid-south. The school district was somewhat segregated by class and race, with mostly White students from wealthy families attending school in the northern part of the district, and Black and Brown students from mixed-income families attending schools in the southern part. In contrast, the schools in my feeder pattern were diversely populated. At the time, having a school that was mixed both ethnically and socioeconomically was frowned upon by the parents in the wealthier, Whiter feeder pattern as well as by parents in the poorer, Blacker feeder pattern. But we students enjoyed our diverse bubble. It was in against this diverse school backdrop that we began reading Huck Finn aloud.

The first reader up was Mase, a White male, who was known for being an overachiever. As he approached the end of the chapter, Mase read, "Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome. By and by they fetched the nig…." His voice trailed off. All of our eyes wandered away from the pages of our books as Mase lingered on the phrase. Quickly he said "...n-word. Popcorn, Brittany," passing the reading responsibilities to a Black female student. Uncomfortable with what the pages held, we continued on with caution. As we progressed through the book, every time the n-word appeared students had to negotiate whether or not to say it. Some recited the word as it was written, others said "the N-word," and some students skipped the word altogether. This went on for about three days. Ms. Ashton seemed unconcerned about how uncomfortable we were reading the text and more concerned with how we seemed unfocused or with the occasional snicker that broke the tension.

1.2. **Boiling Point**

On the third day, we had had enough. For the Black students, the book was offensive. For the other students, there was repeated dealings with the uncomfortable feeling they had every time the "N-word" appeared. The n-word is used over 200 times in *Huckleberry Finn*. Finally,

Tina, a Black female student, yelled out “Ms. Ashton, what is a nigger?” Tina was clearly fed up and asked her question in a sarcastic way. Ms. Ashton replied in a very matter of fact tone, “Well, a Black person.” . Mel, in a calmer voice said: “So, am I a nigger?” Ms. Ashton replied in her Southern drawl, “Ya Black, ain’t ya?” The class went completely silent. I could feel my stomach drop to my feet. I still remember the faces of my friends as I looked around the room that day. Everyone looked like the life had been sucked out of them. After what seemed like an eternity Jeff, a Black male, stood up and walked toward the door. Most of us followed. We did not know where we were going, but we knew we did not want to be in that room with that teacher anymore…

That moment changed the way I viewed many of my teachers and education. I had always suspected that some of my teachers held views that did not favor my culture, but none had explicitly announced their prejudices until that day with Ms. Ashton. Even though a string of parent-teacher conferences followed, Ms. Ashton was not disciplined by school administrators. The only consequence of this interaction was that we closed our study of *Huckleberry Finn* and moved on to another “great American classic.”

As a teacher, it is now easy for me to recognize my colleagues struggling to teach students of color because of their personal beliefs. Later, as a teacher in Hope City School District, I had many encounters with teachers who held negative beliefs about our students. Hope City School district had undergone a major demographic shift from a most White school district to a majority Hispanic school district. My own classroom was next-door to a very active member in a political party, that holds anti-immigration views, and who I could hear daily molding her version of history to fit her ideologies. This became unbearable to me because I knew the Black and Brown students in her class were struggling to digest her viewpoints. She was their Ms.

Ashton. There are many "Ms. Ashtons" out there who cause unbearable harm to students. As I write this dissertation, I keep those teachers in mind and how much damage could continue to be done to our students as our society becomes increasingly diverse. These experiences sparked my initial wonderings about changing demographics in school, which is what my dissertation is all about. I wondered how did these demographic changes in suburban areas occur? What response will changing demographics invoke in educators? And how do these demographic changes affect teachers' stories to stay by?

1.3. **Introduction of the Topic**

Throughout American history, we have seen migration from rural areas to urban areas, from urban to suburban areas, and now from suburban areas back to urban areas. In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a mad rush to the suburbs for various reasons such as low mortgage loans and desperation. The White majority was pulled from urban areas by enticing incentives. Federally insured mortgages pushed them into the suburbs because of the effects of segregation, poverty, and poor social conditions in urban areas (Holmes, 2014). White families were able to move away from the cities and into low-mortgage homes that were not open to most of the minority population, leaving minorities and the impoverished in urban areas. Thus, a homogenous White middle class rose in the suburbs while a poor, mostly minority inner city emerged.

Currently, urban areas are changing demographically because of gentrification. This "re-urbanization" implies economic revitalization of diminishing inner city neighborhoods by middle- and upper-class residents, thus changing the living patterns across most major cities in America (Klineberg & Braswell, 2012). For many, it is more appealing to live in the city because of the presumed enhancement of culture and proximity to work or local shopping (Freeman,

2005; Podagrosi, Vojnovic, & Pigozzi, 2011). The return of affluent White people to urban areas has caused an increase in property taxes making it close to impossible for urban natives—who tend to be people of color--to afford to live in the city (Freeman, 2005).

With White flight and now gentrification, the population of poor, Black, Brown, and the underrepresented are the ones forced to find new homes (Podagrosi, Vojnovic & Pigozzi, 2011). As the White majority moves from one place to another, there is a residual effect: the poor are having to move into areas that are considered suburban because of gentrification and the increase of housing prices. Consequently, the United States (U.S.) is on the cusp of a great community shift which is creating cultural issues in not only gentrified areas, but in suburban areas as well (Podagrosi, Vojnovic & Pigozzi, 2011).

Suburban areas are known for being homogenous communities made up of mostly White, middle-class families. The increase and shift in diversity threatens the homogeneity to which members of traditional suburban communities have grown accustomed (Klein, 2015). Hence, suburban school districts are facing changes in demographics as the population increases (Fry, 2009). The student population in suburban schools has increased by over 3.4 million in the past decade. This population growth has led to an increase in diversity, changing the social structure of suburban schools. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in Latino, Black, and Asian students in suburban schools, yet the demographics of the teacher population in these areas tend to remain the same. Eighty-four percent of teachers in America are White (Klein, 2015), whereas 50% of the students are now minorities from mixed economic backgrounds. Students of color are now twice as likely to be taught by a White teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2000) Additionally, "shifts in suburban school districts show a number of new trends, including an increase in racially, culturally, and linguistically different learner population and a decline in the

European American population" (Diarrassouba & Johnson, 2014). In schools, teachers are faced with new challenges: increases of second-language learners and special needs learners, possible racial tensions, and increasing numbers of students living in poverty. Figure 1.1 details projections of the racial/ethnic breakdown of the student population across the U.S., demonstrating that non-White students are now the majority in public schools-a trend projected to continue through at least 2024.

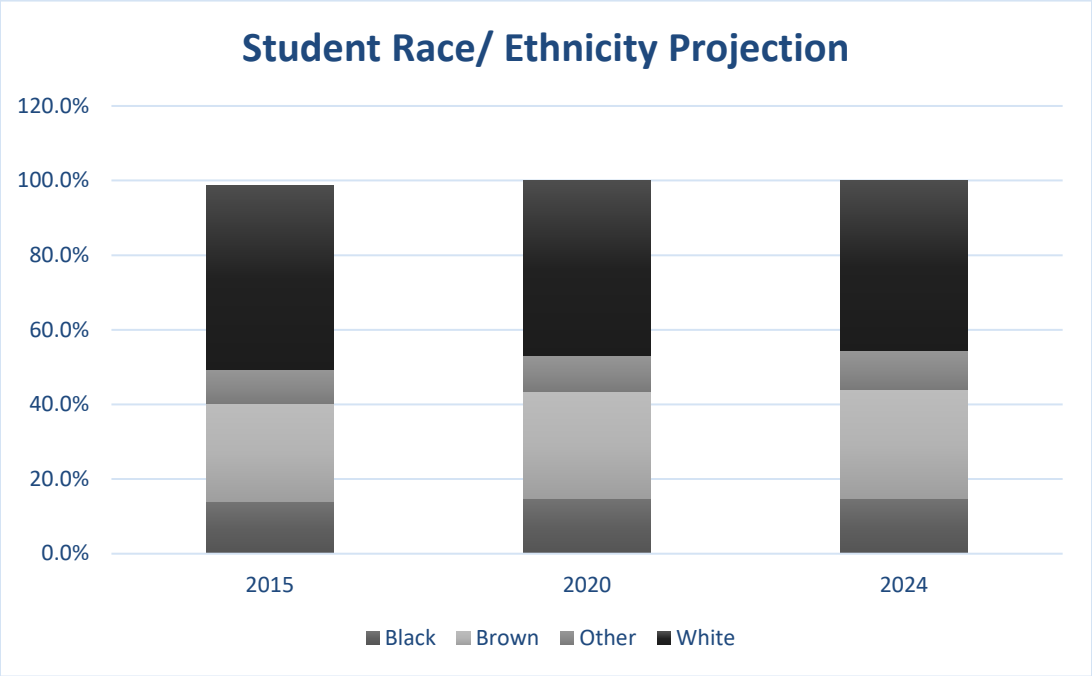


Figure 1.1 Projection of US student population for race/ethnicity

1.4. **Problem Statement**

To reiterate, the U.S. is on the precipice of a great population shift which is creating cultural issues in not only the gentrified area schools, but the suburban area schools as well (Klineberg & Braswell, 2012). Poverty is now a major concern for nearly every school district, not just certain school districts. The suburbs are no longer immune/exempt from this concern as

they are now the home of a large and fast-growing poor population in the United States (Kneebone, 2010). The socioeconomic changes have created an interesting dynamic in suburban America where these demographic changes often lead to increased teacher attrition. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (Haynes, Maddock, & Goldrick, 2014), schools that serve low-income and minority students have a higher level of teacher turnover. This finding is echoed in numerous national studies which indicate that low school performance, in combination with high-minority/high-poverty school populations, are a contributing factor to increased teacher attrition (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). With American schools becoming more diverse socioeconomically, this could potentially trigger an even higher level of teacher attrition.

1.5. **Purpose of the Study**

The intent of this narrative inquiry is to more deeply understand the phenomenon of teacher retention in the midst of a socioeconomic demographic shift by examining the phenomenon evidenced across a community southeast one of the nation's largest cities, Hope City (assigned pseudonym). This study's purpose is to explore the factors contributing to teachers staying in the profession as the demographics around them shift from a school population of mid- to high-socioeconomic status to becoming a Title 1 district characterized as low socioeconomic. The goal of this work is to identify emergent themes within the participants' stories of staying to better serve pre-service teachers who may work in urban areas.

First, I will lay the groundwork of the problem by detailing how urban centers were created and explain three other instances in history in which gentrification has occurred. Following the historical account, I will collaborate with my participants to retell and relive the phenomena of a socioeconomic demographic shift in the community southeast of Hope City

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). To promote anonymity, the school district mentioned will be identified with the pseudonym Hope Urban School District.

This dissertation research is comprised of three narrative inquiries into the lives of four participants who taught in the district or lived in Hope City for a period of at least two years prior to and five years after the year 2005. The particular year, 2005, was chosen as a marker because it was the year Hurricane Katrina occurred. The Katrina disaster led to the migration of evacuees from New Orleans to the city and the school district featured in this study. Larami (pseudonym), a participant, noted that many changes were brought to the surface of conversation as the storm highlighted an already changing landscape. The research questions driving this narrative inquiry are: 1) What effects do gentrification have on surrounding suburban school districts? 2) What issues are faced by teachers in a changing demographic landscape? and 3) What elements of stories act as counter narrative to stories to leave by?

1.6. **Outline of the Dissertation**

This dissertation follows the guidelines of the three-article dissertation protocol set forth by Texas A&M University. Each article has its own introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusions. The conclusion of the dissertation combines common narrative threads from the three articles to answer the major research questions. The following sections present an overview of the three articles that comprise the central focus to this proposed dissertation.

1.6.1. **Article 1: Gentri-migration: A contextual exploration of suburban demographic**

This article takes a historical look at the creation of Hope City's urban center. The most recent wave of gentrification is drastically changing what it means to live in urban areas as it reshapes the inner ring of suburban communities. Hope City, one of the nation's largest

metropolises, has experienced major changes over the last twenty years. This article details the backdrop of one of the most diverse cities in the nation, a city that currently is like the entire U.S. will be in 2040. The intent is to showcase how education in the nation's future may unfold and what changes teachers may face. This article focuses on:

- How has gentrification changed the landscape of urban and suburban Houston.

1.6.2. **Article 2: Two tales, one city: The story of a changed community**

Written as a parallel story, this second article will explore the changes in teacher attitudes from the perspective of two Black female employees at the largest high school in Hope City School District, Star High School. As the community became more diverse ethnically, socio-economically, and linguistically, the school climate began to change. So did teacher attitudes. The purpose of this article is to explore how shifting racial, socio-economic, and linguistic demographics impact teacher perceptions of student achievement and student ability in a suburban context. Its research questions are:

- What are the narrative resonances in parallel stories of teachers' perspectives on school climate during a socioeconomic shift?
- How do teachers of color examine the residence of White teachers' attitudes towards non-White students during the demographic shift in a suburban high school?
- How do shifting racial and socioeconomic demographics impact teacher perceptions?

1.6.3. **Article 3: From their own mouths: Why we came back and why we stayed**

As urban neighborhoods are gentrified the urban natives are often displaced and must find housing in other areas, the suburbs being one such place. The narrative inquiry was conducted in the primary school district of a diverse small city, adjacent to a major city in the southwest U.S. This study explores the impact this migration has had on suburban school

districts. In particular, this narrative inquiry examines what factors contribute to teachers' continued work in suburban schools as the school demographics shift to become more urban-like in composition. The goal of the research is to find themes that can help prepare new teachers to work in diverse settings and to increase teacher retention in urban areas. Interviews are used to compare and contrast themes related to when the teachers stay during a unprecedented demographic shift. Through in-depth interviewing, participants story and re-story their experiences in the midst of dramatic change. The teachers' storied experiences were collected through a series of open-ended questions. The article addresses the following research questions:

- What issues are faced by teachers on a changing demographic landscape?
- What are some elements of stories that act as counter narratives to stories to leave by?

To recap, my first article explores what factors lead to the ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic changes in suburban areas. The second article revolves around my story as a case manager at Hope High School, along with that of Larami (pseudonym), an English teacher who not only attended Hope High School as a student before the demographic shift but returned as a teacher after the demographic change. The third article highlights responses from educators at Star High School. It particularly shares insights into how changing demographics affect teachers' stories to stay by. For this work, I interviewed teachers who remained after the changes in demographics at Star High School. The conclusion of the dissertation ties the three articles together using resonant threads to arrive at overarching interpretations and common themes.

1.7. **Literature Review**

As mentioned, each article includes a literature review related to that article's particular aim and research questions. I include an overarching literature review here to establish a backdrop for the research problem associated with overall narrative inquiry by evidencing t3he

current state of teacher attrition in the U.S. and the need for the infusion of culturally responsive practices in teacher education programs.

1.7.1. **Teacher Attrition**

Teacher preparation is critical to teacher retention. As school demographics become more diverse (ethnically, socio-economically, and linguistically), it is important that teachers are prepared to educate all students, regardless of their cultural makeup. To provide context for this dissertation, I now will review research focused on teacher attrition, particularly teachers who leave within the first five years of teaching, and the major implications for culturally responsive teaching as a means of retaining teachers in the profession.

There are many conceptual and motivational reasons why teachers leave the profession, including lack of support from administrators, compensation, preparation, mentoring and induction, teaching conditions, and misaligned milieu (Craig, 2015; Lindqvist & Nordanger, 2016; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016). For the purpose of this literature review I will focus on teacher preparation, misaligned milieu, and support.

Teacher attrition in the U.S. has been a major topic in education for over twenty years. Although teacher attrition was once thought to be caused by the greying of the profession, researchers like Ingersoll (2001), Banks (2001), and Darling-Hammond (2000) have found that there are many other reasons teachers decide to leave the profession. Support, school climate, and teacher preparation are just the few of the reasons. The teacher attrition rate in the U.S. has increased by 41% from 1987 to 2008 (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012; Keigher, 2010). Of that, half of beginning teachers abandon the profession by their fifth year (Craig, 2015; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Knowing that teachers have the largest influence over student

learning (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2016; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Simon & Johnson, 2013), this high percentage of teachers leaving the profession is alarming.

Of teachers who leave the profession, new teachers are leaving at a faster rate than any other group, followed by special education and mathematics/science teachers, and teachers who teach in urban schools. Teachers are more likely to leave during their induction years (1-5 years), a period in which they are challenged with taking on a new profession. Research suggests that beginning teachers are more likely to leave the profession because they do not possess the knowledge, skills, and/or attributes specific to teaching, which causes stress that leads to attrition (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stukey, 2014). Overall, two-thirds of teachers leave the profession before retirement age (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Thomas, 2016). Not only is this expensive to school districts but it also creates a burden to keep classrooms staffed with quality teachers. With high levels of support and with time, however, new teachers can gain career specific knowledge to help sustain them in the profession.

1.7.2. **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

The Pre K-12 student population is becoming more and more diverse, yet the teacher population remains mostly White, middle class, female and speaking one language (Hill, Friedland, & Phillips, 2012). The cultural differences between preservice teachers and the students they will one day teach can lead to teacher attrition as well as misunderstanding and misconceptions about the students and their families (Hill, Friedland, & Phillips, 2012). As demographics change, new and tenured teachers are faced with teaching in schools that are highly diverse socio-economically, ethnically, and linguistically. These changes can lead to more teachers leaving the field. Urban schools have the highest rate of teacher attrition because of issues that arise when there is a high level of diversity. Recent studies examining stories of

leaving or, teacher attrition, found that teachers leave education because of the restrictions placed on teachers as curriculum makers due to policy changes in districts that have high poverty and diversity rates (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Craig, 2015). Preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with their own beliefs and values, beliefs and values which will remain unless teacher education programs offer meaningful experiences that challenge biased beliefs about groups different from the pre service teachers. (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Howey, 1999).

Enacting culturally responsive practices, or pedagogy, in teacher preparation programs could lead to better sustaining teachers in the profession. Cheng (2009) proposes a holistic framework of four key components to keep high quality teachers in the profession. He believes attracting, developing, empowering, and retaining teachers will improve the profession and will drastically improve teacher working conditions to keep teachers in the profession. Teacher development is key as demographics change. Staffing schools in high poverty, diverse schools is difficult and teachers in these environments need a tremendous amount of support. Most university teacher education programs include courses on diversity practices, yet these courses lack the reflective practices needed to help new teachers address their own assumptions about culture (Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2015). Often after completing these courses, preservice teachers still hold low expectations for minority students consequently reinforcing stereotypes and biases (Irvine, 2003).

Preservice teachers who take courses that teach culturally responsive teaching practices should be able to create a cultural responsive framework in which they can exhibit a sociopolitical consciousness, can facilitate learning for a group of diverse students, and can maintain a curriculum that is rigorous, exciting, and equitable with high standards (Barnes, 2006; Gay, 2002; Gay, 2010). Preservice teachers who are taught to differentiate curriculum based on

culturally responsive practices will know how to build positive relationships with students and their families from a variety of cultures. Students thrive when they feel their teachers care (Gay, 2002, 2010; Rychly & Graves, 2012). When teachers hold a high level of care for their students, they hold all their students—regardless of gender, race, ability or socio-economic level--to the same rigorous standards (Gay, 2002; Rychly & Graves, 2012). This framework will keep students engaged and build their sense of belonging. If students feel like they belong, they are more likely to participate in learning activities and will perform better academically (Lee & McCarty, 2014). Preservice teachers also need experiences in real classrooms with diverse sets of students as this will help them gain confidence and the skills needed to sustain them over their careers.

1.8. **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry methods and methodology is employed in this three-article format dissertation. The following sections describe the theoretical underpinnings of narrative inquiry and detail the particular methods and procedures to be employed in the overall inquiry.

1.8.1. **Theoretical Underpinnings**

Narrative inquiry is an experiential methodology that studies curricular experience as story and is used to explain lived and told experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This methodology captures the stories of individuals and describes their experiences. The researcher then examines the individuals' experiences with the aim of finding meaning by looking backward and forward, inward and outward to make connections between the storied experiences and context, practice, and broader professional landscape. Using such narrative tools (see figure 1.2) as broadening, burrowing, storying and restorying, and

fictionalization, narrative inquiry gives life to phenomena that would otherwise go undocumented (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990).

Figure 1.2. Tools for narrative injury.

