Spring 2023

A Phenomenological Study: The Lived Experience of Jamaican Immigrant Teachers Practicing in Northeastern North Carolina

Dianne Campbell-Barton
Gardner-Webb University, dcampbellbarton@gardner-webb.edu

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF JAMAICAN IMMIGRANT TEACHERS PRACTICING IN NORTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

By
Dianne D. Campbell-Barton

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University College of Education
in Partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
2023

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Dianne D. Campbell-Barton under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

_____	_____
Stephen Laws, EdD Dissertation Chair	Date
_____	_____
Stephen Laws, EdD Methodologist	Date
_____	_____
W. Steve Stone, EdD College of Education Representative	Date
_____	_____
Ingrid Rockhead, EdD Content Specialist	Date
_____	_____
Prince Bull, PhD Dean of the College of Education	Date

Acknowledgments

"In all things, give thanks." 1 Thessalonians 5:18

I am grateful to those who have contributed to this challenging yet exciting and life-changing experience called the dissertation journey. Thank you to members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Stephen Laws, Dr. W. Steve Stone, and Dr. Ingrid Rockhead, all of whom I am indebted to and immensely grateful for their coaching and guidance.

Dr. Stephen Laws, my dissertation chairperson, is credited with setting the stage for me to reach this milestone. Dr. Laws, thank you for the countless hours you have invested in me and this research project, providing timely feedback, pushing me to be a better scholar, and providing me a safe space to be vulnerable when I was unsure of the path to travel. Dr. Stone, thank you for volunteering to be a part of this process when I had my first class with you, even without me fully understanding what a dissertation was, much less knowing what my research topic would be. Thank you, Dr. Laws and Dr. Stone, for your professionalism, sincerity, love, and care; I knew you were two of the best people to guide me on my journey. Dr. Rockhead, my friend, thank you for agreeing to serve on my dissertation committee. Your tenacity and hard work have inspired me. Thank you for believing in me and walking alongside me on this journey. Your friendship makes my life a wonderful experience.

This work would be impossible without the 10 remarkable Jamaican exchange visitor program (EVP) teachers who went by the pseudonyms Darrion, Karin, GiGi, DeMay, Georgia, Halifax, Clarke, Annie-Joe, Duhaney, and Shauna. They are named here individually because they were gracious and courageous enough to share compelling stories of their experiences practicing in rural northeastern North Carolina K-12 public

and charter schools. Their shared stories offer a richer and deeper understanding of their challenges, resilience, and success as Jamaican EVP teachers in northeastern North Carolina.

I am grateful to my friend Hugh, who has supported me throughout this process. You have been my encourager and cheerleader from the beginning. Thank you to my work family: Godineaux-Moody, Mayo, and Barnes-Brown. I love you all!

This is only the beginning of my journey!

Dedication

"She is clothed with strength and dignity; She can laugh at the days to come." Proverbs 31:25

I dedicate this dissertation work to my family! To my loving parents, Maud and Guy Campbell, who have supported my endeavors and taught me to believe in myself, to be unique, and to be strong. Mama, your encouragement and push for resilience ring loudly and clearly in my ears. Papa, although you are no longer of this world, your memories continue to regulate my life. To my husband Dennis, you have been a listener and a source of strength, support, patience, and motivation for me throughout this entire experience. To my siblings, your belief in me has meant more than you will ever know, and I am immensely and infinitely grateful for all of your love and support. To my nieces and nephews, this is Auntie Dianne holding the door for you to walk in, be great, and do the amazing things God has empowered you to do!

Abstract

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF JAMAICAN IMMIGRANT TEACHERS PRACTICING IN NORTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA. Campbell-Barton, Dianne, 2023: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University. Public school districts across the United States (U.S.) have struggled with the hemorrhaging of teachers for many years and have become creative in staffing classrooms, which includes hiring overseas teachers. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of Jamaican exchange visitor program (EVP) teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. An amalgamation of Milton Gordon's (1964) assimilation and John Berry's (1977) acculturation theories guided the research. Semi-structured interviews were used to capture and examine the Jamaican EVP teachers' stories of success, challenges, and resilience. The study capitalizes on the power of Jamaican EVP teachers' stories to amplify and document their multicultural experiences. Findings from the stories revealed six dominant themes in narratives and hold significant insights into how sponsors (teacher recruitment agencies), school district leaders, and local school leaders could improve the experiences of immigrant EVP teachers. Implications for practice include implementing practices beyond relocation assistance, assisting participants in finding housing, reliable transportation, and financial aid, all essential factors that could help ease transitions. Other implications for practice include providing immigrant teachers with high-quality personalized predeparture professional development and mentorship sessions through online learning platforms orienting them to the American culture and teaching in multicultural society classrooms. Further study recommendations include

conducting studies to compare the phenomenon of assimilation and acculturation of Jamaican EVP teachers with EVP teachers from other nations and geographical settings within the U.S.

Keywords: phenomenology, exchange visitor program, nonimmigrant visa, acculturation, assimilation, program sponsors, host community, culture shock, certificate of eligibility

Table of Contents

Page

Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

"*Don't wish it was easier, wish it were better. Don't wish for fewer problems; wish for more skills. Don't wish for fewer challenges; wish for more wisdom."*–Jim Rohn

Globalization has brought momentous changes to our world (Falk, 2015). Globalization has increased and eased the exchange of goods and services between parties and has naturally heightened human curiosity and aspirations. Accessibility to the Internet and increased networking have lessened the distance between people (Chacko & Lin, 2015; Saudelli, 2012). Globalization has extended its reach into education with implications for teaching and learning. Educational institutions have become more open to international teachers and students (Uytico & Abadiano, 2020). Teaching abroad can be a pathway for experiencing the world, learning about other people's cultures, and acquiring intercultural competencies (Chacko & Lin, 2015).

Over the years, the number of educators in America with a migrant background has increased. Still, the size and growth of the immigrant educator population have not kept pace with the size and development of the student immigrant populations across cities and school districts, some experiencing larger shares and increases than others (Seah, 2018). The changing demographics have resulted in an ethnic, racial, and cultural mismatch between the teachers and the students they serve to compound the existing educational problems (Carothers et al., 2019). The new educational challenges and policy changes have forced school systems to recruit educators who understand the differences among cultures and peoples (Seah, 2018).

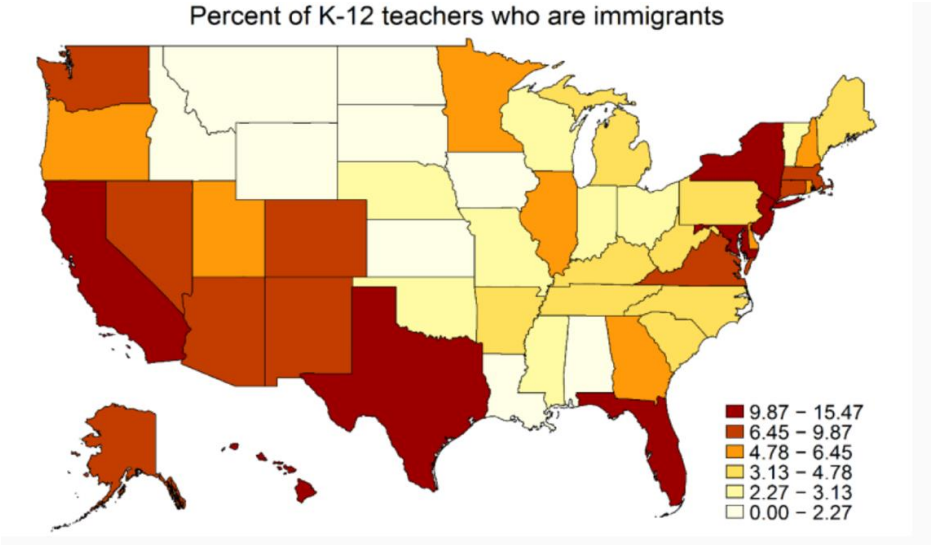
Against the backdrop of rapid globalization, the debate over teacher shortages, recruitment, and retention of qualified teachers has amplified. Some school districts have

opted to look abroad and have employed the services of teacher recruitment agencies to hire educators with experiences similar to the students they will be teaching. In addition to the convergence of teachers departing the profession due to retirement, a reduction in pupils entering teacher training colleges, combined with the high rates of teacher attrition due to high levels of job dissatisfaction, has led educational leaders to come to the frightening conclusion that the United States (U.S.) will be facing an acute shortage of highly qualified teachers shortly (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

The effect of globalization compounded by teacher shortages has forced educational leaders throughout the U.S. to recruit international teachers to fill vacancies in their school districts. The following image was retrieved from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) data file which shows the number of immigrants teaching in the U.S. (Starz, 2017).

Figure 1

Percent of K-12 Teachers Who Are Immigrants



Note. A map of the United States of America showing the percentage of immigrant teachers in each state. (Source: Dick Startz (2017)/IPUMS USA, University of

Minnesota). Copyright 2017 Brookings https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/03/16/immigrant-teachers-play-a-critical-role-in-american-schools/

States with many foreign-born residents also have a significant immigrant teacher population, with Alaska being the exception. The IPUMS data and the U.S. Census show that approximately 13% of the U.S. population are immigrants, and 11% are educators. Of the estimated 8.1 million educators in the U.S., approximately 857,200 are foreign-born teachers (Furuya et al., 2019).

Statement of the Problem

> Assuming that good teachers make a difference in students' lives, why is there not an effective teacher in every American classroom? The easy answer is that there are not enough teachers, especially the good ones. Teachers leave American classrooms at a daunting and unstainable rate. (American Federation of Teachers, 2009, p. 7)

Some of the most significant variations in teacher shortages are not between states but between schools and betwixt school districts across states. Students in low-income, high-minority, low-performing schools are impacted more significantly by teacher shortages. Staff turnover in these schools is regularly high. Retaining qualified teachers in schools, particularly those in rural communities, has been challenging due to the diminishing labor pool and the tendency for teachers to move from rural areas to metropolitan areas. For instance, states such as North Carolina, which has large geographically rural areas, have experienced massive teacher shortages in the last decade (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022).

North Carolina has experienced teachers migrating to schools in urban areas or

leaving the occupation earlier than its time for their retirement.

Table 1

2018-2021 Teacher Employment and Attrition Report

Employment year	Total employees	Attrition	
		Numbers (n)	Percentage (%)
2018-2019	94,672	7,115	7.5
2019-2020	94,410	7,111	7.53
2020-2021	94,342	7,737	8.20

Note. Adapted from Surveys and Reports from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. State of the Teaching Profession Reports. G. S. 115C-12(22) requires the State Board of Education to monitor and compile an annual report on the decisions of teachers to leave the teaching profession. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/district-human-capital/surveys-and-reports#StateoftheTeachingProfessionReports-1177.%20Report%20to%20the%20North%20Carolina%20General%20Assembly In the public domain.

According to the-*Report on the State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina* published by the North Carolina State Board of Education on February 17, 2022, there were 94,342 teaching positions reported in North Carolina Local Education Agencies for the 2020-2021 school year. Compared to the attrition rates for the most recent years, 2020-2021 reported the highest rate. Table 1 illustrates North Carolina teacher attrition during the 2019-2021 school years across the state's 117 Local Education Agencies, including charter schools (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2022).

Each Local Education Agency within the state of North Carolina provides an

annual report on the state of the teaching profession to NCDPI. When an educator decides to exit the profession, North Carolina also tracks their reasons for leaving their jobs on the Local Education Agency resignation document. Table 2 illustrates reasons for the highest attrition rates reported to the state by the teacher on the resignation form (NCDPI, 2022).

Table 2

2018-2021 Teacher Attrition by Reason Code

Reporting year	Total attrition	Personal reasons		Initiated by local education agency		Beyond control of local education agency		Other reasons	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2018-2019	7,114	4,315	60.7	567	8.0	1,689	23.7	544	7.6
2019-2020	7,111	4,194	59.0	537	7.6	1,836	25.8	544	7.6
2020-2021	7,737	3449	44.6	459	5.9	1,856	24.0	1,973	25.5

Note. Adapted from Surveys and Reports from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. State of the Teaching Profession Reports. G. S. 115C-12(22) requires the State Board of Education to monitor and compile an annual report on the decisions of teachers to leave the teaching profession. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/district-human-capital/surveys-and-reports#StateoftheTeachingProfessionReports-1177.%20Report%20to%20the%20North%20Carolina%20General%20Assembly. In the public domain.

Table 3 illustrates attrition rates in North Carolina by teacher category for the 2020-2021 school year. The North Carolina teacher attrition rates differ by subgroups, licensure, and years of experience.

Table 3

State of North Carolina Attrition Rates by Teacher Category 2020-2021

Category of teachers		Total numbers of teachers in each category 2020-2021	Number of teachers leaving employment in North Carolina public schools	% attrition in category 2020-2021
Experience, licensed teachers		80,804	6,417	7.9%
Beginning teachers		13,538	1,320	9.75%
Teach For America teachers	All	538	102	34.93%
	Before contract term	292	80	29.6%
Visiting International Faculty teachers	All	1,819	195	10.7%
	Before contract term	1,708	85	5%
Lateral entry teachers		3,599	468	13%

Note. Surveys and Reports North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. State of the Teaching Profession Reports. G. S. 115C-12(22) requires the State Board of Education to monitor and compile an annual report on teachers' decisions to leave the profession. 2020-2021 Annual Report on the State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/14558/download. In the public domain.

The state's attrition rate for beginning teachers is much higher than its more experienced counterparts. Beginning teachers account for roughly 9.75% of all teachers who separate from their jobs in North Carolina public schools. In the state of North Carolina, educators with less than 3 years of teaching experience are categorized as beginning teachers. There were 13,538 beginning teachers employed statewide between

March 2020 and March 2021, and 1,320 left their teaching positions. Of the 3,599 lateral entry teachers who were working in North Carolina public schools in March 2020, 468 (13.0%) left the North Carolina public school system by March 2021(NCPDI, 2022).

One subgroup of immigrant teachers of interest is Visiting International Faculty (VIF) teachers. Of those, 195 (10.2%) left employment in March 2021. VIF teachers commit to a 2- or 3-year contract with North Carolina school systems. Of the 292 Teach for America (TFA) teachers employed in March 2020, by March 2021, 102 (34.93%) were no longer employed with North Carolina public schools. Like VIF teachers, TFA teachers commit to a 2- or 3-year contract with NCDPI (NCDPI, 2022).

TFA recruits highly competent recent college graduates, referred to as corps members, to teach for 2 or 3 years in either a rural or urban community anywhere in the U.S. Upon completing the program, the corps members receive an alternative teacher license through coursework taken while they are fulfilling their teaching assignment. TFA's goals are for its corps members to address educational equality and excellence by providing students in low-income, low-performing communities with the knowledge, skills, and character necessary to become lifelong learners and reach their full potential. When the first corps was established in 1990, TFA placed 500 teachers in six regions across the country. Today, more than 64,000 TFA corps members have been placed in over 50 regions around the country, including cities and rural areas like eastern North Carolina and the deltas of the Mississippi. TFA is one of the largest employers of recent college graduates. It is estimated that collectively, TFA members have taught over five million students across America (TFA, n.d., 2023).

Recurrent teacher turnover is expensive, debilitates school improvement efforts,

and sabotages student achievement. According to Podolsky et al. (2016), a study in North Carolina revealed that the state's accountability exacerbates the shortage problem making it more challenging to retain its staff, especially in rural, low-performing, low-income school districts. Consequently, these school and district leaders continually expend considerable time, effort, and resources to staff these schools with highly qualified teachers (Podolsky et al., 2016).

Exchange Visitor Program for Teachers

The government of the U.S. began sponsoring and funding international exchanges between Americans and people of other nations shortly after the Second World War ended. In 1961, the U.S. government created an exchange visitor program (EVP) as part of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1948. The Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act is also called the J. William Fulbright Education Exchange Program. The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 is one of many government exchange programs whose objectives are to improve relationships and strengthen ties between the U.S. and other nations through cultural and educational exchange programs. The objective of the Act was to promote the exchange of scholars, researchers, students, teachers, and other professionals between the U.S. and foreign countries, participating in fellowships, internships, and other programs in American governmental and nongovernmental educational institutions and programs. The EVP temporarily provides foreign nationals opportunities to live and work in the U.S., expecting them to return home when their program is completed to share their experiences (American Immigration Council, 2020).

The U.S. Department of State administers the EVP. The U.S. Department of State

designates academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, government agencies, businesses, and nonprofits to administer the EVP. These organizations are referred to as EVP sponsors. Based on the exchange program regulations, EVP sponsors prescreen and select exchange visitors who meet the requirements to participate in their programs. The sponsors provide unlimited opportunities for the EVP participants and Americans to engage directly and to share their own culture, traditions, and views with Americans; and in the long term, expand and strengthen the relationships between America and the rest of the world (American Immigration Council, 2020; South Carolina Department of Education, n.d.).

According to Garcia and Weiss (2019), the shortage of credentialed teachers threatens students' abilities to learn, especially in high-poverty schools. The needs significantly impact student learning outcomes in some disciplines, including bilingual education, foreign languages, mathematics, and science. Furuya et al. (2019) opined foreign-born educators could alleviate these shortages. Several EVP sponsors and independent agencies, approved by the U.S. Department of State, have turned to recruiting international teachers to fill hard-to-staff classrooms, especially those in rural school districts (American Federation of Teachers, 2009). Educational Partners International, LLC (EPI), based in Swannanoa, North Carolina; International Teachers Exchange Services, headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina; Global Teaching Partners (Global); and VIF now branded as Participate, based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, are designated EVP sponsors by the Department of State and approved by NCDPI. The EVP sponsors provide recruitment and placement of qualified EVP teachers from around the world in North Carolina's K-12 public, private, and charter schools

(American Immigration Council, 2020; South Carolina Department of Education, n.d.).

Based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, VIF (now branded as Participate) is the most extensive international EVP linking schools in the U.S. with international teachers. VIF was founded in 1987 by former Elon University president J. Fred Young and his son Alan Young as a family business. At its inception, VIF provided universities with international educators and support services; however, in 1989, when the U.S. Department of Education began offering world language learning to K-12 students, VIF shifted its focus to recruiting, relocating, and supporting K-12 educators in U.S. classrooms (Schroll, 2017).

VIF and Other Agencies

In 1989, VIF's first group of 12 international teachers worked as foreign language teachers teaching Spanish and French in 10 North Carolina counties. VIF, designated by the U.S. Department of State as an EVP sponsor, has placed thousands of international teachers across the U.S. Over the years, VIF has selected, sponsored, and supported international teachers from 50 countries, including Argentina, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Jamaica, to teach elementary education, math, science, world languages (Spanish, French, and German), special education, and other subjects in high demand. Upon completion of the program, it is expected that VIF alums return to their home country, contribute to the development of their nations, and serve as goodwill ambassadors to the VIF program and the U.S. (American Immigration Council, 2020; Schroll, 2017; South Carolina Department of Education, n.d.).

The international teacher recruitment agencies advertise U.S. teaching vacancies

in the local newspaper, internet, radio, television, and other media sources. The agencies publish and compare a teacher's salary in the U.S. in advertisements. The earning potential lures teachers into applying to these agencies to fill teaching positions in the U.S. school system.

All teachers selected for a teaching job with the VIF program or any other program EVPs are screened. Screening includes face-to-face interviews, reference checks, criminal background checks, verification, and evaluation of academic credentials. In North Carolina, the selected teachers must qualify for a professional certification issued by NCDPI. When teachers are chosen to participate in the exchange program, the agencies match them with participating host schools. All educators participating in the EVP must meet the minimum eligibility and certifications: a baccalaureate degree, full-time 2 years of teaching experience, and a valid driver's license. When selected, participants arrive in America, are housed for a week by the EVP sponsors, and receive a week of orientation. Teachers are supplied with advisors to assist their transition from their home country to a new life in America. EVP teachers also receive in-school visits by educational consultants from the agency (American Immigration Council, 2020).

As society becomes more globalized and student populations become more diverse, schools can impact students and influence their perspectives of other cultures. Staffing schools with diverse teachers, such as those from Jamaica hired through cultural exchange programs, will provide students and adults an insight into the Jamaican culture while providing short-term measures to solve the recurrent teacher shortages (Schroll, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The study's purpose was to investigate the lived experiences of a group of Jamaican-educated teachers, particularly those who were recruited by teaching agencies to fill vacancies in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public schools. The study reports participants' lived experiences and positive or negative experiences in teaching in northeastern North Carolina public schools.

Significance of the Study

Personal and professional development (PD) opportunities attract many international teachers to teach in a foreign country despite the potential struggles. This study documented the challenges and successes of one group of immigrant teachers in northeastern North Carolina. The study will have implications for (a) international teacher recruitment agencies; (b) host school district leaders, principals, teachers, parents, and students; (c) recruiting companies who work with teachers who want to move abroad; and (d) teachers who want to live and work in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public schools.

This study centered on the voices of Jamaican teachers who came to the U.S. through the EVP, hoping that their stories will be a tool to provide social-emotional support to other EVP teachers. The study is at the disposal of immigrant teachers to use as a resource to encounter the challenges they face by examining the experiences of other EVP teachers, identifying common areas of strengths, and how they use them as a means of professional advancement.

This study should also benefit non-EVP teachers, students, and parents who work closely with or interact with EVP or other immigrant teachers. This study should

enlighten and help Americans conclude that EVP teachers are professionals of different nationalities, have a different vocabulary, and add to the cultural diversity within classrooms and communities. As they gain insight into the immigrant teachers' personal and professional landscape, they might develop greater tolerance and appreciation for the differences of teachers from diverse national origins; therefore, being informed about and having of the challenges and sources of foreign-educated teachers who are living and working in America is a crucial issue because it can help advance the work of the teacher recruitment agencies that recruit Jamaican and other international teachers, hence improving the experience of the teachers and their students.

While some newspapers, journal articles, and news programs have documented the departure of Jamaican educators to work in the U.S., very little research has been done concerning the teaching experiences of Jamaican teachers whom agencies recruit to teach in America; therefore, further studies must examine the lived experiences of Jamaican teachers recruited to teach in North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. It is hoped that this study will initiate robust discussions concerning the essential but little-known facts about the experiences of Jamaican-born and educated teachers who live and work in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter school districts.