Narrative inquiry finds its historical roots in the work of John Dewey (1938) and Joseph Schwab (1954/1978). Dewey's (1938) work focused on education as continuum of experiences that are both personal and social, and always present over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Dewey, experience is characterized by continuity in that experiences grow out of experiences and lead to further experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This notion that experiences occur in social contexts and that they are forever happening became the foundation for the conceptualization of a three-dimensional inquiry space. Narrative inquiry serves as the best way of understanding experiences because it attends to teacher experiences (sociality) that

occur in context (place) over time (temporal) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Sociality, place, and temporality form a three-dimensional inquiry space. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) extend on the idea of the three-dimensional inquiry space to include the four directions in inquiry: inward and outward, backward and forward.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also draw on Schwab's work in creating the common places of inquiry. Joseph Schwab's (1973, 1983) preference for the practical over the theoretical served as a major influence for Connelly and Clandinin as they conceptualized narrative inquiry. Schwab viewed learning experience as phenomena that involved the learner, the teacher, subject matter, and milieu, also known as the common places of education (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kridel, 2010). Schwab's view that educational research had to be more than a set of theoretical standards attributed to teacher behavior, paved the way for narrative to not only be seen as methodology, but as phenomenon (Connelly & Xu, 2008). Narrative as phenomenon describes how people live storied lives and tell stories of those lives (Connelly & Clandinin 1990).

Combining these two thoughts, Clandinin (1994) conceptualized teachers' practical personal knowledge and stories to live "in" and "by" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Craig, 2013). Teachers' personal practical knowledge is knowledge created through experiences and is heavily grounded in Dewey's works (Clandinin, 1994). Further conceptualization of teachers' personal practical knowledge led Clandinin and Connelly to develop the concept of professional knowledge landscapes, which describes relationship among people, places, and things (Clandinin,1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Professional knowledge landscapes are composed of in- and out-of-classroom places and the landscaped places where teachers live inside and outside of school experiences that add to what teachers know (Craig, 1995; Shaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014).

When developing narrative inquiry studies, researchers seek to understand and represent experience through the stories individuals live and tell (Creswell, 2003). Topics that are most appropriate are focused on individuals and their experiences. These studies are not designed to show correlation or prove a theory, rather, they are studies that explore phenomenon and are designed to find narrative themes that can lead to future research. This dissertation study examines the experiences of teachers and investigates their internal and existential conditions through reflecting backward and forward, inward and outward. As such, narrative inquiry provides the research space for the teachers participating in this study to re-story their experiences and for me as researcher to identify educative happenings (Mitton-Kukner, Nelson, & Desrochers, 2010).

1.8.2. **Context: Hope City School District**

In 2000, Hope City School district was composed of 17,837 students whose student demographics consisted of 17.6% African American, 39.2% Hispanic, and 42% White (Texas Education Agency, 2016). Of those students, about 51% were eligible for free or reduced lunch, meaning their households were living at or below the poverty line. School district data gathered by the Texas Education Agency (2016), demonstrates a much different student population by the 2017-2018 school year. Currently the school district educates 23,837 students, consisting of 15.5% African American, 61% Hispanic, and 19.7% White. About 64% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. In order for students to receive free or reduced lunch they must come from homes that are considered low-income households (Texas Education Agency, 2016). This community has experienced a demographic shift as indicated by the school demographics.

The graduation rates in 2000 (see Figure 1.1) were considerably higher compared to those in 2016 (see Figure 1.2). In 2000, 98% of African Americans, 98% of Hispanic, and 99.1% of

White students graduated, and 98.9% of the economically disadvantaged students graduated. In 2016, 88.7% of African American, 88.7% of Hispanic, and 91.1% of White students graduated, whereas 72.4% of the economically disadvantaged students graduated. The decrease in graduation rates is alarming, but also telling in that the school district had a major shift in demographics. Sadly, the district did not adopt measures to keep up with the change.

The most dramatic drop was the graduation rate of African American students and the economically disadvantaged. The African American population decreased in size; however, their graduation rate decreased the most, by 11.7%. This could mean that this population has been ignored over the years or that the district decided on interventions that were used did not benefit this particular population. The district also saw an increase of economically disadvantaged students and a disturbing 26.2% drop in graduation rate for this group which includes students from all races. The Hispanic population almost doubled from 2000 to 2016 and their graduation rate fell by 9.3%. It appears the district did experience an increase in English language learner (ELL) students, but ultimately their efforts on their behalf were not effective as hoped.

High student dropout rates have serious ramifications for students, districts and communities. Students who do not graduate from high school will have decreased job opportunities. Most will settle for low paying jobs that will trap them in the cycle of poverty (Rumberger, 2011; Swanson & Editorial Projects in Education, 2009). Hope School District now has demographic data similar to that of an inner-city school system. Having a large number of students drop out of school, changes the face of the community (see figures 1.2 & 1.3). The community can grow even poorer and increased crime could result. Based on the data, Hope City School District is not closing the opportunity gap (Darling-Hammond, 2000), rather, the gap has grown into a pit.

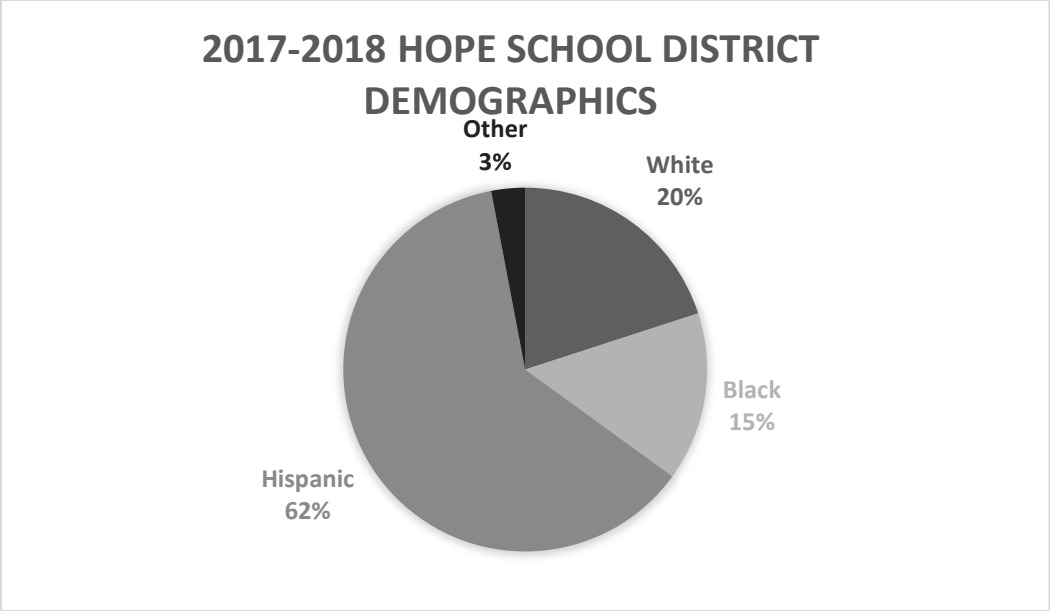


Figure 1.3. Demographics of students in Hope School District from 2017-2018. Provided by Texas Education Agency (2018).

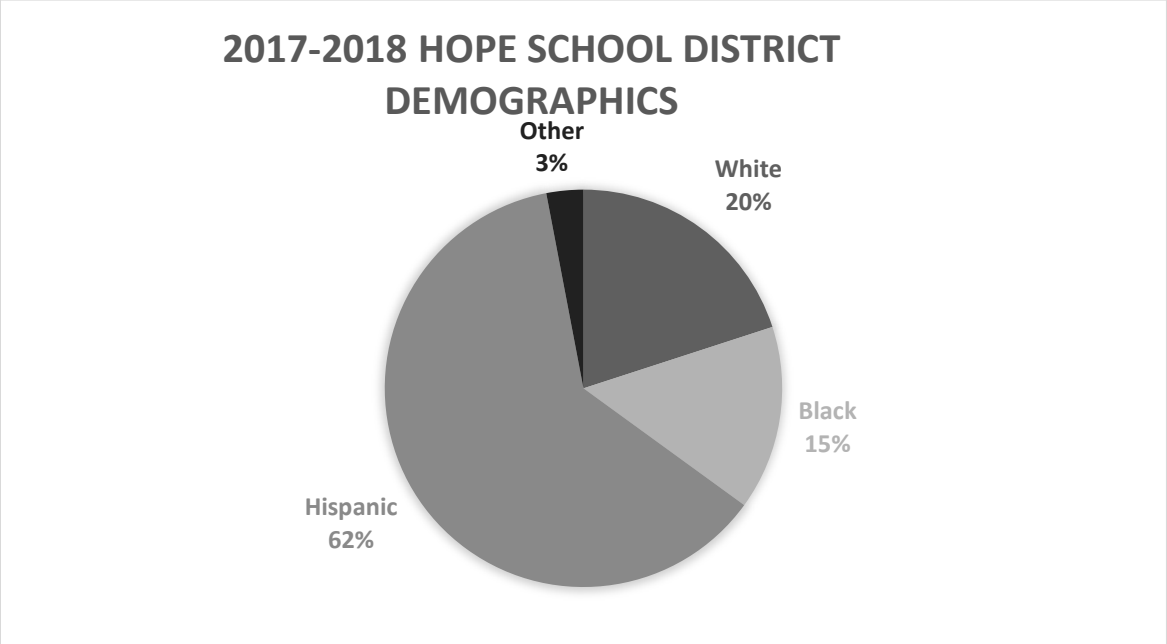


Figure 1.4. Demographics of students in Hope School District from 2000. Provided by Texas Education Agency (2018).

1.8.3. **Participants**

In total, five research participants were selected using snowball sampling based on their ability to meet the following criterion (Johnson & Christensen, 2014):

- teachers who worked in the district at least two years before the demographic shift to five years after the major demographic shift,

or

- teachers who were former students of the school district prior to the major demographic shift and returned to the school district as teachers,

and

- all participants must have maintained employment within the district despite socioeconomic changes.

Through convenience sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011), I identified my first participant, Larami (pseudonym), whose experiences are captured in the first article. I met Larami at Hope High School when she was a teacher and I was a case manager working for a non-profit organization. She was also a former student at Hope High School and had personal knowledge of the changes Hope High School had undergone. Larami was approached to participate in the study and to also provide names and contacts for other teachers (participants) who met the criteria above. I approached Larami because she was a teacher at Hope High School who had also attended Hope High School as a student. Each teacher, the school district, and any schools mentioned will be given pseudonyms to promote anonymity. Using convenience sampling, four additional participant teachers were sought out, identified, and asked to participate in the inquiry.

Teachers were excluded from the study if they found new employment in another district in the five years following the demographic shift. Teachers outside of the target school district were also be excluded. The rationale for these exclusions is that teachers who left the district or work outside the district would not have experienced the phenomena investigated in this narrative inquiry.

1.8.4. **Field Texts**

Data, often referred to as field texts in qualitative research, was produced from multiple sources including interviews, reflective journals and notes. Two in-depth, one-to-one interviews (one hour each) were conducted in a private place of the participants' choosing to promote confidentiality and anonymity. After each interview a reflective journal entry was collected from each participant, including my own participant observer 30-minute reflections written after each interview. Participant observation notes taken during the interviews and reflective journal entries from participants and the inquirer also served as field texts for the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This three-article inquiry involved member checking, as interim texts generated by the researcher were shared with the participants to check for accuracy. This provided an opportunity for researcher and participants to discuss any perceived differences in understandings. These field texts and peer reviews helped with establishing triangulation for trustworthiness.

1.8.5. **Procedures**

Identification of research participants started with determining which teachers in the school district of the suburban community of Hope City who were employed by Hope City School District before the demographic change. The participants signed consent forms agreeing to have their stories used to further research in the education field.

As the field notes were analyzed, I composed interim research texts. These interim texts were then shared with participant for confirmation that they maintained truthful accounts of the participants' perceptions. The interim research texts were then revised and rendered into final research texts ready for publication (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Validity and reliability are demonstrated in narrative inquiry research through trustworthiness (Lyons & Laboskey, 2002). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest, "Like other qualitative research methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability. It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research" (p. 7). Along with several in-depth interviews, I used journaling and member checking as a way to validate trustworthiness. Member checking is a process whereby "the final report or specific description or themes" are taken back to the participants (Creswell, 2009, p. 191) to offer them "an opportunity to provide context and an alternative interpretation" to make sure the researcher has analyzed the data as the research participant intended.

1.9. **Anticipated Journal Publication**

The first article, "Gentri-migration: A contextualized history of migration due to gentrification" will be submitted to the Journal of Negro Education. Article 2, Two tales, one city: The story of a changed community will be submitted to Teaching and Teachers: Theory and Practice. "From their own mouths: Why we stayed," the third article, will be submitted to the American Educational Research Journal (see figure 1.5).

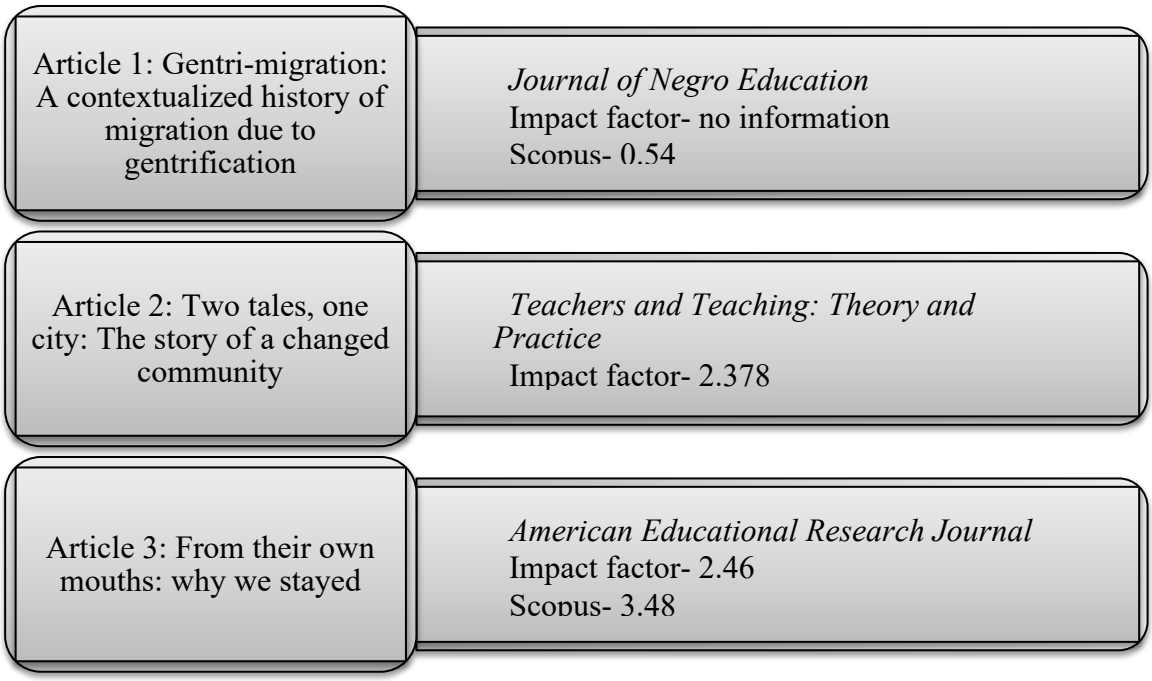


Figure 1.5. Possible journals to submit articles.

2. ARTICLE 1: GENTRI-MIGRATION: A CONTEXTUAL EXPLORATION OF SUBURBAN DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

I can recall watching a popular home renovation show of a young, White couple who wanted to live close to the downtown area of their city. The particular episode was eye opening because as the camera panned the neighborhoods closest to downtown many of the homes appeared abandoned. The realtor told the couple that this part of downtown was up and coming and would be a perfect place to move. "So, this house is below your budget, the owners are asking $300,000..." As my jaw dropped from noticing the dilapidated house, the couple gleamed with joy. The realtor went down a seemingly never-ending list of renovations the house would need, but the couple seemed unphased. Location was the most important factor to them because this meant they would be close to the buzzing nightlife their city's downtown had to offer.

Living close to the urban core of major cities has grown in popularity this past decade (Podagrosi, Vojnovic & Pigozzi, 2011). This popularity, however, appears more frequently among White people, often at the expense of Black and Brown people. Gentrification represents the process of renewal or reinvestment in inner-city neighborhoods. A common characteristic of that process includes sustained disinvestment by higher-SES White residents (Wei & Knox, 2013; Zuk, Bierbaum, Chapel at el, 2018) A second characteristic includes the raising of property values that leads to displacement of original homeowners who are often Black or Brown (Pearman & Swain, 2017). Segregation in the history of the US influenced the process of gentrification. For example, during the 1950s, the government aided in the White flight of many White people from the inner cities. As White people moved out of the inner cities to the suburbs, Black and Brown families possessed little or no means of improving their inner-city communities. In addition, many of these families experienced red lining, and thus were unable

to purchase homes in White neighborhoods. The disinvestment in the inner cities and racist policies of the US's past created urban centers generally occupied by Black and Brown families. In the 1980s, these neighborhoods became easy targets for gentrification. As I think back to the show I watched on television, I realize that, in buying that particular house located in the inner city, this White couple participated in the gentrification movement. My thoughts, however, raised questions about the family who lived there previously. Why did they leave their home? Were they forced out of their home by increases in the cost of living? And most of all, where did they find their new home? Were the families having to move far from their community and places of employment?

The remainder of this first article relates my lived experiences as I witnessed gentrification in Houston, Texas. However, my main focus of research attention centers not on the urban center of Houston, but a surrounding suburb that I call Hope City. I begin by first outlining my methodology. In doing so, I provide the reader with the ideological backdrop for telling my story. I find that in telling my story, I can best describe my experiences as a member of a changing community as a result of the forces of gentrification. Through lived experiences I have witnessed gentrification. My experiences have led me to study the phenomenon of gentrification as it causes major changes in the demographics for populations living within the urban core of a major metropolitan city situated in the southwest region of the US. In the remaining sections of this article, I will discuss the major parts of my story, including: (a) my journey to Hope, (b) gentrification and gentri-migration, and (c) the change in Hope. This roadmap will assist readers in understanding my story as I drove out in search of Hope.

In this article I will narratively explore how gentrification acts as the catalyst for demographic shifts in Houston's suburban neighborhoods. I lived and worked as a social worker

and teacher in one of Houston's suburban neighborhoods and witnessed the after-effects of one neighborhood's transition from a wealthy neighborhood to a poor Black and Brown community. Using the narrative analytic tools of broadening, burrowing, storying and restorying, I will create the contextual landscape of how gentrification influenced the transition (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Craig, 2015;). First, I describe the broadened landscape of gentrification in Houston and then burrow into my own story to explain my gentrification related experiences. Finally, I will restory the article to revisit my narrative. Narrative inquiry provides a way for me to create an understanding of my experiences during my time in Hope School District over the span of a decade (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). The sociality, place, and temporal forms of the three-dimensional space allow for deeper exploration of teachers' personal practical knowledge; or in my case, an interest in teachers' stories to stay (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Craig, 2015). In the next section, I story my experiences in Hope City.

2.1. **My Journey to Hope**

Growing up in the suburbs of Dallas, life was simple for me. I focused on school, grades, sports, orchestra, and a long list of clubs and organizations. Although I was born in Memphis, TN, my parents moved to the Dallas suburbs right after I learned to walk. The suburbs in which I grew reflected a diverse community with close to a third of the population being either Black, Brown, or White. Many of the families consisted of blue-collar middle-class workers. I don't recall a time when my essential needs were not met. I knew how fortunate my life was because we would visit other family members living in the poor inner-city of Dallas and Memphis. I learned about inequality from these visits; especially the inefficiencies, inequalities, and inequities of education. While I had the option of taking multiple advanced placement courses at my school in the suburbs, my cousins were lucky to have one advanced educational course

offered through their inner-city schools. I even realized how fortunate I was to have central air and heating in my school as one of my cousin's school had poorly performing air conditioning units installed in classroom windows. These visits cultivated my passion for social justice and education.

After high school, I received a major scholarship that would pay for 10 years of my education. I decided to attend a private Baptist university in Texas after my senior year. I majored in Social Work and wanted to work in public schools. I felt that I would be able to make a major change in many students' lives. Soon, I began to realize that I no longer possessed a desire to return to my suburban home. During my time at this university I realized that many of the other students I met came from Houston. As a result, I had the opportunity to visit the Hope City several times before I graduated.

After completing my first university degree, I decided not to return to my childhood suburban home as I foreshadowed. This was a risky and scary move for me, but going home meant settling into the same family-oriented lifestyle of the suburbs. I wanted to see more of the world; for me, this meant moving three hours away from that home to inner-city Houston. As a twenty-one-year-old Black woman who was straight out of college, this move seemed like a major life decision. Moving to Houston excited me and allowed me to continue building relationships with friends I met in college. I assumed Houston would be very similar to the suburbs I knew as a child. The only major difference being that I would be there with friends instead of parents. I was wrong. My hometown was large and diverse, so I thought, but I soon learned that Houston was no comparison.