Research Question

The study sought to learn more about the lived experiences of a group of EVP teachers teaching in U.S. public school systems, specifically in northeastern North Carolina. This study was designed to investigate the benefits and challenges of their intercultural experiences. The research question that guided the study was

What are the lived experiences faced by Jamaican educators while living and

teaching in northeastern North Carolina?

Scope of the Study

Many foreign-educated nationals volunteer to come to America to practice their craft in K-12 public and charter schools. This is a qualitative research study in which I gathered information from teacher surveys and interviews with Jamaican teachers. The participants selected for the study consisted of Jamaican teachers who travelled to the U.S. on a J-1 or H-1B work visa to teach in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public elementary, middle, and high schools. I was interested in the narratives of their experiences teaching in the U.S. Each teacher's lived experience may be complex and even conflicting; their collective stories provided insight into their experiences as they navigated their teaching experiences and entered their host communities.

Conceptual Framework

Globalization and migration are two essential aspects of all societies. Often accompanied by many hopes and aspirations, Jamaicans leave their homeland searching for a better economic future for themselves and their families. Migrants and host community members sometimes experience various cross-cultural challenges (Joy & Gopal, 2017). Immigrants integrate into their host communities in a variety of ways. As a result, different terms have been used to describe the methods and extent to which they find their place in the host community. Various sociologists and anthropologists have used the terms assimilation and acculturation to describe the processes and results of the meeting of formerly distinct and separate groups of people. The terms have overlapping meanings and often are used interchangeably (Cole, 2020).

The term acculturation is not new and has been around since the early 20th

century. Park (1914) drew an ecological framework to describe how ethno-racial groups become acculturated progressively and irreversibly through contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.). The 1936 classic definition of acculturation says that when people of two or more formerly distinct cultural groups meet each other, it changes the original cultural patterns of either one or all groups (Smokowski et al., 2017). According to Park, the absorption of immigrants and ethnic minorities into a dominant culture is progressive and inevitable (Joy & Gopal, 2017).

Assimilation occurs when separate groups of people come together to share a common culture and merge socially. Building upon Park's (1914) theory, Gordon (1964) proposed one of the first formalized theoretical descriptions of the assimilation theory. Gordon proposed an assimilation model in which immigrants and ethnic minorities are gradually absorbed into a dominant culture as individuals or groups (Worthy et al., 2020). Gordon advanced the idea that the immigrant initially adopts the host country's cultural norms and then assimilates into the host society. Gordon argued that the foreign-born initially acculturate, adopting the host country's cultural norms and then assimilating with the host community. Gordon's idea of assimilation reiterates Park's concept of assimilation as a unidirectional integration or convergence of the foreign-born with the American-born (Healey, 2019).

John Berry (1977), a Canadian scholar of cross-cultural psychology, proposed an acculturation theory. Berry (1977) proposed a bidirectional or quadric-modal acculturation model outlining immigrants' strategies in their acculturation process. Berry (1977) explained the connections between how individuals acculturate and how they adapt. The varying degrees of acculturating are labeled using the terms integration,

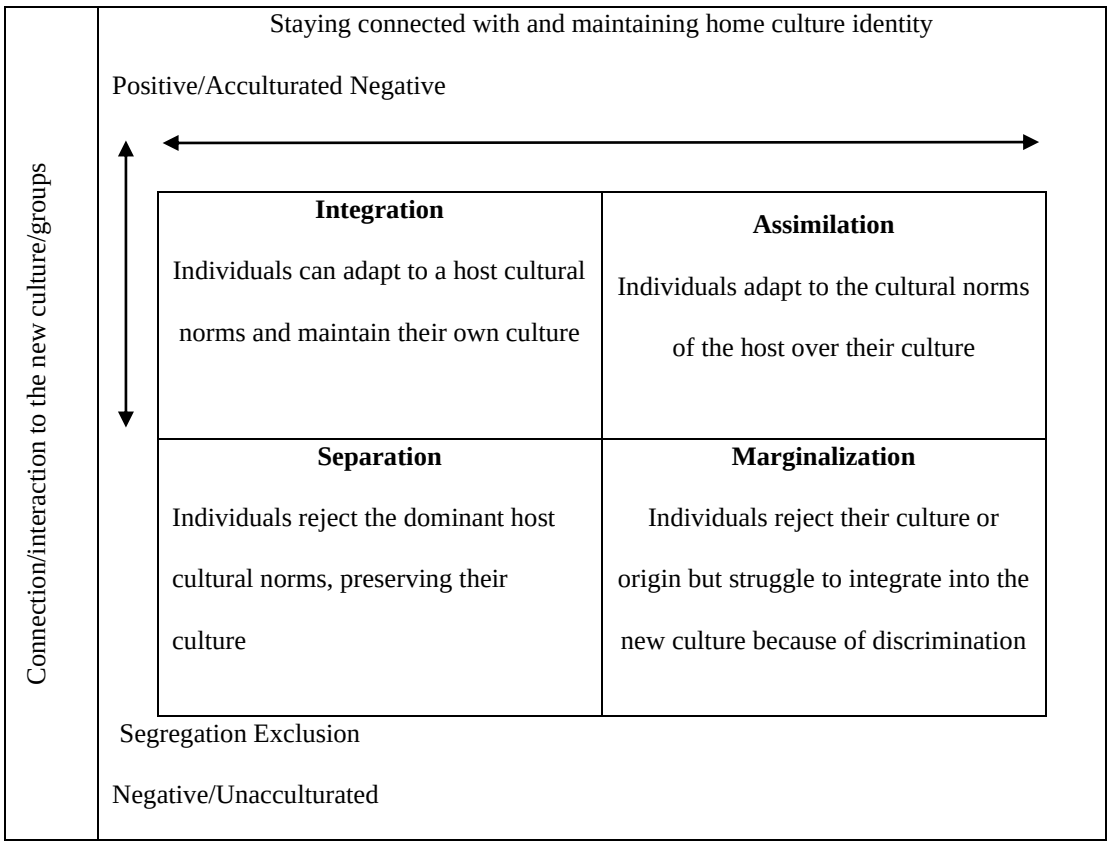
separation, assimilation, and marginalization; boundaries between them are difficult to define. Berry (1977) explained that immigrants who integrate are better adjusted than those who acculturate by orienting themselves in other cultures (assimilation or separation) or neither culture (marginalization). Berry's acculturation theory has been used to advance the understanding of Latino, Black Caribbean, and Asian adolescent migrant populations (Worthy et al., 2020).

Gordon's (1964) assimilation and Berry's (1977) acculturation models have primarily been used to explain how immigrants assimilate and acculturate to a foreign culture. Gordon argued that acculturation is an essential component of assimilation but is a separate process and concept. He also claimed acculturation measures the adaptation of behaviors and practices of the host societies, while assimilation focuses on the results of acculturation (Healey, 2019).

To better comprehend Jamaican immigrant teachers' perspectives on their lived experiences teaching in northeastern North Carolina, an amalgamation of Berry's (1977) bidirectional, also known as the quadric-modal model of acculturation, and Gordon's (1964) unidirectional assimilation model was used as the conceptual framework to ground this study. Figure 2 illustrates an amalgamation of Berry's (1977) and Gordon's models.

Figure 2

Immigrant Acculturation and Assimilation Into Host Society/Community



Migration often involves constructing and deconstructing one's cultural beliefs as their cultural identity is redefined during acculturation. A new cultural identity is built in the host community (Budzynski, cited in Caravatti et al., 2021). Acculturation depends on a specific country's experience with migrants; an individual's expectations may differ from reality. According to Berry (2005), migrants are likely to undergo an acculturation cycle, which happens during the different stages of someone's time in their new environment.

Key Terms

The following section clarifies critical terms used in the study.

Assimilation

The process in which persons or groups of a particular culture become similar to their host societies by adopting their customs and culture.

Acculturation

The process in which persons or groups of a particular culture adopt the values, norms, and practices of another group.

Bracketing

The process by which the researcher sets aside their judgment to understand the phenomenon under investigation to understand the experiences of the study participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Culture

Used to describe the characteristics of a group of people, all-encompassing their language, norms, religion, food, habits, music, and the arts (Pappas & McKelvie, 2021).

Cultural Exchange Teacher, International Exchange Teacher

Terms are used interchangeably throughout this research. They refer to an event in which an educator/teacher leaves a teaching job in their home country to teach in the U.S./a foreign country through sponsorship by a specific cultural exchange program.

Cultural Exchange Sponsor

A specific organization or company that makes the cultural exchange or international exchange possible through promotion, sponsorship, and financial investment.

Culture Shock

Used to describe the feeling of uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety people

experience when they move to a foreign country or experience a new culture (Segal, 2021).

Epoche'

The researcher set aside their preconceived ideas of a phenomenon to see it through the experiences of the research participants.

High-Needs Schools

Schools in which 30% or more of the students come from families whose income levels are below the poverty line; they have relatively high percentages of teachers who are not certified, who teach in a field in which they are not certified, or who teach in a school with high teacher turnover rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

H-1B Visa

Nonimmigrant work visas that allow U.S. employees to hire international workers for specialty jobs with a baccalaureate degree or higher.

Host Organization

"A host organization is a school, business, camp or other entity in the United States that provides the actual internship, training, or education program in which the exchange visitor participates" (American Immigration Council, 2020, p. 4).

Immigrant Teachers

Foreign-born and trained teachers currently living and working in the U.S. on temporary work visas.

J Visas (J-1 and J-2 Visas)

A category of nonimmigrant visas issued by the Department of State to EVP participants, their spouses, and minor children to participate in the U.S. EVP.

Lived Experiences

Used in qualitative phenomenological studies to highlight the importance of a group of individual experiences.

Summary

As teacher demand surges and projections increase, there has been much media attention to the threat of teacher shortages in the U.S. Some states are pursuing various strategies to address the scarcity. Tapping into the talents and experiences of international educators with baccalaureate or higher degrees earned outside of the U.S. is one of the strategies explored to find potential EVP teachers to fill vacancies in hard-to-staff schools.

Numerous questions arise when exploring teacher cultural exchange programs and teacher experiences. The transcendental phenomenological study's purpose was to discover and report on the Jamaican teacher’s personal, professional, and intercultural development experiences as a migrant teacher teaching in northeastern North Carolina and their reasons for staying there.

The background for the study, the statement of the problem, the research question, and the significance of the study were explained in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to the historical look at teacher shortages and international teacher recruitment in the U.S. Chapter 3 outlines the research and data collection methodologies used in the study. Chapter 3 also includes an explanation of the research design, a description of the study participants, and data analysis. Chapter 4 represents the data collection methodology, data analysis, and the study’s findings. Chapter 5 discusses the implications for practice and opportunities for relevant stakeholders (potential and

participating EVP teachers, sponsors, and host partners).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

"*Nobody has such power to broaden the mind as the ability to investigate systematically and truly all that comes under thy observation in life*." –Marcus Aurelius

Introduction

American newspaper headlines were packed with stories about teacher shortages for more than a decade. Various reports detailed some of the hardships school districts were going through in staffing schools (Cai, 2019); however, there is little doubt that hiring qualified teachers to staff America's classrooms has become increasingly challenging. Headlines in *The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times,* and *Axios* scream of the COVID-19 pandemic fueling teacher shortages across the U.S. (Goldhaber et al., 2021; Jacobs & Olson, 2021); of course, the U.S. was already dealing with teacher shortages before the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, with warnings about the looming crisis stretching back over a decade ago (Barnum, 2021; Gecker, 2021).

Data show a worrisome teacher supply and demand trend in specific subject areas, grade levels, and geographic areas. Evidence shows that larger school districts are far more likely to experience teacher shortages as they face the COVID-19 pandemic for 3 years. Various scholars have offered explanations for teacher shortages in the U.S., ranging from low salaries, testing mandates and accountability pressures, the tightening of the labor market since the Great Recession of 2007-2009, poor working conditions in the schools, the challenges of working with low-achieving populations, students from low-income communities,, and the location of teacher education program colleges to schools where student teaching occurs and those with the highest needs (Goldhaber et al., 2021).

Education in North Carolina Public Schools

As of the 2020-2021 school year 1,434,121 students attended traditional public schools in North Carolina, a slight decrease from 1,434,153 in 2019-2020. However, enrollment grew in charter and other schools from 121,321 students in 2019-2020 to 129,389 students in 2020-2021 (Public Schools First NC, 2021).

In an article published by the Public School Forum of North Carolina (n.d.), regarding the 1994 landmark case of *Leandro v. The State of North Carolina*, parents, students, and five low-wealth counties filed a lawsuit against the state, accusing the state of not having enough money to provide an equal education for their children despite taxing their residents higher than average, thus denying students their rights to good quality education under the constitution. The North Carolina Supreme Court established that every North Carolina student has a constitutionally protected right to basic education. The North Carolina Supreme Court's ruling called for constitutional compliance, ensuring effective teachers in every classroom, effective principals in all schools, and adequate resources to provide at least a quality education for all. The latest WestEd report released in January 2020 reported the teacher turnover rate as one of the most significant reasons North Carolina has gone from having a teaching force that was highly qualified to one that is highly lacking (Keung, 2022; Public Schools First NC, 2021). WestEd's findings were endorsed by Judge David Lee who was overseeing the Leandro School Funding case. Judge Lee ordered the state leaders to develop a plan to improve the state's educational system (Keung, 2022; Public School Forum of North Carolina, n.d.).

In 2019, a study of the demand, supply, and quality of educators in North Carolina conducted by the Learning Policy Institute in conjunction with the Education

Policy Institution at Carolina and WestEd revealed that access to qualified educators was increasingly limited and inequitable in the state. The study also showed that the North Carolina teacher workforce has declined, impacting the state's ability to attract, recruit, and retain a highly qualified teacher workforce (Sutcher et al., 2019). The ongoing teacher shortage problem has severely affected poor communities and communities of color with fewer resources and low performance (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). The North Carolina Department of Commerce (n.d.) estimated that the demand for teachers will grow, and 72,452 educators will need to be replaced by 2026.

EVP

The U.S. Department of State manages international EVPs, one of which is the international visiting teacher exchange program. Overseas-born and trained teachers can gain eligibility to teach and live in America by either qualifying for a J-1 or H-1B work visa. The J-1 visas are made available to employers seeking to hire international workers. The J-1 visa is a 1-year visa that can be renewed annually for 5 years. The H-1B visa is a nonimmigrant visa available to employers seeking to hire international educators in specialty fields. The H-1B visas are for 3 years and can be renewed once. The J-1 and the H-1B work visas are temporary and do not offer a clear pathway to citizenship. After the visas expire, the immigrant worker must return to their country of citizenship to fulfill a home residency requirement per their contract. The EVP participating worker must remain outside the U.S. for at least 2 years before becoming eligible for another J-1 or H-IB visa; however, in certain circumstances, the home residency requirements of EVP participants are sometimes waived by their government, allowing them to continue

working permanently in America after their program ends (U.S. Department of State, 2020).

Every fiscal year, the U.S. Congress mandates that the Department of State cap the new H-1B visas issued at 65,000. In addition to the 65,000 mandated by congress, the Department of State reserves another 20,000 H-1B visas for foreign nationals who have earned a U.S. master's degree or higher. If the number of H-1B visa applications filed is significantly higher than the mandated 65,000, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services randomly selects 65,000 of the applications submitted by regular applicants and another 20,000 applications submitted by applicants who have U.S. advanced degrees. Organizations that could seek H-1B work visa cap exemption are (a) accredited colleges and universities; (b) nonprofit organizations affiliated with colleges, universities, and government organizations (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2022).

The Department of State does not have a yearly limit on the number of J-1 visas available to foreign nationals, but they do have a pre-set number of Certificates of Eligibility (DS-2019 Forms) made available to the various sponsors of the EVP. The potential EVP participants must obtain a Certificate of Eligibility and other required documents when they go to the U.S. Embassy to interview for the J-1 visa. The EVP participant may bring their spouses and unmarried children under 21 to the U.S. (American Immigration Council, 2020).

Sponsors of exchange teachers are departments of education, local school districts, and some private schools. The Secretary of State designates educational institutions in the U.S. as program sponsors or host organizations. In some cases, the sponsors are also the host. The EVP sponsors are responsible for screening and selecting

international teachers and monitoring each participant's performance. To be eligible to participate in the U.S. exchange visitor teaching program, the international teacher must establish the following:

1. At the time of their application, they were actively teaching either in a primary or a secondary school, a college, or a university in their home country.
2. They have a degree equivalent to a U.S. Bachelor's degree or higher education in the specialized area in which they are applying to teach.
3. They have been teaching for at least 2 years or have related professional experiences.
4. They are proficient in the English Language.

Over the last decade, the number of participants in the EVP has risen significantly to over 500,000 annually. Data from the Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation (2019) flyer showed that 3,454 new teacher exchange visitors representing over 200 countries were employed as full-time educators in accredited primary and secondary schools or prekindergarten programs. The five countries with the most teachers participating in the 2019 EVP are the Philippines, with 932 exchange visitors; Jamaica sent 383 participants; China sent 223 exchange visitors; India sent 176 exchange visitors, and Columbia sent 174 exchange visitors. North Carolina was the top destination for new teacher exchange visitors (American Immigration Council, 2020; Gogol, 2021; Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation, 2019).

The Bureau of Education in the Department of State administers the international teacher EVP with the host organization and sponsors, but the Department of State and Homeland Security monitors host organizations' and sponsors' compliance with the EVP.

The Secretary of State designates sponsors who qualify to participate in an EVP. Sponsors of the program may range from academic institutions, cultural organizations, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and certain types of businesses. In some cases, the program sponsors are also program hosts (American Immigration Council, 2020).

Sponsors such as the VIF program and its main competitors, EPI and Global, travel internationally to identify, recruit, and place teachers to fill hard-to-staff, high-needs subject areas. These teacher recruitment agencies have brought international teachers to fill positions in selected public, private, and charter schools, primarily in the Southeastern U.S. Placements are in rural, suburban, or urban settings (BridgeUSA, 2021; Schroll, 2017).

The VIF program has historically sponsored the most exchange teachers for U.S. K-12 public schools. The VIF was founded in 1987 as a language exchange program that provided universities with international educators and support services; however, since 1989, during the height of severe teacher shortages, the VIF Program, Inc. has brought international teachers to fill gaps in hard-to-staff positions in selected K-12 public schools in the Southeastern U.S. International VIF teachers represent more than 24 nations; teaching the sciences, special education, elementary education, mathematics, foreign languages, and English as a Second Language (ESL; U.S. Cultural Exchange Program, 2022).

Educational leaders acknowledge that students and teachers must understand and adapt to the global society. Not every U.S. citizen will have the opportunity to travel abroad and experience other cultures. As a result, school districts partner with

international cultural exchange programs that bring culturally diverse teachers to the classrooms. Teachers who participate in the cultural exchange program, such as those promoted by EPI and VIF programs, bring a wealth of international experiences to schools in the U.S. (American Immigration Council, 2020).

History of the EVP

In 1948, the U.S. government founded the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act to increase mutual understanding between the American people and the people of other nations. In 1961, the U.S. government created an EVP as part of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1948. The Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act is also called the J. William Fulbright Education Exchange Program or Fulbright-Hays Act, which was named for Senator William Fulbright (1905-1995), a Democratic senator from Arkansas. Senator Fulbright advanced the idea that the U.S. government should sell surplus government property to fund international exchange programs. After the Fulbright-Hays Act was enacted, it soon began providing student and teacher exchanges through the Fulbright Classroom Teachers Exchange Program (Encyclopedia.com, 2018).

The Act's objective was to empower the American government to promote a better understanding between the American people and other nations. To achieve the goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act, the government used the following:

1. information services to disseminate information about the U.S. in foreign countries; and
2. an educational exchange program to cooperate with other counties around the world by

a. exchanging of individuals, knowledge, and skills,
b. rending of technological and other services; and
c. the interchange of developments in education, the arts, and science.

The teacher EVP allowed foreign nationals to live and work in America and promote cultural exchange. The Department of State started the EVP to enable international teachers to contribute to the growth of the U.S. education system and share their culture with their host communities. Initially, the EVP brought young adults to America to teach or conduct research. The program has since expanded to include over 15 categories through which the EVP participant teaches, studies, completes research studies, or receives advanced training (American Immigration Council, 2020).

Immigration Policies Impact on EVP Teachers

The U.S. has a long history of employing workers worldwide to fulfill labor shortage needs. Each year, thousands of people are recruited internationally to work in the U.S. on temporary work visas. Internationally recruited temporary workers are employed in nursing, teaching, agriculture, technology, and other high-needs industries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2022).

Immigrant teachers play an important role in alleviating the teacher shortage problems in America's K-12 schools. Nearly one in every 13 elementary, middle, and high school teachers is an immigrant. Table 4 illustrates the number of immigrants in the U.S. education sector (New American Economy Research Fund, 2021).

Table 4

Immigrants in America's Education System

	Number of immigrant workers	Share of foreign-born workers
Overall education sector	2,056,104	12.85
Child daycare	278,313	17.7%
K-12	898,365	9.8%
Colleges and universities	750,414	17.3%
Other schools and education support	128,948	14.0%

Note. The data for Immigrants in America's Education System are from Immigrants and U.S. Educational System by The New American Economy Research Fund (2021). https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/immigrants-america-educational-system/ In public domain.

An analysis of the 2019 American Community Survey conducted by the National Association of Education shows that over 2.1 million immigrants were working in the U.S. education sector. Together, immigrant teachers make up more than one in eight workers in the U.S. education sector helping to ensure that America's children receive the quality education they deserve (New American Economy Research Fund, 2021).

Exceptional education teachers and mathematics and science teachers are always in short supply. Many public school districts have relied upon foreign workers to fill hard-to-staff positions. The Clark County School District in Nevada was on track to bring more than 95 international teachers, primarily special education teachers, to fill vacancies for the 2020-2021 academic year. Likewise, 43 international teachers were offered positions in Ector County Independent School District, Odessa, Texas; Denver Public Schools in Colorado anticipated bringing in 13 Spanish teachers; and Cumberland County Public Schools in Fayetteville, North Carolina, were planning to hire 73 foreign

language teachers (Critchfield & Donovan, 2020).

In July 2020, Former President Donald J. Trump, in an unprecedented move, signed an executive order temporarily halting the processing of certain temporary worker visas through to the end of 2020. The Trump administration's visa ban reverberated through the public schools around the country that hire international teachers to fill vacancies in high-need areas (Critchfield & Donovan, 2020; International Labor Recruitment Working Group, 2013). Among the types of visas that President Trump's proclamation temporarily put on hold were the H-1B and J-1 nonimmigrant visas issued to overseas teachers who participate in the EVP for teachers (Edelman, 2021).

The Trump administration policies made it burdensome for school districts to get their petitions for the nonimmigrant J-1 and H-1B visa petitions approved by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The administration's changes to the immigration policy threatened the ability of school districts to recruit immigrant teachers to come to the U.S. to fill hard-to-staff positions in local American K-12 school districts. Because of Former President Trump's changes to the immigration policies, the Governor of Nevada, Steve Sisolak, wrote to the former president, urging him to exempt teachers from the executive order (Appendix A). Sisolak explained that the visa suspension would negatively impact 88 of the 95 teachers offered jobs to teach in the Clark County School District and would potentially leave thousands of special education students without a teacher (Blad, 2019).

On January 31, 2020, on his first day in office, Joseph R. Biden, the 46th president of the U.S., signed five immigration-related executive orders revoking Trump's Executive Order, green-lighting the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to resume adjudicating

applications and petitions for H-1B and J-1 visas (Blad, 2019).

International Teacher Migration

There is a shortage of studies on the experiences on the lived experiences of immigrant teachers in the U.S. and even fewer studies on the EVP Jamaican teachers; however, developed countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand had a plentiful supply of studies reflecting on the experience of teachers from these countries living and working in the U.S. The studies give a firsthand account of immigrant teachers' experiences working in the U.S. educational system.

Jamaica Context

Throughout history, individuals and groups of people have migrated long distances to various regions around the world for various reasons. Scholars of migration patterns attempt to identify why people migrate and group them into categories called the push and pull factors. A push factor is described as a force driving persons to consider leaving home to live elsewhere, including in a foreign country. A pull factor is an allurement of individuals to another place to live or work. One of the pull factors is the lucrative offer of higher compensation and benefits to lure teachers into taking up jobs in a foreign land.

Most often, teachers move from developing countries to more developed countries. Teachers often cite financial advancement and life experiences as the main reasons for relocation. Other reasons teachers put forward to explain why they leave their homeland to work in a foreign land include a shared language, family or historical ties, the necessity for qualified and specialized subject area teachers, and educational and career advancement (Modesto, 2020).

On January 21, 2021, Akera Davis, a writer for the Jamaica STAR newspaper, penned and published “More Teachers Could Take Flight.” This article documents an interview with Adian Charlton, director of International Student Affairs Travel Services, on teacher recruitment for U.S. schools. In his interview, Charlton told Davis that International Student Affairs Travel Services searched for 70 to 100 qualified teachers who were willing to move to the U.S. to take up a teaching job in the 2022 academic year. He pitched the idea of bigger paychecks ranging from $35,000 to $52,000 that could lure many of the island's top teachers to take up jobs in the U.S. (Davis, 2021).

Jamaican teachers who work abroad can increase their knowledge and skills in special education, subject-matter content, and teaching methodologies. Living and working abroad has also been economically rewarding for teachers who seek teaching opportunities in the U.S. When foreign governments release their teachers to accept employment in the U.S. and other developed nations, the foreign economies also benefit from the tens of thousands of U.S. dollars in remittances the teachers send home (Davis, 2021).

Living and Teaching in the U.S.

In recent decades, societies have been forced to tackle the challenges in education due to globalization. With increased globalization comes more culturally diverse classrooms, and school districts must address the needs of their student population from diverse backgrounds. To better serve their students, K-12 schools and teacher preparation programs seek to recruit educators with a broader understanding of the differences among cultures and people. Despite the advancement of these arguments, many U.S. educators lack the required skills and cultural and linguistic competencies to meet the needs of their

students (Serin, 2017).

Scholars of migration have supported employing international teachers to bridge the divide. Teachers educated internationally serve as role models as they often can better understand the needs of diverse students. Due to their experiences, these teachers would bring to the classroom a unique disposition toward diversity-related issues because of their personal experiences. Internationally educated teachers could also help to bridge the cultural divide by serving as cultural ambassadors for their home country. Researchers also argue that teachers working abroad are exposed to new and innovative teaching and learning styles, educational materials, and curriculum resources that aid in developing their teaching practices. Besides, teachers living in different cultures can integrate new skills and knowledge into their teaching practices (Participate Learning, 2021; Serin, 2017).

When international educators embark on teaching in the U.S., they face many rewarding and challenging experiences acclimating to a foreign country. For example, teachers who participate in an EVP can increase their knowledge and skills in their area(s) of expertise and broaden their perspectives on teaching. Immersing in a new culture is a rich opportunity to view their own culture from the outside and use these cross-cultural experiences as a foundation of intercultural learning (Ospina & Medina, 2020).

International teachers who take offers to teach in U.S. public and charter schools face some challenges posed by cross-cultural experiences. Despite having teaching experience in their own country, they sometimes suffer from culture shock; unfamiliar logistical, structural, and organizational arrangements; economic hardship; lack of

support; discrimination; communication gaps; and problems with teacher-student relationships. Understanding the challenges and successes of international educators in America can advance educational reforms and improve the experiences of both students and teachers (Goodroad, 2019; Ospina & Medina, 2020).

Benefits

Despite some EVP teachers experiencing difficulties living and working in the U.S., the program has proven advantageous for teachers to elevate their personal and professional lives. EVP teachers working in the U.S. allow the exchange teacher to develop cultural awareness, forge good relationships with students from diverse backgrounds, and develop effective teaching strategies to meet their students' needs. The most significant advantage of the international teaching experience is learning about the life and culture of the many different people they interact with, thus making them aware of their students' needs, culture, values, and beliefs (Ospina & Medina, 2020; Participate Learning, 2021; Serin, 2017).

Career advancement and individual successes are also benefits of teachers working abroad. Teachers working abroad can help accelerate educational reforms and contribute to the education of students in their home country, advancing their own teaching and learning experiences for all. An EVP teacher living and working abroad is regarded as a global and local citizen. International experience will allow teachers to learn new teaching methodologies and apply them in their teaching when they return home at the end of their program. Teachers who work in the U.S., upon their return home, can compare similarities and differences between their international experiences and their own country's education system and introduce their government agencies,

policymakers, and private sector agencies to what they learned abroad to help improve their knowledge and develop different attitudes towards teaching and learning (Serin, 2017).

Before an EVP teaching candidate earns a teaching position in a classroom in the U.S., the exchange visitor must meet specific requirements. These teachers have a wide range of experiences, which is essential to their qualifications as a participant in the EVP. A participant's roles, experiences, and knowledge of the U.S. K-12 public school system shaped each person's reality and experiences teaching and living in America (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2022).

Challenges

The opportunity to live and teach internationally brings uncertainty, risks, and challenges for the EVP participant. Foreign-born teachers arrive in the U.S. with various skills and competencies but experience different realities integrating and assimilating into an unfamiliar work environment (Starz, 2017). Some educators who migrate to teach in U.S. public schools face challenges transitioning from their cultures to exotic settings. Housing accommodations, finances, emotional demands, homesickness, social isolation, cultural conflicts, communicative skills, support in the school, and tedious credentialing processes are some situational factors that challenge immigrant teachers (Beck & Nganga, 2016; Participate Learning, 2021).

When international teachers arrive in their host country, the U.S., they must meet all the living and working requirements. International educators have to learn how federal education laws and policies work and must also learn about the state and local public school regulations, school laws, and policies. Successful acclimatization may require the

teacher to learn about their host community, including getting their driver's license to drive legally. Language is one of the main challenges international teachers face as they transition into their new setting. Even when international teachers have developed significant mastery of the foreign language, it might still create some challenges and misunderstandings because expressions, silences, spelling, unfamiliar accents, pronunciation, and body language can prevent effective communication. Immigrant teachers originate from a markedly different culture from the U.S. and face many challenges posed by cross-national experiences. Studies indicate foreign-born and educated teachers experience different cultural, societal, and professional expectations that were unknown to them before their recruitment to teach in the U.S. public and charter school systems (Beck & Nganga, 2016; Goodroad, 2019; McDaniel et al., 2017). The foreign-educated teachers adjust their vernacular as a strategy to fit in their host community, function in everyday life, make friends, become a part of the host community, and have a successful life and career in the U.S. (Cole, 2020; Starz, 2017).

Gap in Literature

Scholars began researching and writing dissertations, journal articles, and books on international teacher migration in the early 2000s; however, despite decades of international teacher recruitment programs that bring educators to the U.S., few have written about the programs, and even fewer have written about the lived experiences of its participants. Researchers have found that the influence of cultural exchanges on teachers, their personal experiences, curricular decisions, or the impact on other adults have not been widely assessed or recorded.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a study is described as the primary frame, structure, or scaffold on which the study is built. Grant and Osanloo (2104) opined that the design and vision of a study would be unclear without a theoretical framework, just like a building cannot be constructed without a blueprint. This study was grounded on the theoretical frameworks of Gordon's (1964) assimilation and Berry's (1977) acculturation theories.

The philosophy of assimilation and acculturation is founded on understanding how immigrants settle, transform, and become a part of U.S. society. Sometimes the terms are used interchangeably, but sociologists are more likely to use the word assimilation, while anthropologists will use the word acculturation in their discourse (AbiHanna, 2014). Assimilation refers to how immigrant groups meld to become increasingly similar to a common culture. On the other hand, acculturation is the process through which groups or individuals from minority cultures adopt the practices and values of a dominant culture while still retaining their unique cultural identity. In other words, acculturation refers to how immigrants adapt to the culture of their new home to function in their everyday life and be a part of their local community while maintaining the values, traditions, values, and practices of their own culture (Crossman, 2021; Hall et al., 2016).

Assimilation

The study of immigrant assimilation began with sociologists based at the University of Chicago studying how minority populations within Chicago and its surroundings assimilated into the mainstream society and factors that might impede the

process. In recent times, an influx of new immigrants has rekindled new and exciting research alongside robust and contentious debates. Gordon's (1964) classic or straight-line assimilation theory is central to the discussion. Gordon posited assimilation as a linear process in which ethnic and minority groups follow a straight-line convergence, becoming similar in values, norms, behaviors, and characteristics over time. Changes occur over time, and the length and process of assimilation vary by immigrant groups or individuals for various reasons. Segmented assimilation emerged in the 1990s as an alternative to straight-line assimilation theory. Segmented assimilation posits differing paths for different ethnic groups post-1965. Assimilation theory appeals to religion, education, health, cultural and social adaptation, economy, race, color, ethnicity, and employment. The assimilation process can be gradual, rapid, spontaneous, or forced. The process can be blocked or interrupted by bias or based on some individuals' racial, ethnic, or religious identities (Alba, 2016; Cole, 2020; Foner, 2014; Stroud Stasel, 2021; Tran & Birman, 2017).

According to Cole (2020), assimilation or cultural assimilation is the term ascribed to the process through which formerly different cultural groups blend and become more alike; there are no distinguishable differences between the groups. The term assimilation is often used to describe how people from other cultural groups can blend, forming a homogenous culture; hence, the melting pot metaphor has been used to describe the U.S. as people of many different cultural backgrounds and cultures who share attitudes, sentiments, and goals. As individuals or groups assimilate into the host society, they will adopt the cultural elements of food, certain holidays, life milestones, dress, entertainment, news media, etc. (Gordon, 1964; Hall et al., 2016; Vasquez-Parraga

et al., 2015).

The melting pot concept is used to describe the assimilation of immigrants in the U.S. The melting pot idea can best be conceptualized by the 26th president of the U.S. Theodore Roosevelt's Americanization Day Speech. After watching a play of the same name, the president used the melting pot metaphor to describe nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities. He referred to the U.S. as a melting pot in which immigrants of different nationalities, races, and religions bring together their cultural history, melding it into the ever-evolving homogenous culture, creating a united citizenry. In other words, as diverse immigrants settle in the U.S., they experience an assimilation process in which there is the dissolution of their cultural identity as they assume a U.S. cultural identity. However, the melting pot idea is often challenged by those who believe that cultural differences within the host society are valuable and must be preserved. Minority groups are expected to shed the unfamiliar aspects of the culture, give up traditions, and conform to the preexisting American culture (Crossman, 2021; Hall et al., 2016).

According to Furuya et al. (2019), the assimilation theory was born on the suppositions supported by investigations outlining the diverse progressions of immigrants to integrate into their host nation. Assimilation philosophies in different eras attribute the political and socioeconomic situations to the foreigner's experiences settling in the U.S. The varying assimilation theories could generate a wide range of surviving and adaptive approaches for individuals or immigrant families (Crul, 2015; Zhou, 2014).

In a 2019 study, Hendriks and Burger theorized and explored the extent to which the subjective well-being of immigrants in developed European countries is hindered over time and across generations by the faltering perceptions of the host country's

societal conditions. This research was divided into four parts, for which the researchers formulated and tested four hypotheses. In the first part of the research, Hypothesis 1 was explored to discover how the changing perceptions relate to their emotional well-being and development. Hypothesis 2 examined how the immigrant's characteristics impact the mediating role of changing societal perceptions. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested in the third part of the study, which explored how second-generation immigrants' perceptions of society are related to their subjective well-being assimilation and the subjective well-being gap between immigrants and natives.

For this study, Hendriks and Burger (2019) used data from Rounds 5-8 of the 2010-2016 cross-sectional, multi-country biannual European Social Survey. Samples analyzed were from respondents residing in 14 European countries that make up the EU15 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), excluding Luxembourg and three of the four European Free Trade Association countries (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland), excluding Liechtenstein.

Hendriks and Burger (2019) found that the subjective well-being in terms of happiness and life satisfaction of immigrants in developed European countries remains lower than that of natives and did not substantially increase their length of stay or across generations despite their improved living conditions. One of the study's main findings is that faltering societal perception of a host country's economic, political, and social conditions impaired the subjective well-being assimilation of first-generation immigrants in developed European countries. The faltering societal perceptions affect the subjective well-being assimilation of immigrants across generations, particularly those whose

societal conditions improved by migration or those who migrated to developed European countries after childhood. Hendriks and Burger showed there is a negative association between the subjective well-being assimilation of first-generation immigrants who gradually developed a less positive perception of the host country and across immigrant generations in developed European countries. However, natives or first-generation immigrants with a more positive societal perception have a subjective well-being advantage.

Hendriks and Burger (2019) attributed the study's findings to the immigrant's expectations and aspirations of better conditions that follow them from their home country to their host country. Hendriks and Burger suggested that a delay or deceleration of the process of immigrants' faltering societal perceptions could be used to improve subjective well-being assimilation and reduce immigrants' frustrations about their perceived lack of progress toward realizing their aspirations in their host communities.

Murayama and Nagayasu (2021) used spatial assimilation theory to examine the adaptability of immigrants in Japan by examining the relationship between their backgrounds and their residential locations. Spatial assimilation theory predicts the concentration tendency of immigrants who arrive from overseas and relocate within the country. Spatial assimilation theory predicts the dispersion of international immigrants from ethnically concentrated to nonconcentrated areas over time. Spatial assimilation theory predicts immigrants will concentrate in parts of the cities where most ethnicities are similar to them to overcome the disadvantages of language barriers and low socioeconomic status. Residing in a city with a large immigrant population like theirs will allow them to make the best use of employment opportunities and welfare conditions

pertinent to belonging to a community of immigrants.

Murayama and Nagayasu (2021) collected data from immigrants and non-Japanese who lived in 47 different political subdivisions, also called Prefectures. Migration data were taken from the Statistics Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2010 national census data (Murayama & Nagayasu, 2021, used the most recent data available to them when they were writing their study). In Japan, the national census is conducted every 5 years to capture the number of foreign nationals ages 15 to 64 who had settled in 47 Prefectures between October 2005 and October 2010. The top 10 countries of origin used in the study were Brazil, China, Indonesia, Korea, Nepal, Peru, the U.S., Vietnam, Philippines, and the United Kingdom.

Murayama and Nagayasu's (2021) findings were aligned with the spatial assimilation theory prediction. Murayama and Nagayasu found that international immigrants to Japan are more likely to move to ethnically concentrated geographical areas similar to the migrant's country of origin, but over time, immigrants will disperse from ethnically concentrated geographical areas to nonconcentrated areas. The data revealed that Asian groups from areas with lower capita gross domestic product than Japan were significantly positive. In contrast, the Chinese and Korean groups with similar cultures, languages, and religions who migrated domestically had a weaker tendency to move to Chinese and Korean population concentrated areas. The results also showed slow spatial assimilation among foreign nationals characterized as low-income or culturally dissimilar to Japan. Other results also indicate that Chinese and Korean immigrant groups are more integrated into Japanese society than others (Murayama & Nagayasu, 2021).

Li and Zhang (2021) conducted a quantitative study that examined the spatial assimilation patterns of three decimal generations of immigrants from India, Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam who arrived in America as children. The residential patterns of three decimal generation cohorts (1.25, 1.5, and 1.75) are predicted based on the age at which they arrived in America. The 1.25 generation cohorts are immigrants who arrive in the U.S. between the ages of 13 and 17; the 1.5 generation cohorts are immigrants who are primary school-age children and are between the ages of 6 and 12; the 1.75 generation cohorts are those immigrants who were brought to the U.S. in their early childhood years between 0 to 5 years of age.

Li and Zhang (2021) extracted and analyzed Public Use Microdata Area-level demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic information from the 2013-2017 American Community Survey. Public Use Microdata Area is a geographical area within state boundaries with approximately 100,000 residents. For this study, Li and Zhang restricted the sample to six Asian-born (Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese) ethnic groups 18 years and older who were householders. The Local Moran's 1 statistic and the logistic regression model were used to identify the ethnic areas and examine the effects of immigrants' cultural, educational, and generational statuses, and socioeconomic assimilation on the probability of living in ethnic areas using the 5-year (2013-2017) American Community Survey estimates and IPUMS data.

Li and Zhang's (2021) findings showed that 1.25 and 1.5 decimal generations of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean immigrants demonstrated a higher propensity to live in ethnic areas than the first-generation of each of the four ethnic groups. However, Asians, Indians, and Vietnamese showed spatial assimilation. Li and Zhang found that

irrespective of the ethnic group's generational effects, English language proficiency positively impacted their probability of living in nonethnic areas. At the same time, economic assimilation indicators indicated mixed results. The results also suggested that significant predictors of the residential preference of Asian immigrants in America are the age of arrival and ethnicity (Li & Zhang, 2021).

Amin (2020) studied the assimilation of Coptic Orthodox Egyptian immigrants in Texas. The Coptic Orthodox Egyptian immigrants are identified by their religion and ethnicity. Amin hypothesized that parental religious and school involvement in the coethnic community contributes to their children's educational attainment; however, when parent involvement in school and involvement in religion were compared, parent involvement in the ethno-ethnic community will influence their children's achievement more significantly.

Coptic Orthodox priests in four Texas cities (Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio) were contacted by Amin (2020) via email seeking the voluntary participation of Coptic immigrant parents with at least one child in Grades 1-12. The priests sent 311 emails through their listserv asking parents to participate in the research. Eighty-three (27%) parents responded and participated in a cross-sectional web-based survey administered through Survey Monkey. Each participant could answer survey questions for up to seven children, yielding data for 106 children. The survey contained 29 questions, two of which were close-ended.

The dependent variables in the study were the children's educational achievement, while the independent variables were religious involvement and parental school involvement (Amin, 2020). Ordinary Least Squares regression models were used

to analyze the data. The results showed a positive correlation between parental involvement in their children's education attainment ($r=0.35$, $p<0.0001$). On the other hand, there is a weak connection between parental religious involvement and parental school involvement ($r=0.21$, $p<0.05$). The study's findings aligned with other scholars' positions who argued that the answer to immigrants and their children's success is to assimilate into mainstream society (Amin, 2020).

Acculturation

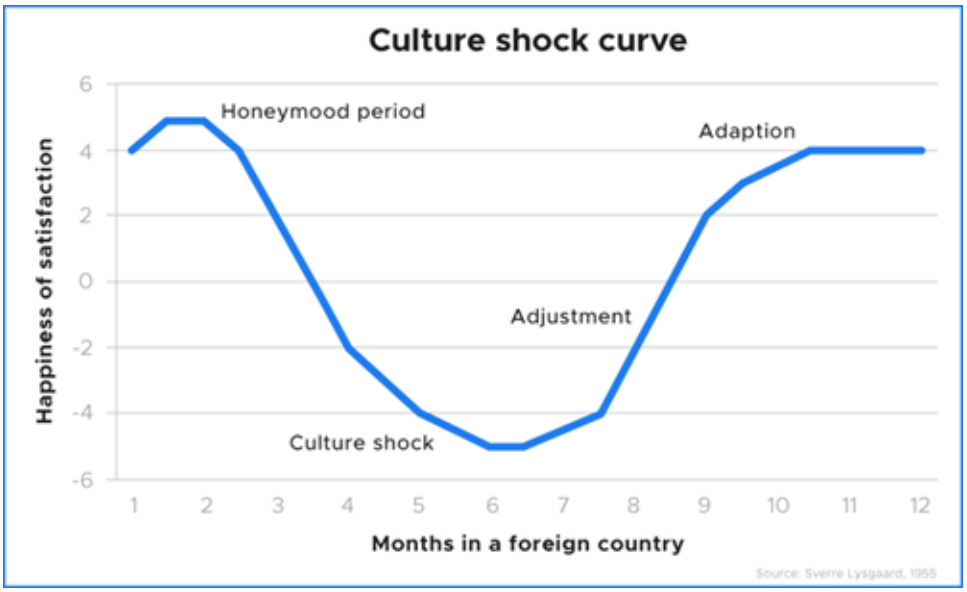
Acculturation is generally conceptualized as the social and psychological adjustments individuals or groups experience as they adapt to a culture that differs from theirs. One of the aspects of cultural adjustments is culture shock (Berry, 2005). Oberg (1960) first used the term culture shock and referred to the almost instantaneous feeling of disorientation individuals experience when encountering an unfamiliar culture. When educators move abroad to live and work, they bring their own cultural identities and live in an environment that differs from their experiences (Berry, 2005; Stroud Stasel, 2021). Because of the socio-cultural differences between immigrant teachers and Americans, immigrant teachers are more than likely to experience culture shock from their new students, colleagues, and an unfamiliar working environment (Hutchinson & Jazzar, 2007, cited in Ospina & Medina, 2020).