At the time I moved, I did not realize Houston represented one of the nation's 4th largest cities and one of the most racial/ethnic diverse (Kinder Institute, 2018). I did not realize more

than 2.3 million people lived in the city that spans across 566 square miles of land (US Census Bureau, 2019; see figure 2.1). Houston has the most equitable distribution of the nation's four largest racial and ethnic groups; White, Black, Asian and Hispanic. In addition, over 90 different languages are spoken in the city (Kinder Institute, 2018). I included the figure below to show the size of Houston

Figure 2.1. Map of city limits for Houston, TX from 2020.

Rich in culture, there are a myriad of festivals, cultural showcases, and plenty of ethnic-based restaurants. However, the city is not fully integrated. When I would visit the city with my friends in college, we would stay in one part of the city. It was not until I moved to Houston that I noticed this was not by accident. Many of the people in Houston choose to live in communities

that fit their ethnic or socio-economic makeup, creating cultural hubs. I did not pay much attention to this until it was time for me to find an apartment.

I recall driving south on US HWY 45 headed towards Hope City to begin my search for a new home. I quickly learned Houston was a huge city and living close to work came with advantages. I drove past several communities as I made my way to Hope. Each of these communities possessed a different feel, a different identity. Trees covered the suburbs in north Houston. People living there appeared to not only value nature, but privacy as well. Referred to as a dispersed metropolitan, most of Houston's growth-focused on low-density outward suburban expansion (Podagrosi, Vojnovi, & Pigozzi, 2011). These suburbs surround the inner urban core of most large cities, including Houston. Possessing good schools and low crime rates, they have--in recent decades--existed as social and ethnic enclaves (Podagrosi, Vojnovi, & Pigozzi, 2011). Historically composed of White middle-class families, these suburbs undergo noticeable changes as you move closer to the urban core. For example, the further out you travel from the core, the more expensive and secluded the suburbs become.

As I drove further south, into Houston, I began to see more apartments; some nice, but most old and dated. The shopping centers in the north held common middle-class clothing shops. Now, I saw vacant shopping centers or shopping centers housing discount stores and payday loan businesses. I began to travel southeast on US HWY 610 and noticed yet another change. The shopping centers and grocery stores began to disappear. The area became more industrial, I was fearful during this part of my trip as I found myself surrounded by large tractor-trailers. The last leg of my trip led directly east and another major change to the landscape appeared. This part of Houston housed chemical plants, a new experience for me because in my hometown in North

Texas no chemical plants existed. The sight of these plants gave me an uneasy feeling because I was uncertain if I was safe living so close to these plants.

2.1.1. **Reaching Hope**

Finally, I arrived in Hope City, a small suburb of Houston, situated between two major oil refineries, which are part of the financial lifeblood of Houston. As I visited several apartment complexes, I realized there were few apartments available in the range of my budget. Working for a non-profit organization can fill you with feelings of gratitude, but often will not fill your pockets with cash. My options were to extend my budget or live in an older apartment complex. Living in an older apartment was not an option because they seemed unsafe to me during that time. Later I found out that many of the middle-class residents lived in these apartments. The only exception was whether they were married or worked in one of the plants. There were many section 8 apartments, but I made too much money to live in those complexes, and my parents would not allow me to live in low-income dwellings. My parents grew up in Memphis, TN, a city riddled with poverty, and they worked hard to leave that lifestyle. They would be furious if I returned. I would later find out that Hope City was once an affluent town, but due to events like Hurricane Katrina (Jan & Martin, 2017) and possibly gentrification (Hanlon & Airgood-Obrycki, 2018), the small city's demographics had changed drastically. This change has happened to many of the suburbs surrounding Houston's urban core.

2.1.2. **Leaving hope**

I decided to look for an apartment in a neighboring town, however, this town had many more chemical plants and even older apartments, so I just drove further out. Honestly, I had no idea where I was going. My GPS kept directing me to a toll road, but I did not have a toll tag. I had to find other ways around the tollway. The drive was treacherous. Now as a Houston

resident I view having so many toll roads as a way to keep impoverished people in certain parts of city. The tolls create circles around the city to make the commute from the suburbs easier. The tolls create a type of barrier for some of the suburbs of Houston. This means you cannot get to these suburbs without a toll tag, so if you cannot afford a toll tag, you cannot visit or live in those suburbs. Put simply, if you cannot afford the tax to drive on these roads, you cannot afford to live in those neighborhoods. After an hour drive full of turns, I landed in a suburb south of Houston. This town houses NASA and seemed to be a more expensive part of Houston. I was fortunate and found a brand-new apartment complex that offered $300 off rent for an entire year. I signed a lease and headed back to North Texas.

According to the Kinder Institute (2018), Houston is at the forefront of what all American cities will look like in the future. In 2040, diverse metropolitan areas will be composed of mostly people of color, especially those of Black, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern descent (Kinder Institute, 2018). Economically Houston has one of the widest gaps between the wealthy and those who live in poverty (Craig, 2009). This information provides yet another glimpse into what American cities will have to face in the future (Kinder Institute, 2019; NPR, 2013). To better understand my journey to Hope, an understanding of gentrification and gentri-migration is needed.

2.2. **Gentrification and Gentri-migration**

My intention in this section is to show how gentrification in Houston's urban core influences the surrounding suburban neighborhoods (see figure 2.2). I started my career as a social worker in a suburb southeast of Houston call Hope City. Hope was once a wealthy community that thrived because of the oil industry. The schools were the pride of the city and benefited from the fact that parents are generally wealthy there. However, events such as

Hurricane Katrina, gentrification, and job loss changed this community and schools drastically. I will begin this section by explaining my experiences as one of Houston historical inner-city wards felt the pressure of gentrification and consequently the displacement of its original inhabitants. I will continue by showing the numerous communities being gentrified in Houston's core and how these could be a factor in the increase of suburban poverty.

Figure 2.2: An example of gentrification in Houston, TX.

2.2.1. **The Beginning**

After ten years of living in Houston, I have much of the city's' culture. Every part of town has a distinct personality and way of life. Over the years I have spent time in the city's historically Black 3rd Ward. Described as dangerous in 2009, which coincidentally was the year I moved to

Houston, 3rd Ward is one of my favorite parts of town. However, I never had a sense of danger, it felt like any other part of town to me, booming with culture and history. As we recovered as a nation from the economic crisis of 2009, things began to change in 3rd Ward. As the years passed I noticed subtle changes not only in 3rd Ward, but other communities of color surrounding downtown Houston. Investors were building large expensive condos. As this was happening, I begin to see 'for sale' signs go up. The changes only occurred on the edges of the community. The rumors began to spread about the building of a major grocery store chain attempting to buy people out of their houses, there were rumors about the name of the 3rd Ward being changed to the "Economic Corridor" to erase the negative feelings about the ward. All of these were efforts to revitalize the community, but I understand more fully now that 3rd Ward was on the cusp of gentrification.

In the literature, I found the term urban renewal or revitalization often used often instead of gentrification. The term "urban renewal" at its most basic definition is the redevelopment of areas within a large city, typically involving the clearance of slums (Hyra, 2012). Many would argue that urban renewal is a positive trend that shows a city's willingness to reinvest in the redevelopment of its urban center. However, I find the term urban renewal leaves out the human element. When defined this way the answer is yes, urban renewal is positive. However, as buildings are rebuilt, houses are renovated, shopping malls are developed, people who lived in the area prior to this renewal are forced out of their homes.

Urban renewal by investors will only lead to gentrification and perhaps economic stimulation, but ironically only for those who can afford the "renewed area". As investors build new houses and shopping centers, the property taxes inflate and landlords increase rent prices, all of which leads to the pushing out of poor residents. If initiated by those who are socio-politically

conscious, urban renewal, may result in the actual rebuilding of historically Black and Brown communities where those original inhabitants are able to maintain their place of residence.

I wondered about the history of gentrification and quickly realized this is not a new phenomenon. With more access to sharing news with social media, gentrification has become a popular topic in the Black community. It is now common for Black musicians, Black artist, or Black news reports to focus on gentrification and how Black communities are changing due to gentrification. Nationally, there have been three waves of gentrification (Displacement of Lower-Income Families in Urban Areas Report, 2018; Hyra, 2012; Perman, 2019; Zuk, Bierbaum, Chappel et al., 2017). The first wave occurred in 1950 and lasted until the recession of 1973. This wave of gentrification occurred in the northeast and most US cities did not experience this change. Prior to 1950, the government gave subsidies to White families to encourage the suburbanization of cites. Yet during this wave of gentrification subsidies and urban renewal incentives were given to a similar demographic to stop the decline of the urban centers (Hyra, 2012). The second wave of gentrification began in the late 1970's and continued until the 1980's. Unlike the previous wave of gentrification, this wave stretched more broadly across the US major cities. It was during this wave the nation began to see the encouragement of private investors to take on the role to renew urban areas. Those who lived in poverty now faced landlord harassment and eviction. Similar to the first wave of gentrification, the second ended with the recession of the late 1980s. The third wave of gentrification began in 1993 to the early 2000s. This wave of gentrification was more widespread across the nation and moved beyond inner-city communities. This was also the first-time private investors or developers did not wait for the urban core to become tamed, instead they lead the gentrification process. During this

wave of gentrification, residents welcomed the upgrade to the community and fought displacement. The social landscape had changed.

The last wave of gentrifications has affected Houston. As developers invest in Houston's urban core, they are changing the landscape of the city. The members of the original community are fighting displacement, but are facing corporations with major financial assets. Houston's urban core began to change I noticed how the news about 3rd Ward and other majority Black and Brown communities were described. The news changed from stories of crime to stories about development. I recall going to a Christmas event in 3rd Ward and noticing the many White faces in the crowd. I noticed the for-sale signs in many of the yards surrounding the event. As I began to think about displacement, I started to wonder if the original residents of the homes up for sale chose to leave or if they faced displacement.

2.2.2. **Displacement**

Displacement is debated because it is difficult to track people's intentions as they move (Freeman, 2005), but there is no debate about how the demographics in urban centers have shifted from mostly Black, Brown, and low SES to mostly White middle-class inhabitants. Quantitative researchers found that people affected by gentrification were less likely to leave their homes, their exit rates were lower in gentrifying neighborhoods that in non-gentrifying neighborhoods, that low-income households were less likely to move, and that Black and Brown people were less likely to report displacement (Ellen & O'Ragan, 2011; Freeman & Braconie, 2004; Newman & Wyly, 2006). In all of these researchers' work, they concluded that the residents' voluntary entries and exits were the primary force propelling the socioeconomic change in gentrifying neighborhoods (Ellen & O'Regan, 2011; Freeman, 2005).

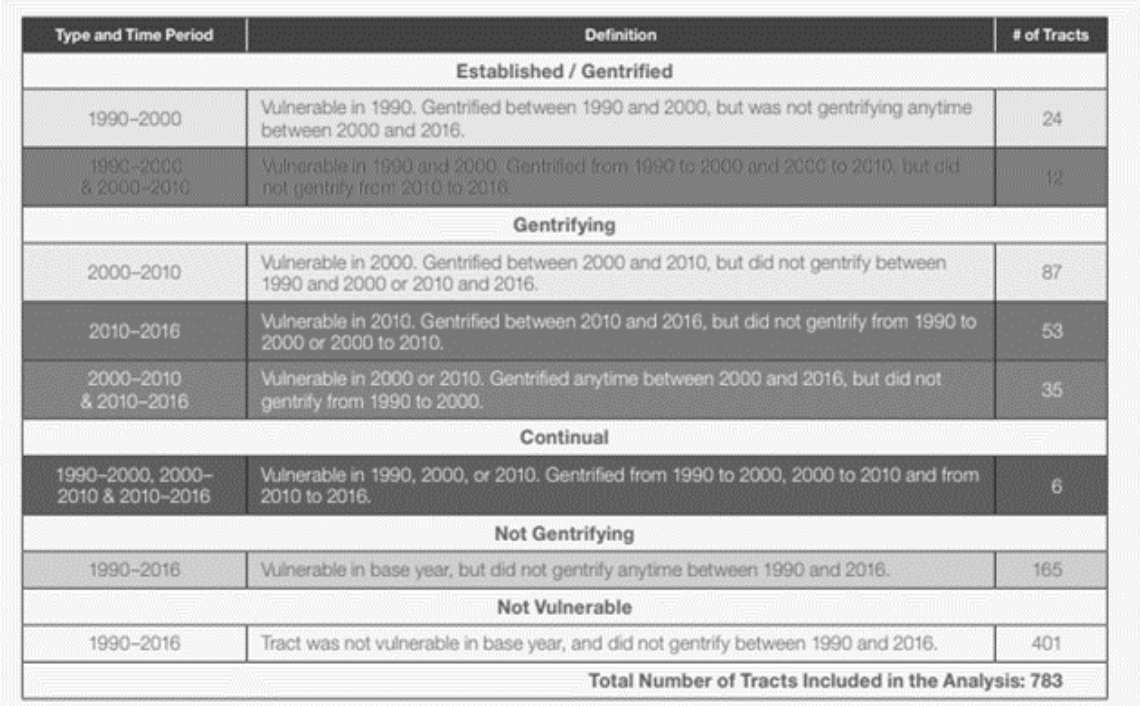
These findings are startling to me because it appears, gentrification has no effect on the original residents in a gentrifying neighborhood. Displacement is difficult to prove, but mostly because it depends on when and where researchers have decided to study the phenomenon. Some studies merely look at residents exiting an apartment unit instead of the entire neighborhood. Some researchers study displacement after major gentrification has occurred, only to find that most of the residents left as soon as the gentrification began. It is also important to note that in the past, increases in rent were not as common as they are today. With millennials and retiring baby boomers moving back to the inner city there has been a renewed investment of not only individual preferences, but also the government and private investors (Ehrenhalt, 2012) This interest can cause displacement as property values of homes go up and through the illegal actions of landlords (Displacement of Lower-Income Families in Urban Areas Report, 2018).

Increases in rent and home values significantly influence residents' mobility decisions (Ding, Hwang, & Divringi, 2015). The varying types of displacement and difficulty proving displacement is actually taking place have led me to use a broader term to describe the movement of people due to gentrification, gentri-migration. I will use gentri-migration as an umbrella term to describe all movement patterns of people due to gentrification.

2.2.3. **Changes in Houston**

Gentrification in Houston has become a major demographic change agent in the city. Areas west of downtown have experienced gentrification since the 2nd wave of gentrification, but there has been an increase across the city. Since 1990, 217 neighborhoods have been gentrified or are currently being gentrified in Houston. In order to understand how researchers determine what parts of a city have been gentrified or will be gentrified, the Kinder Institute used the following criteria. Neighborhoods are a risk to be gentrified if they meet three of the four

following criteria compared to the county median in the base year: (a) a higher percentage of low-income households, (b) a higher percentage of individuals 25 years and older without at least a bachelor's degree, (c) a higher percentage of non-White population and/or (d) a higher percentage of renter households (Kinder Institute, 2018). Figure 2.3 provides neighborhood gentrification from 1990 to 2016. The map in Figure 2.4 indicates what neighborhoods have been gentrified. most neighborhoods within the 610 Loop are gentrifying, with the exception of the city's most affluent households (Kinder, Institute, 2018).



Type and Time Period	Definition	# of Tracts
Established / Gentrified		
1990–2000	Vulnerable in 1990. Gentrified between 1990 and 2000, but was not gentrifying anytime between 2000 and 2016.	24
1990–2000 & 2000–2010	Vulnerable in 1990 and 2000. Gentrified from 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to 2010, but did not gentrify from 2010 to 2016.	12
Gentrifying		
2000–2010	Vulnerable in 2000. Gentrified between 2000 and 2010, but did not gentrify between 1990 and 2000 or 2010 and 2016.	87
2010–2016	Vulnerable in 2010. Gentrified between 2010 and 2016, but did not gentrify from 1990 to 2000 or 2000 to 2010.	53
2000–2010 & 2010–2016	Vulnerable in 2000 or 2010. Gentrified anytime between 2000 and 2016, but did not gentrify from 1990 to 2000.	35
Continual		
1990–2000, 2000–2010 & 2010–2016	Vulnerable in 1990, 2000, or 2010. Gentrified from 1990 to 2000, 2000 to 2010 and from 2010 to 2016.	6
Not Gentrifying		
1990–2016	Vulnerable in base year, but did not gentrify anytime between 1990 and 2016.	165
Not Vulnerable		
1990–2016	Tract was not vulnerable in base year, and did not gentrify between 1990 and 2016.	401
	Total Number of Tracts Included in the Analysis: 783	

Figure 2.3. Details the time period, if the neighborhood has been gentrified, is being gentrified, is experiencing continual gentrification, or will not gentrified, or not vulnerable to gentrification and the number of neighborhoods affected. Figure taken from Kinder Institute (2019).

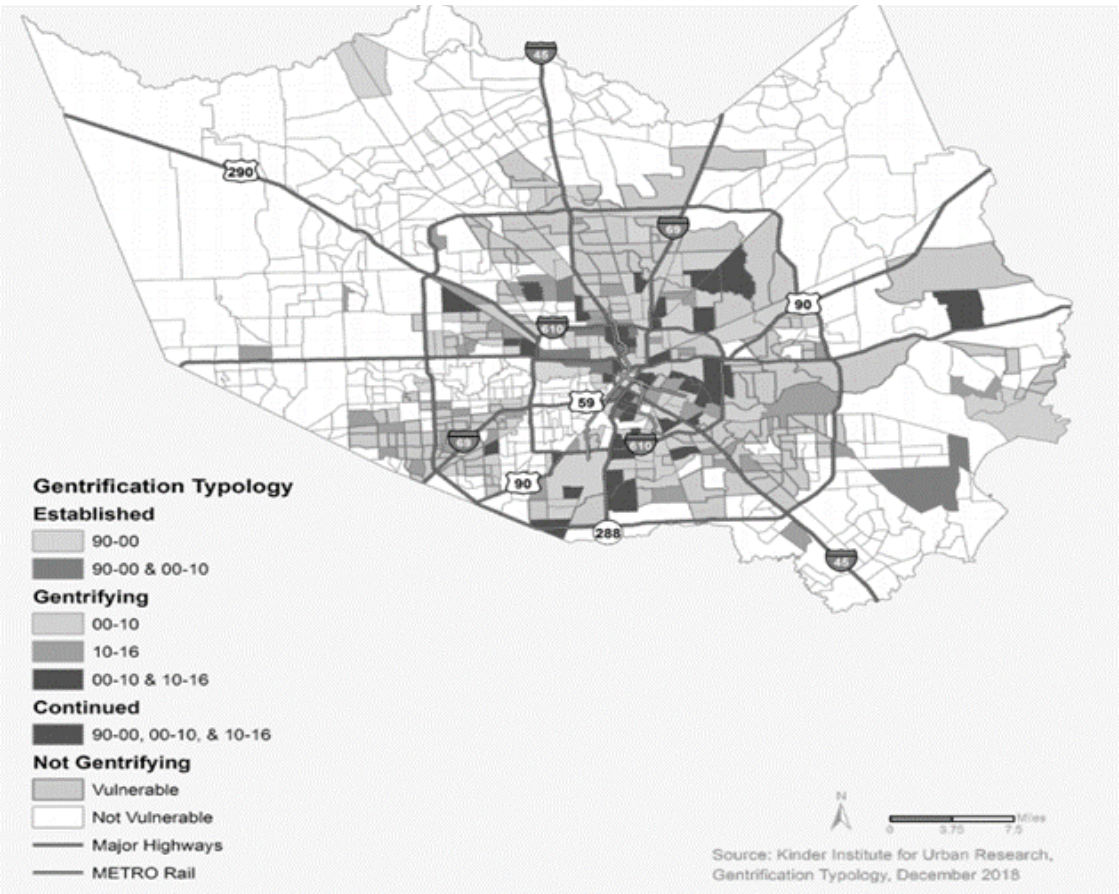


Figure 2.4. Gentrification within neighborhoods across Harris County: 1990 to 2016. Taken from Kinder Institute (2019).

As I look at these figures it seems that most of the tracts where once homes of mostly Black, Hispanic and poor families, but are now mostly White middle-class families. Some neighborhoods saw an increase of 200% in income. With these major changes to neighborhoods, I began to wonder where the original residents moved. Did they move to other parts of the city that were mostly Black, Brown, or poor, like researchers like Hyra have told us, or did they follow a more socio-economically upward course and move into the suburbs?

2.3. **Suburban Demographic Shifts**

After reflecting on the changes downtown Houston has undergone, I now turn my attention to the surrounding suburbs. By this, I mean suburbs like Hope City that were once affluent, but now house low-income apartments and food banks. As I make my journey back to Hope, I now pass many inner ring suburbs that have changed socio-economically, ethnically, and linguistically. The following section focuses on the major shifts in demographics in these suburbs. I will then shift my focus to the schools in suburbs like Hope School District and how the demographic changes appear in schools.

With over 217 neighborhoods in Houston urban core undergoing gentrification the surrounding suburbs have undergone major demographic shifts as well. As gentri-migration occurs, these surrounding neighborhoods have changed. Kneebone (2013) describes these suburbs as growing poorer more quickly than any other suburbs in Texas. This phenomenon has not been studied by many researchers, but there is evidence that gentri-migration is one of the reasons the suburbs are becoming more urban in nature. According to Hyra (2012), in the past people affected by gentrification would find new enclaves to live that closely resembled and are close to their original communities, however, due to the amount of gentrified neighborhood in Houston, this may not be the case in Houston. As Houston saw its greatest growth of gentrification, the suburbs also began to grow more diverse and there were major economic shifts in the suburbs as well. After the economic crisis of 2009 many suburban homeowners were thrown into financial crisis, but this event would not change the ethnic makeup of the suburbs. The number of high-poverty neighborhoods in Houston suburbs has nearly doubled from 2000 to 2015 (Brookings Institute, 2018; Housing Study at Harvard University 2017). Because Houston is more suburban than other cities, it has one of the fastest-growing poor suburban populations

(Martin, 2017; Kinder Institute) Affordable housing can be found in the suburbs, especially with the steady increase in rent in the historically urban neighborhoods (Bennet, 2017; Brookings Institute, 2018) . Changing the social and ethnic makeup of these communities. Kneebone speaks of the growing poverty in suburban communities around the nation. Houston is not exempt from these changes. The strong ties between race and poverty have led to these consequences. The oppression of Black and Brown people in the US has created a system in which those who live in poverty and in the urban centers are mostly Black and Brown people so as they are forced to find cheaper living in the suburban community.

The changes in suburban communities can be felt mostly in schools as schools are the cross-section of communities. As I progress through this dissertation my focus will turn towards what do these changes mean for schools? How will these changes affect teachers and the image of their best-loved selves? Mixed demographics schools are becoming the future of the most suburban schools. Mixed racial and ethnic demographic schools are a very real reality for most schools, especially those in Houston. The population in Houston for the first time is mostly non-White and school-age children are leading the way in this change. Because of gentri-migration and the shift in population demographic make-up, suburban communities and schools are changing. It is important that teachers are prepared for the new face of the suburbs, especially if they are seen as the easier place to be a teacher compared to the urban landscapes.

2.3.1. **Effects on Education**

As people move due to factors such as gentri-migration, schools begin to change. Schools in the suburbs are known for being mostly White middle to high class. Urban schools have been historically been inner-city schools made up of Black, Brown, and students who often live in poverty. Often looked at as schools that were run down and had low morale. Now that more

Black, Brown, and students living in poverty are moving to the suburbs teachers and administrators are having a paradigm shift. They are facing new students that have different needs then the students they were accustomed to serving. In Houston, the inner ring suburbs have felt these changes the most as they are closer to the gentrified urban center of the city. These schools now have to adjust to the new changes in their student population. These changes can have a major effect on the milieu in the school and the image of best loved self for all involved in the changes.

Students who are new to schools and have potentially changes the demographics in the schools may feel like they are a problem, shut down or out, or may become apathetic in school. Teachers and administrators may have similar feelings. How to reconcile these feelings as the change occurs is a major concern of this dissertation research study and many others that need to follow.

3. ARTICLE 2: TWO TALES, ONE CITY: THE STORY OF A CHANGED COMMUNITY

3.1. **Abstract and Introduction**

3.1.1. **Abstract**

Written as a parallel story, this article explores two teachers' perceptions of their peers' responses or attitudes toward students at various points during the defined period of demographic shift. from the perspective of two Black female employees at the largest high school in Hope City District, Star High School. As the community became more ethnically, socio-economically, and linguistically diverse, the school climate began to change. So did teachers' attitudes. The purpose of this second article is to explore how shifting racial, socio-economic, and linguistic demographics impact teacher perceptions of students' achievement and student ability in a suburban context. This narrative inquiry examines the narrative resonances across the parallel stories of two teachers of color who worked through a demographic shift on a suburban campus. Their perceptions of White teachers' attitudes towards non-White students, as well as the echoes of their own stories of experience are presented to promote discourse on future narrative inquiries concerning stories to live and leave by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Craig, 2015).

3.1.2. **Introduction**

I was a social worker for one of the nation's largest dropout prevention agencies and while I was working at Star High School, I felt what the students felt: unwelcomed. The teachers that passed my office on a daily basis seemed to be so full of negativity. What initially appeared to be passing conversations about how students no longer had school spirit opened the floodgates to a much larger inquiry into teacher attrition due to changes in the school's student population demographics. My role as a case manager required me to advocate for, broker relationships and opportunities, and teach hidden rules to an underbelly

of poor, historically disenfranchised, mostly Black and Brown students now enrolled there. I realized my role on the campus was not needed ten years prior because the school did not have a large population of students who needed such services. Conversations about how much the school had changed were constant during my time at Star High School. At first, I attributed this to the new zoning boundaries drawn by the school district. The boundaries placed most of Hope City's poorest students at Star High School. However, I soon realized that Hope City itself had undergone a massive change. Once known as a booming predominantly White suburb, it had become a mostly poor, Hispanic and Black community mostly resembling inner city urban center. I began to wonder what caused the changed this transition, how did people not see the change happening, and what has been done to address the change?

I recognized the teachers' coded language; hearing these complaints had become my norm at Star High School. It was not uncommon for me to hear teachers say things like, "These kids just don't have the same school spirit as the kids in the past, it's like they do not care. This will be my last year here." or "I hate when students speak in Spanish. They should only speak in English at school. It hinders participation" or "This school is so dangerous now that we can't even have pep rallies on a regular basis. It wasn't always this way; these kids are out of control." The conversations about how much the students had changed were a normal part of my day. Most of the conversations between teachers about students carried racial and classist undertones that left me wondering why these teachers remained at Star High School.

It was clear to me that many of my professional peers longed for a time when their interpretation of an ideal student attended Hope High School and struggled to comprehend

their new reality. This became the backdrop to my research. For three years I witnessed teachers masking their struggles they were living as secret stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) by blaming students and highlighting how disinterested they were. Many teachers experienced tensions as they attempted to reconcile their" stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999)—their identities in narrative terms--as teachers with the reality of their teaching landscapes.

Many teachers left Hope High School in search of old Hope City at the district's newest high school. What they found there were similar conditions. I then witnessed teachers leaving the profession altogether because they could no longer relate to the social changes and the changing classes of students. There were other teachers, however, who did become better teachers as the schools grew more diverse. Larami (a pseudonym), my main participant, was one of them. During my second year, I met a woman named "Larami" who had attended schools in the area and who had begun to teach in that region several years before I arrived. Larami helped me contextualize what had happened in Hope City. She had grown up in this city and had only moved away to attend college. She then moved back to teach there. She had seen the transformation first hand as a student and a teacher

3.1.3. **Coming to the Inquiry**

Part of my inspiration for becoming a teacher came from my experiences as a social worker in one of the largest suburban areas of the nation's third largest metropolitan area. During this time, I was responsible for building meaningful relationships with students to help them achieve their educational goals. I was an advocate and broker for my students and eventually teachers at Star High School. Most of my students were students who were at risk of dropping out for various reasons. I made it a goal to create a safe place for them to come and seek help

with issues varying from tutoring to drug addictions. Larami and I often discussed campus happenings, student needs, and her relationship with her students, which was unlike most of those I had witnessed. She was able to build meaningful relationships with her students as evidenced by their willingness to work their hardest in her class. The year I met her (2009), her students had performed exceptionally well on the state assessments.

Based on my first-hand observations, Larami's success as a teacher stemmed from her positive relationships with her students and her ability to keep them motivated. I asked her why she thought that others were not achieving the same perceived success working in the in the same fluctuating environment. As we talked, she used the term "gentri-migration" to describe the shift in population demographics of her hometown. My immediate interpretation of the term conjured up thoughts of the migration patterns of urban residents of low socio- economic status due to gentrification, and I wondered whether the teacher's mentioning of it would hold a similar understanding. In a recent conversation, we revisited the concept:

> TG: Remember when we talked about the reason that the teachers on your campus had trouble building relationships with their students? The term "gentri-migration" was brought up, why did you use that term?
>
> L: During that time, we were living in a bubble in Hope City. The teachers wanted the student population from 1999, but it was 2009 and a lot had changed. To me, gentri-migration is when people from urban areas in Houston made their way to (the town). It had been happening slowly, but things were amplified in the cultural aftermath of Hurricane Katrina…all of the movement, or migration, from New Orleans and one of the largest cities in the nation, as

those areas became gentrified, made Hope City a lot more financially accessible for a lot of people.

I wondered about so many of the things that Larami described and what she herself had observed during this critical time of change. I wondered what might be learned from other teachers working in the same area about their teaching experiences as student demographics changed. After working in the same community in what I considered to be the midst of this phenomena, I wondered about why certain teachers stayed and others left.

As a witness to the aftermath of the demographic changes in the Hope City schools, I experienced several reactions to the changes, including teachers leaving the profession, teacher apathy as well as some teachers staying and remaining diligent in instruction. While I watched the various responses of many teachers, the stories of staying of those who remained intrigued me the most. I wondered what kept these teachers in the field. What were their motivators as the environment around them so radically changed in Hope City? This narrative inquiry will focus on better understanding the influence of gentri-migration on teachers' attitudes as their work milieu shifts. As I story and restory my and Larami's story alongside each other, I center on common experiences we had working with a predominately White faculty at Star High School.

3.1.3.1. Context

Hope City is located southeast of one of the nation's largest city and is home to two of nation's largest producers of oil. Hope City was known as a city of prosperity for most of its history. It maintained its top-of-the-pile status until a major shift occurred in the early 2000s that resulted in the urbanization of this suburban city. Because schools represent a cross section of the community any changes that occur in the community are first experienced in the schools. Hope City is part of Hope City School District.

In 2000, the Hope City School District was composed of 17,837 students whose student demographics consisted of 17.6% African American, 39.2% Hispanic, and 42% White (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Of those students, about 51% were eligible for free or reduced lunch, meaning their households were living at or below the poverty line. Hope City School district data gathered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA; 2019), demonstrates a much different picture of its student population by the 2017-2018 school year with the school district educating 23,701 students. with 15.4% being African American, 19.7% being White, and 61.8% being Hispanic. About 66.7% of these students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. In order for students to receive free or reduced lunch they must come from homes that are considered low-income households, meaning the families of 4 earn less than $47,000 or less per year (Texas Education Agency, 2019). As can be seen in figure 3.1, Hope City experienced an unprecedented demographic shift captured in Hope High School's demographics.

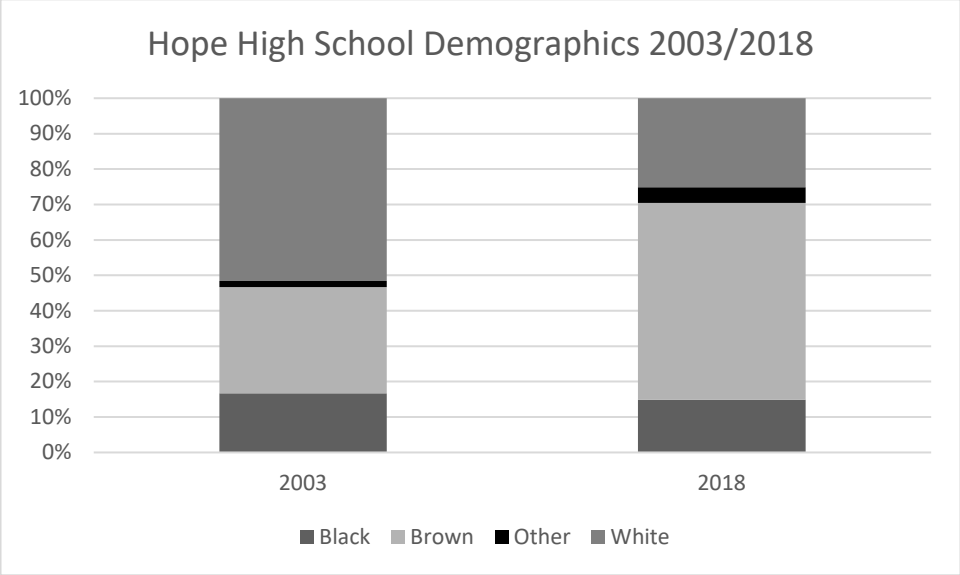


Figure 3.1. Demographics for Hope High School from 2003 and 2018. Data from Texas Education Agency.

The graduation rates at Hope High School in 2000 were considerably higher compared to those in 2018. In 2000, 98% of African Americans, 98% of Hispanic, and 99.1% of White students graduated, and 98.9% of the economically disadvantaged students graduated. In 2018, 88.7% of African American, 88.7% of Hispanic, and 91.1% of White students graduated whereas 72.4% of the economically disadvantaged student graduated. The drop in Hope's graduation rate is alarming, but also telling. Hope City School District had a major shift in demographics. It appears the district did not take measures to keep up with the change.

The most dramatic drop in student achievement and attainment was the graduation rate of African American students and the economically disadvantaged. The African American population decreased in size. At the same time, their graduation rate decreased the most (11.7%). Nearly one out of every twelve Black students enrolled at Hope High School would fail to matriculate. This raises questions such as: Was the district and school paying attention to that segment of the population? What reforms were going on at Hope High School at that time? Why did they not benefit Black youth? The district saw a 15.7% increase of economically disadvantaged students and a disturbing 26.2% drop-in graduation rate. The Hispanic population almost doubled from 2000 to 2016 and their graduation rate fell by 9.3%. It appears the district did see an increase in ELL students, but ultimately their efforts were not effective.

By year 2030, possibly 40% of students in k-12 schools will be children whose first language is not English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Teaching English language learners (ELLs) are often broadly categorized as teaching "teaching diverse students", however ELLs require

more than cultural understanding from their teachers (Hallman & Meineke 2014). Cultural as well as linguistically responsive teachers are needed to address the increase of ELLs in the U.S. (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Students and parents who are ELLs are often faced with feeling isolated because of language barriers and by the negative perceptions from educators in schools, along with facing the challenges of understanding academic content (Gaitan, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

3.2. **Participants**

3.2.1. **Larami: A Veteran Teacher**

Larami is a woman in her mid-thirties of Afro/Latino descent. She identifies as African American, but acknowledges her Latina heritage. Coming from an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse family, Larami has been able to see a full spectrum of what life can be in Hope City. She grew up there and can recall a time when Hope City was known as a wealthy suburb. Her upbringing was that of a traditional middle-class family. Her father was employed by a major oil company; her mother worked as an deaf education interpreter at a school in Hope City School District. At the time of this report, her mother and father have been married for 40+ years. She has one younger brother.

Larami was identified as Gifted and Talented early in her schooling and excelled in Hope City School District. She attended Star High School, and earned her B.A. in Literature and Composition at a college within the state. Larami wanted to be an attorney, but decided to move back home after graduation, to teach and save money before entering law school. Larami returned to Hope City and became a high school English teacher at Hope High School where she experienced great classroom success. Upon completion of her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, she was assigned to coach struggling teachers and became the chair of the English

department. Larami exited the classroom when she was offered a job as a district level Director of English in another suburb of the metropolis. Later she resigned from that job to obtain her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. After completing her doctoral degree, Larami launched her own consulting firm where she continues to work with English teachers. She has two daughters and a husband who is an educator and middle school administrator.

3.2.2. **Tenesha: Novice Research/Novice Teacher**

I am an African American woman who was born in Memphis, TN, a city plagued by poverty. I was subsequently raised in Arlington, TX a suburb of Dallas, TX. Having spent time in both contexts has had a strong impact on the person I have become. My experiences have fueled my passion for equality, equity and social justice due to my insight into both lifestyles. I excelled in school despite having to deal with several instances of educators making assumptions about me and my ability based on race. I participated not only in athletics on a varsity level, but in orchestra, National Honor Society, Junior Optimist Club and several other organizations. I went on to receive the Gates Millennium Scholarship[1] which allowed me to attend any university of my choice for free for a 10-year period. Hence, the scholarship also paid for my master's degree education as well as my doctorate degree program. After my undergraduate education I began working at Hope High School in Hope City School District as a case manager for Advocates on Campus (pseudonym) a non-profit organization focused on dropout prevention, the nation's largest and most effective dropout prevention organization .The mission of this

[1] The Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program, funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was established in 1999 to provide outstanding African American, American Indian/Alaska Native*, Asian Pacific Islander American**, and Hispanic American students with an opportunity to complete an undergraduate college education in any discipline area of interest. Continuing Gates Millennium Scholars may request funding for a graduate degree program in one of the following discipline areas: computer science, education, engineering, library science, mathematics, public health or science (GMSP.org)

organization is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life (Advocatesoncampus.org)

After determining that the biggest issues with which Star High students struggled were educational, I enrolled in an alternative certification program[2] to become a teacher and a master's program at a local university to further my academic education. I started teaching science at a Title I[3] Junior High School in Hope City School District that was the lowest performing junior high in the district. Over time, my department became the highest performing science department in the district. I eventually left my position to pursue a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction with a focus in urban education and teacher education, which led me to conducting this research.

3.3. **Purpose of the Inquiry**

As I progressed through school, I witnessed teacher who were not prepared to work on campuses that were highly diverse. My experiences lead me to wondering about how teachers respond to the demographic changes. As a student I attended a school that was in a suburb of a major city. However, this suburb was highly populated and included residents who were ethically, linguistic, and socio-economically diverse. As new schools were being built, school boundaries become more and more important. The school board and parents wanted to control which type of student went to each school. I recall a school board meeting where? to discuss the new boundaries for the newest high school. A parent angrily stood up in the meeting and

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[2] Alternative or non-traditional teacher certification was initially introduced to fill critical teacher shortages (Ingersoll, 2001)

[3] "Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards" (US Department of Education, 2019).

shouted, “I don’t want my kids going to school with those south-side kids.” I myself was a south-side kid, the high school the parent was speaking of would be the high school I would graduate from. The south side of town was more diverse than the north, east and west areas. The experiences in that high school have lingered with me through my adult years. There were several times when I felt othered because of my race or had to deal with teachers’ lack of cultural understanding because they were not prepared to work in such a diverse school.

My junior year in Advanced Placement English was one of those times. We were reading *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) out-loud in class. This book contains to work “nigger” over 200 times. Every time the word would appear, we became more and more uncomfortable. The White students did not feel comfortable saying the word out loud, so they would edit themselves and say “n-word.”. The Black students became more and more angry. We asked often why we had to read this book, and the teacher, a White woman, would reply “It is an American classic.” Her cultural mismatch was apparent. She did not care how the book affected the Black students in class. She did not understand our push back because she felt the book was an American classic. Our behaviors were foreign to her. After becoming a teacher, I now know the approved reading list had over fifty books she could have chosen, but at the time I thought it was “required” reading. One day a Black girl finally had enough of the book. She asked the teacher “Ms. – What is a nigger?” Without hesitation, the teacher said, “A Black person.” Everyone was shocked by her truncated response. The student asked another question, “Well, am I one?” In a matter-of-fact way, the teacher responded, “Well you’re Black, aren’t cha?” My class sat motionless for a few seconds. Everyone had a shocked look on their faces. I, along with several others, walked out. I went directly to an administrator who had taken me under her wing. I talked to her about how it felt wrong to even read the book—and out-loud,

nonetheless-- and how upset I was about the teacher's remarks. The school leader looked upset but stuck to her role as an administrator and convinced me she would "look into it."

The teacher was not suspended. In fact, I cannot say if she was reprimanded at all. However, we did stop reading the book. One of my coaches told me that the administrator I talked to had no control over teacher suspensions or discipline. Those things were in the hands of the head principal, an older White man. In my opinion, this teacher had gotten away with damaging students and damaging teacher-student relationships.

As an educator, I have had new experiences with teachers not being culturally aware, especially during my time at Star High School. These experiences have fueled my wonderings and lead to my research questions. I now wonder what are the narrative resonances in parallel stories of teachers' perspectives on school climate during a socioeconomic shift, how do teachers of color examine the residence of White teachers' attitudes towards non-White students during the demographic shift in a suburban high school how do shifting racial and socioeconomic demographics impact teacher perceptions of student achievement and student ability in suburban context

3.4 Review of Related Literature

Students of color represent the majority of students in public education for the first time in history and nearly half of the student in public school are classified as low income based on federal guiding for free and reduced lunch (Ross & Bell, 2014; Southern Education Foundation, 2011). While the student population has grown more diverse the teacher population remains White, middle class, women (Department of Education Educational Demographics Unit. 2013). It has recently been determined that America's Black and Brown students are now twice as likely to be taught by a White teacher. Many of these teachers are

not prepared to work in diverse classrooms and have a major disconnect from their students (Boutte, 2012; Castro 2010; Ladson Billings, 2001). Many teachers have not had experiences students who are ethnically, linguistically, socioeconomically, and culturally different from them, yet they are expected to successfully teach these students (Banks, 2001; Irvin 2003). They often hold negative misconception about their students as well (Banks, 2006; Castro, 2010). With this knowledge we know that something must be done to better prepare teachers for a diverse student population.