Most acculturation theories are in psychology and have developed since Oberg's (1960) seminal work on culture shock. Culture shock is a normal reaction, and most people feel confused, nervous, irritable, and uncertain. Culture shock and the stages of culture shock are part of the acculturation process. Oberg, a renowned Finnish-Canadian anthropologist, coined the term culture shock. He described culture shock as an

emotional, psychological, behavioral, and cognitive adjustment individuals undergo when they relocate to an environment and interact with a new culture that differs from their own (Stroud Stasel, 2021). Oberg opined that culture shock is a complex phenomenon and conflicts with how it affects different individuals. He postulated that culture shock is experienced through four broadly defined stages. Figure 3 illustrates Oberg's culture shock (Oberg, 1960, as cited in McCluskey, 2020).

Figure 3

Illustration of Oberg's (1960) Stages of Culture Shock



Note. From Culture Shock Stages: Everything You Need to Know by Lauren McCluskey (2020). https://www.now-health.com/en/blog/culture-shock-stages/ Copyright 2021 by Now Health International.

Culture shock occurs in stages. The first stage of culture shock is the honeymoon or euphoric stage. The first phase is characterized by a fascination with the new culture, excitement about the different aspects of life, and an overall enjoyable experience. This phase can last anywhere from a few days to a few months in the host country. During the

first stage of culture shock, the traveler quickly identifies the cultural difference between them and their host community. At this stage, moving to a new environment seems like the best decision the individual has ever made and is overwhelmingly positive (McCluskey, 2020; Pacheco, 2020).

During the second stage of culture shock, the person begins to experience frustration and anxiety. The second stage is referred to as the negotiation or disintegration stage. The excitement gradually disappears, and the person begins to miss friends and family back home, experiencing trouble in school and work, language barriers, or difficulty shopping. The traveler may also experience homesickness at this stage, and even bouts of depression may set in. This is the most challenging part of living abroad, and the immigrant may begin to harbor resentment and hostility toward their host community (Worthy et al., 2020).

The third stage of culture shock is the adjustment stage to the host environment. At this stage of the process, the person has grown accustomed to their new host environment and become familiar with places, people, food, customs, and local way of life. This stage usually begins around Month 6, and by this point, the person may have learned some of the common languages and have made a few friends who are helping them to understand and adjust to the host community culture (McCluskey, 2020; Worthy et al., 2020).

The acceptance of the bicultural setting is the fourth stage of culture shock. The person no longer feels isolated or lonely. The individual feels a sense of belonging and is more comfortable in their new country and community. During the acceptance stage, the individual can pull together the resources they need to cope and prevent culture shock

from ruining their otherwise rich experience living abroad (McCluskey, 2020; Participate Learning, 2018).

An individual's experiences of culture shock are ascribed to the differences between an individual's home culture and their host community culture. Berry (2005) developed the acculturative stress theory in response to Oberg's (1960) seminal work on culture shock. Berry (2005) reframed the idea involving both opportunities and challenges. Research on Berry's (1977) acculturation theory has led to decade-long careers studying acculturation. Nevertheless, gaps exist in the research on international teachers, resulting in a dearth of information on immigrant teachers working abroad (Stroud Stasel, 2021).

The northwest side of Chicago serves as the entryway for resettled immigrants and refugees in America. During 1 academic year, Tran and Birman (2017) studied 10 teachers of 12 Somalian Bantu elementary students in the northwestern side of Chicago. In this qualitative study of the expectations teachers held for Somali Bantu refugee students, eight boys and four girls were included and placed in regular education classes but were pulled out for their ESL classes. The study also included two ESL and eight regular education teachers. The study explored teacher expectations for the students using context analysis of one-on-one interviews with the teachers who taught the students. The teacher interviews lasted anywhere from 45 to 60 minutes.

The results of Tran and Birman's (2017) research showed that teachers held several expectations of their students. Tran and Birman identified (a) acculturation of the American language, (b) behaviors, (c) classroom assimilation, (d) family home/home, and (e) internal attributes as the five expectations the teachers had for their students.

Seven teachers (n=7) reported on expectations that students are learning to read, speak, and write the English language, thus meeting the expectation. Five teachers (n=5) said that Somali Bantu students knew the major U.S. holidays and were knowledgeable about current events and societal roles, thus meeting the American knowledge acculturation expectations. Five (n=5) of the 12 teachers reported that the Somali Bantu students met the behavioral assimilation expectation because they ate and dressed like Americans, thus meeting the expectation. Six teachers (n=6) said that teachers expected the Somali Bantu students to change their attitudes and emotions to conform to the class expectations. Grade-level skill and mastery were mentioned by nine (n=9) of the 10 (n=10) teachers. Their expectations of their students ranged from basic knowledge to working independently to attaining grade-level mastery skills. Teachers (n=6) stated that the Somali Bantu students' language, characteristics, and treatment of their peers affected their relationships with their peers. Four teachers (n=4) said Somali Bantu students' relationships would be affected based on how they treat others in their classrooms. Eight (n=8) of the 10 (n=10) teachers anticipated that Somali Bantu students would meet the behavioral expectations, follow the rules, and do as they were instructed.

Tran and Birman (2017) concluded that the central theme of acculturation ran across all the categories of student expectations explored in the study. All the teachers (n=10) mentioned American acculturative expectations for their students. They reported that when the Somali Bantu students first arrived in the U.S., they could not meet teacher expectations; however, they adapted and met the expectations their teachers had for them (Tran & Birman, 2017).

Dey et al. (2019) explored the cosmopolitanism and acculturation strategies of

immigrants in London by analyzing ethnic minorities' food consumption. The study participants were 31 first- and second-generation immigrants of European, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, African, Arabic, Afro-Caribbean, and Chinese ethnic backgrounds. The 31 participants of different educational levels participated in 45 to 90 minutes of in-depth interviews where they were asked about their perceptions of life in multicultural London. Photographs, observations, and dairy notes were also used in the data collection methodology. Results from the study showed that ethnic minorities' food consumption habits reflected their acculturation strategies. Results also showed that the British and other immigrants' cultures, multicultural corporations, and food brands such as McDonald's are interrelated and influence the ethnic consumers' acculturation strategies (Dey et al., 2019).

Güzel and Glazer (2019) used the Relative Acculturation Extended Model in a mixed methods study to investigate Black Americans' perceptions and preferences of African immigrant acculturation to the Black American host culture. The mixed methods study used the Relative Acculturation Extended Model and qualitative statements to study (a) Black Americans' perceptions and preferences of African immigrant acculturation to their native cultures to determine whether Black Americans observe separation strategy; (b) Black Americans' perceptions of African immigration and acculturation strategies in seven life domains of social relationships, friendships, values, spending habits, race relations, education, and communication; and (c) whether Black Americans' responses about African immigrant acculturation differed according to the plane (Black culture or Black American culture).

One hundred and seventy-three Black American adults born in the U.S. to

American-born parents participated in Güzel and Glazer's (2019) study. The sample was made up of 70.5% (n=122) females and 27.2% (n=47) males. Participants recruited online using the snowball recruitment methodology completed a survey to share their knowledge about how Black Americans perceived immigrant adjustments to Blacks in seven life domains. The quantitative study showed no differences in African immigrants' acculturating to native or Black cultures. Additionally, the results showed that Black Americans perceived African American immigrants are adapting to the American culture while maintaining their native cultures. This quantitative study expanded the knowledge of the perspectives, perceptions, and relationships between Black Americans and African immigrants (Güzel & Glazer, 2019).

In an explanatory mixed methods study, Buckingham and Suarez-Pedraza (2019) sought to appreciate the relationship between acculturation and well-being. The study hypothesized that if immigrants could acculturate in the ways they prefer (adopting the practices, beliefs, and identification they want), the lower their acculturative stress and better their self-reported well-being. The study participants comprised 438 Latinx immigrants ages 18 to 77 who have lived in Maryland, Virginia, Arizona, and New Mexico for less than 55 years. The participants for the study were divided into 12 focus groups, which included naturalized citizens (31.0%), documented immigrants (33.2%), and undocumented immigrants (35.8%) in each sample. The participants responded to a 212-item survey. Participants with low literacy skills responded aloud to the survey items so Buckingham and Suarez-Pedraza would document their responses. Using the snowball sampling strategy, the research team members and community partners recruited Latinx immigrants from frequently visited establishments.

Buckingham and Suarez-Pedraza's (2019) results suggested that the more distant Latinx immigrants are from practicing the culture, the poorer their well-being will be, which can partially be explained by acculturative stress. The study results support the idea that immigrant-environment interaction should be considered as researchers seek to understand acculturation and well-being. The findings indicated that when Latinx immigrants acculturate in their desired ways, they report better well-being. This can be partially explained by them experiencing less acculturative stress (Buckingham & Suarez-Pedraza, 2019).

Using a longitudinal design, Koo et al. (2021) examined international students' acculturative stress, adjustment, and college experience in their first year. Participants in the study included 192 international students in the U.S. on F-1 visas from 12 different countries pursuing their studies at one of the private research universities in the Mid-Atlantic region. Participants for the study were recruited during international new student orientation day. Data for the analysis were collected in two waves via online surveys. Fifty-eight percent of the participants were females, while 42% were males. Thirty-three percent of the participants came from China, 30% were from India, 15% were from South Korea, 2% were from Saudi Arabia, 2% were from Turkey, and 2% were from Greece. Ninety-five percent of the students in the study identified as being single, 81% of them spoke ESL, 42% stated they are from high socioeconomic status families, 47% identified as coming from a middle class family, and 11% said they are from low socioeconomic status families.

Among the 192 international students, Koo et al. (2021) measured stress relating to culture using the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students. The study

consisted of 36 questions scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Results from the survey showed that compared to their counterparts, the male students identified as being from low socioeconomic families, and those majoring in humanities displayed lower rates of satisfaction and higher rates of acculturative stress with their college experience compared to their female peers. The paired *t* test statistical procedure was used for college experiences and longitudinal comparison of acculturative stress between the first week of the first semester and the first week of the second semester. The students reported an increase in their English language proficiency, a decrease in their acculturative stress rate, higher social connectedness rates, a lower rate of homesickness, and higher satisfaction rates during the first week of the first semester. The results also showed that significant acculturative stress predictors were college experience satisfaction, English language proficiency, social connectedness, and self-esteem (Koo et al., 2021).

Stroud Stasel (2021) studied the factors affecting 17 educators' well-being using acculturation as the framework. The study closely examined the experiences of sojourning teachers, principals, and school counselors. The educators were of varying age groups, were at different stages in their professional careers, and earned their educator certification in Anglo-Western institutions. The 17 educators were employed in 11 Malaysian, Macanese, Chinese, Singaporean, and Thai K-12 schools. Collectively, the 17 educators in the study reported they experienced culture shock. The teachers who had lived abroad said their first experience working abroad was shocking, suggesting acculturation might have involved learned skills. During the data collection phase of the study, 17 teachers were separated from their jobs, one did not renew their contract, one

sought teaching work elsewhere, and one was a midnight runner. The study data indicate alienation and language barriers as standard features of both culture shock and acculturative stress (Stroud Stasel, 2021).

Researcher Positioning and Reflexivity

Positionality is a standpoint a researcher has taken about the social or political context of the participants involved in the research study. Any position the researcher adopts will affect every phase of the research process, including how the research is designed, how the research questions are constructed, and the study's outcome. A researcher's positionality is a reflection of (a) the study topic, (b) the study participants, and (c) the study context and process. There are some factors of positionality that are also fixed culturally, and these include factors such as the researcher's race, skin color, personal life history, experiences, and nationality; however, these fixed positionalities do not automatically lead to a particular point of view (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Holmes, 2020).

Reflexivity informs a researcher's positionality. Positionality refers to what the researcher knows and believes, while reflexivity is what they do with their knowledge. Reflexivity refers to examining one's beliefs and self-understanding about the biases, values, experiences, judgments, and practices they bring to a qualitative study that may have influenced the study's outcome. Reflexivity states that researchers must acknowledge and disclose themselves to the research participants and understand how they influence their research. Reflexivity requires the researchers to be self-conscious and self-evaluate their views, opinions, biases, or positions. A researcher's reflexivity and positionality may indirectly or directly affect the research design, process, and

interpretation of the data (Holmes, 2020; May & Perry, 2017).

Role of the Researcher

The role of a researcher in a qualitative study differs from that of a quantitative study researcher. Roger et al. (2018) stated that one of the unique features of qualitative research is the role of the researcher in conducting a qualitative study. Unlike other research, qualitative research acknowledges the connection between the researcher and the research; however, it is the researcher's responsibility to keep their assumptions and biases out of the research, thus establishing neutrality throughout the study. The purpose of a qualitative study is to explore lived experiences and give precedence to the underrepresented or unheard (Elliott, 2018; Roger et al., 2018).

My role as the researcher is an informed inquisitor because I am an international teacher who immigrated to America from Jamaica with the VIF program. The VIF program is one of the many EVPs that bring international teachers to the U.S. I arrived in America in 2009 to fill a science teaching position at a middle school in Charlotte, North Carolina, and have experienced the phenomenon under study. Undoubtedly, I have experienced similar terrain similar to that of the typical Jamaican immigrant teacher.

Epoche or bracketing was used to set aside personal experiences, preconceived notions, and biases about the EVP teacher experiences. I suspended personal preferences, experiences, assumptions, beliefs, values, and judgments toward the phenomenon. The phenomenon was approached from a new perspective to learn about other Jamaican teachers' unique personal experiences and understandings that have been taken for granted (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary

This chapter provided a literature review relevant to the phenomenon of immigrant teachers' lived experiences in America. Data from the U.S. federal government reveal severe teacher shortages across the U.S. The severity of teacher shortages varies within states, school districts, and subjects, with schools in low-income rural communities being the most severe. Low teacher retention rates and a lack of candidates applying to and entering teacher preparation programs are ascribed to America's chronic teacher shortage problems.

To address these shortages and fill positions in hard-to-staff schools, school districts have recruited overseas-trained educators to fill hard-to-staff vacancies and respond to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 content area specializations. Overseas-trained teachers were recruited to meet the requirements for highly qualified teachers and principals in each school as outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The EVP program, school districts, and teacher recruitment agencies make the phenomenon of Jamaican immigrant teachers living and working in America possible with the acquisition of nonimmigrant J-1 and H-1B work visas.

The purpose of this research was to make the personal experiences of a group of Jamaican teachers who came to America on the EVP, who are living and teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools explicit and visible. The lived experiences of Jamaican teachers have primarily remained undocumented. This research will add to the sparse and neglected area of study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

"*You'll ask some questions that other people have figured their way past, but you'll ask some good ones that nobody's asked yet and that's where the breakthroughs live."*–Bret Weinstein

Introduction

As America takes stock of the widespread teacher shortages, there are discussions about the anemic teaching workforce's ability to meet the various needs of the growing population of the nation's youths. The many reasons for teacher shortages are complex. As the student population is becoming increasingly diverse, school districts struggle to recruit educators who reflect and meet the complex and growing demands of their students' racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and linguistic makeup. Across the country, school leaders have utilized international EVP teachers to staff their schools and meet the growing demands of the diverse population. While the discussion at the center is the systemic shortages of teachers, missing from the debate is how foreign-born educators who are imported to staff difficult-to-fill positions in K-12 public and charter schools adapt to living and working in America. However, very little is known about the lived experiences of EVP teachers in North Carolina and predominantly those Jamaican immigrant teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 school districts.

Statement of the Problem

The American teaching workforce is often compared to a leaking bucket that loses a steady stream of teachers yearly. It takes scores of teachers to educate the nation's children. The shortage of quality teachers and unfilled positions in the nation's schools have the opportunity to undermine students' opportunities to receive the quality

education they deserve and their ability to learn.

Policymakers and school leaders struggle in recruiting and retaining a qualified teaching staff to address the teacher shortage problems that exist in North Carolina K-12 schools. One of the state's approaches to solving the teacher shortage problems and addressing the needs of the students is attracting, recruiting, and retaining excellent educators is by recruiting overseas-trained teachers. NCDPI has partnered with teacher recruitment agencies to bring internationally trained teachers to the U.S. on exchange visitor teacher programs to fill staff vacancies. Jamaican teachers on the EVP can obtain a nonimmigrant J-1 or H-1B visa that allows them to temporarily live and work in America for 5 or 6 years respectively.

Rationale for the Study

The primary purpose of the phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of a group of Jamaican EVP educators teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public schools. There is a shortage of studies about the lived experience of foreign-born and educated immigrant teachers and none about EVP Jamaican teachers temporarily practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public schools. This lack of literature regarding the lived experiences of EVP teachers who are practicing in America's K-12 schools has created a gap in information regarding the lived experiences of Jamaican-born and educated teachers recruited through the EVP practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public schools.

The research's theoretical foundations will amalgamate Gordon's (1964) theory of assimilation and Berry's (1977) acculturation theories. This phenomenological qualitative study aimed to close the gap in the literature by exploring the lived

experiences of EVP Jamaican teachers in northeastern North Carolina and adding to the neglected and sparse area of study. Researching the lived experiences of the Jamaican-born and educated EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina answered the research question. The findings will provide EVP stakeholders with pertinent information regarding Jamaican EVP teachers' unique living and working experiences in northeastern North Carolina.

Research Question

The study sought to explore the lived experiences of a group of Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. The research question which guided the study was

> What are the lived experiences faced by Jamaican educators while living and teaching in northeastern North Carolina?

Researchers use qualitative methodologies when they need to explore and study the nature of a phenomenon. Qualitative research aims to explain something that cannot be observed or calculated; hence, qualitative research seeks to examine the reality of individuals' or a group of people's narratives of their lived experiences as closely as possible (McLeod, 2019). This study follows a qualitative phenomenological methodology research design.

Research Methodology

This study followed a qualitative phenomenological methodology. A qualitative phenomenological research approach is one in which the researcher identifies the phenomenon that is explicitly centered on a shared experience by a common group of people. A rich, in-depth, detailed description of the phenomenon being investigated is the

central aspect of phenomenological research and was therefore most appropriate to address the objective of this study. The study explored the adventures of a group of Jamaican EVP teachers through their stories of responses and reactions to challenges and successes that came about because of their experiences while practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. Transcendental phenomenology, predominantly developed by Edmund Husserl in the early 1900s, was used to understand the lived experiences of the Jamaican educators in this study.

The qualitative research method began with presumptions and theoretical frameworks that would inform the study and address the participant's experiences. The qualitative research approach used in this study included collecting data in the participant's natural environment and examining their responses, reactions, and feelings. Quantitative methodology was unsuitable for this research since the study did not require collecting numerical data. While the study used 10 participants to represent Jamaican-born and educated EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina, the number of participants involved did not influence the study's results. Because a qualitative phenomenological study aims to generalize, there was no required minimum number of participants to participate in the study. Researchers have opined that a sample size of 10 is adequate for a qualitative phenomenological study (Hall et al., 2016).

Numerous psychologists and other social science scholars have long used phenomenology as a research model. "Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.d., para. 1). In other words, phenomenology studies a wide range of human experiences ranging from one's perceptions, thoughts, memories,

imaginations, emotions, desires, and social and linguistic activities that are described by the participants. This description culminates with the account of the crux of the experience as revealed by the group of people who have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The different phenomenological research methods include transcendental phenomenology, coined by Husserl (1858-1938), considered the father of transcendental phenomenology, and hermeneutic phenomenology, articulated by Heidegger (1889-1976), Husserl's student (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Transcendental phenomenology involves the researcher separating or putting away themselves from prior conceptions of the experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the human experience as it is lived and interpreting the experiences to find meaning in the experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Transcendental Phenomenology

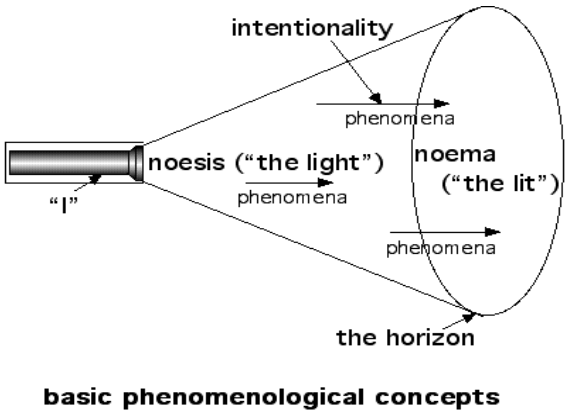
Rao (2019) advanced that at the end of the 19th century, phenomenology philosophy came about by mathematician Edmund Husserl. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical approach that is a detailed and systematic methodology seeking to understand the structures of human experiences. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology focuses on describing the experiences of the participants in the research with less focus on the researcher's interpretations (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in Rao, 2019). Phenomenology represents a detailed and systematic attempt to describe a phenomenon rather than explain it to understand the first-person lived experience structures. Husserl's concept emphasizes that the researcher must put aside their personal experiences and be objective as much as possible to gain new insights and

perspectives about the phenomenon under investigation based on the lived experiences described by the participant in the study (Rao, 2019).