Suburban neighborhoods nationally have undergone rapid demographic changes (Diem, Welton, Frankenberg & Holmes, 2013). The suburbs now consist of at least 35 percent of people of color (Fry, 2011). Sometimes called "melting pot" suburbs, Houston, Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. consist of a majority of people of color opposed to being mostly White (Fry, 2011). As the nation's population grows more diverse, historically White middle-class communities are also becoming more ethnically, socioeconomically, and linguistically different (Kneebone & Garr, 2008). Suburban communities surrounding major metropolitans represent the new face of poverty. The effects are first seen on school campuses as schools are a cross section of most communities (Kneebone & Garr, 2008). Also, all communities have schools, some of which are dedicated to other purposes or have been torn down.

3.4.1 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive teaching practices requires teachers not only to connect class lessons to students, but to create a community of learners with empathy and understanding while taken into consideration cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of ethnically diverse students to teach them more effectively (Bennett, 2012; Gay 2002).

Culturally responsive teaching has grown over the years to not only include teacher dispositions, but their classroom atmosphere, curriculum and instruction. Ladson-Billings (2001), Gay (2002), and Vilegas and Lucas (2002) created an outline of characteristics culturally responsive or relevant teachers possess. Ladson-Billings (2001) used three tenets as her framework for culturally relevant teachers: they (a) are focused on individual students' achievement; (b) have cultural competence and help students develop cultural competence as well; and (c) develop a sense of sociopolitical consciousness. Gay (2002) expanded on this concept in t her theory about the culturally responsive teacher. Gay outlined five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teachers:

- develop a cultural diversity knowledge base
- design culturally relevant curricula
- demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community
- establish cross-cultural communication an
- establish congruity in classroom instruction.

Researchers Villegas and Lucas then expanded on the foundation created by Gay and Ladson Billings by identifying six characteristics of culturally responsive teachers. Together, these frameworks call for the preparation and development of teachers who are politically, socially, and culturally aware and focused on creating an equitable, caring classroom for a diverse classroom (Brown; 2007; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). I will use these guiding principles as an identifier of teachers who made positive adjustments to a changing student population.

3.5 Methodology

Pulling from the narrative forms of telling stories (Craig, 1997) and parallel stories

(Craig, 1999, 2003), individual teacher narratives are re-presented and interpreted using my researcher narrative to help move the inquiry (Curtis, 2012). The parallel stories reveal challenges, growth, transformation, and the "intentionality and concreteness of everyday life" (Greene, 1995, p. 10). Using Craig's (1999) parallel stories method I incorporate "the narrative of a school as an institution" (p. 401) with "the stories of a teacher's experiences within that institution." Because of my ties to Hope City and Star High School, I act as a co-participant with Larami. Together we will not only re-create the narrative landscape for Star High School, but we will use our experiences to tell and re-tell our stories of a particular sequence of time and a shared place within which we worked.

3.5.1 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a method of research used to explain lived and told stories (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This exploratory study takes the experiences of teachers and investigates their internal and existential condition, through storying both backwards and forward. Narrative inquiry allows for the teacher participating in this study (Larami, me [Tenesha]) to re-story their experiences and allow me to identify miseducative and educative happenings (Dewey, 1938; Mitton-Kukner, Nelson, & Desrochers, 2010). Narrative inquiry is, for me, the best way of understanding experiences because it attends to teacher experiences (sociality) that occur in context (place) over time (temporal) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These three aspects on inquiry sociality, place, and temporal form a 3-dimension inquiry space.

Broadening, burrowing, storying and re-storying are the three analytical tools I will use to analyze Larami's story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Using broadening, I situated Larami's experiences against a change being felt in many metropolitan cities (Fry, 2011). To investigate what major themes would come to the surface, I burrowed into Larami's personal experiences.

Using the last analytical tool, storying and re-storying I was able to highlight Larami's personal and professional feelings about working in a community that experienced an ethnic, socioeconomic and linguistic change.

3.6 Introduction of Co-Research Participants

I (Tenesha) met Larami, an English teacher at Hope High School (pseudonym) in Hope City School District in Hope City. At this time, I was a social worker with a bachelor's degree from Baylor University. As a social worker, I saw and heard the issues students were having with their teachers as well as the issues the teachers were conversely having with the students. I worked with students who had hardships that were hindering them from academically achieving in school. Larami talked regularly during this time because many of the students I worked with were also in her English classes. She was given the students who were labeled "low achievers" she was able to help them make great academic strides on standardized tests. I felt Larrmi would be the best participant for this study because she had insights about Hope City School District in the 1990s through to the 2000s. She had been a student in the school district as well as teacher in it. Her firsthand narrative account helped me to identify the changes that occurred in the district and what it was like to be a teacher during this time of great social, economic, racial and educational transition.

3.6.1 Larami's Early Years

Larami's father graduated from college with a degree and worked in the oil and gas refinery plants in Hope City as many males did during this time. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom. They lived in a middle-class neighborhood, but Larami attended a school, Wilkins (pseudonym) she was not zoned to. Her mother used her grandmother's address so that Larami could be enrolled in a school that was considered the best in Hope City School District. During

her time at this school Larami recalled being the only Black student in her classes. She remembered there was one Indian student as well. Most of the students in her class were affluent with their parents either owning businesses or working in the plants during the energy booms.

> L - My friend, Kehlani, had a father who owned several gas stations in the city, my other friend's dad owned eight Holiday Inn Hotels along (a major highway). I was also in classes with Jay, whose family owned an asphalt company, as most of the construction companies were in the neighboring cities. It is safe to say that most of the students were upper middle class or affluent.

Her words stood out to me because the area Larami grew up in had changed dramatically. Now, it was predominantly lower middle class, whereas when she lived there is was considered a prime suburb of the larger metropolis. Larami described Hope City as a "big-small town" because the town had a large with a population of about 100,000, but had a small-town feel to it.

During her time at Wilkins, Larami only recalled one instance of racism. Although schools were segregated by color, she felt that class as a social marker was most notably important in Hope City. The only person at the school who made race an issue was a "poor student"—an impoverished student--whose mother told her she could not play with Brown students.

> L - I remember there was a girl who I played with a lot when I was in the 2nd grade. She was always wanted me to come to her house and play after school. My mom said that would be fine once she met the girl's parents. Well, my mom met her mother at a park while we played and everything seemed okay,

until the next day in school. She told me that her mother said she could not play with me anymore because she wasn't allowed to play with Brown people.

As Larami told this story she seemed unbothered by the girl's comments. As I asked more questions Larami revealed why.

L- I felt sorry for the girl. She was poor. I noticed her clothes were often dirty and the other kids would not play with her. I didn't really notice these things until she pointed out that I was Brown. I was trying to befriend her when the other kids would not. She did not hurt my feelings because I thought her mother's reasoning was sad. I grew up in a multiethnic family and we recognized differences without placing value on them. I now realized others did.

Larami's teachers initially noticed that she belonged in the Gifted and Talented program. She was tested and admitted; however, during this time the district housed the program for elementary students at a school that was predominantly Black and in an impoverished area of the city. Larami's mother did not want her to go to this campus because, when she went to visit, she was approached by three people on drugs before she made it to the front door. She felt it unsafe for Larami to attend. Larami did not know the exact reason the GT program was housed there, but said that she suspected it was to help the school district seem more equitable where school programs were concerned.

L - As an adult, and an educator, I can look back and tell that they were likely trying to provide some esteem there. People wanted their children in the GT program. If they wanted it badly enough, they would have to drive to that campus. It did not last for long though. Like my mother, others were

concerned with safety and the drug epidemic got so bad that there was a television special on the issue. Then the district decided that each campus would house its own GT program under the direction of a centrally located program coordinator.

During the 4th grade Larami attended the school to which she was legally zoned. This shift in school context opened her eyes to instructional inequity. When comparing the curriculum used at her previous school where the student population was comprised of mostly upper middle class and affluent White students, and the new campus which was a more racially and socioeconomically diverse campus. (mix of generationally impoverished and blue-collar middle-class families)

L - I actually loved math. So, when I arrived in 4th grade, I realized that I had done everything the teacher was going to present to me. This was immediate. I had a copy of my second-grade math book at home and it was truly the 4th grade book there. After asking around a little, I discovered that our math curriculum had been "accelerated" on that campus. Everything had. I remained in contact with my kindergarten teacher forever. I sang at her daughter's wedding; she gave me my first puppy…. So, when I started teaching in district, she told me about the tracking program that started with my kindergarten class on that campus. The district piloted it with my cohort. It explained more about why my school felt so small. I was part of a small group identified as high ability (who likely all had parent who did not wish to enroll their children at the GT campus) ... and it is why I was ALWAYS the

only Black child. I was reading very well by age 4 and all of the kids in that cohort were early readers, just not many Black kids there at all.

Upon the move, Larami noticed there were more Black students and even a young Black math teacher who was the first to offer Larami a glimpse of herself in the profession.

L - I noticed race more once I moved. There was more to notice, I guess. Looking back on being in Wilkins, race was an issue that was discussed by teachers, or students. Class was not either, but social class would still determine your peer and teacher level of acceptance. The way that you dressed, and your speech were forms of social currency and they were often part of the negotiation for academic success. The cohort of academically accelerated students was a hand up for me. When I started at the new school, I was two grades ahead of the other students in math. This would become common for me the rest of my elementary and junior high school years. In sixth grade, pre-algebra, I became a teacher's assistant.

During junior high and high school Larami was tracked into Pre-Advanced Placement courses. She noted that she was one of five Black students who participated. As a student at Hope High School she was well known and very active in school activities. She participated in the school's dance group, track team, and National Honor Society. During this time, she wanted to be lawyer. When asked about college, she recalled no one talking to her about the admission process. She talked about her private vocal teacher helping her to get a vocal scholarship to a college, so that became the college she attended. She did receive scholarships from other universities, but because her vocal teacher actually talked to her about the college, it became the

one she attended. Hope High School was known as the districts best high school during this time. Many of the students who attended the campus were from middle to upper income families.

After college Larami went back to work at Star High School. She noted some considerable changes in race and class had happened during the time she was away When she was a student, she recalled parents being able to write checks for hundreds of dollars for students to participant in school clubs and activities. She talked about Project Graduation where there were raffles for items as large as cars, but upon her return the largest item may have been a portable television. Larami attributed the change to socio-economic shift.

> L - A generation of people who had been wealthy were now older and wanted to retire to acreage. There was not much of that available as the population continued to grow. Commercial properties were being sold more quickly than residential. On top of the retirement swing, there was an environmental issue in a neighboring city and a large percentage of its residents, mostly Hispanic people, were moving to Hope City for affordable housing. There were always available units of Section 8 apartments and homes in my city. There was frequent discussion of the changing demographics. I believe this was also a factor in people moving away.

3.6.2 The Teaching Years

I wanted to know about Larami's time teaching at Hope High School and how other teachers were affected by the change in demographics. She also was very aware of the changes that had happen to Hope City and Star High School.

> L - As a teacher, I knew the anticipated shift had happened because 4 years prior, I had been the only Black in several classes and now I had classes where

there was only 1 White. Most of my classes were diverse, but some were largely Hispanic which was very different.

I asked about her own practice as a teacher. Larami saw great success in areas the other English teachers did not. She attributed some of this to her being able to see herself reflected in her students.

L - My ability to see myself in every student, I thought I was just like everybody. I often asked myself "What would I want?" or "What would I need?" if I were one of my students. If I couldn't relate to the particular struggle of a student, I found some part of the student I could relate to.

Larami did not cite an instructional technique she helped her students but did note that community was important in her classroom.

L - My students would often say "we talk to people in the class we don't ever talk to and might never have without it. I felt I created a sense of community with them and that kept me going. I would think about what would happen if they didn't have a teacher like me, I would think about the bad teachers I had and I didn't want to leave them with that.

Larami explained that she did not have many issues as a teacher. Her students always performed well, so much so, she was accused of falsifying passing rates by a colleague. "She didn't understand that engagement and compliance were two different things." Larami said of this peer. "I told her that active engagement can be loudly and messy and still yield learning. She only backed down on her feelings of my grade padding when the state scores came back and my students passed at the highest rate in the district.". Larami did her best to make all her students

feel important and valued. She even started several school programs that embraced multiculturalism.

L - I was a sponsor for a multicultural student association called the Spirit of Star. It boasted a gospel choir, a step team, a dance team and a creative writing group. It was quickly approved a lot of fun for them. We didn't compete, but we traveled and performed, read our writing pieces and took college tours… Also, I developed and co-sponsored a group called GP (Growing Potential) for understanding the struggles and developing the character and young minority males after Katrina. I hoped that a male sponsor would take over, but no one did. The group had a weekly meeting where they would dress in shirt and tie, discuss an article, voice a concern and propose a solution, and have a guest facilitator that was male. They took a field trip to the bank and learned about financial literacy, and they also went on college tours. I couldn't keep up with both GP and SIS. My SOS co-sponsors were spread thin too, so at the end of year 2, no one picked up EP, but I did get a new co-sponsor for SOS.

Larami continued:

This group took longer to approve. The central administration officer questioned if I was ready to respond to why the group was limited to minority males and I said yes. I told her that membership was not restricted, the function, purpose and focus would be on issues related to that population and that Whites, Asians and indigenous students were welcome to join the

conversation and add to it or make connections with their experiences. She said: you're approved.

Larami felt the other teachers were not used to having to teach their students because before the students were self-directed and did not need much assistance. She perceived the teachers she worked with were afraid to teach Black or poor students because of accountability and also a general lack of understanding.

L - Many of teachers who worked in Hope City School District did not have to work. Their spouses had well-paying jobs that provided enough income for them to stay home, so their money was viewed as disposable income. There were teachers who were able to put most of their money towards retirement and just live off their husbands' income. When the population shifted, these teachers were not prepared. They had been told, and many held the belief that students of color could not perform.

The Black and Brown students at Hope High School became a challenge that most teachers were not prepared to endure. Their normal teaching methods were not engaging to the new population and they were faced with teaching students who were English Language Learners (ELLs). They were used to working at a school that did not have to worry about diversity or poverty. Many of the teachers who witnessed the change harbored resentment for the students and had a hard time adjusting to the change. Hope High School administration did try to change the climate of the school as the student population changed according to Larami.

Larami continued to explain that these teachers felt the students did not care and education became mediocre. The teachers felt the students did not belong and a sense of

helplessness filled the school's atmosphere. When asked if teachers left the school or stayed, she responded:

> L - Teachers did a little bit of both. Some stayed if they could teach "AP kids" they believed that this meant the kids were "better", more behaved and smarter. That wasn't the case of course. But AP became a place for teachers' kids, and kids who had active and vocal parents. It was an attempt to recreate the bubble that I grew up in, but unsuccessful because when I was there [as a student], you had to test, have teacher referral and a previous years' average of 95 or higher in that subject area. College Board removed room for those tracking patterns and that opened AP up to anyone.

The teachers attempted to recreate classrooms that resembled the old Star High School, by separating students based on ability. The perceived ideal was that the students were in Pre-AP (Advanced Placement) courses were better behaved, however, as ideas surrounding tracking began to change, they could no longer avoid having diverse classrooms. According to Larami the administration at that time did attempt to react to the increase of Black, Brown and students living in poverty, by hiring a more diverse staff.

> L - New administration ran many sour teachers to early retirement or transfer. The new principal was also very vocal about hiring a faculty that mirrored the diversity of the student population. And he did it.

She continued:

> When I was hired in 2003 there was just me and a male history teacher… perhaps an assistant coach, too...But in the next 3 years the Black and Hispanic teacher count was up. So, the old teachers didn't really change, but

the new teachers had different attitudes. They were often hired from places with a large or majority minority population. So, the tide shifted as the staff did.

The new teachers were more understanding and felt the original teachers did not want to step up to the challenge.

L - They [new, diverse group of teachers] thought that suburban poverty and the demographics were a walk in the park. They voiced that teachers who had been longer than they had didn't realize how lucky they were to be teaching there and some voiced that the teachers complaining were just lazy and used to kids coming in and being compliant. I agree. There wasn't often a discussion of compliance versus engagement until the new crop came in.

Larami further explained:

That is again tied to leadership. The new principal had also come from a high poverty school and himself had grown up in poverty. He also had ADHD and was always thinking of what he needed when he was in school. So that is was lens that he used during casual walk-throughs. "Who would have reached him?

Larami only left the classroom after she felt her identity as a teacher was changing because of an assignment change. She was appointed to be department chair as well as a specialist. For the assignment, she spent half the day teacher and the other half coaching struggling teachers. This dual job status made it difficult for her to focus on the one thing she loved, building relationships with students.

L - I found myself being pulled in two different directions and I did not like that. I think that if I could have been a full-time Literacy Coach or a full-time

> English teacher, I would have stayed at Star High School. I was in a space where my identity was not clear…was I a teacher of students, well sometimes…. was I a peer coach…sometimes? I just did not like it.

After two years of a dual status role, Larami left Hope City School District. She worked as a campus Instructional Coach and then a district level English curriculum director for a neighboring school district. At the start of her 3rd year in that district, Larami began pursuing a terminal degree in curriculum and instruction at a tier one research institution.

These interviews with Larami were very insightful. Her experience was unique because she was always a part of this community. I entered the community as an outsider. My views of Hope City are similar to those of an observer. I found that I only knew of the changes because of the action of teachers and students. Larami experienced the changes within the community as an active member.

3.7 Researcher Reflections

I entered Hope High School as a case manager in 2009 two years after the school district rezoned the students from the poorer side of town to Hope High School. Hope High School also had a new principal. The previous principal who took actions such as hiring a group of diverse teachers to adjust to the demographic changes had been moved to the new high school across town. Many of the teachers he hired followed him to the new school, leaving a less diverse teacher population. After speaking with Larami about how the teachers and administrators responded to the demographic changes, I realized Hope High School had undergone yet another major change; a change in administration. 2009 was also the year a brand-new high school opened, which caused Hope City School District to rezone its feeder pattern communities again.

The new rezoning left Hope High School majority Hispanic as many of the historically Black and Hispanic neighborhoods, as well as most of the Section 8 apartment complexes, were zoned to the new high school.

3.7.1 Teachers

During my first year at Star High School, I noticed a looming feeling of descent. Many of the teachers I interacted with not only had a negative view of the changes made at the school, but a negative view of the non-profit I worked for. It appeared that they did not understand why such a program was needed in their school and believed the students I worked with only wanted to skip class. They did not realize that many of these students were dealing with hardships most adults in the building had never encountered. The teachers at Hope High School were used to a certain type of student and were having a difficult time adjusting to their student population.

In my view, Larami was seen as a person in the storm with the teachers, whereas I was alongside the "at-risk" students were viewed as the storm itself. Our positioning at Hope High School was vastly different. Larami recalls negative teachers being forced out of the school during this time and the new administrator replacing them with a new diverse group of teachers. However, as the school underwent changes in administration and teacher population, conversations in my office suggested there was a widening gap in cultural understanding. This could have been because of what my presence in the school represented. Needing a dropout prevention program to assist "at-risk" students meant there were students in the school who fell outside of the traditional norm for the school. Whether those students came from the school from across the tracks, the inner city, or were Katrina evacuees, they were not the representation of the school the teachers wanted, the school with which the teachers had previously identified.

3.7.2 Administration

The new principal was not charismatic; he was a very serious, no-nonsense person. He did not like conflict and would easily cave into the wants of certain school personnel. I had the opportunity to learn more about him and how he felt about students during a meeting about issues we were having with an after-school program tied to the non- profit agency I worked for. During this meeting he chastised the leader of that group and made a statement about wishing he could pour a slab on concrete outside for this program to keep the students from meeting inside of the school. I had to remind him several times during this meeting that the students in the after-school program were the same students who attended his school during school hours. During the principal's second year as the school's leader, two of Hope City School District's Black female students were murdered. One of the girls attended Hope High School and was a student who was on my caseload. I found out Sunday about the incident and quickly alerted the principal. Monday when I walked into the building, a group of students had already started forming at my office. I expected counselors to be notified and a grief room for the students to have a safe space to cry be available. The principal did not notify anyone. He did not have a room set up for the students, and he did not understand why I would request a moment of silence for a student who had only attended the school for three months. He was not aware that the student was popular and had family members who also attended the school. I had to fight for a moment of silence and a safe space for the students at the same time as I dealt with my grief and the grief of all my students. I believe the principal handled this situation poorly, in part, because it was a Black student. He was not responsive to the climate in Hope High School and lacked the culturally sensitivity needed to improve the campus's climate.

This school leader was drastically different from the one Larami described. Whereas the previous principal was intentional about his actions and used a culturally responsive method to address the diversity on Star High School's campus, the new principal did not continue the same efforts to help teachers adjust to the changes of Star High School. His actions or lack of actions aborted the previous progress made in improving the school climate.

3.8 Major Themes

After interviewing Larami, I was able to identify three major themes. Through Larami's experience at Hope High School she was able to build a community for her students because it was the thing she longed for as student. Larami's experience with the teachers at Hope High School during the demographic shift were varied. Most teachers were afraid of the accountability that came along with teaching diverse students. However, the teachers who refused to embrace the change were removed from the school by an administrator who understood what was best for students. Which leads to the third major theme, the impact leadership has on the culture and climate in schools.

3.8.1 Larami's Experience

Larami did not fear the change in demographics. She believed in her students and decided to teach every child instead of giving in to the helplessness other may have felt because Hope High School exhibited a major shift in the social class of its students. Being able to build community lead to Larami's success in the classroom. Her students had a place where they all belonged and that kept them engaged. Throughout Larami's story community or belonging was a major theme in her life. As a child, she played with the only students who did not have friends, during school she built her community around the students by creating programs for them to participate in, and as a teacher she left the profession when she felt she had no community

because her identity was split between teacher and administrator. Community sustained Larami in the classroom and she worked hard to create a sense of community for her students.

3.8.2 Teachers' Experience

Larami spoke of the fear other teachers felt due to accountability. They felt if their classes were full of Black and Brown students their scores would decrease and they would lose their value as a teacher. For years teachers, have been told that minority students do not perform well academically, so when faced with a classroom of minority students, teachers made assumptions about their students. I found that many of the teachers I spoke to would say "How can you make students care who just don't ?" or "How am I supposed to teach students who just can't learn?" The teachers feared diversity because they had accepted that it was a helpless situation.

Larami stated that the first wave of teachers left because they felt forced out by administration. I had a different experience. During the second wave, I heard the things teachers were saying about the students. I can recall a teacher telling me she would not return next year because the kids "lacked school spirit" and the overall atmosphere of the school was just different. These were sentiments I heard from many other teachers as well. I believe they were just uncomfortable and afraid of teaching students who were completely different from themselves. Larami knew some teachers held racist beliefs, but she mostly noted that they just did not want to be accused of poor teaching when student did not perform as well academically. Teachers were now living in a world of high-stake testing and had been told over and over again that African American students struggle with reading and math. As their classroom became more diverse, they were forced to deal with this "issue".

Most of my conversations with teachers had a racist undertone, similar to the ones mentioned before, but they also were laced with a classist undertone. Many of the teachers were

not used to having students who struggled to have their basic needs met. When I started working at Star High School, I would deliver food to families in need. Larami's childhood neighborhood started as a middle-class neighborhood, but it too had become was one of those places I would have to deliver food. Economic status, according to Larami's account. determined what school you went to, what activities you could participate in, and how teachers treated you.

3.8.3 The impact of leadership on climate and culture

From Larami's interviews and my encounters with principals and administration, I find their role to be pivotal in calibrating teachers' identities amid the dramatic school landscape change. Star High School, before my entry in 2009, had a leader who was focused on the positive climate of the school. He took actions to ensure that all students felt welcomed and that teachers were prepared for the new type of students they were encountering. The administrative team provided professional development for the teachers and allowed teachers like Larami to create spaces and organizations for students of color. Larami is able to speak about a time that appears to be more progressive than my time at Star High School.

On my first day at Hope High School, I was greeted by a principal who had just been hired the year prior. My interactions with him were limited. However, they often left me feeling that he did not understand the students who were in his school. This was evident in the comments he made about laying a slab of concrete for the after-school kids and his reluctance to acknowledging the death of Black students. Through his leadership style, he changed Hoe into a place that was oblivious to the needs of students of color and the needs of students living in poverty, many of who were suffering from food anxiety.

3.9 Conclusion/Future Studies

In revisiting, how teachers react to demographic changes I learned that there are teachers who are able to maintain their image of their best loved self and grow from their experience of a demographic paradigm shift. Larami was able to better navigate the change of demographics because she was able to see herself in all her students. After many conversations it was clear to me that Larami's background and upbringing prepared her to teach all students especially with her family being ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. Larami also practiced being a culturally responsive teacher, by having a cultural knowledge base, by being caring as she created organizations for the Black and Brown students, and by building community in her classroom. From her interview, I could see how her humility allowed her to be a better teacher to all students. In the future, I will look for that quality in other teachers I interview.

From the interviews, I identified many other issues I would like to explore in the future. One major one is the intersection of race and social class. In the United States, race and class are inextricably linked because of the historical oppression of people of color, Black people in particular. Now that more Black people are moving into the middle class, assumptions about social class are now being challenged. No longer is it safe to assume that Black people are living in poverty or that they reside in urban centers. With the changes that are occurring in shifting suburban communities, I wonder if educators are willing to adjust their assumptions and biases as well? Not all Black and Brown students in suburban classrooms are living in households that are impoverished. Some of these families are middle-class and similar in socio-economic status to Larami's family. This also leads me to wonder how other teachers would have viewed the changes if it were White students of poverty moving into their communities? How would their reactions have changed, if at all?

Being culturally responsive is not just important for teachers, but for administrators as well. At Hope High School most of the culturally responsive actions were taken by an earlier administrator who recognized the importance of changing with the community. However, once that administrator moved to another assignment, the positive attitudes of the teachers changed. I believe school climate starts with leadership. From talking to Larami, I now understand how principal's attitude trickled down into the teacher population. Leadership sets the tone of Star High School. Is this a common theme for other schools facing similar demographic and human challenges?

I am interested in how schools in suburban areas adjust to the changes in their community as well as schools. If school are going to become mixed demographic schools, in what way can we better sustain teachers? How will these new faces challenge teachers? Will teachers continue to react as the teachers in Hope High School did or will they grow into more culturally responsive educators? And, if they are able, how might the transformation best be accomplished?

3.9.1 Ongoing Theme

As I continue writing my dissertation, a major overarching theme has emerged: a teacher's ability to maintain an image of their best loved self (Schwab, 1954/1978; Craig, 2013) as their classrooms become more diverse. If teachers' ideas of their best-loved self are confirmed in their classrooms, they are more likely to be sustained in their careers. As shifts happen and they move away from their perceived best-loved self, they are more likely to become dissatisfied in their role as educators and leave the profession. This leaves me with the lingering question: How can teachers' best visions of themselves be sustained during times of dramatic demographic transition?

4. ARTICLE 3: LIVING IN THE "IN-BETWEEN SPACES"

Living in the in-between spaces or in periods of transition continuously shapes my identity as a Black woman. As I journey through my past, I realize that most of my life I have had to navigate through the middle of transitions. I call these transitions the in-between spaces. The in-between spaces are usually chaotic and involve constant change. Living and working in the in-between spaces has taught me to be flexible, patient, and caring. In the first section of this article, I visit my past as it relates to education. I will first focus on how being in the in-between spaces created my passion for equity in education and then move on to discuss how I negotiate the in-between spaces.

4.1. **In-Between Poverty and Middle Class**

I was born in one of the US south's most poverty-stricken communities, but only long enough to learn how to walk. My parents moved to a suburban town in Texas with the hopes of providing my two younger brothers and me a better life. However, we left behind the majority of our family, which led to me living a suburban life with friends from mixed backgrounds and visiting my extended family who all continued to suffer the pains of poverty. I was in an in-between familial, socio-economic space.

Summer was my favorite time of year because I had the opportunity to travel back to my birth town and visit the most important people in my life--my aunts, uncles, cousins, and my grandparents. Reflecting back now, every visit in the past revealed a different lesson in which I learned about being in-between worlds. The most pivotal being when I visited my cousins' elementary school. The school was a large, cold, brown brick two-story building. The front of the school had small windows that housed window air conditioning units, some held up by a wooden plank. I remember many of the windows being broken and others were dingy and

yellow. My suburban school at home had central air conditioning and heating, as well as big shiny windows all around the school.

As I walked into my cousin's school no one questioned me about being a visitor or new student. They simply ushered me into a classroom. All visitors, no matter their age, had to check into my suburban school. As I looked around my cousin's classroom, I saw paint peeling off the walls, faded posters, and plenty of broken desks. The classroom seemed to hold well over 30 students. It was hard to move around the room because the desks were very close together. I sat in the back of the room and tried to blend in with the other students. This was impossible. Although we were all Black students, they knew by the way I talked and my ability to get the work done that I did not belong. Some of the students taunted me, calling me "White girl" because of the way I talked. My family often called me "White girl," that this became normal to me. Most of my cousins would say the same thing because of my proper accent. I was in yet another in-between space. Forced to defend my blackness because I was growing up differently than the students in the class, different from most of my cousins.

During class, we worked on two worksheets the entire day. One focused on multiplication and the other verbs, nouns, and adjectives. What took me an hour took my cousin and her classmates the entire day. They were in the 4th grade, I was in the third. My suburban school focused heavily on making sure all students were on grade level. The teachers had extremely high expectations for us. My cousin's school did not have the same resources and it was clear to me, even at that young age, that they were academically behind.

I learned a lot about myself and equity that day. I realized I would never truly fit into the world my family members had to navigate. However, this did not stop me from being empathetic to their circumstances. I learned that I would be able to accomplish more than what is even

offered to my family. That one day of being in between worlds launched my desire to fight for equity in education. I used to feel guilty for having more than what my family had. It took me a long time to reconcile this feeling. I cannot save my family, but I can work to change the circumstances surrounding issues of poverty and race. This has pushed me throughout my career to be an advocate for those who do not have the same access to education.

4.1.1. **Class, Race, Community and College in the In-Between Spaces**

After high school, I attended a large Baptist private university in Texas. Attending a private institution introduced me to the wealthy class. It was not uncommon to have classes with students related to foreign dignitaries, or students of CEOs who own Fortune 500 companies. I felt like a poor student at this university. This was a new in-between space for me.

The university hosted an event to welcome and introduce incoming freshmen and their parents to the University. Upon our arrival, I noticed many luxury cars, purses, shoes, and clothes. Many of the students who attended this university came from wealthy families that could afford the staggering tuition. My circumstances were vastly different. I could afford to attend the university because of a full scholarship from an outside source. Attending this university taught me valuable lessons about class, race, and belonging to a community.

While at the university, I enrolled in a Spanish course that was capped at ten students. This was yet another pivotal learning experience for me. I was the only middle class and Black student. The others were White and wealthy. These students in the class were on what I thought of as a spectrum of wealth. I remember a girl whose family had just made a tremendous amount of money during the technology boom in California. She was mostly concerned about possessions. There was a male student who grew up with plenty, but his dad was an employee of Enron and had to resign from his job. This guy did not understand why his father was being

punished for someone else's actions. One day he was upset because the family was not able to take their annual family vacation. The most interesting student to me was a fellow from Louisiana. His family has had wealth for many generations. When I encountered a problem with another professor, he told me that he was going skiing with him that weekend and he would take care of it. He was also the only White student who did not seem upset by the election of Barack Obama. Politics did not affect his status. Growing up and being able to interact with people from all spectrums of economic standing helped me to understand the many ways class etches people's personalities. Being able to see what school was like for those who live in poverty, those who live in the middle class, and those who live with wealth has shown me how education will not be the great equalizer because education is not equal for all.

4.1.2. **Negotiating the "In Between Spaces"**

I have often found my place to be in the in-between spaces. Experiencing life in a place of ambiguity in the in-between spaces taught me many valuable lessons. Living in the in-between spaces cultivated a certain wisdom in me that could only come from experience. As I grew more comfortable in the in-between spaces, I began to study the reactions of those who were not as comfortable with the chaos. I noticed the people who fell into a pit of despair. I noticed the people who craved stability. However, the most interesting group were those who acknowledged the chaos and decided to be a change factor. They became the ones who brought a phase of stability. As their reality changed, they moved with the shift. These people can make sense of the transitions happening around them and they adjust to fit the needs of their surroundings. I began my career at Hope High School, a school that became my new in-between space.

4.1.3. **Working in an "In-Between Space"**

I started working at Hope High School as a dropout prevention case manager for a non-profit. I knew from my first day, Hope was in what appeared to be a period of transition. The year before I arrived, the school district Hope was situated in changed school boundaries to accommodate the opening of a new high school. Hope High School had been described as being a rich school in previous years. However, the new boundaries zoned some of the poorest communities within the school district in to the school boundaries of Hope. This was not the first time Hope experienced major demographic changes. During the 1990s, Hope City was a booming suburb southeast of Houston. One of the nation's largest oil companies housed its largest plant in the town and many of the residents worked for that company. Students attending Hope High School were predominately economically well off and mostly White. During the early 2000s things changed for Hope High School. Events such as Katrina and gentrification changed Hope's demographics drastically. I knew Hope was in an in-between space, but I did not know the complete history of the high school during my time there. It is only in the more recent past that I have sought a fuller explanation from many people's perspectives—including the local and national literature and my own deeply lived experiences. During my first year at Hope High School, I was met with skepticism about my role in the school from some of the teachers. They were under the impression I was not needed. They were holding onto the notion that Hope was the premier school in town. Having a social worker on campus was an indication that things had changed at this school and because of this, I felt they resented me. During my first year, I worked hard to prove my position was needed on the campus. Most teachers understood they were teaching a more diverse and economically disadvantaged student population, but they were not fully aware of the different life happening their students were

experiences, especially the students who lived in poverty. That first year I was met with comments like “students just come here to skip class” or “this office is just a space for students to dig up; their issues”. Towards the end of my first year working at Hope High School, the conversations with teachers began to shift. The negative cloud that loomed over my office began to lift. Over that year the teachers watched me help the neediest students in their classroom. They saw my weekly trips to food banks. They heard of the many home visits I made. Soon teachers were making student recommendations for my case load. I felt they no longer resented me, but saw me as an asset to the campus

4.1.4. **Hope’s In-Between Space**

Hope High School was once described as the wealthiest school in Hope School District. Many of the students attending this school were from middle to upper class families. Over time, Hope School District and Hope High School changed dramatically. Events such as Hurricane Katrina and gentrification brought changes to the student demographics. This new student demographic more closely resembled an urban school, with high ethnic, racial, linguistic, and economic diversity, than the older student demographics composed primarily of White middle to upper class demographic.

In 2000, 54% of the students in Hope High School were White, 28.1% were Hispanic, and 16.1% were Black. Of those students identified as White, Hispanic, or Black; 25.8% were labeled economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2019). In addition, only 2.6% of all students were identified as English Language Learners. By 2018, however, the percentage of White students had dropped by more than half, from 54% to 25.1% (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Similarly, the percentage of Black students had decreased to 14.9%. The percentage of Hispanic students, however, had grown to 55.5%, more than double the number of Hispanic

students at Hope eighteen years earlier. The teacher demographics also demonstrated changed during this period, however, the majority of the teachers remained White middle-class women (72%). There was an increase in Black teachers from 11% in 2000 to 16.5% in 2018, and the number of Hispanic teachers shifted from 2.6 to 3.7. Many of the teachers currently working at Hope High School have less than 5 years of experience (34%). Since teachers with less than five years of experience are considered novice teachers, this was problematic for Hope High School. Beginning teachers or teachers with 1-5 years of experience are more likely to leave the profession (Craig, 2015; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), with a primary factor in their leaving being that they do not possess the knowledge specific to teaching which causes stress that leads to attrition (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stukey, 2014). This led me to again wonder about how to sustain teachers as their educational milieus shift due to demographic changes.

The in-between space occurred when my participants, Mr. Williams, Larami, and Ms. Rayburn (pseudonyms) were all present at the school. They witnessed the school's first experience in the in-between space. During this time, they used culturally responsive practices in adjusting to the changes at the school. They were working their way out of the chaotic period of transition. However, their push forward ended when Mr. Williams left the school to become the principal at another school in a neighboring school district.

4.1.5. **Why is this important?**

While working at Hope high school I met Larami, an English teacher and teacher-coach. We would often talk about Hope's past and how much things had changed within the walls of the school. Many of our conversations revolved around how teachers struggled with the new student and teacher demographics, as well as how students were suffering because of their teachers' struggles . Because of these conversations, my interests grew on how people within particular

school contexts experience demographic changes. I wondered what could be done to sustain teachers as their classrooms grew more diverse and they were faced with new issues, such as poverty. The purpose of this third article is to explore how two teachers and an administrator became change agents at a school in the in-between space. My goal is to further explore how their use of culturally responsive practices sustained them in a shifting landscape.

This study examines the impact demographic migration has had on suburban school districts. In particular, this narrative inquiry explores what factors contribute to teachers' continued work in suburban schools as their demographics have shifted to become more urban-like in composition. The goal of the research is to find themes that can help prepare new teachers to work in diverse settings and to increase teacher retention in urban areas. Participant interviews were my data base. These interviews were subsequently analyzed for emergent themes. Themes were then compared and contrasted to decipher why teachers stay during a demographic shift. My research queries are as follows:

- What issues are faced by teachers on a changing demographic landscape?
- What elements of teachers' storied experiences act as counter-narratives to stories to leave by?

4.2. **Literature Review**

The three participants in my study were all focused on creating community as a means to sustain themselves as teachers or administrators. They each used different tenets of culturally responsive practices to create a safe space for students and themselves as the school underwent major demographic changes. This literature review will focus first on relationships in schools. I will then discuss what does it mean to be culturally responsive teachers and leaders. Lastly, I

focus on how culturally responsive teaching could help prepare preservice teachers for classrooms that are populated by majority Black and Brown students.

4.2.1. **Relationships in Schools**

Relationship building in schools has been heavily researched. For this literature review, I focus on key relationships that can sustain teachers in the profession: (a) relationships between teachers and administrators, (b) relationships between teachers (professional knowledge communities) (Craig, 1992, 1995); and (c) relationships between teachers and students.

Administrators play a major role in teacher satisfaction as they have a major influence over school climate (Richards, 2005). Administrators who are able to create supportive environments focused on teacher growth are able to sustain teachers at higher rates than their peers situated in environments not focued on teacher growth (Brown & Wynn 2009; Petzko, 2004). Research suggests that lack of support from leadership is a key reason for teacher attrition (Gallant & Riley 2017; Towers & Maguire, 2017). Recognition, feeling valued, and having a sense of being trusted professionally by leaders in the school, are all factors shown to help to sustain teachers in the profession (Kelchtermans, 2017; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002)

4.2.2. **Culturally Responsive Practices**

For the first time in American history, the majority of school-age children are Black or Brown. This means that most schools are beginning to appear more urban in nature; that is to say that more school demographics are reflecting the diversity in the general population, a characteristic once found primarily in urban schools. The nation-wide teacher population, however, has not made the same dramatic shift. The majority of teachers in the US are still White middle-class women, who speak one language (Hill, Friedland, & Phillips, 2012). Since urban schools see the highest levels of teacher attrition (????), and increasing numbers of schools

are more urban-like in student demographics, this raises concern for increased teacher attrition in schools that had previously had low teacher attrition.

Teachers leave the profession for many reasons, changes in demographics could be one of those reasons. As teachers' professional landscapes change, they face a change in milieu that could lead them to leaving the profession (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Bergeron, 2008). Teaching in schools that house a large number of students living below the poverty line, or who are not native English speakers is especially challenging (NEA, 2018). As more suburban schools become urban in nature it is important that teachers are prepared to work with a highly diverse population. Culturally responsive pedagogy could be a major factor in sustaining teachers as demographics shift.

Culturally responsive teaching is a term used to describe the pedagogical framework introduced by Geneva Gay (2000)), whereas culturally relevant pedagogy is a theoretical construct introduced by Gloria Ladson Billings. Both ideas are often used under the umbrella term culturally responsive teaching (Jett, 2013). I will use the term culturally responsive teaching in this manner. Culturally responsive teaching suggests using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspective of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively according to Geneva Gay (2012, p. 106). Culturally relevant pedagogy empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). Both attend to using culture and care as a means to help improve student achievement among Black and Brown students.

Teachers who are culturally responsive are caring and emphatic, about their attitudes and beliefs about other cultures, and knowledgeable about other cultures (Gay, 2012; Rycholy & Graves, 2012). These teachers focus their practice on validating and empowering students and

enacting a comprehensive, transformative, multidimensional and emancipatory curriculum to better serve their students (Gay 2012; Jett, 2013). Because these practices are designed to engage students, the students will more readily learn from the teacher. When students are engaged, they are more likely to succeed, thus making the teacher feel more accomplished.