In an attempt to fully understand the phenomenon studied, Husserl proposed phenomenological reduction (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Reduction is all beliefs, assumptions, and preconceived perceptions regarding the phenomenon studied being set aside or bracketed to grasp the essence of the experience. Bracketing is also called the epoche. Reduction allows the researcher to record the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences in an open, naïve, direct, and honest manner (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Husserl also considered intentional acts or intentional experiences important in understanding transcendental phenomenology (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Husserl believed every intentional experience consists of a noema and a noesis. Figure 4 shows a visual interpretation Husserl believed represented the researcher's mindful intentions behind studying the phenomenon (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Figure 4

Husserl's Visual Representation of Noema and Noesis Phenomenological Approach



Note. Visual interpretation of basic phenomenological concepts. Adapted from Qualitative Methods: Part One by C. George Boeree (1998) via Shippensburg

University's online portal. Copyright 1998 by C. George Boeree. https://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/qualmethone.html

Researchers must consider the noema and noesis in phenomenological research to fully comprehend the participants' lived experiences. The noema would represent the "what" about the experience, while noesis is how different participants perceived their experiences (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Hermeneutical Phenomenology

Heidegger and Hofstadter's (1982) approach to phenomenological research differs from Husserl's in how he perceived it should be explored. Transcendental phenomenology takes a descriptive approach, while hermeneutic phenomenology takes a descriptive approach. Husserl believed researchers should set aside their own beliefs and presuppositions through bracketing (Heidegger & Hofstadter, 1982). Heidegger and Hofstadter thought it was impossible to set aside intrinsic awareness, which is fundamental to understanding the experience. A transcendental researcher focuses exclusively on the participants in the study's descriptions of their lived experiences and not on their interpretations of the phenomenology under investigation. In contrast, hermeneutic research focuses on the participant's understanding and descriptions, and the researcher interprets and deduces meanings from the participant's life experiences (Heidegger & Hofstadter, 1982).

Research Design

A selected group of 10 Jamaican EVP teachers of mixed gender participated in the study. The research process began in November 2022 and ended in March 2023 (Table 5).

Table 5

Researcher Timeline

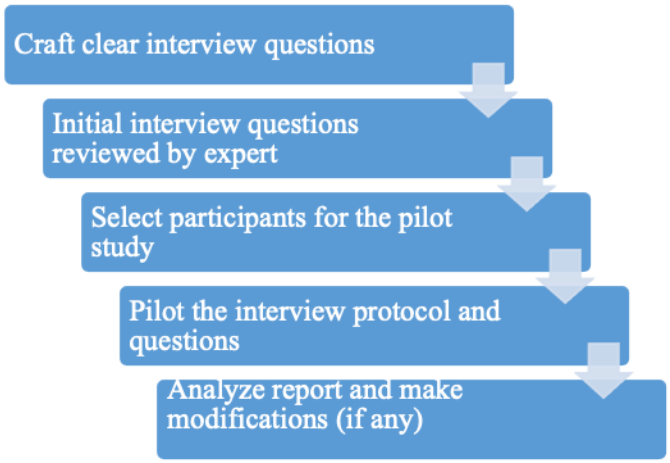
Date	Activity
November 2022	• Craft clear interview questions for the study. • Interview questions reviewed and validated by experts. • Permission sought from Institutional Review Board to conduct the study. • Pilot interview protocols. • Recruit and select participants who are Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools.
December 2022-February 2023	• Virtually schedule and hold informed consent meetings. • Virtually scheduled dates and site for individual 30-minute semi-structured interviews. • Conduct 30-minute semi-structured interviews with Jamaican EVP teachers. • Transcribe digitally recorded interviews. • Member checking-participants review the transcribed interview for accuracy. • Code, analyze, interpret, and document data for reporting purposes.
February-March 2023	• Further analysis and interpretation of data, if necessary, based on feedback
April 2023	• The study results will be shared with the participants, GWU, school district leaders that recruit Jamaican teachers, teacher recruitment agencies, and the broader population of educators.

This study followed a qualitative methodology focusing on lived experiences told by a group of Jamaican teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. Majid et al. (2017) explained that, unlike a quantitative study, the main instrument for generating data in a qualitative study is the researcher, and at the heart of interviewing are the interview questions. Pilot studies are used in qualitative research to test the research questions. The pilot interview employed in this research was

to identify any flaws or limitations with the research questions and interview procedure and to make necessary modifications to strengthen the interview procedure and interview questions. The interview questions were piloted with Jamaican EVP teachers living in North Carolina who were not targeted to participate in the research study (Appendix B). Figure 5 explains the steps that were used in conducting the pilot study of the interview questions.

Figure 5

Interview Questions Pilot Study



Note. Visual representation of steps in conducting a pilot study. Adapted from Piloting for interviews in qualitative research: Operationalization and lessons learned by Majid, M. A., Othman, M., Mohamad, S. F., & Lim, S. (2017). *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 7*(4), 1075. https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v7-i4/2916

The pilot study was used to increase the effectiveness of the interview process and to ensure that the open-ended questions would answer the research question and achieve the study's objective.

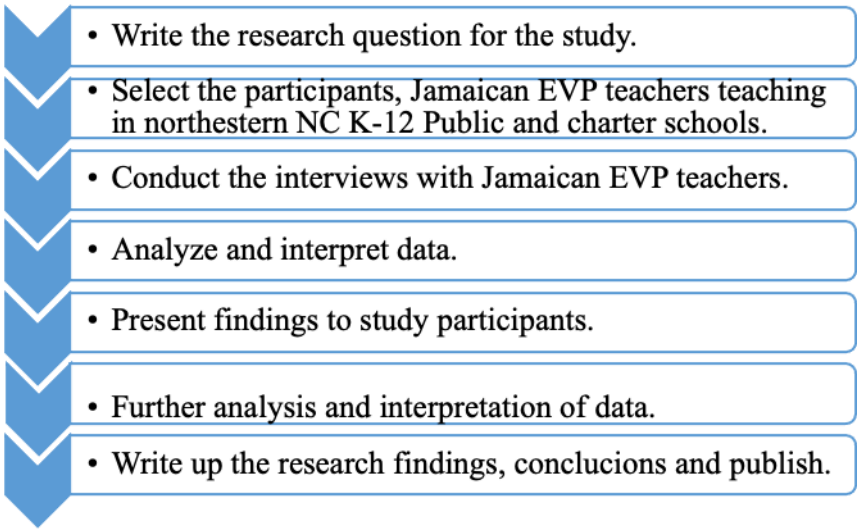
Well-crafted qualitative interview questions allow the researcher to understand

the phenomenon from the person's account of their experiences. One of the main obstacles in gathering valid data in a semi-structured interview is allowing the interviewee the opportunity to share their subjective experiences. To avoid this issue, I refrained from asking leading or double-barrel questions during the interviews. The interview protocol was adhered to because it was a necessary aid to keep the interview process with each participant consistent.

The phenomenological design connected the participant's stories as told by them to the phenomenon of assimilation and acculturation through semi-structured interviews. I collected the stories of EVP Jamaican teachers' lived experiences assimilating and acculturating into new teaching positions and host communities in northeastern North Carolina. Since the primary purpose of the study was to make meaning of a group of teachers' lived experiences, the study's purpose informed the research design and methodology. The critical characteristics of the study's design are illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Critical Characteristics Within the Study



The research design plan organized the research to ensure the research question

would be addressed. A selected group of EVP Jamaican teachers in northeastern North Carolina teaching in K-12 public schools were interviewed to gather data for this study.

Sampling and Participation

Immigrant teachers require significant adjustments to their work environment and host community. Living and working under starkly different conditions from their home country can be daunting. Issues relating to culture shock include social isolation, teacher-student relationship, communication gaps, and missing those they left behind in their home country, which can be stressful for many overseas-born and trained teachers as they transition to their new environment.

According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), participants in a phenomenological study should meet specific criteria; most importantly, they should experience the same phenomenon to be studied. Therefore, phenomenological research requires a homogenous group of participants. The study focused on a group of EVP Jamaican-born and trained educators practicing in rural northeastern North Carolina K-12 school districts. The target population has experienced the same phenomenon: EVP Jamaican teachers recruited in Jamaica obtained a J-1 or H-1B visa and were teaching or taught in a K-12 public school in northeastern North Carolina. The study involved EVP participants from Jamaica who have taught in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools for at least 1 academic year.

Study participants were sourced using the snowball sampling method, also known as the Chain-referral sampling method. The snowball or Chain-referral sampling began with the initial selection of participants who recruited additional participants for the study (Appendix B). This participant recruitment method was non-probability and non-random;

the initial recruits used the unique selection criteria to identify participants for the study until the sample size was met. Snowball sampling is used where potential participants such as the EVP Jamaican-born and educated teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools are hidden or hard to locate (Bindah, 2019).

The nature of the snowball sampling method facilitated and enabled me to determine participants' suitability and recruited them for the study. The research used the unique criteria of EVP Jamaican-born and educated teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools for at least 1 year. Due to the nature of the snowball or chain-referral sampling method used in this study, the initial identification and sourcing of participants began with referrals from professional colleagues and through a Jamaican EVP teacher known to me who was teaching in a northeastern North Carolina K-12 public school. These colleagues were asked to refer potential participants for the study by making initial contacts with Jamaican EVP teachers who were teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public schools. The initial group of recruits were asked to solicit or refer other prospective study participants who met the selection criteria until the sample size was met.

Initial contact with prospective participants was by phone call, email, or text message to introduce myself and sought a verbal agreement to participate in the study (Appendix C). Those who did not meet the selection criteria or who were not willing to take part in the study were asked to refer other prospective participants. After the initial contact, the prospective participants preferred email addresses were collected and used to send an email officially inviting them to participate in the study. In this email, I introduced myself and explained the purpose and structure of the research; the

participant's role; and their right to participate, not to participate, or leave the study group at any time during the study (Appendix D). The nature of the study did not require obtaining site authorizations since participants were allowed to select their preferred locations for their interviews.

Data Collection and Management

Qualitative data for the research were collected through 30 minutes of semi-structured interviews with a group of Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools for at least 1 year. The instrument was designed to explore a group of EVP Jamaican-born and educated teachers' experiences as they assimilated and acculturated to teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools for at least 1 year. All participants were screened for eligibility, and only those Jamaican EVP teachers who met the selection criteria were invited to participate in the phenomenological study.

Before each interview session, the participants were guided through the interview protocol. Then, each participant was greeted in our native Jamaican Patios language. The selected format was intended to build the participants' trust, thus allowing them to answer the interview questions directly, openly, and honestly. However, all participant interviews were conducted entirely in English. The interview was divided into two sections. Part A captured the participant's demographic information, while Part B of the semi-structured interview consisted of open-ended interview questions. Part B of the semi-structured interview included six questions concerning the phenomenon (Appendix E). During the 30-minute interview sessions, unscripted, probing, follow-up questions were asked when elaboration and clarification were needed. A combination of audio recording and digital

note-taking devices was used to record the interviews. The audiotape was used for accuracy and to generate verbatim transcripts.

The study participants included a mixture of males and females. Participating in the study was strictly voluntary, and participants in the study were not compensated for their time. Participants were made aware of their rights to participate or not participate in the research. Selected participants read and signed the Gardner-Webb University-approved consent forms for participating in the study (Appendix F). Permission was sought from Gardner-Webb University's Institutional Review Board to collect participants' identifying information and conduct the 30-minute semi-structured interviews. Participants were asked to sign the Gardner-Webb University research participant consent form. I assigned aliases to each participant. Concealing participant identity using aliases was essential in maintaining anonymity during and after the study was completed and published for public consumption.

The semi-structured face-to-face interview lasted for 30 minutes. Each of the participants was required to sign, date, and return the informed consent forms via email, or they could hand-deliver them on or before the date of the interview. The purpose of the informed consent form was to provide evidence indicating that the interviewee was not coerced or promised incentives and did not receive incentives for their participation and that they did so at their own will and consent. Each participant was given ample time to review the ethical considerations and the interview questions so they could adequately articulate their responses to the interview questions outlining their experiences while teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 schools.

Data were collected from the semi-structured interviews of the participants at

their preferred times and locations. The nature of the semi-structured interview was to provide an opportunity for researchers and consumers of the study to develop a deep appreciation for the phenomenon. For each section of the interview, an interview guide was used to engage the participants about the research question and to create a free-flowing dialogue between the participants and me. I took notes while I listened to each participant's story about living and working as a Jamaican-born and educated EVP teacher in northeastern North Carolina.

The storage and disposal of research participants' personal and confidential information must be handled with extreme care. All voice recordings and electronic data collected during the research are stored on a password-secured computer, on a password-protected Universal Serial Bus (USB) drive in a locked storage file cabinet. To protect the participant's identities, all paper copies of transcribed interviews or handwritten notes are stored in a locked storage cabinet in my work office at home for a prescribed time. At the end of the storage period, electronic data will be deleted, USB devices destroyed, and paper copies shredded to conceal and protect participant identities.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with transcribing the data collected on audio into text format. I first used a deductive coding method by developing a codebook that I used to arrange and analyze the data collected during the 30-minute semi-structured interview process. The codebook was in the form of a data table created in Microsoft Word. It was used to provide organization to the data so I could examine it systematically to increase the validity of the analysis.

The initial code was created using the research question, themes, and patterns

identified while conducting the interviews. Transcripts of participant responses were reviewed alongside the interview questions. The answers were coded to methodically and systematically identify reoccurring themes within each response. The codebook was used as a source of reference during the analysis process and provided a rich understanding of the data. A table was used to record critical concepts, and labels were assigned to words and phrases that represented essential and common themes in the answers.

The inductive coding method was also applied during analysis as new narratives and theories emerged from the data. Codes for themes and patterns not coded in the initial codebook were added to the codebook as new narratives or patterns were discovered during analysis.

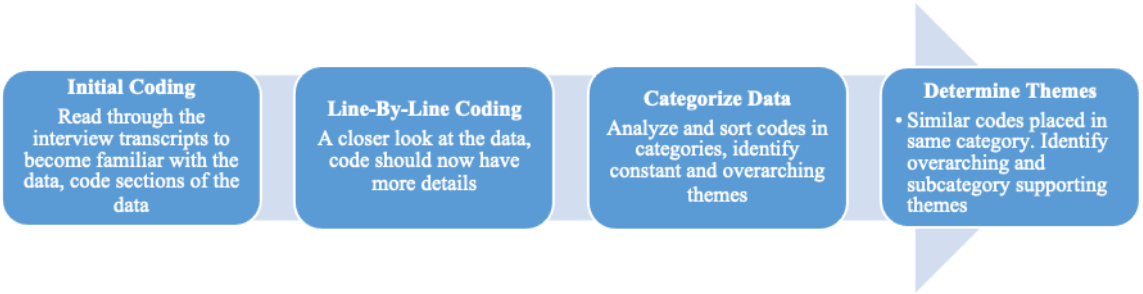
Codes in a qualitative study are as crucial as numbers in a quantitative study. Both deductive and inductive data analysis methods were utilized to establish patterns and themes using the data collected from the participants' reflections and lived experiences. Deductive and inductive analytic practices were employed to provide a complete perspective of the investigated phenomenon and to answer the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The inductive analysis helped developed codes and themes, made sense of the data, explained findings using literature and theory, and identified representative data to support the conclusion. On the other hand, the deductive analysis allowed me to sort and organize the data into categories, maintain alignment with the research question, and apply the theoretical framework.

Yi (2018) described coding as a part of the data analysis process where the researcher breaks the data down into minor units and then reorganizes the data in a meaningful way to identify relatable stories. Data collected in the 30-minute semi-

structured interviews were coded to assign and generate themes and subthemes to explore and form relationships within the content. Figure 7 outlines the data coding stages that were used to determine themes and answer the research question.

Figure 7

Data Coding Process



The initial coding process was a quick read of the transcribed interviews. During this time, notes were written down and pertinent sections of the data were labeled with code names for quick reference. In the second stage, every line of the data was coded, and details were added. During the line-by-line stage of coding, everything was coded for detail. After, similar codes were placed in the same categories to identify consistent themes and overarching themes from the data. The final step was to categorize the coded data into similar themes in a meaningful order to tell the Jamaican EVP immigrant teachers' stories.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are key features of all research and are used to evaluate the quality of the research. In a qualitative study, meticulous attention must be paid to the researcher's subjectivity, the research design, the research methodology, and writing up the results to ensure that the research findings are reliable and valid. Reliability is about the uniformity of the data and the extent to which the results can be duplicated if the

research is repeated under identical conditions. On the other hand, validity deals with the accuracy of the data and how well the results are consistent with established theories and other measures regarding an identical concept (Middleton, 2022).

Creswell and Poth (2018) explained validity as how researchers check to ensure that their findings are accurate from the researcher's and participant's vantage points. Creswell and Poth advanced nine strategies for validation in qualitative research. Creswell and Poth grouped the nine validation strategies into three groups referred to as lenses: (a) researcher's lens (corroborating evidence through triangulation and multiple data sources, discovering negative case or disconfirming evidence, clarifying researcher biases or engaging in reflexivity); (b) participant's lens (member checking or seeking participant feedback, collaborating with participants, and having a prolonged engagement and persistent observations in the field), and (c) reader's or reviewer's lens (enabling external audits; generating a rich, thick description; and having a peer review of the debriefing of the data and research process). Creswell and Poth suggested that researchers should integrate at least two of the validation strategies in their qualitative research.

This study used Creswell and Poth's (2018) strategies to validate the research. I used member checking to assess the data validity. Member checking or participant feedback is the most crucial method for proving the credibility of the study; therefore, I solicited the participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretation of the data and reported any instances of negative or harmful discrepancies in the data (Appendix G).

Summary

The study's purpose explored the shared phenomenon of a group of Jamaican

EVP teachers teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. The research focused on 10 Jamaican EVP teachers teaching in northeastern North Carolina for at least 1 year. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach was used in the study. The qualitative phenomenological methodology provided detailed descriptions of the lived experiences and reflections as told by the participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Using an amalgamation of Berry's (1977) acculturation and Gordon's (1964) assimilation models as the conceptual framework, the data collected were analyzed, and the results presented, to reflect the meanings constructed from the phenomenon based on the participants' viewpoints.

Chapter 4: Results

"*Everybody has a story. Moreover, there is something to be learned from every experience.*"- Oprah Winfrey

Introduction

Jotkoff (2022) stated that the National Education Association, the most prominent teachers' union in the U.S., cited data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics stating that schools across the U.S. are facing a shortage of 300,000 teachers and staff. While there is a shortage of educators across the U.S., the needs are not uniform across the states, districts, or schools (Nast, 2022).

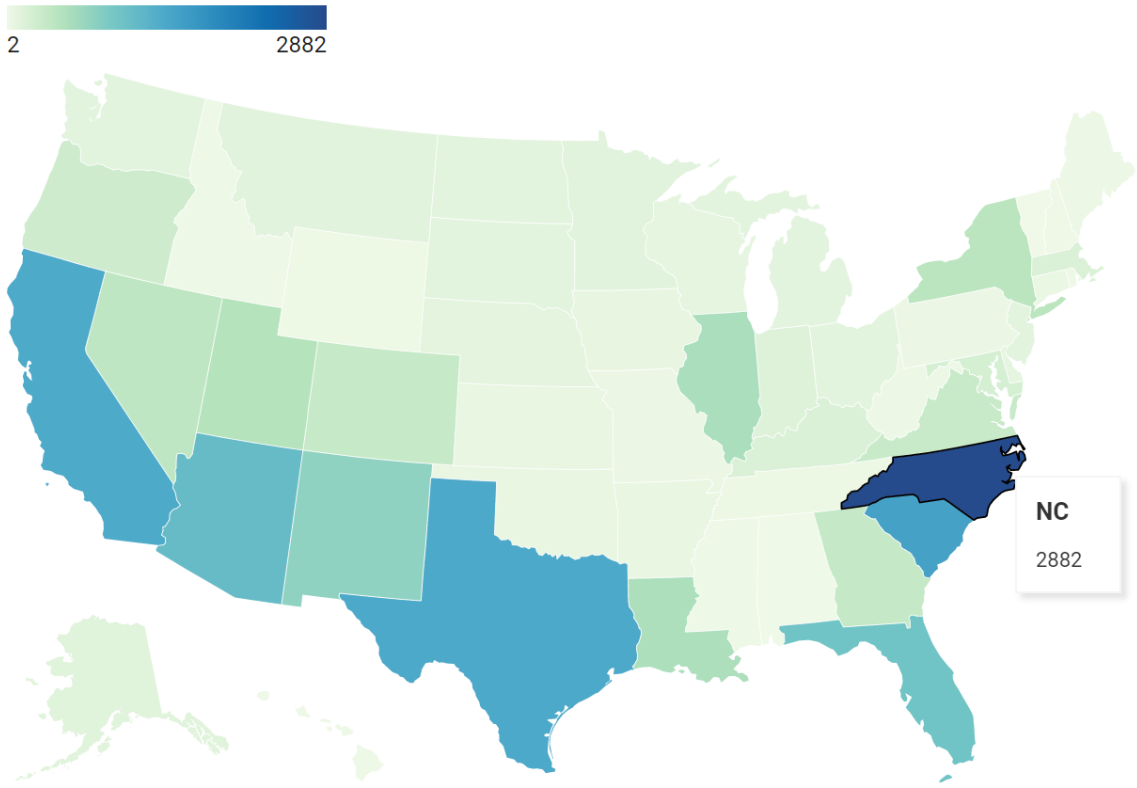
Fewer people are graduating from North Carolina college teaching programs. Federal data in 2020 show that only 4,228 students completed the North Carolina teaching programs. NCDPI and local school district leaders need help attracting and retaining young college graduates in their classrooms. NCDPI needs help to address the current staffing crisis and to build a solid and diverse teaching workforce. School district leaders have turned to innovative ways to bridge the gap in the labor force by using international teacher recruitment agencies to recruit and place foreign-born and trained teachers in some North Carolina public and charter school classrooms. Some rural school districts hire international teachers because they struggle to hire anyone else (Heubeck, 2022; Johnson, 2022).

International teachers recruited to work in the U.S. must be eligible for a J-1 or H-1B visa. The J-1 visa is a 1-year visa, which can be renewed annually for 5 years, while the H-1B visa is a 3-year visa renewable once for an additional 3 years. North Carolina has led the nation in hiring international teachers to fill critical shortage areas in science,

math, and special education in K-12 schools. Figure 8 shows the number of J-1 visas the U.S. Department of State has granted international teachers since 2016 (Johnson, 2022).