4.2.3. **Preservice Teachers**

Most university teacher education programs include courses on diversity practices, yet these courses frequently lack the reflective practices needed to help new teachers address their own assumptions about culture. (Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005). Often after completing teacher education courses, preservice teachers still hold low expectations for minority students, consequently reinforcing stereotypes and biases (Irvine, 2003). Preservice teachers who take courses that teach culturally responsive teaching practices should be able to create a culturally responsive framework in which the teacher has a sociopolitical consciousness, can facilitate learning for a group of diverse students, and maintains a curriculum that is rigorous, exciting, and equitable with high standards. (Barnes, 2006; Gay, 2002). Preservice teachers who are taught to differentiate curriculum based on culturally responsive practices will know how to build positive relationships with students and their families from a variety of cultures. Students thrive when they feel their teachers care (Gay, 2012; Rychly & Graves, 2012). When teachers exhibit a high level of care for their students, they hold all their students to the same rigorous standards (Gay,2012; Rychly & Graves, 2012). This framework will keep students engaged and build their sense of belonging. Research shows that if students feel like they belong, they are more likely to participate in learning activities and will perform better academically (Lee & McCarty, 2014). Finally, preservice teachers also need experiences in real classrooms

with diverse sets of students as this will help them gain confidence and the skills with sustaining power to carry them through their careers.

4.3. **Methodology**

4.3.1. **Narrative Inquiry**

This study uses narrative inquiry methods to tell the story of my three participants, Mr. Ryan, Mrs. Willams, and Larmi. Narrative inquiry is a way to explore teachers' experiences in a way that animates their lives and what they have learned through experiences (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). It is a multi-layered, fluid form of investigation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2005; Schwab, 1960/1978), with an emphasis on human experiences, as the researcher reflects inwards, outward, backward, and forward (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Narrative inquiry is deeply rooted in the philosophy of Dewey and Schwab. Dewey felt both life and education created experience (Dewey, 1939). Experience, according to Dewey, manifests itself in three qualities: temporality (time), sociality (interaction), and place (context) (1938). Schwab (1973, 1983), favored the practical over the theoretical as he knew educational research was more than a set of theoretical standards outlining teacher behaviors. This understanding made way for narrative to be a methodology and a phenomenon (Connelly & Xu, 2008) as well. Narrative as phenomenon details how people live storied lives and tell stories of those lives (Connely & Clandinin, 1990). These two thoughts influenced Clandinin (1994) to conceptualize teachers' practical personal knowledge and the notion of stories to live "in" and "by" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Craig, 2013).

4.3.2. **Investigative Tools**

The narrative tools of broadening, burrowing, and story and restorying and employed in this inquiry into my participants' experiences at Hope High School (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Using broadening, I explored how living and working in an in-between space can affect personal growth. To better understand how my participants used culturally responsive practices in Hope High School's in between space I burrowed into their practice and personal experiences. Using the analytical tool of story and restorying facilitated my showing oof how my participants' personal and professional feelings about working in an in-between space created a positive change in Hope High School.

4.3.3. **Participants**

The three participants whose experiences are storied in this article were selected using a purposive convenience sample (Christensen & Johnson, 2014; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) based on the following criteria:

- Educators who worked at Hope High School least two years before the demographic shift to three years after the major demographic shift.
- Educators in the study-maintained employment with the district in spite of socioeconomic changes.

Educators were excluded from the study if they worked outside of the target school or if they left the school because of demographic shifts. The reason for these exclusions is that teachers who left the district or work outside the district would not have experienced the phenomena investigated.

4.3.4. **Introduction of Participants**

Larami. Larami grew up in Hope City. She experienced the changes in Hope from the perspective of a student, a teacher, a teacher educator, and currently a researcher. Larami did not initially dream of becoming a teacher, she wanted to be a lawyer, but was convinced by peer to try teaching. Education soon became a passion of hers. Larami taught junior level English and found great success in the classroom. 93% of her students passed the exit level state test her first year of teaching. She soon moved on to become a teacher educator. It was during this time that I met Larami. We often talked about the identity challenges she faced as a teacher and teacher educator. She found spending half the day in the classroom and half the day in an administrator type role split her time and kept her from seeing success in either role. She was in an in-between space.

Larami had plenty of insight to the changes that occurred at Hope High School, as she grew up in Hope City and attended Hope High School as a student. During one of our conversations she described leaving Hope High School when most of the students were White, middle to upper class. Yet when she returned as a teacher, Hope High School had changed drastically. The classrooms were more racially and ethnically mixed and more students were economically disadvantaged. Hope High School was in an in-between space.

She identifies as a Black woman with Latin roots. Larami is in her mid 30s and married to an administrator who once worked at Hope High School as well. She left Hope High School to become a district English facilitator at a neighboring school district. She left that position to pursue a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on teacher education. Currently, Larami is an educational consultant.

Mrs. Williams. My first interaction with Mrs. Williams was in the office of Larami's husband at Hope High School. I recall a small-framed, older White woman with dark framed glasses stomping into the office and quickly saying, "Ya know, this student has missed tutorials three times, he is not failing my class...if he is in ISS send him to my class so he can catch up on what he has missed." Before there was an answer from Larami's husband, the woman was gone. Larami's husband looked at me and simply said, "She is a great teacher."

Mrs. Williams began her teaching career in North Texas, but moved to Hope City after two years. At the beginning of her career, she taught at two junior highs in Hope School District before moving to Hope High School as a Biology teacher. Mrs. Williams was forced to teach at Hope High School's rival school because she married a coach at Hope High School and during this time there were strict rules against couples working at the same school. She would later return to Hope High School when the rules relaxed, remaining there for 24 years. Mrs. Williams taught Larami and worked for Mr. Rayburn, my third participant. When Mr. Rayburn moved on from Hope High School the new principal decided to move Mrs. Williams to another junior high because of teacher cuts. She was the oldest Biology teacher and the only one certified to work on the junior high level. She became a teacher educator at one of the district's poorest schools. This is where I met her. Mrs. Williams who was my mentor during my first year of teaching at this junior high.

Mr. Rayburn. I would describe Mr. Rayburn as a dynamic leader whose contagious energy automatically creates an excitement in a room. Mr. Rayburn, like me, grew up in an in-between space as he was a poor White student surrounded by wealthy peers. Similar to Larami, he attended a high school that was majority White and wealthy and returned to that high school as a Physical Education teacher to find the demographics had drastically shifted. As a teacher at

his alma mater, he taught mostly Black students who were economically disadvantaged. Mr. Rayburn understood what it meant to be a poor student. He grew up with a single mother who struggled to provide for her children, but stressed the importance of education.

Mr. Rayburn became an assistant principal at that high school and eventually the head administrator. After two years of working at that school he interviewed to be the principal at Hope High School. He worked at Hope High School for four years before becoming the principal at another high school in a neighboring school district. He choose to leave Hope because the new high school was closer to his home. Currently Mr. Rayburn in a District Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools a neighboring school district.

4.3.5. **Field Texts**

Data, often called field texts in qualitative research, was drawn from multiple sources, including participant interviews, participant and researcher reflective journals, and researcher field notes. Two in-depth, one-to-one interviews were conducted in a private place of the participants' choosing to promote confidentiality and anonymity. Both the participant and researcher wrote a 30-minutes reflection after each interview. Participant and inquirer notes taken during the interviews and reflective journal entries from participants and the inquirer contributed to field texts (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Data was examined and analyzed for emergent themes across participant experiences.

4.4. **Creating Communities for "In-Between Spaces"**

This section details how participants used culturally responsive practices to sustain themselves at Hope High School. Each subsection highlights individual participants to showcase what they did to create community in their roles and to make a safe space for their students. Subsections begin with Larami's experiences as a student and a teacher at Hope School District,

then move onto Mrs. Williams's experience as a Biology teacher, and finally Mr. Rayburn's experience as an administrator at Hope High School.

4.4.1. **Larami: The Community in the in-between space**

Larami grew up in Hope City. Her personal account of the changes that happened in this community created the foundational backdrop for this research. As a young student in Hope School District, Larami was part of the Gifted and Talented program. She recalls being one of two Black students in the program. As she entered high school she was often the only Black student in Advanced Placement courses. After she graduated from college, she returned to Hope School District as a teacher at Hope High School, the school she graduated from just four years prior. She realized that the school had changed dramatically in those four years. Once a high school that would give away major gifts like cars as graduation prizes, Hope High School could only raise enough funds to give away small televisions by the time Larami joined the faculty there.

Larami's focus during this time became building a community for her students. Growing up as a Black student tracked with mostly White students in school, she felt community was the thing she longed for the most. She explained,

> My ability to see myself in every student, I thought I was just like everybody. I often asked myself, "What would I want?" or "What would I need?" if I were one of my students. If I couldn't relate to the particular struggle of a student, I found some part of the student I could relate to. My students would often say "we talk to people in the class we don't ever talk to and might never have without it. I felt I created a sense of community with them and that kept me going. I would think

about what would happen if they didn't have a teacher like me, I would think about the bad teachers I had and I didn't want to leave them with that.

Larami worked to build a community for her students as she sponsored several multicultural groups at Hope High School. She was intentional in creating groups that would create safe places for Black, Brown, and students who lived in poverty, but would not exclude the White students. Larami sponsored groups that attended to students' social, cultural, and spiritual needs. She elaborated, saying:

> I was a sponsor for a multicultural student association called the Spirit of Star. It boasted a gospel choir, a step team, a dance team, and a creative writing group. It was quickly approved a lot of fun for them. We didn't compete, but we traveled and performed, read our writing pieces and took college tours. Also, I developed and co-sponsored a group called GP (Growing Potential) for understanding the struggles and developing the character of young minority males after Katrina. I hoped that a male sponsor would take over, but no one did. The group had a weekly meeting where they would dress in a shirt and tie, discuss an article, voice a concern and propose a solution, and have a guest facilitator that was male. They took a field trip to the bank and learned about financial literacy, and they also went on college tours. I couldn't keep up with both GP and SIS. My SOS co-sponsors were spread thin too, so at the end of year 2, no one picked up EP, but I did get a new co-sponsor for SOS.

Community for Larmi was synonymous with relationship building. Many of the teachers at Hope School District struggled to build these relationships with students because they felt they

were too different from the students. Larami was a teacher who embraced these differences. She described her approach to building relationships.

> I wanted my class to be a safe haven for students who had no other place to go. I think by pulling these students into my world, it helped them make sense of their own. I was an open book to my students and gave them honest answers to the tough questions they had. There were times where I would catch students not on my roster skipping lunch just to be a part of the world I created within my classroom. My world soon became our world and within such a large school, I found many of my students had found a place to belong.

Community building was a specialty of Larami's. She was also a gifted teacher. Because of the relationships she had with the students, she found it easy to relate her curriculum to their lives.

> I was always in the know. I knew what the students were watching on tv, I knew the drama students were dealing with at schools, I knew the more serious issues students faced at home. They did not keep information from me. I was a part of their lives. I took the information they gave to me and found ways to make it relevant in our English lessons. I would incorporate excerpts from popular blogs into lessons, I would use music from their favorite during the poetry unit. I was able to grab their attention with the things they liked in class.

Her efforts were recognized by the administration and they decided to make her the English department lead and then she as promoted to a literacy coach at Hope High School. The move was a promotion for her, but it moved Larami away from the thing

she valued the most, community. As a literacy coach she found herself isolated as she was seen as more of an administrator by teachers, but as a teacher by administrators.

> I found myself being pulled in two different directions and I did not like that. I think that if I could have been a full-time Literacy Coach or a full-time English teacher, I would have stayed at Star High School. I was in a space where my identity was not clear…was I a teacher of students, well sometimes ... was I a peer coach…sometimes? I just didn't like it.

After two years of being pulled in two different directions, Larami left Hope School District to work as the Director of English for a neighboring school district. …?.

4.4.2. **Mrs. Williams: Care in the in-between space**

I officially met Mrs. Williams at a junior high school in Hope School District. She was the science specialist during that time and I was a first-year teacher. She helped me find my identity as a science teacher throughout her mentorship. Mrs. Williams was placed at this school after the new principal at Hope High School made cuts to the science department. He did not know her or her reputation, most of the school felt this was a mistake. During the interview, Mrs. Williams was not shy about her feelings during that time.

> I was so upset when he told me I had to go to Ousley Junior High (pseudonym). I was a science teacher and knew nothing about mentoring other science teachers. My plan was to retire from Hope High School. He ruined that and in a very unprofessional manner. He called a meeting with all the science teachers and said he had to cut one teacher and Mrs. Williams it's you. I was floored. I was miserable that entire summer. Luckily, Ousley Junior High turned out to be a great fit for me.

Mrs. Williams was well known in the district. Her leaving Hope High School left many in disbelief because they recognized how important she was to the school. I remember that first year she received letters from students from Hope High School. The students expressed how much they missed her and how they still go by her room hoping she was still the.

> Excerpt from student letter 1: Hey, It's TJ. Hope isn't the same without you because you are a phenomenal teacher. You really helped me when I was in ISS, you really helped me pass. I know you were mad at that, but I've been really good this year. Mrs. Williams I sure wish you could come back, I want you to know I appreciate you, and I thank you for all you have done.

> Excerpt from student letter 2: Dear Mrs. Williams, Thank you so much for everything you did for me my sophomore year. You are one of the greatest teachers I have ever had. I learned a lot from you, you taught me so much. I miss you, every time I pass by your class. I just wanna go in there and say hi, but then I remember you're not there anymore and that makes me sad.

Interviewing Mrs. Williams was difficult. This was not because she held back information, but because she could not see the impact she had made at every school she has worked in. This is far from the truth. As I interviewed her, I realized the demographic changes at Hope High School did not affect her.

Mrs. Williams's main goal was to help every student in her class no matter their race, ethnic background, or socio-economic background. When I asked her how did she feel about having different students in her class, she responded:

> I don't care if you are Black, White, pink, or purple, as long as you're respectful in my class and you're trying in my class. So I don't care as long as you're doing what you're supposed to do.

Mrs. Williams worked hard to make sure her students learned. She was more focused on being a good teacher to all her students instead of how her classroom changed over time

> But for me, it was what can I do to make sure you know the information?...At some point it was important to me, one that I did a really good job in my classroom, and two, that if a kid wanted help, that they were going to get help before school, after school, during lunch, whenever.

She sacrificed her time to ensure her students had every opportunity to learn. Mrs. Rayburn felt this was just her being a good teacher, but I feel she showed a high level of care that not many teachers were willing to give.

> Well, I tutored them before school...I would tutor them during lunch, and I would tutor them after school. But on top of it, at Hope, with technology, I had a Facebook page, and I would put on there, "This is your homework. This you need to do." And I've always also done things like, the first person that can or five people that can tell me the answer to whatever question, I will get this to make ... Hopefully, get them to look at it. They have my phone number. They could call me if they have a question. And yet I would tell them, "If I'm busy," I mean, you know, because there were times, I had small kids, and they always ... I mean, I gave my phone number out to parents, kids, all the time. "I will either tell you to come meet me in the morning or I'll call you back." And I told them it was a

> double-edged sword. You come in the next day and you tell me you couldn't do your homework because you didn't understand it, that doesn't fly.

Mrs. Rayburn was serious about helping all of her students. She was able to build relationships with the hard to reach students. At Hope, she made a point to look for the students who need the most help. Her goal was for them to feel some sense of achievement. She wanted her students to feel good about themselves and went to great lengths to help them.

> And even now, I mean, you know, I'm like, well what else could I do? I even like the ... the mentorship aspect. I love that. I think that's a really good tool for some of the kids. I will check their grades, and then I will go hunt them down, and we'll talk about their grades. The worst thing for a student is to fail in class because they did not understand. If a kid showed effort, I worked my butt off for them. If a kid is constantly failing, how is he supposed to feel good about himself sitting in that class?

4.4.3. **Mr. Rayburn: Heart in the in-between space**

From the moment I walked into Mr. Rayburn's office, I could feel his electric energy. He was excited about doing the interview. He told me before we started that he felt my research was so relevant as another school district was experiencing the same changes. He wanted me to know that demographic changes were going to continue to affect teachers and administrators who were stuck in the old ways of teaching.

> You need to get the *Chronicle* today or go online ... this same issue is happening in [unnamed school district] this school district had increased diversity and they've had three or four, what I would call highly publicized disciplinary situations that involve minority

> students.. there are just some things, I mean, just speaking on this today about that piece ... when there's a change in ... demographics, when there is a change in a school ... when a school has had a predominantly, it wouldn't matter to me, it would be predominantly white, predominantly black, predominantly brown, and if there's a shift that changes that ...the process of the adults catching up with the change and the expectations of this is the way we used to do it, we've always done it. We're still doing many things in education like we did 50 years ago, 100 years ago, even though segregation, de-segregation, right?

As an administrator, Mr. Rayburn worked in schools that presented as title 1 schools, but was not labeled this way because of optics. He found that Hope High School experienced two major changes under his leadership. First, the demographics changed racially and ethnically. When the school district opened the new high school a second change happened Hope, the student population grew poorer.

> Economically disadvantaged children struggle especially in environments where there's a smaller percentage of economically disadvantaged. It doesn't matter if you are White, Black, or Brown when you are poor. You are poor. When I arrived at Hope, our demographics each and every year our white population was decreasing. Our Hispanic population was growing and our African-American population was stable, without a boundary change. When the new high school opened, the boundaries were redrawn and Hope had a very different look. We had an increase in poor students.

Mr. Rayburn understood poverty because growing up he was a poor student. As a leader, he knew the new student population would need to feel a part of a community and would need a high level of care.

> And so this whole deal and I didn't know anything any different and I just started building relationships with kids and started loving on kids and, you know, we had our kids coming from the poorest side of town. I did not care what neighborhood they came from, as educators our job was to build relationships with our students, I think, for me, number one is that we're here to serve children, all children. So, that was my parameters. It didn't matter the color of your skin, it didn't matter what zip code you had, what area code you lived, you know, it was about kids. And I think, so ... to me, empathy had set in and I just wanted to love on people but I had to ensure that every person that worked at Hope High School, that they understood our core values of what they were going to be and that we were going to model those as adults. Our motto was Attitude Is Everything, it was about attitude.

Mr. Rayburn went on to say:

> We completely cleaned the school, literally, physically cleaned the school because there was graffiti and just little things that I just believe that the school is like it's a home away from home for children. And so for some kids that live in that environment, they're used to that, there are some that aren't but I wanted to show them that school was a safe place, that it didn't matter if you didn't have this or that but you could come and it was going to be an atmosphere and an environment that you could feel accepted in.

Looking forward, he added,

> And I just established relationships. We're going to have a culture of acceptance, we're going to have a culture of tolerance, and we're going to work together. We all are at Hope and it doesn't matter what part of the district.

Relationship building was key to Mr. Rayburn and he was adamant about filling the school with teachers who cared about all students. He took measures to make sure the school was staffed with teachers who were willing to buy into his vision.

> And so that's how I did that initially and there were clearly some people that weren't ready for that. They weren't ready for me to hold them accountable for their product that they were putting in front of kids. They weren't ready for me to challenge the status quo. So we had a 25, 30, 35 teachers that at the end of my first year that we moved on. Most of it was voluntary because I just sat down in a room like this and said, "Look I love you. I mean, but here's the thing, I'm not sure this is the right fit for you because this is what we're going to do here. And here's our core values and this I what we're going to do." many of those teachers did not understand the changes at our school were imminent ...at least in my mind. These were our students now so I did not allow teachers to say “those kids”, don’t refer to any of our kids as those kids. You can say, my loud kids, you can say my sweet kids, but don’t say those kids."

Mr. Rayburn continued.

> We're servants in education. Well, I just think you just have to embrace you have to embrace the changes. The problem is people don't know what they don't know and I think that it takes a change agent. It takes somebody to just bring things to

> people's attention meaning this, it’s a different world. that's the kind of stuff you're speaking to in regard to just the transition of different cultures and different backgrounds all coming together under one roof. And when you're predominantly being taught by white females, let's not kid ourselves. They didn't grow up in those neighborhoods. In many ways, they don't know any better. They only know what they know but unless somebody is willing to bring in training on kids that have grown up in poverty. How do you know how to teach a kid unless you don't ... you know? But you still got to build relationships and if you're asking questions, how would you not know that something major is going on with your students that will affect their education.

As a leader, Mr. Rayburn did not only attempt to change the staff he also tried to change the teachers' understanding of the students they were now servicing. He used professional development to address this issue. He decided to implement profession developments that were focused on race, poverty, and tolerance.

> Along that way too, I think in year two, I brought in Rachel's Challenge. Rachel Joy Scott Rachel Scott was one of the first kids that was killed in Columbine. She sat outside the door and was shot basically because of ... you know, she was a Believer. She had faith. Anyhow, the bottom line is it's a program and it talked about prejudice. We were so blessed because they had consultants that would come out and lead the training. It was an all-day training. It even included an assembly for each grade level. That evening, we did a nighttime portion where we brought the community back in because it really did talk about kindness and acceptance and it talked about prejudice. And it talked about what

> happened at Columbine and bullying and all those kind of things that happened there and we were blessed beyond belief that her brother, Craig, was our presenter. He was in the library and he heard when Dylan and those guys came through and when they shot an African-American kid, they used the n-word when they shot him. And he lived to tell that story and so you talk about meeting kids where they were at.