Figure 8

J-1 Teacher Visas Granted to North Carolina Since 2016



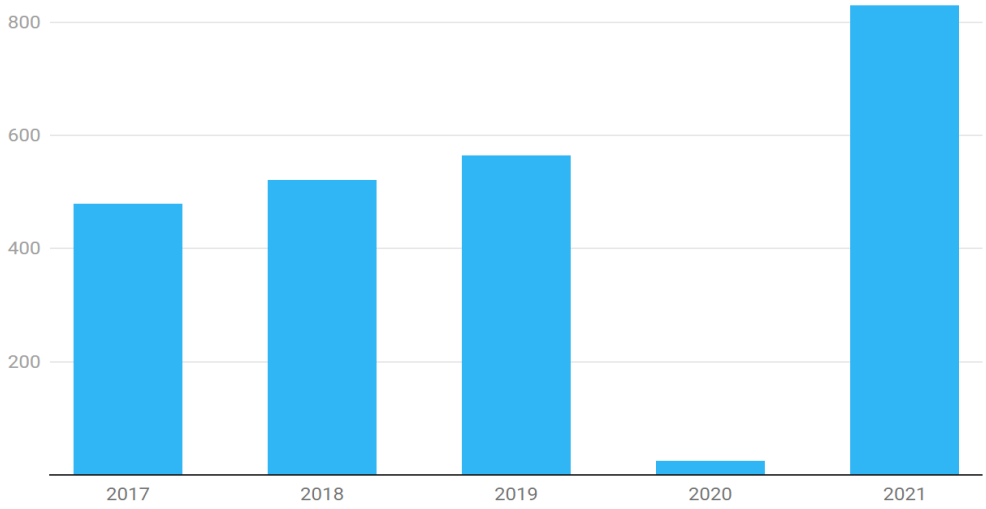
Note. The image was created using Datawrapper with data retrieved from the U.S. Department of State (2022). Data are for calendar years and not school years. https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/QOWcp/2/

The EVP teacher population in North Carolina is expanding as recent college graduates' interests in teaching seem to wane. North Carolina leads the nation in hiring international teachers in K-12 schools compared to other states. The U.S. Department of State has issued 2,882 J-1 visas to North Carolina EVP teachers since 2016 (Johnson, 2022).

The U.S. Department of State granted 2,422 new J-1 visas to EVP teachers nationwide between the 2017 and 2021 calendar years. Statistically, North Carolina receives 10% to 20% of all J-1 EVP teacher visas issued each year (Fickey Martinez Law Firm, 2022). Figure 9 shows the number of J-1 EVP teacher visas the U.S. Department of State granted for the 2017-2021 calendar years.

Figure 9

J-1 Visas Issued to North Carolina EVP Teachers Between 2017 and 2021 Calendar Years



Note. The image was created with Datawrapper using data retrieved from the Fickey Martinez Law Firm (2022). Data are for calendar years and not school years. https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/w2Waw/2/

The U.S. Department of State tracks the number of J-1 visas granted to EVP teachers yearly. Data show 480 new J-1 teacher visas were granted in the 2017 calendar year. In the 2018 and 2019 calendar years, the number of J-1 visa application approvals steadily increased. In 2020, the number of visas issued to international educators in North Carolina declined considerably due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Trump

administration's temporary visa ban. The number of visas issued to North Carolina EVP teachers jumped by almost 97% from 25 in 2020 to 830 in 2021. Eight hundred and thirty new teacher J-1 visas were issued in 2021, the most since 2016 (Fickey Martinez Law Firm, 2022).

EVP teachers have made significant contributions to the North Carolina public school system and have the lowest attrition rate of all teaching groups (Jackson, 2022). EVP teachers are one of North Carolina's fastest-growing subsets of the teaching population. According to the U.S. State Department, among the 19,491 teachers from 114 countries who were issued cultural exchange visas, the greatest numbers have come from developing countries such as Jamaica, Columbia, and the Philippines. Between 2015 and 2021, Jamaica sent 2,213 EVP teachers to the U.S. (Heubeck, 2022). Despite the vast number of international EVP teachers recruited to fill vacancies in North Carolina schools, understanding how Jamaican EVP teachers assimilate and acculturate to teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools can be incredibly beneficial to both the teachers and the school districts.

Research Question

The primary purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the lived experiences of Jamaican EVP educators currently teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. The research question that guided the study was

> What are the lived experiences faced by Jamaican educators while living and teaching in northeastern North Carolina?

Approximately 5 hours of the Jamaican EVP teachers' interviews were recorded

and transcribed verbatim to learn about the intricacies surrounding their experiences. Table 6 shows the research question and its alignment with the semi-structured interview questions, the data collection tool.

Table 6

Research and Interview Question Alignment

Research question	Interview questions/data collection instrument
What are the lived experiences faced by Jamaican educators while living and teaching in northeastern North Carolina?	1. What are the differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina? 2. Describe your experience adjusting to the cultural differences between Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina. 3. What are the differences between teaching in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina? 4. Describe your experiences adapting your teaching to the needs of rural northeastern North Carolina students. 5. What supports should schools/school districts provide Jamaican teachers to assist in their adjustment to the American schooling/culture? 6. What else would you like to tell me about your experiences as a Jamaican EVP teacher living and working in rural northeastern North Carolina?

Participant Interview Protocol

The snowball sampling method was used to recruit Jamaican EVP teachers to participate in the study. Ten Jamaican EVP teachers of mixed gender currently teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools were selected to participate in the study. The face-to-face semi-structured interview sought to understand how Jamaican EVP teachers assimilate and acculturate to teaching in northeastern North

Carolina K-12 public and charter school systems. The interview questions consisted of six open-ended questions designed to answer the research question (Appendix E). The study reported the participants' positive and negative experiences teaching in northeastern North Carolina public and charter schools.

The interview protocol used to guide the semi-structured interview was as follows:

1. A mutually agreed upon setting with very little distraction was selected.
2. The purpose of the interview was explained.
3. The terms of confidentiality, security, and storage of information were discussed.
4. The interview format was presented.
5. The length of the interview and additional time for member checking were discussed.
6. The interview questions were shared and reviewed with the participants to eliminate ambiguities and ensure they understood what the questions were asked.
7. Contact information was shared for further questions/discussions before the start of the interview.
8. Opportunity was given to ask questions or share concerns if they had any before the interview began.
9. An audio recording device was used to record the interview to capture accurate data and generate verbatim transcripts.

Participant Profiles

The study's participants originated from different locations in Jamaica, are in varying stages of their careers, and have taught in Jamaican public primary or high schools. Each participant teaches in K-12 schools in various northeastern North Carolina school districts. Table 7 presents the demographics of the research participants.

Table 7

Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonyms	Age	Educational level	Endorsement area	Teaching level	Years teaching
Annie-Joe	38	Masters	Math 6-9; Science 6-9	Middle School	16
DeMay	46	Doctorate	Math 6-9	Middle School	21
Darrion	36	Bachelors	Math 6-9	Middle School	8
Clarke	35	Bachelors	English Language Arts 6-9	Middle School	8
GiGi	34	Bachelors	English Language Arts 6-9	Middle School	9
Duhaney	40	Masters	Math 6-9	Middle School	16
Shauna	39	Bachelors	Career Technical Education (CTE)- Family and Consumer Science 9-12	High School	15
Karin	36	Bachelors	Math 6-9; Math 9-12	High School	12
Halifax	35	Bachelors	Science 6-9	Middle School	11
Georgia	31	Bachelors	English Language Arts 6-9	Middle School	8

The demographic information is included to provide mini-portraits of each participant. Some of the pseudonyms used in the study were chosen by the participants, and others were assigned to the participants by me. The pseudonyms assigned were shared with each participant. The pseudonyms are used to protect the participant's identity and were used throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

Annie-Joe

Annie-Joe is a single parent of a teenage child. Teaching is a second career for her. She has been teaching for 16 years, 11 of which were spent in Jamaica teaching ninth-grade math. Annie-Joe earned her Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics education from Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina, and a Master of Arts degree in curriculum and instruction from Nova Southeastern University, Florida. Global recruited Annie-Joe to teach middle school math. Annie-Joe is in the third year of her contract with Global. She is certified to teach Grades 6-9 math. She taught sixth-grade math at her original placement school for 1 year but elected to change schools at the end of the first year of her contract and has been teaching eighth-grade math at a neighboring middle school for 2 years.

DeMay

DeMay taught high school math in Jamaica before filling a vacant math position in a middle school. She has 21 years of teaching experience. She is in the second year of her second contract with EPI. During her first contract with EPI, she enrolled in a small university and earned her PhD in curriculum and instruction. While she is certified in North Carolina to teach high school math, she is currently teaching seventh-grade math. She also serves as the volleyball coach for the girls' team at her school. DeMay is an active member of her church community and frequently hosts gatherings for her community and fellow international EVP teachers.

Darrion

Darrion is 36 years old, married, and has one child. Before becoming an EVP teacher, he taught math in Jamaica at the high school level. He has an undergraduate

degree in math and is certified to teach Grades 6-9 math. Darrion is in the second year of his second contract with EPI. He is also teaching at the same school he taught at during his first contract with EPI. Darrion is from a family of educators. His grandmother, mother, and one of his sisters are also teachers in Jamaica. Besides teaching, Darrion likes to work on cars.

Clarke

Clark taught elementary school for 2 years and high school English language arts and communication studies for 4 years in Jamaica. She is certified to teach Grades 6-9 English language arts/reading. Two years ago, she came to the U.S. as an EVP teacher with EPI to teach middle school English language arts. She is currently enrolled in college and is pursuing her Master of Education. Clarke is single and regularly socializes on the weekends with her coworkers.

GiGi

GiGi is a single female with no children who has been in education for 9 years. She earned her bachelor's degree in education from the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. She served as a teaching assistant for 1 year and taught high school English language arts for 4 years in Jamaica before migrating to the U.S. GiGi migrated to the U.S. 4 years ago to fill a vacancy as a seventh-grade English language arts teacher in a charter school. She is certified to teach Grades 6-9 English language arts/reading. GiGi is teaching eighth-grade English language arts and history and is in the final year of her contract with EPI. She plans on returning home at the end of her contract and does not want to continue teaching in America.

Duhaney

Duhaney is a 40-year-old male, married with two children. Duhaney has a Master of Science in mathematics education. Global recruited him to fill a middle school math position. Duhaney has been an educator for 16 years, 13 of which was in Jamaica. He taught math at a traditional high school for 10 years and was an assistant principal for 6 years. Since arriving in the U.S., he has been teaching seventh-grade math. Duhaney explained that he loves law and wants to make a career switch to study law at the end of his contract with Global. Duhaney loves soccer and plays the sport with a local community team.

Shauna

Shauna is a 39-year-old female. Shauna's husband and children are living in Jamaica. Shauna earned her Bachelor of Science degree in family and consumer science from the University of Technology in Jamaica. She taught home economics to 10th- and 11th-grade high school students in Jamaica for 12 years. Three years ago, Shauna heard about EPI. This Swannanoa, North Carolina-based EVP sponsor was recruiting international teachers for placements in North Carolina K-12 public, private, and charter schools, and she applied. She interviewed for a career technical education teaching position. She was placed in a northeastern North Carolina high school to teach family and consumer sciences education-foods and nutrition/culinary arts. She does volunteer work with the local 4-H Club in her community.

Karin

Karin has been an educator for 12 years. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in education from Northern Caribbean University in Mandeville, Jamaica. She taught high

school mathematics for 9 years in Jamaica before migrating to the U.S. Three years ago, Karin interviewed with EPI to teach math in a northeastern North Carolina public school. Karin is certified to teach Grades 6-9 and Grades 9-12 math. She has been teaching math since arriving in the U.S. She is enrolled in college pursuing a Master of Arts degree in mathematics education. Karin loves to play netball and would like to join a local club where she can play basketball.

Halifax

Halifax is a 35-year-old, single male who teaches science. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in general agricultural science and a diploma in secondary science education from the University of the West Indies. Halifax has been an educator for 11 years, 9 of which was in Jamaica. Three years ago, he interviewed for a middle school science teaching position with Global and was placed in a northeastern North Carolina public middle school. Halifax is certified to teach Grades 6-9 science and teaches seventh-grade middle school science at a charter school. Since arriving in the U.S., he has been teaching seventh-grade science. When Halifax is not teaching, he is socializing with other EVP Jamaican teachers or playing football (called soccer in the U.S.).

Georgia

Georgia is 31 years old and has been teaching English language arts for 8 years. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English language arts and communication studies from the University of the West Indies, Jamaica. She taught English language arts for 4 years to eighth-grade students in Jamaica. She is certified by NCDPI to teach Grades 6-9 English language arts. She came to the U.S. 4 years ago as an EVP teacher with EPI to teach middle school English language arts. Georgia is the de facto hairdresser

of many Jamaican EVP teachers living in her community, and when she is not in the classroom, she can be found braiding hair. She is also an active member of her church community and frequently volunteers in the church's food pantry on Saturdays.

Data Analysis

The data source for the study was the information derived from the 30-minute interviews. I created a digital password-protected file within which individual folders were labeled with each participant's pseudonym in which their audio-recorded interview and transcripts were stored. A physical folder was also created to organize the participants' printed interview transcripts, which are held in a locked cabinet to protect their identity. Each printed interview transcript was labeled using the participants' pseudonyms.

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word using paid speech-to-text software. To ensure the data reflected the Jamaican EVP teachers' experiences while practicing in a northeastern North Carolina K-12 public or charter school, the participants' verbatim transcripts were converted to PDF files and emailed to them for member checking. The participants reported that they did not find any discrepancies in their interview transcripts. The primary methods of contact between myself and the participants during the study were emails, phone calls, and text messaging.

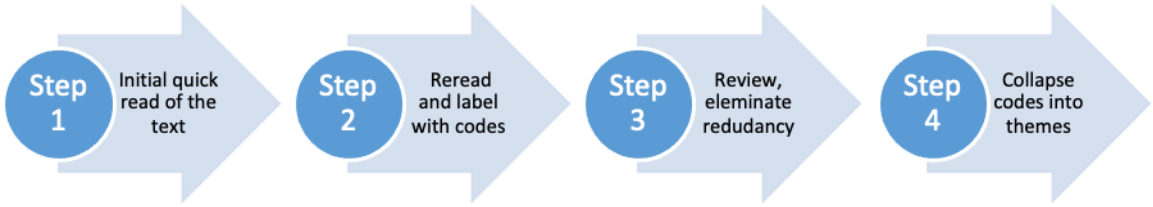
The nature of a phenomenological study requires that the researcher identify recurring events as they gain an understanding of the collective data. A codebook was developed to organize and categorize the data based on predetermined codes. The codebook was a three-column table created using a Microsoft Word document. The

interview questions were in the left column, the interview transcripts were in the middle column, and in the right column were the descriptive codes assigned. Microsoft Word comments feature was used to code the data, and then the comments were extracted and organized into a table for theme analysis.

A 4-step methodology was designed to code and analyze each teacher's interview transcript to understand their social and professional world. Each teacher's interview was read and coded separately. The coding process involved deductive and inductive coding. Predetermined codes from the codebook were assigned to broad categories of the data, and codes that emerged as the data were reread and applied. Figure 10 shows the steps initiated for coding and identifying emerging themes.

Figure 10

Coding and Identifying Themes



Step 1: Initial Read

The first step of data analysis began with a quick read-through of the transcribed interviews to understand the stories from the participants' perspectives. During the first read, notes of any information that attracted my attention were written down. During this phase, predetermined codes from the codebook were assigned to broad categories of the data.

Step 2: Line-by-line Reading

A line-by-line rereading of the interview transcripts alongside the interview

questions was performed. Each time the data were reread and codes emerged, they were applied. Snippets of the transcripts, which include repeated phrases and paragraphs that were similar or surprising about the phenomenon of their lived experiences, were labeled with codes. Each phrase, word, or paragraph was coded with a term that aligned with what the phrases, comments, or paragraphs were about.

Step 3: Code Reduction

Coded segments of the transcripts representing similar understandings were organized into broad categories. The coded sections of the participants' narratives were copied into a separate Microsoft Word file with a corresponding category. The final step was to identify similarities, differences, and relationships between the ideas generated from the codes. During this time, careful and precise examination of the data grouping according to codes assisted in eliminating redundant codes to interpret emergent themes from the data.

Step 4: Codes to Themes

The next stage was prioritizing, reducing, and combining codes to form themes. The themes were aligned with the research question and explained the core of the participants' experiences based on the interview questions. At this stage, patterns among codes were identified and combined to form themes. Themes were grouped, labeled based on connections between them, and then reorganized to form the foundation for superordinate themes. Superordinate themes develop from emergent themes and are higher-level concepts connected to clusters of other themes referred to as subordinate themes. Subordinate themes are minor themes and establish a substantive connection to the superordinate themes. A graphic organizer was then developed to illustrate

superordinate and subordinate themes based on the data from the interview.

Summary of Findings

This descriptive qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of 10 Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina. The study results present the previously unknown stories of Jamaican-born and trained immigrant teachers' lived experiences teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 schools. Embedded in the results are the much less known positive and challenging experiences of the participants who leave Jamaica to teach in the U.S. for a finite amount of time.

This study was grounded on the theoretical frameworks of Gordon's (1964) assimilation and Berry's (1977) acculturation theories. Gordon's assimilation theory states that an immigrant's identity and values merge with those of the host society as the immigrants develop a sense of identity to become similar to the common culture. Berry's (1977) acculturation theory purported that persons from minority cultures adopt the practices and values of the host society while maintaining their distinct cultural identities.

The individual interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted an average of 35 minutes. Each participant shared their personal and unique story in their journey to fully understand and assume the behaviors of the dominant American culture in their rural northeastern North Carolina host communities. Extrapolated from the interview data are superordinate and subordinate themes, which are aligned with Gordon's (1964) assimilation and Berry's (1977) acculturation theories.

Six major or superordinate themes emerged during the interviews. The identified themes describe different aspects of the participants' experiences as they recounted them.

Some themes were readily evident as the participants shared their stories, while others came to light during the thematic analysis. The superordinate themes captured the different facets of the most common and reoccurring patterns across the data set.

Six superordinate themes, each with associated subordinate themes, were generated. The superordinate themes are those themes that were collectively referenced by at least six of the participants, while the subordinate themes were referenced at least 10 times collectively. I determined the superordinate and subordinate themes based on the number of participants and the frequency to which the participants referenced those themes.

Unique labels are used to identify the superordinate themes in the data set concerning the research and open-ended semi-structured interview questions. The most common themes that emerged from the stories are (a) encountering differences, (b) cultural collision, (c) systematic and cultural diversity, (d) learned approaches to teaching Americans, (e) personal and professional growth, and (f) care and support. Table 8 displays the most common themes referenced by the Jamaican EVP teachers as they shared their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their experiences while practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 schools.

Table 8

Themes Most Prevalent Throughout Participant Stories

Pseudonyms	Encountering the differences	Cultural collision	Systematic and cultural diversity	Learned approaches to teaching Americans	Social and professional growth	Care and support
Annie-Joe	X	X			X	X
DeMay	X	X	X	X	X	X
Darrion	X	X	X		X	
Clarke	X		X	X	X	X
GiGi	X	X	X	X	X	X
Duhaney	X	X	X		X	X
Shauna	X	X	X	X		X
Karin	X	X	X	X	X	X
Halifax	X	X		X	X	X
Georgia	X		X	X	X	X

The themes presented in Table 8 represent those most emphasized in the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and do not exclude the existence of other themes. Highlighted in Table 8 are themes associated with particular participants; however, the lack of association of a theme to a specific participant does not indicate that this theme is a missing factor in their lived experience. All participants were asked the same interview questions in the same order, and the open-ended question format allowed them to recount their stories as they saw fit.

During the thematic analysis, subordinate themes were identified and clustered in discreet groups to identify superordinate themes. The subordinate themes affiliated with each superordinate theme were labeled to make the superordinate theme more salient. Table 9 displays the interview questions and the corresponding superordinate and subordinate themes that emerged during the thematic analysis process.

Table 9

Summary of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Research Question: What are the lived experiences faced by Jamaican educators while living and teaching in northeastern North Carolina?		
Interview Questions	Superordinate	Subordinate
Q1. What are the differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina?	Encountering differences	• Lifestyle change • Interpersonal connection
Q2. Describe your experience adjusting to the cultural differences between Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina.	Cultural collision	• Culture shock • Cultural awareness
Q3. What are the differences between teaching in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina?	Systematic and cultural diversity	• Schooling • Culture of respect • Social and professional development
Q4. Describe your experiences adapting your teaching to the needs of rural northeastern North Carolina students.	Learned approaches to teaching American	• Opportunities and response to learning
Q5. What supports should schools/school districts provide Jamaican teachers to assist in their adjustment to the American schooling/ culture?	Care and support	• Onboarding and navigating new terrain
Q6. What else would you like to tell me about your experiences as a Jamaican EVP teacher living and working in rural northeastern North Carolina?	Support for success	• Settling down • Trust and autonomy

Each of the superordinate and subordinate themes is connected to a specific interview question that provides answers to the research question. Each subordinate theme discussed has been supported by extracted quotes from the interview transcripts, which recounted the 10 participants' lived experiences as they assimilated and acculturated to teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools.

Theme 1: Encountering Differences

In this study, the theme of encountering differences represents those differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina. Lifestyle change and interpersonal connections were the main differences that affected the participants' lives as they adjusted to rural northeastern North Carolina.

Lifestyle Change

A commonality between all participants is that they were lured to North Carolina because of the opportunity to experience life outside of Jamaica and earn a salary far exceeding what they would have earned there, thus affording them a better quality of life. Annie-Joe explained.

> When I compare my current salary to what the government would pay me in Jamaica, I earn almost three times that here. I can have a better life and provide for my family. Also, since Jamaica is a third-world country, there are certain things that I find to be more advanced here, just the infrastructure in general and the quality of care and customer service you receive here.