He finished by adding,

> We also had Capturing Kid's Hearts training, we had Team Leadership, We trained our teachers in team leadership, we went to Capturing Kid's Heart where we talked about building relationships with students who are different from you.

4.5. **Major Themes**

4.5.1. **Community**

Larami, Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Rayburn each discussed building community. Larami created community with her students through clubs and an open-door policy in her classroom. She allowed students to be themselves when they were in her class. She incorporated their culture her curriculum, without sacrificing her own personal identity. Mrs. Williams built a community with her students as well. She worked hard to create a learning environment that was rigorous and inclusive. She did not care about race or class; she wanted all her students to feel successful. Mr. Rayburn built community within the entire school, by leading by example. He gave teachers a model by implementing professional developments that targeted the issues they were facing at the school. Mr. Rayburn was not afraid to lose teachers who refused to be a part of the community. Bennett (2013) explained, “Culturally responsive teachers not only connect class

lessons to home, socio-cultural and school experiences, they create a community of learners with empathy and understanding" (p. 382).

4.5.2. **Care**

In order for my participants to build communities at Hope High School, they had to foster a high level of care. According to Gay (2010) there are two types of care: to care about and to care for. Caring about invokes feelings of empathy and compassion, however to care for invokes actions (Gay, 2012). My participants care for their students, which is why they went out of their way to create social groups, provide tutoring several times a day, or buy into professional development programs focused on working with diverse student populations. Their actions led to student success. I believe the success of their students also contributed to sustaining them at Hope High School. Their best-loved selves were tied to their ability to help and care for their students.

4.6. **Conclusion**

Although my participants were at different stages of their career while at Hope High School, they all used care to build community around them. Larami was a novice teacher who knew how to reach her students because they reminded her of herself. Mrs. Williams was a experienced teacher with over twenty years in the profession. As demographics changed around her, her goal was to only see the students as human being deserving of an education. Mr. Rayburn had moved from being a teacher to being an administrator at the school. He believed that all the students deserved to have someone in the school who cared about them. Mr. Rayburn introduced Hope School District to different types of professional development to address the demographic changes. As a leader he knew there were teachers working at Hope High School who did not belong, but he also saw the potential in teachers like Larami and Mrs. Rayburn. Their stories

together can fuel more research into the role of professional development. Teachers like Larami and Mrs. Williams may not have needed the professional development offered by Mr. Rayburn, but I believe there were teachers who were on the brink of leaving the profession who may have taken something away from these trainings to sustain them.

From their interviews I wonder how care influences a teacher's best loved self. I think about teachers I know who are empathic and show high levels of care. I wonder if there is some aspect of care and being culturally responsive that shapes educators' image of their best loved selves? This is clearly a topic of local, national and international important that I will further develop.

5. CONCLUSION

Throughout my dissertation, I have shared educative experiences that shaped my perspective as a Black woman working in and living through education. These experiences deepened my understanding of the social inequalities Black, Brown, and other students living in poverty face. It all started with the visit to a poor elementary school in my birth city. Witnessing equity issues first-hand created a spirit of care in me. As I navigated my way through the education system, I witnessed racism and classism to varying degrees. Teachers like Ms. Ashton reminded me that my skin color harbored a weight I would constantly carry. Being the "poor" student on a wealthy university campus further fostered my compassion for those who are disenfranchised. Living in the in-between space at Hope High School expanded my understanding of Black, Brown, and impoverished students' experience at school. This dissertation captures my accumulated experiences against the backdrop of a nation that is becoming increasingly diverse ethnically, racially, linguistically as well as economically more stratified than ever. To conclude this dissertation study, I connect my three articles' narrative threads by recapturing the essence of each article and spotlighting each article's overarching themes. Finally, I offer implications for education in the future and where my research and career path may take me.

The first article "Genti-migration: A contextual exploration for suburban demographic change" explored the possibility of demographic changes in Houston suburban neighborhoods due to the gentrification of Houston's urban core. I purposefully used this work as the entry point of this research to show how gentrification affects not only urban areas, but suburban areas as well. My overall goal for this article was to show that the movement of people from urban centers created a ripple effect throughout the city and subsequently affected the socio-economic

context of local schooling. The second article, “Two Tales, One City: The story of a changed community” delved into a suburban community that once consisted of White middle to upper-class residents but has since changed due to factors such as gentrification and natural disasters. In this article, I introduced Larami, a participant, who could both personally and professionally attest to the changes that affected the community and its school district. This eventually led to Larami leaving Hope for a more affluent district. The third and last article “Living in the ‘in-between’ space” expanded on the foundation created by the first two articles and dug deeper into the experiences of two teachers and an administrator who worked as change agents during shifts in the in-between spaces. Together these articles (1) highlight ways communities change, (2) explore implications for education, and (c) offer a backdrop for a productive framework to sustain teachers as their classrooms become more diverse.

5.1. **Common Threads**

. Similar to changes in education, shifts in demographics happen slowly over time. They are barely noticeable until communities and neighborhoods assume completely different stories and identities. It was important to me that I document what I saw in the midst of Hope’s dramatic neighborhood change. I found this creeping change created many pedagogical and social issues at Hope High School. My participants took practical steps to address the changes in order to maintain their understanding of their best-loved selves as they lived in the midst of these in-between spaces.

“Self” according to Burner (1990), is “a concept created by reflections, a concept constructed much as we construct other concepts.” (p. 100). My participants created an image of self that was intertwined with the students in their classrooms. Because they could see pieces of their identity in their students, they were able to construct a positive self-image as educators.

Craig's article "Teacher Education and the Best-Loved Self" offers insight into Schwab's theory. Craig (2017) probes what Schwab meant by teachers' best-loved selves. She found the foundation for a teacher's best-loved self to be:

> (1) the teacher as a curriculum maker us[ing] his/her capacity to make curriculum alongside students, rather than incapacitating himself/herself by implementing only what the State requires; and (2) the teacher, acknowledging his/her best-loved self as a curriculum maker, fuels students' living and learning of curriculum alongside him/her in freeing, satisfying ways (p.193).

It is important that teachers' stories to live by resonate with their images of their best-loved selves because they are not only curriculum-makers, but also mentors, guides and models for students. In short, they motivate students to achieve (Craig, 2017)

Through my research, I was able to deconstruct my participant's images of their best-loved selves (see Figure 5.1). They were sustained by creating a community *for* their students, by caring *about* their students, while *valuing* their students' culture. Their students, in turn, reflected their best-loved selves. Larami saw herself in her students, Mrs. Williams saw the humanity of her students, Mr. Rayburn saw his past and I built relational bridges between students, teachers, and administrators.

Figure 5.1. Three factors contributing to teachers' best-loved selves during demographic changes.

5.1.1. **Caring Enough to Build Community Where Culture is Valued**

As the suburban demographics became more diverse and urban in nature, the community was thrown into an in-between space. Hope High School's in-between space was a time where students, teachers, and administrators had to redefine what their community would be. My participants, Larami, Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Rayburn were examples of educators who cared enough to rebuild Hope High School's community.

> Larami- My students would often say "we talk to people in the class we don't ever talk to and might never have without it. I felt I created a sense of community with them and that kept me going. I would think about what would happen if they didn't have a teacher like me, I would think about the bad teachers I had and I didn't want to leave them with that.

Larami's was clear in expressing how having community with her students sustained her. She knew they needed her, but was also aware that she needed them. She cared for her students.

Revisiting Gay's work on care, caring is attending to person and performance, care is action provoking, care prompts effort and achievement, caring is multidimensional responsiveness (2010). Care is a central tenet of Gay's culturally responsive pedagogy conceptualization. When teachers express a high level of care for their students, they hold all their students to rigorous standards that will help students achieve (Gay,2002; Rychly & Graves, 2012).

Mr. Rayburn was an important figure in creating community for students. His vision of a united school, filled with care and community moved Hope High School towards being a safe place for all students. As he stated below,

Mr. Rayburn- We're going to have a culture of acceptance, we're going to have a culture of tolerance, and we're going to work together. We all are at Hope and it doesn't matter what part of the district.

Care was central for all of my participants. Mr. Rayburn was not the principal when I arrived at Hope High School, but his presence lingered with teachers like Larami and Mrs. Williams.

5.1.2. **The Value of Culture**

Larami, Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Rayburn worked to show that the culture of Black, Brown, and students who lived in poverty did not affect the culture of the school in a negative way. Added diversity in any community creates a wealth of growth. Students and teachers alike, had the opportunity to grow emotionally as empathy is required to work with those who live in poverty. They had the opportunity to grow socially, as working with diverse populations extends one's world view. They also had the opportunity to grow mentally, as a more diverse student

population increases the standard knowledge base. The community should grow stronger because teachers, students, and administrators learn about cultures different from their own.

Larami lifted her students' culture by creating spaces for her Black, Brown, and students who lived in poverty. She did this without alienating her White students; her learning groups were inclusive. As a witness I saw how these cultural groups allowed for all groups of students to learn about each other. Larami not only gave students a place to express their culture, but a space where students could learn about each other. As Hope high school shifted in and out of an in between space, she wanted her students to know that their cultures were valued.

Mrs. Williams adapted her pedagogical philosophy to fit the needs of her students. She avoided blaming students for their lack of resources. Her positive disposition toward her students and her high expectation of all her students, motivated her to become a better teacher. Her best-loved self was not challenged by the "new" population; expanded because of it. She became a teacher that viewed culture as a mechanism to grow her practice as her statement below suggests:

> Mrs. Williams- The worst thing for a student is to fail in class because they did not understand. If a kid showed effort, I worked my butt off for them. If a kid is constantly failing how is he supposed to feel good about himself sitting in that class*?*

Mrs. Williams became a better teacher because she had a deep need to help all of her students see their worth and feel valued in her class. By creating opportunities for her students to meet with her outside of class, allowing them to have her phone number, and setting extremely high expectations of them and herself, she was able to adjust to their needs and provide an equitable education to all of her students.

As an administrator Mr. Rayburn had the power to control how the Black and Brown students' cultures were acknowledged. He created an atmosphere where all cultures present felt valued as he explained below:

> Mr. Rayburn-These were our students so I did not allow teachers to say "those kids", don't refer to any of our kids as those kids. You can say, my loud kids, you can say my sweet kids, but don't say those kids."

Mr. Rayburn encouraged teachers like Larami and Mrs. Williams to express and highlight the different cultures in a valuing way. He fought the deficit mindset of teachers who could not adjust by removing them from Hope's campus. Together Larami, Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Rayburn created a shared narrative of who teachers and administrators can be during demographic changes.

5.1.3. **Fostering Care**

Care was a central theme throughout all of my interviews and notes collected from my participants. Care for students, school, and self, become central topics. As educators they held a high level of care that transferred to their students. Using this central tenet of culturally responsive teaching they were able to elevate the learning experience for students, who were otherwise seen as a difficult demographic. Care for students morphed into their willingness to adjust philosophies and teach and lead with the intention of creating safe spaces for these students. Their mission was to create a school that welcomed their new demographic while actualizing their identity.

Self-care emerged as part of their image of their best loved-self. I found this to be a very important, but often overlooked concept. Self- care is often thought of as being trips to the spa or time off. Such was not the case for Laramis, Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Rayburn. Throughout our

interviews I noticed how they were very reflective about what sustained themselves during this change. They were able to go deep and bring forth for consideration a form of self-care that built upon their idea of their best-loved self. By doing so, they were able to foster care in their classrooms and throughout the school.

5.1.4. **A Bridge for Them All**

As I revisited my journey at Hope High School with my participants, I realized my greatest contribution to Hope was my ability to create a safe place where relationships between all could form. Everything in my office was designed for people to feel comfortable expressing themselves. Although small, my office played a major part in connecting students, teachers, and administrators. I was a bridge that connected students, teachers, and administrators, no matter their background.

During my first year at Hope I felt that my presence at the school was a reminder of how much the school had changed. There were teachers who were not afraid to remind me that my position was not needed in the past because there were not nearly as many students labeled "at-risk". I spent the first year laying the foundation of what would become a major resource for the school. I focused my energy on care and community building. As a Black woman even then I understood the importance of affirming all cultures. My past experiences with racism and classism greatly shaped how I treated people who were different from me. It was important that I created a place that was welcoming to everyone no matter their class or race.

I had an open-door policy unless I was assisting with sensitive matters. I can recall times when nearly ten people would cram into my tiny office just for an opportunity to talk to me or each other. Students and teachers would come eat lunch together in my office. Administrators would stop by my office just to talk about their day. My office became an important part of

Hope's community. My office eventually became a central hub of Hope High School. I attribute this to my ability to build relationships with just about anyone and connect them to others, similar to a bridge.

At that time, I did not realize how much I had contributed to the culture of the school. It was not until my supervisor told me that he had never seen a case manager get along with students, teachers, and administrators. He told me that oftentimes in our roles of advocating for those with less, there are feelings of betrayal. This suggests that when case managers advocate for one group the other group is bound to feel as if the case manager has chosen a side. That was not the case for me. He told me that I had the power to mediate any situation and all parties would walk away feeling acknowledged, affirmed and uplifted. Writing this dissertation has helped me see my role during this time clearer. I was able to bridge the cultural gaps that existed at Hope High School. Simply put, my foundation for building community was care, similar to the care my participants in their interactions with students.

5.2. **Implications for Future Research**

Knowing that the US is going to continue to grow more diverse, I believe it is necessary for more research to be conducted that focuses on teaching students from diverse backgrounds. As I completed each of my articles, I was left with further wonderings about teacher professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching practices. I assert that the best way to prepare not only preservice teachers, but also in-service teachers to work in ethnically, linguistically, racially, and economically diverse contexts is to provide professional development focused on cultural responsiveness. Culturally-responsive classrooms are places where "all students, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background, are welcomed and supported and provided with the best opportunity to learn" (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007, p. 64). These safe

spaces are created by teachers who care for their students (Gay, 2012). According to Johnson (2003), "it is important that teachers are trained to help them recognize their own biases and cultural assumptions and learn specific strategies and approaches that are inclusive and pluralistic" (p. 22)

To better prepare preservice teachers to teach in diverse settings, teacher education programs should adopt a culturally diverse knowledge base. A knowledge base with relevant curricula that demonstrates culturally caring and cultivates caring learning communities (Taylor, 2010). The programs should require preservice teachers to critically reflect on their beliefs, experiences, especially as they relate to diverse student populations (Durden & Truscott, 2013). Learning to become culturally responsive does not happen in one course, becoming culturally responsive is a lifelong commitment that requires introspection.

Looking forward, teachers who are in the field require the same level of commitment. As a teacher I have worked with educators who have a fixed way of thinking about culture, not realizing, culture is not a set of standard stereotypes, but is a fluid way of being. Culture is complex and there is no one size fits all way of being. A bridge to continuing the development of culturally responsive teachers is personalized professional development. As culture changes, professional development will need to respond to this shifting in order to address the needs of the community.

Culturally responsive teachers keep students engaged and build their sense of belonging. If students feel like they belong, they are more likely to participate in learning activities and will perform better academically (Lee & McCarty, 2014). In my own practice, I found the

achievement of my students was affected about how I felt as a teacher about my teaching. Their learning of not only content, but social understanding made me feel as if I was making a difference, enhancing my image of my best loved self. Looking forward, I want to dig deeper into not only sustaining teachers in the profession, but building, maintaining, and redefining teachers' images of their best loved self.

Currently I am teaching in a middle school that has also found itself in an in-between space. Similar to Hope, the campus was once mostly White middle to upper middle-class families. Over the past five years, the school has become mostly Black middle-class families. The number of students who are economically disadvantaged has increased as well. Every day I notice teachers having miscommunications with their students simply because of the assumptions they make about them. Issues specifically arise around social class. Many of the teachers believe the school is close to being a Title 1 school although the data tells a very different story. I believe that when teachers see more Black and Brown faces, they assume these students are impoverished. I noticed the teachers have begun to make statements similar to the teachers at Hope High School. Clearly, they are experiencing challenges to their best loved selves. My future research will focus on how teachers grapple with change and redefine their images of their best loved selves during demographic shifts such as those highlighted in my dissertation research.

Finally, I return to me—Tenesha Gale—and the fact that the topics of gentrification, gentri-migration, and in-between spaces have marked my life and my thinking over this past decade. I have witnessed communities I frequent becoming unrecognizable because of gentrification. I fear that these communities that hold generations worth of history will lose their

cultural identities. Now that gentrification has become a hot topic in popular culture, my hope is that these communities will fight to keep their identity, but I am not naïve. Gentrification disguised as urban renewal will continue to happen. In Houston's 3rd Ward it feels as if there is a battle happening, a battle to maintain the culture that made this part of town so unique.

5.3. **Personal Reflection**

When I think about increasingly diverse suburban neighborhoods, I worry most about the Black, Brown, and impoverished students who attend these schools. My goal as a researcher and educator is to help others navigate through the chaos of change. I hope to prepare preservice and in-service teachers for demographic changes. This dissertation serves as my first step in reaching that goal. Navigating though the in-between spaces has become my norm. As mentioned, I work in a school that is in an in-between space. I hope to use my knowledge to create a more equitable educational experience for students by better preparing teachers for diverse landscapes.

As I walked alongside my participants, I realized that I had spent most of my career not only being a bridge to connect those around me, but also a coach who navigates in-between spaces. My dissertation focuses on the 'in-between' space created by demographic changes, but through this process I have been in my own personal 'in-between' process that started with my transition from teacher to student, from student to instructor, and finally from researcher back to teacher. Though each transformation, particular experiences challenged me and spurred my personal growth.

5.3.1. **‘In-Between’ Teacher and Student**

As a teacher moving towards student, I was able to shift my focus from advocating for my students to advocating for myself. I had the opportunity to experience what it is like to be a learner in a new context. As the first person in my family to embark on a terminal degree program, I had to navigate the new context first by myself. I greatly suffered from imposter syndrome. I felt I lacked the skills to successfully complete a doctoral degree. I struggled with this for the entire first year of school. It was not until I grew closer to a group of black scholars and began to build a community of support. My advisor, Dr. Cheryl J. Craig, played a major part in helping me find my confidence. Her constant encouragement proved to me that she felt I deserved to be in the program. She became what I had always been for my students, an advocate. With her help, and the group of fellow doctoral students, I had a community that sustained me throughout the program.

5.3.2. **“In-Between’ Student and Instructor**

Transitioning from student to instructor introduced me to teaching in higher education. I taught a classroom management course as well as co-taught a science methods course. Working with young adults who had aspirations to become teachers became a passion for me. I realized that I enjoyed helping pre-service teachers shape their images of their best-loved selves. In those classes I was able to hold conversations that were provocative. My goal was to help the preservice teachers think about how their identities would affect the culture of their classroom. During this time, I learned how to create a meaningful syllabus that would stimulate growth within other who would soon be teachers. As a doctoral student we often discussed how

important it was to prepare pre-service teachers for the profession. As an instructor I could take actions that would help make that happen

5.3.3. **'In-Between' Researcher and Teacher**

Being 'in-between' researcher and teacher brought me full circle in my educational career. It is here where I find myself currently. I decided to go back and teach on the secondary level. With the knowledge base I now have, I am able to not only teach the young students, but also help the teachers with whom I work. I now pay more attention to how curriculum influences learning, I have a deeper understanding of why relationship building is central to my practice. I know myself more fully as a teacher now. My best-loved self is rooted in relationships, care, and valuing teachers. I am at home in my classroom. I am also at home when I can empower other teachers. Looking forward I want to continue to help create teachers who are culturally responsive and can create relational bridges that assist their students.

5.4. **The Future**

Moving forward, I want to continue to research gentrimigration and its effects on education. I plan to publish each of these articles to add to the literature focused on changing demographics. I will submit the first article "Gentri-migration: A contextualized history of migration due to gentrification" to the *Journal of Negro Education*. I will submit the second article, Two tales, one city: The story of a changed community, to *Teaching and Teachers: Theory and Practice*. Lastly "From their own mouths: Why we stayed," my third article, will be submitted to the *American Educational Research Journal*. I am excited about having my work shared with a wider scholarly audience.

As for my career, my goal is to become a district level teacher developer. I want to work with teachers during their induction years to help them create a solid foundation for their

practices. I want to empower teachers and help them create classroom atmospheres that will create community for all students. I will continue to work on my scholarship as I plan to also work as an adjunct professor for a major university. Later in my career I will seek a tenure track position at a top research-intensive university. For now, I am embarking on yet another 'in-between' space as a new graduate and field-based educator. I look forward to the new experiences and lessons I will learn in the next phase of my life.

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