Similar to Annie-Joe, Clarke shared that the significant differences between living in Jamaica and North Carolina are the pay she earns and the purchasing power she now has to acquire the unaffordable things she needed when she lived in Jamaica. Clarke espoused,

> The compensation package compared to Jamaica is better, well, for teaching. I don't know all of it, but compensation-wise, it is better here. I am better off here. I can afford to buy things I could not afford in Jamaica. I always joked with my friends that when you live in Jamaica, it’s from the womb to the tomb. Working

> here, I can save and live a good life when I retire. I can afford to send money home to help my mother, who is sick.

Karin, another female teacher, spoke at length about her ability to afford the things she could not accomplish with her monthly salary while working as a teacher in Jamaica. While she did not focus on what she could purchase in the U.S., she focused on what she could buy and save for future use when she returned home. Karin shared,

> If I can stay here for ten years, at the end of the five years with EPI, I can go home and come back and work for another five years I would be happy. I can save and finish paying for my house. I can use my savings and pension to care for myself when I am older. You see, I don't have children.

Interpersonal Connections

Interpersonal connections are those relationships between friends, colleagues, or family members. These connections are built on mutual respect, and individuals provide care and support for each other. Embedded in the participant's stories are their experiences adapting to their host communities, communicating, and forming relationships. For example, DeMay shared that she attends a small church in her small community, which has helped her develop friendships with members of her community. She elaborated, stating,

> The members of my church are like family to me. Hosting events for church members has allowed me to meet many people and build friendships. At first, adjusting to some of the American customs and routines was difficult, but I had to adjust in terms of speech quickly, modes of dress modes and general behavior.

When asked the same question, GiGi had a different experience. She said,

> I am going to be honest. I have been to New York several times before coming to work in North Carolina, and in New York, people do not laugh at your accent or how you pronounce words. In North Carolina, it is different. Here, teachers and students will openly imitate me because of my Jamaican accent. I am unsure if it's because it's a rural area or we are the only foreigners they are exposed to.

Duhaney, reflecting on his observations of the differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina, said,

> People in Jamaica take pride in expressing pleasantries. You would say good morning, good evening, or good afternoon. This is regarded as being respectful and, if not done, is frowned upon by others. In North Carolina, this is not so. You will pass others and say good morning, and they do not respond.

Halifax shared one of the differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina, stating,

> Living in rural northeastern North Carolina is very different from Jamaica. Community relationships are more heartfelt in Jamaica, as Jamaicans are friendly to their neighbors and know them to some extent. Here, on the other hand, I find that people are too busy to be friendly with their neighbors and may not even know each other's names.

Darrion and Annie-Joe shared positive and negative experiences in forming human connections in rural northeastern North Carolina. Darrion, in the second year of his second 5-year contract with EPI, shared that he has learned from his first experience and what other EVP teachers have shared with him. Darrion stated,

> Jamaicans are more welcoming. They are more supportive. Here they will pass

> you without saying hello, or they sometimes pretend they do not understand what you are saying. You might see a smiling face, but it's not necessarily a smiley face. I don't have such a hard time because most teachers know and support me but, I have heard of and have been ignored by other teachers at my school.

Annie-Joe shared a not-so-positive experience in that sometimes when she greets individuals, they would respond by saying “yah mon,” which translates to “yes man,” making fun of her accent. “Yah” is a phrase used by Jamaicans to mean yes. She went on to say,

> It’s a mixed bag but has more positives than negatives. Most of the people are very friendly, and they say hello when you meet them. Sometimes they ask me where I am from. I would tell them, and they would say that the accent is beautiful.

Theme 2: The Cultural Collision

The theme of cultural collision describes the experiences of the 10 Jamaican EVP teachers as they adjusted to the cultural differences between Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina. Umbrellaed under the cultural collision theme are subthemes of culture shock and cultural awareness that emerged as the teachers shared their stories. The participants explained the feelings of euphoria as they converged on their hotel for 3 days of orientation to teaching in American schools before being bussed to their school district.

Culture Shock

All but two participants had traveled outside Jamaica before moving to northeastern North Carolina. Those who did not travel outside Jamaica until they came to

practice in rural northeastern North Carolina shared that their knowledge about the U.S. was either what they saw on TV or read in a book, their interactions with American tourists on vacation in Jamaica, or what others told them. However, spotlighted in 10 Jamaican EVP teachers' narratives were the cultural differences they observed and experienced as they adjusted to life in North Carolina.

Georgia expressed that there are few cultural differences between Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina. According to Georgia,

> Miami is less than 500 miles from Montego Bay and one and a half hours by flight. We are so close to the U.S. that we are exposed to the U.S. culture regarding food and music. The difference between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern NC is the way we talk, spell some words, and the food we eat. The food stores in Jamaica are not as large as the ones here, and there are not as many fast-food restaurants except for Kentucky Fried Chicken, but still not as plentiful as when compared to the U.S.

DeMay shared that she had problems adjusting to some customs and routines and would describe her first experience in North Carolina as a culture shock. She explained that while Jamaicans and the people in rural northeastern North Carolina have an accent, the vernaculars are different. DeMay said,

> I had to adjust to the language barrier regarding the pronunciation and spelling of some words. Most of the time, Jamaicans talk Patois (a mixture of English and African) except in formal settings, but here they speak American English. The taste of the food is different. I could not find any Jamaican food at first, but I found a Mexican store where I could get some of the food we eat in Jamaica. Here

> on every corner, there is a fast-food restaurant, not so in Jamaica, maybe because most of us can't afford it [laugh].

When asked the same question, Clarke paused to reflect on the differences between the two environments. She spoke at length about her stress and adjustment experiences as she acclimatized to her new host community. Clarke shared that it was difficult for her to adjust to the American culture at first. She said,

> It was hard for me at first. At one point, I considered going back home in my first year, and I am glad I stayed. The biggest cultural difference is the food. In Jamaica, we are exposed to many of the things that are here. For example, we hear American music, we see designer clothes in stores, and some supermarkets sell American food the only thing is that many people cannot afford to buy them. Jamaicans that live here send barrels back home with food and clothes, so some of us have no problems eating the food.

Continuing the theme of cultural differences between Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina, Shauna shared,

> Shopping for food that I am familiar with was a challenge for me. Every grocery store had the same things even though there are people from all over the world here, I could not find Jamaican food. I have been to the U.S. several times before deciding to come here to teach, so I am very familiar with American culture. I have been to New York several times, and the only differences between the people of northeastern NC and us are the pronunciation and spelling of some words, they celebrate Thanksgiving, and we don't.

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness, as used in this study, is the responsiveness of individuals to the differences and similarities between cultures and the sensitivity in communicating effectively with members of other cultural groups. The participants explained that because of their daily interactions with Americans and people from other nations around the world, they have become more aware of the cultural differences between rural northeastern North Carolina and Jamaica. The excerpts shared are more than a cursory reference; they are specific and are a significant part of all 10 participants' stories. Embedded in the stories are experiences of covert and overt racism and the resilience of the teachers as they assimilated and acculturated to rural northeastern North Carolina.

One of the experiences of an EVP teacher is to share their culture and way of living in the school community so the students, staff, and parents can get to know them. Discussing her experiences of melding into the American culture, Annie-Joe expressed,

> Sometimes I try to sound like an American to fit in, but it's difficult for me it's not natural. One time some students heard me talking on my cellphone and asked me if we speak another language in Jamaica, and I explained that we talk Patios and explained to them what Patios is. So when I hear students using phrases like "on tomorrow," "we was" and "you is" I try to correct them and use it as a teachable moment explaining to them that the phrases are not grammatically correct, just like the Jamaican Patios that I speak but it's a part of our culture. When I am sitting at lunch, I will talk with the students about Jamaica and what life is like living there and answer the same two questions over and over again: "do you have houses in Jamaica?" and "did you come here in a boat?" I know

what they are trying to say, it used to bother me, but it doesn't bother me anymore.

Darrion, who is in Year 2 of his second 5-year contract with EPI, when asked to share his story, added,

> And I truly understand what it means to be a black person living here. In Jamaica, yes Jamaica, we have a lot of black people there, but it was never an issue; you are just a Jamaican. You know, you're rich, you're poor, you're just a Jamaican. But here you notice that there are levels to it. There's a difference between a black immigrant and a black American and a white American. I noticed those differences when I got here. So those were the few things that I had to adjust to and know that I am not an American. It wasn't a big challenge for me in terms of adjusting, so I just have to identify the things that I needed to navigate, and I got around them. Just put it this way, I'm Jamaican, and being Jamaican means being resilient; we can overcome anything. My roommate is American and has helped me navigate the culture here. I have experienced the good, the bad, and the ugly. Talking to my roommate and her friends helped me a lot. In my first year, I made a big mistake by telling one of my students he was lying. We say lying all the time in Jamaica. I learned that I should not say lie, I should have said fibbing after a phone call from his parents. It's rough when you come at first because our accent is strange to them, and some people don't take kindly to foreigners, especially during election season. This experience has been eye-opening for me, that's all I will say.

GiGi, reflecting on her challenges acclimatizing to her host community, shared

what she saw, heard, and experienced as she tried to find her place in the community. She explained,

> I have had students tell me to go back to Africa because they were upset with me for one reason or another. I have heard other students tell students of Hispanic descent that they will be happy when President Donald Trump builds the wall and sends them back home. Even teachers made jokes that I should hurry up and leave because President Trump is going to send me back home. Realizing their jokes were because of ignorance, and I would say racism, I would correct and educate them, but there are times I would have to check my emotions, so I stayed silent those times.

However, when asked the same question, DeMay shared a different experience:

> By interacting with the staff, students, parents, and other international teachers in my church, I learn about other people's cultures and take every opportunity to share my Jamaican culture. My church community is also a big help. I have not experienced some of the challenges some of my colleagues faced. I have students who imitate the way I talk, so I imitate them in return, so they realize they pronounce words differently and say words and phrases that are not a part of the English Language or it's not even grammatically correct but is a part of their language just like some words we as Jamaicans use are not a part of the English language; it's broken English [laugh].

Some participants shared how they helped their school community understand that African and British ancestral heritage plays a huge role in how Jamaicans speak. It also plays a role in some of their social practices. During the discussion, they implied and

stated some of the challenges they faced and what they did to overcome them, thus getting the school communities to understand better who they are as a people and gain acceptance.

Duhaney explained how he used the international day event at his school to teach the school community about his Jamaican culture and shared things Jamaicans have in common with the U.S. He told me,

> We had an international day at my school. We cook and had staff and students taste some of our jerk chicken, rice and red peas, and fried plantains. We also played Jamaican music, showed things like some of our money, taught them some Jamaican dance moves, and talked about some famous movie stars, singers, and athletes that represent the U.S. but were actually born in Jamaica. One of my students asked me what the word [curse word] means in Jamaica. I smiled and asked myself how I should explain to the student that it is a Jamaican curse word. I told him it's a Jamaican word that is a mixture of African and English language, then quickly changed the subject.

Shauna, a high school career technical education teacher, shared how she was received and how she shared her Jamaican culture with her school community:

> I usually play reggae music in my classroom, so some students and teachers know a little about me and the Jamaican culture. I also use a corner in my room to display a map of Jamaica, the Jamaican Flag, some Jamaican money, and famous people from Jamaica. I have only met one person at my school that has ever been to Jamaica, plus they had Jamaican teachers working there before I came. I try really hard to make friends with the teachers at my school and do not face the

> mocking and taunting that some of my colleagues at other schools face. Americans say knock on wood, I don't have to experience what others are going through. But you know what, Jamaicans are resilient people they will be just all right.

During my discussion with Georgia, she shared that she had challenges at the beginning of her career in northeastern North Carolina, and years later, she is still facing some of these challenges.

> In the first few months, my students and adults mimicked me and made rude comments, and I hated it. I have been at my school for some time now, and some students and teachers still imitate me, but it's not as bad as it used to be. I think they are beginning to appreciate us as international teachers and the diversity we bring to the classroom. It's much, much better now thank God! The students are more respectful and at times are fascinated by the different names we have for certain things. For example, during the World Cup soccer tournament, my students and I got into a fun debate about why every country except the U.S. is right for naming the sport football and not soccer. We had a long back and forth and some good laughs. I also learned the hard way that if you say hush, you are telling someone to stop talking, and it is offensive in Jamaica say for example, if someone falls and you say hush, it means you are showing empathy, you are telling them I understand, I hope you feel better or saying never mind. I also learned from the students that the word hell is a curse word here, far different from our curse words [laugh].

Theme 3: Systematic and Cultural Diversity

The themes of systematic and cultural diversity were prevalent in the shared stories and encompassed the differences, challenges, and opportunities of working in American intercultural spaces. The concepts of schooling, the culture of respect, and social and PD collectively underscore the differences between teaching in Jamaica and northeastern North Carolina.

During the discussions, the participants shared the differences between the Jamaican education system, modeled on the British education system, and the American education system. Students, 1-6 years of age, spend 6 years in public basic schools before entering primary school, already being able to read. In primary schools, students are taught by one teacher who teaches religious studies, math, science, English language, art, and social studies through an integrated approach. Students in Grade 6 and between the ages of 10 and 12 take the Grade Six Achievement Test, a national exam. They are tested on social studies, language arts, math, science, and communication tasks to earn a place in their preferred high school based on academic achievement. Generally, in Grades 7-9 or Forms 1-3 in high schools, students must be taught integrated science, math, English literature, and language arts as separate subjects. They must also take Spanish, social studies, physical education, computer science, and a career and technical education subject such as agricultural science, home economics, clothing and textiles, industrial arts, music, or art. Students in upper high school can choose the subjects they study and can choose anywhere from eight to 11 subjects (eight is the standard). They begin taking elective subjects such as biology, physics, and chemistry as separate subjects; accounts, agriculture, Spanish or French, and business science are taken alongside the compulsory

subjects of math, English literature, and English language arts. After high school, students can attend college and earn an Associate of Science degree, diploma, or undergraduate degree.

Schooling

In this study, schooling refers to the differences in school structures and how resources affect how students in rural northeastern North Carolina and Jamaica are educated. DeMay shared that when she taught high school math in Jamaica, she was timetabled to teach math to three different grade levels in a single day. She shared,

> I taught two seventh-grade and two eighth-grade classes. It was tedious and took a lot of time for her to write four lesson plans in Jamaica because students were grouped by abilities there and find it easier here to plan and teach her students. Here the curriculum is pretty much laid out for you. It is easier to prepare for my lessons since I am teaching the same lesson four times every day to one grade level. Also, in Jamaica, we do not have access to many computers, reliable internet services, manipulatives, and other resources, it was basically chalk and talk as the saying goes. Here students spend a lot of time on the computer completing work. North Carolina schools are better equipped with technology, manipulatives, and other resources for teachers and students. Here students take the End of Grade exams online, while Jamaican students take paper and pencil End of Year exams.

Karin reminisced about the differences between teaching in Jamaica and northeastern North Carolina:

> Here in the U.S., my focus is just teaching one set of students ELA. I would teach

> language arts and literature to two or three grade levels in Jamaica. Here students are supplied with textbooks free of cost, but in Jamaica, students would have to buy or rent some of their books which some cannot afford. North Carolina students have an advantage with its resources. They have access to endless resources, internet connection, and a device for each student. They have everything here.

When asked the same question, many of the other teachers shared the same sentiments as Darrion and Halifax. They added other observable differences between teaching in rural northeastern North Carolina and Jamaican schools. Darrion shared: "Here, everything is pretty much laid out for you. My only challenge was learning how to use the technology they provide." Duhaney, like Darrion, expressed that he also spends less time planning his lessons and loves that each student has their own Chromebook and school-issued textbooks. Duhaney shared, "in Jamaica, students have to either rent or buy their own textbooks and do not get to take their school-issued Chromebooks home if they have Chromebooks at their schools. They have endless free resources here, not so back home." Halifax mentioned that Jamaican schools lacked the resources needed to educate the students and said, "I remember spending my own money to get supplies for science class. Here I have everything I need all I need to do is ask if it's not already in my classroom."

In her interview, Shauna noted,

> Every teacher is faced with the same problems of different personalities, abilities, and levels of motivation in the same classroom. However, one difference in the Jamaican classrooms and classrooms that I cherish is the grouping of students by

> ability. I can plan differentiated lessons for the different classes because they are all on the same achievement level. Here the detailed curriculum dictates what should be accomplished daily in the class. Sometimes it's too slow, and the high achievers get bored, and you know what happens when children are bored. Then if I go too fast, the low performers get left behind.

Culture of Respect

In this study, the culture of respect refers to how students follow directives and interact with their teachers, peers, and others. The participants shared that explicitly teaching classroom expectations and having rules posted in their classrooms are new to them. A notable response from Shauna was,

> Although teachers are not paid well in Jamaica, they are revered. I am from a small community, and everyone who knows me knows I am a teacher. Some people in my community do not even know my name. They call me teacher here but that does not matter. They will disrespect you, especially if you "hold their feet to the fire."

Karin, who shared the same sentiments as Shauna, said, "students know what to do and how to behave in class. I am not saying we don't have students who misbehave but not to this extent. Students don't formally greet teachers when they first enter the classroom."

However, GiGi, DeMay, and other participants shared a different experience. They believed that the respect students show them here is not vastly different from what they are accustomed to in Jamaica; they describe their experiences as both good and bad days. GiGi Shared,

> Before coming here to work, I would go to New York (NY), I saw how the students in NY behaved, so I knew that I would've faced some challenges but not what I experienced at first. My first year was rough, but it got better over time. Some students will tell you what they will do and will not do. I have formed some strong relationships with some of my students and families.

In expressing the differences between teaching in northeastern North Carolina and Jamaica, DeMay could relate and shared,

> Students will tell you they don't have to do anything you tell them to do. This was a shock to me. It almost killed me [laugh]. In the same breath, some of these students are respectable and try to help me sometimes. When I taught in Jamaica, I never had students tell me what they will do and not do. They may not agree with my decision, but they were never that bold to say I am not going to do as you asked me to. They will talk under their breath, so you can't hear clearly what they are saying, and their body language also lets you know they are upset.

Duhaney shared,

> Students in Jamaica seemed to be more respectful because they tend to listen and follow the teacher's instructions while the students here question your directives. I am guessing it's because of their upbringing; American children question anything they disagree with. When I give instructions to children here, I explain my rationale for such instructions, and they are more likely to follow these instructions.

Social and PD

Social and PD refers to the training and interactions teachers have been involved

in to educate, improve their practice, and adequately fulfill their teaching obligations in their host school. The following statements reflect the attitudes among participants regarding social and PD as a difference between teaching in Jamaica and northeastern North Carolina. During the discussion, Shauna shared,

> I am much happier now, my first year was rough. Making friends and getting them to accept my culture was rough; teaching was rough; and classroom management was rough. To sum it all up, my first year was a disaster. It was an epic failure. Here I have the opportunity to attend PDs and learn about the curriculum, teaching methods, and how to take advantage of the many learning platforms available to us. I have grown as a person and as a teacher. I have a lot in my toolkit I can pull from.

Darrion shared similar sentiments as Shauna and others. He shared that during the first few months of his first 5-year contract with EPI, he felt incompetent because the school system in Jamaica differs from the school system in America. He was reluctant to ask questions because he feared being judged.

> Some things are different in the terminologies we use, but many things are the same content-wise. But there are so many things that are different. But things got better once I started asking questions and attending PDs. I am better able to engage the class and try new things.

Clarke, reflecting on her journey, shared that "the PD sessions have helped me to flip my classroom from a teacher-centered approach that I was used to in Jamaica, to a student-centered approach in the U.S., students are doing the thinking and hard work, not me." She continued,

> I have attended lots of PDs about teaching practices. Some of them were school-based, and some are district-wide. I have learned about classroom management, teaching, and strategies and learned how to navigate the many learning platforms. I have learned a lot. I feel more competent and confident in my teaching. I am now at the point where I am helping new teachers from Jamaica and other countries with strategies to help them navigate and survive their first year of teaching. No one asked me to do it. I just do it to help.

Agreeing with the other participants, Georgia described the social and professional differences and added,

> As they say, America is a land of opportunity, and it truly is. I take full advantage of any PD that I can attend. I may not have all the technology to use when I return home, but I am taking it all in; why not, it's free. The PDs have allowed me to develop my skills and grow as a teacher. In Jamaica, there are usually two PDs at the beginning of the year, and that's it. Here, that's not so; there are always some PD or other training. I feel like I am growing, I am getting help and also giving help, and have also made friends along the way. The PDs, school or district-wide base have allowed me to meet and work with people I wouldn't have normally worked with, and because of this, I have gained some friends, and some respect [laugh]. Thank God for the PDs, even though sometimes I say another PD again!

Karin shared, "PDs, workshops, and frequent training in the use of technology devices in the classroom have helped my teaching and classroom management." She went on to talk about how PDs have helped her to grow socially. She said, "because of the PDs, I have met Jamaicans that I did not know were in my school district. I have also

met teachers I can text or email for help or just when I need to ask a question."

Theme 4: Learned Approaches to Teaching American

The EVP teachers shared their stories about how they adapted their teaching to meet the needs of the students they serve in rural northeastern North Carolina. The subordinate theme of opportunity and response to learning is umbrellaed under the learned approaches to teaching the American theme.

Opportunities and Response to Learning

This subordinate theme referenced participant, student, and family dispositions toward teaching and learning. Intertwined in the stories are how the availability of resources, differences in cultures, and school policies determined how the Jamaican EVP teachers adapted their teaching to accommodate their students' needs.

All participants acknowledged that people are different, and their behaviors mimic their culture. Student, parent, and teacher personalities, abilities, mannerisms, and values they and their families place on education are also different. They also agreed that how they taught their classes in Jamaica differs from how they plan, deliver their lessons, and assess students here.

Karin recounted, "The truth is, I came here with the mentality I had in Jamaica, that students are here to learn; we are not here to be friends; and we will just respect each other." Karin soon found out that the approach and expectations she had for her students had to change: "Yes, I did not waiver or lower my standards but have softened up a little bit. I am not mean, I am what I call warm and demanding, and kids and parents don't like that so much."

Karin added that students are grouped by abilities in Jamaica, which is not the

case here, so she has to cater to the different needs and learning styles in the classroom. Explaining, she said,

> I have to plan and differentiate lessons for students with IEPs and other accommodations, academic abilities, and learning styles. In Jamaica, everyone in the classroom was at about the same level, so I did not have to change the lesson or do much accommodation for them. Here, it's different. For example, when I taught 8A and 8B, they had different lessons and were taught differently, but those are separate homerooms. Here, the homerooms have students of different abilities. Here, my school has a lot of resources; they have textbooks, student workbooks, and computers with hundreds of online platforms that the students used daily. My students in Jamaica did not have all these resources. They had a textbook if they can afford it, and a notebook to write their notes in. So that should tell you that the way I taught in Jamaica is different from the way I teach my students here.

Duhaney explained that he had to change his approach to teaching in America. He used the analogy of night and day to describe how his teaching in Jamaica differs from how he teaches his middle school students math. He explained,

> In Jamaica, all I had was a textbook, worksheets, and whiteboard markers. My students did not have Chromebooks at their disposal as these students do. They had a textbook and a notebook. I plan and teach my lessons far differently than I did teaching my seventh- and eighth-grade students in Jamaica. Here, most lessons are student-centered, so I do small groups where I work closely with the students, or they are helping each other. I use math manipulatives to teach my

students, and they also spend a lot of time on the Chromebooks completing their assigned class work. In Jamaica, we don't give make-up work or accept late work. I had to quickly make room to accept late assignments, and even give make-up work to students who failed to complete given assignments. This is not something I am used to but discovered that this was a norm for students to make up work that they did not do the first time. This was new to me, but that's the school policy, so you must follow it.

Halifax shared how he, like all the study participants, adapted his teaching style to fit the needs of the students he serves. He recounted,

> We don't have the resources America has. We can't teach the same way we did when we worked in Jamaica. The curriculum is pretty much laid out for me, and all the resources I need are available for use. In North Carolina, the students are not grouped by ability, so I have to do a lot of differentiation to ensure everyone gets what they need. I must ensure that students get accommodations, whether it's a quiz, test, homework, or classwork.

After a brief pause, Halifax went on to share,

> I grew up in a single-parent household. When I was in high school, my mama always told me that the only way out of poverty was through education, which has stuck with me and my approach to teaching. Back home, students are responsible for their own learning, whether rich or poor or representing the school by playing a sport. I do not allow students to opt out of participating in class and completing their work, but sometimes they do. It can be called begging, but at times I literally have to beg some of them to do some work. Some will do the work after much

begging, and some will straight up ignore you. If they turn work in that is not done properly, I will ask them to redo it, sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't. They also know you can't put them out of class for not working or you can't fail them, they will get a 50%. My students back home know that whatever grade they get, that stands, no makeup, and no late work. The first grade is what goes in the grade book. It also seems that the students who play sports are given more leeway regarding expectations about their work. But it is what it is; you must follow the school's policies, written and unwritten.

DeMay concurred, sharing,

Coming from a culture where giving homework to students was regarded as a great tool for students to get extra practice, I got pushback from parents and students in North Carolina. Parents complained that their children were engaged in several after-school activities, such as swimming, soccer, football, dance, and music, and they had no time after school to do the homework I assigned. Students will sit in class and not complete the work, and I have to give them a grade of not less than 50% on the assignment. This is not so in Jamaica, grades are earned, and teachers do not give you extensions or retakes. It doesn't matter who you are and how you represent the school. But this is America [laugh]. However, I see students who get a second chance to redo work do better than before. That may be something we might consider in Jamaica. But students who we have to push every day may not turn in their work on time because they get to turn it in late, adding another layer of stress to the already stressful job.

Shauna, who teaches at the high school level, shared some of the same

perceptions and experiences as the other teachers. She expressed,

> The way we teach in Jamaica is different from how we teach here. Most of our lessons are teacher-centered there, and here they focus on student-centered lessons. In Jamaica, the teachers do most of the talking, lecture, but here, they have the resources for teachers to do plenty of things in the classroom so that the students can learn. Students are not streamed here, so our approach to teaching when we get here has to be different, it can't be the same. My school and school district provides professional development sessions about lesson planning, teaching, and motivating students. I had to find ways to give students extra practice and to assess them besides giving a quiz or test. Yes, it took more careful planning and execution, but it is working and a good compromise for them to learn. At the school I am teaching, they know how important their grades are for promotion and graduation, so for the most part, they do their work. I am not saying all of them do their work, but some are plain lazy, some struggle to read, and some just approach instruction with impunity.

Theme 5: Care and Support

This interview question focused on the support the Jamaican EVP teachers perceived they needed from their host communities (school district or school) as they assimilated and acculturated to the American culture while practicing in northeastern North Carolina.

Onboarding and Navigating New Terrain

Participants' stories individually and collectively reflect their views about the support they received and what they believe should have been provided by the schools or

school districts as they adjusted to their new work environment. The terms mentors, support, and help were referenced 15 or more times as the interviewees spoke about adapting to life in northeastern North Carolina.

When asked what supports should schools or school districts provide Jamaican teachers to assist in their adjustment to the American schooling and culture, Annie-Joe laughed and shook her head as she relayed her story of the physical and emotional support she thought she would receive and what was actually provided as she navigated her new environment. Annie-Joe stated,

> New teachers need mentors, someone to answer their questions, to help with simple things like lesson plans, how to get a driver's license, or even how you will get your pay. There's Google, but google can't answer every question. The American school system is different from the Jamaican school system. The orientation Global provides for us should be more. They made it seem like it would be easy. We need at least a week or two of orientation in the school we are placed. We should be able to go into schools and observe before we are thrown into the classrooms. Seeing it and living it are two different things.

When asked the same question, DeMay, in reflection on her experiences, shared the same perceptions as Annie-Joe and her other Jamaican counterparts. DeMay shared,

> I think having a true liaison or a mentor that see that you are adjusted to your new environment is very important. Coming here for the first time, I had no idea what to expect I only knew what I Googled and what they told us at the three-day new teacher orientation. They could help us as a new international teacher, not as a new teacher; there is a big difference. It's a new life in a new country. The rosy

> picture they painted of living and working in America when they were recruiting us is different once we arrived. We need at least a week or two when we get to our new school to observe and get our driver's license, and find a good place to live.

In interviewing Halifax, he concurred with other participants, stating,

> Support us with mentors who are either Jamaicans or someone who studied and understands the Jamaican culture. If we had advisors who were genuine and cared about us, it would not have been that difficult when we first got here.

Halifax went on to equate the Jamaican teachers to a family of lions, saying,

> At my school, the motto is the strength of the Pride is the lion, and the strength of the lion is the Pride. Lions hunt together and eat together. They are not satisfied until everyone is fed, and that's what we do here for each other. That's exactly what we are, we take care of each other. We are the unofficial mentors for new Jamaicans that we know of that come to our school district. We help each other.

The recurring theme of onboarding echoed in every participant's story.

Karin and Duhaney shared some of the same ideas. Duhaney shared, "The school system is different from what I am used to. We need to have mentors or advisors who are Jamaicans or someone who understands the Jamaican school system and could help us acclimatize to this new system." When asked the same question, Karin said, "I don't think the school administration understands that not every school operates like the American school system. They tend to use a lot of acronyms without anyone to help us navigate this new terrain." Duhaney went on to share, "Providing a handbook that explains all the various acronyms used in the North Carolina school system would help. If there was a

book explaining all these acronyms, life would have been easier."

Karin went on to further express her struggles early in the program, saying,

> Sometimes I feel incompetent because I get lost in data meetings or Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meetings because I don't understand the terminologies they are using. I strongly believe the school district should provide us with a mentorship program that allows us to meet international teachers from schools in the district so we can learn together and from each other.

When asked the same question, Clarke, GiGi, and Georgia reported similar experiences. Clarke shared,

> At first, I was sad and miserable. I eventually made friends with another Jamaican teacher at my school, some Jamaicans in nearby schools, and the American teachers on my grade level. They also assigned me a mentor that checks on me. The teachers on my grade level were patient with me and answered the million and one questions I had about the acronyms and made me feel comfortable. They were not my mentor, but they were, so to speak [sigh]. We need mentors who will meet with us not only about school work, and evaluation but will also help us find housing, get our social security cards, sign up for the praxis, and get our driver's license.

According to GiGi,

> Some people have never traveled outside of Jamaica. I had a mentor who would check in with me and help me to understand how the American system operates. Some teachers make many bad choices because of their lack of knowledge; they had no one to help them get acclimatized to the American system.

Georgia also explained,

> One of the main complaints of Jamaican and other international teachers I know is support. The biggest support, I would say, is helping them find housing even before they arrive in America. I must say I am pleased with my district, and my mentor helped me a lot. They helped me the best way they could. I stayed in a hotel for a week, and they helped me find an apartment close to school and register for the Praxis exam.

Theme 6: Support for Success

When the opportunity came for the participants to freely share anything else that the previous interview questions did not capture about their lived experiences as Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in rural northeastern North Carolina, the subordinate themes of settling down, autonomy, and self-efficacy emerged. References of not being supported by the recruitment agency and hints of determination and strength are embedded in each story of their lives in northeastern North Carolina.

Settling Down

This subordinate theme references the support participants needed from their recruiting agencies as they established new living conditions and navigated and got acclimated to their new environment in northeastern North Carolina.

Annie-Joe shared that one of the things she wanted her recruitment agency, EPI, to know:

> EPI needs to have a local teacher help us find housing and show us how to survive the first couple of months. Michelle (pseudonym), another Jamaican teacher, and her husband did a whole lot for me. For teachers coming to America for the first

> time, I would say EPI promised us support. I don't know if it's happening now, but I remember they had promised they would come into the schools and provide support for us, but they didn't do all these things they promised. In all my years with EPI, they came to the school once. I get emails from them, but they are general emails for every international teacher, regardless of where they come from.

Shauna, concurring with Annie-Joe and other participants, shared that EPI did not live up to the promises they made to them when they came to Jamaica and recruited them and promised them at the 3-day new teacher orientation. Shauna shared,

> When I came here, my approach was like starting over. I came here with enough funds to rent a decent apartment and buy a reasonably priced used car. Since we don't have a credit rating, transitioning from Jamaica to America would be easier if EPI built business relationships with apartment complexes and car dealerships. It was difficult for me to find a decent and reasonably priced car and pay the deposit and first month's rent on an apartment with the money I brought with me. They gave me an interest-free loan, but I did not want to start my life here in the U.S. owing money to anyone.

Georgia, who was also recruited by EPI to teach English language arts in a middle school, shared her disappointment with the EPI and expressed,

> EPI needs to come into the schools and support us. They don't. They need to visit us and especially when you're in your first year so that we can share the good things that are happening and share changes they can make to make the program better. If you have struggles, you have to figure it out yourself. In your first year, I

> think teachers need a lot of support and not just connecting with another Jamaican teacher because I am sure you know everybody has their own struggles. The program is a great experience but is not exactly what we saw on TV. But it's a great experience. I wish every teacher could get the opportunity to experience teaching outside of Jamaica. It might be tough at first, but as Jamaicans, to borrow a phrase from Tim Gunn from Project Runway show, Jamaicans will always "make it work," we always find a way.

While the three aforementioned participants are displeased with the support they received from their agencies, Darrion, who is in the second year of his second 5-year contract with EPI, shared a different experience. He shared,

> EPI helped us, we had an advisor, and she was an international exchange teacher. My only thing is that I wish she was Jamaican. They need to employ Jamaican teachers as new teacher mentors or other exchange teachers who understand Jamaican culture. Jane [pseudonym] helped us with things like the Praxis. I did not know what the Praxis was before getting here. They helped us with getting our driver's licenses, getting our social, and even showing us where to buy Jamaican food. Some people get depressed and leave before their contract is up. They get very little support. I would tell any Jamaican teacher or exchange teacher coming here to find people from your country and stay close to them. They will help you get through. That's what helped me the most, so that's why I came back a second time. I always tell myself that we are from the land of wood and water, Jamaicans are resilient, and we will survive.

Other teachers like Clarke shared their onboarding experience when asked the

same question, stating,

> When teachers leave their home countries to come to the United States, it is a very big adjustment in every respect. I've heard stories of these programs just dropping off teachers at different district offices and just leaving them there. My program does a good job of welcoming the teachers and finding or helping them to find accommodation. I think other programs can take on that approach.

Halifax agreed with Darrion and Clarke and shared that he had a good experience with his recruitment company getting settled in the new community. Halifax shared,

> I think Global did a decent job checking on us, but they could support us holistically. It's not just about work, work, work. Yes, we're here, here for that, but they have to cater to all aspects of our needs.

Halifax also went on to say,

> We are paid on the same salary scale as our American counterparts, and while we don't pay taxes for the first two years, we have to pay full price for medical and dental insurance. If we sign a five-year contract, we should at least be provided with these services at the same rate as the American teacher. We are doing the same job, aren't we?

Trust and Autonomy

One of the themes that emerged when the last question was asked was trust and autonomy. The participants who spoke on this topic affirmed that despite being foreign-trained educators, they were trusted to plan their lessons and teach their students.

Annie-Joe stated, "Of course, I have to follow the curriculum but they trust me to do my job. I am not micromanaged. Every time I am observed and given feedback about

something I need to adjust, I have implemented the feedback." Darrion shared the same point of view Annie-Joe and other participants shared:

> My principal had no reservations rehiring me when EPI asked them. We do a good job, and that's why they continue to recruit us. As Jamaicans, we are respected for our teaching skills and the diversity that we bring to the school.

Clarke concurring with Darrion, explained,

> I have heard that a Jamaican math teacher who worked at my school was awarded Teacher of The Year, which makes me feel good. I am not micromanaged and have worked hard to gain respect from the staff and students. I can say I am treated as a new international teacher, not as a new teacher. They recruit the best and brightest teachers from Jamaica, so when we come here, we have to work just as hard as we did back home.

Other participants like GiGi, Shauna, and Karin shared that they have gained the trust of their school administration and are trusted to make decisions about their teaching. Karin said, "No one is breathing down my neck or interfering with how I teach. They don't interfere; they may not understand algebra enough to interfere anyway [laugh]. I have been there for a couple of years, so they trust me." On the same topic, GiGi said,

> I take the standards and make decisions every day about how to deliver the content to my students. Once a teacher, always a teacher. It doesn't matter whether you teach in Jamaica or in the U.S. It's about using the curriculum, standards, or syllabus to give the students what they need. They know we are not new teachers because we have to be teaching for at least two years to qualify for the program. I get observations and evaluated just like everybody else.

Shauna's experiences are similar to the other participants. She shared,

> I teach Family and Consumer Science, I am the only Family and Consumer Science teacher at the school, so I have the freedom to make all the decisions about how to teach the lessons. I have my daily lesson plans on a clipboard by the entrance of my classroom, available for everyone who wishes to observe. I sometimes collaborate with teachers depending on the topic I am teaching so that we can teach across the content areas. I am confident in what I do.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided the qualitative data from this phenomenological study of the lived experiences of 10 Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina. The data collected in this study revealed six superordinate and nine subordinate themes from over 300 minutes of the participants' semi-structured interview transcripts. The superordinate themes were (a) encountering the differences, (b) cultural collision, (c) systematic and cultural diversity, (d) learned approaches to teaching and learning, (e) personal and professional growth, and (f) care and support emerged from the participants' stories. The themes provided insight into the participants' lives as they navigated teaching in rural northeastern North Carolina.

The study's 10 participants, identified by pseudonyms, presented stories of benefits, challenges, and hints of resilience as they acculturated and assimilated to teaching in rural northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. The participants cited benefits as a better quality of life, improving their teaching practice, gaining new knowledge, and international teaching experience. They shared that they experienced societal conflicts because of their communication (i.e., accent), weak or

nonexistent support programs, and some Americans' lack of appreciation and tolerance of other cultures.

The layered descriptive data derived from the transcribed face-to-face semi-structured interviews regarding the lived experiences of 10 Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina are further analyzed in Chapter 5. Included also in Chapter 5 are implications for practice in helping Jamaican teachers assimilate and acculturate in various school districts as well as recommendations for further investigation into the lived experiences of EVP teachers.

Chapter 5: Discussion

"The outcome does not determine success. The outcome is the result of having already decided that you are successful, to begin with."–T. F. Hodge

Introduction

How Jamaican immigrant teachers assimilated and acculturated to practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 schools was unknown. A qualitative phenomenological study was beneficial in exploring the lived experiences of Jamaican EVP teachers. The study targeted those recruited by international teaching agencies to fill vacancies in rural northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. The intended goal of exploring and amplifying the stories of Jamaican EVP teachers has been to contribute to the dearth of literature regarding the lived experiences of Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools.

Participants

Participants in the study were 10 Jamaican EVP teachers teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools for at least 1 academic year. The participants were sourced using the snowball or chain-referral sampling method. The participants in the study are of mixed gender and are presented in Chapter 4, Table 7. The participants introduced in Table 7 are listed by pseudonyms, and the table includes their demographic information.

The selected participants are Jamaican EVP teachers sponsored by Global and EPI, two J-1 cultural exchange programs offered through U.S. Department of State-approved sponsors. The group represented experienced teachers recruited to fill vacancies in English language arts, career technical education, and hard-to-staff positions in math

and science. All participants have been in education for a minimum of 8 years and a maximum of 21 years. Of the group, Darrion is in Year 2 of his second contract with EPI. The others are in different stages of their first contract with their sponsor.

Summary of Methodology

Beyond the numbers and headlines of Jamaican EVP teachers recruited to teach in the U.S. are the stories of individual teachers who leave their homeland to teach in America for 5 years, a finite amount of time. The interview process was designed to create open-ended, direct, and honest conversations around the lived experiences of these teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. The interview questions and prompts asked individual teachers to share their complicated stories as they acclimatized and acculturated to teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. Face-to-face interviews were conducted, audio recorded, and transcribed into texts using an online web tool. Multiple coding and thematic analyses were used to highlight themes from the individual stories. The stories of classroom and cultural challenges and gratitude for new opportunities and successes shared by the participants were also used to address the research question that undergirded the study.

The semi-structured face-to-face Interviews with open-ended questions moved the discussion in unexpected directions. The study participants shared stories of adversities, successes, and adaptations that resulted from their experiences teaching in northeastern North Carolina school districts. Literature regarding the lived experiences of immigrants in a foreign land indicates that foreign-born adults face challenging transitions as they acclimatize and acculturate in new host societies. Gordon (1964) proposed a theory that

affirms the phenomenon of assimilation when immigrants integrate into the host community's dominant culture: Identity and values merge with the host community's identity and values. Berry (1977) proposed a model of acculturation that explains how immigrants change following their entry (voluntary and involuntarily) into a host community. According to Berry's (1977) acculturation is a dual process of psychological and cultural changes between groups of people or individual members of a minority group and host society. Berry (1977) explained that individuals who acculturate often view their culture as inferior to the host culture and assimilate as a way to improve their economic and social status (Krsmanovic, 2022).

Research Question

The following research question framed the study:

What are the lived experiences faced by Jamaican educators while living and teaching in northeastern North Carolina?

The critical focus of the research is presented as an overarching question accompanied by six open-ended interview questions:

1. What are the differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina?
2. Describe your experience adjusting to the cultural differences between Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina.
3. What are the differences between teaching in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina?
4. Describe your experiences adapting your teaching to the needs of rural northeastern North Carolina students.

5. What supports should schools/school districts provide Jamaican teachers to assist in their adjustment to the American schooling/culture?
6. What else would you like to tell me about your experiences as a Jamaican EVP teacher living and working in rural northeastern North Carolina?

Data Analysis

Using the research question as a guide, the individual narratives shared by the 10 Jamaican EVP teachers who participated in the study provided rich insights and layered data about their adversities, successes, and adaptations that resulted from their intercultural experiences working in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter school systems. The six dominant themes that emerged from the study were (a) encountering differences, (b) cultural collision, (c) systematic and cultural diversity, (d) learned approaches to teaching Americans, (e) personal and professional growth, and (f) care and support.

The findings that emerged from this phenomenological study of the lived experiences of 10 Jamaican EVP teachers are aligned with and are supported by the research literature on the theory of assimilation postulated by Gordon (1964) and the acculturation theory advanced by Berry (1977). These two ecological models are used to explore the adaptation of immigrants in a new host society. Figure 11 illustrates Berry's (1977) and Gordon's theories of how immigrants (in this case, Jamaican EVP teachers) would integrate into their host communities.

Figure 11

Berry's (1977) Acculturation and Gordon*'s (1964) Assimilation Theories of Immigrants (Jamaican EVP Teachers) in Host Communities (America/Northeastern North Carolina School Districts)*

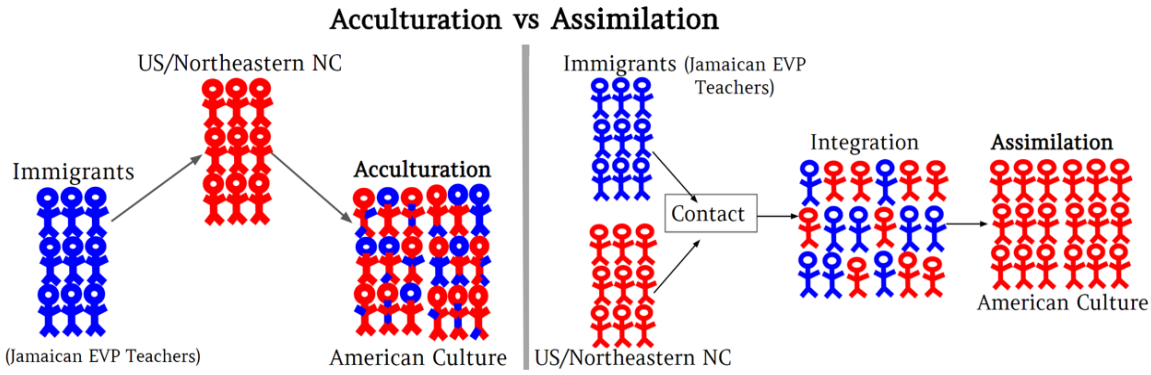


Figure 11 demonstrates two ways in which the immigrants, Jamaican EVP immigrant teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina, integrate into their new communities to appear American and fit in. Gordon's (1964) assimilation and Berry's (1977) acculturation theories are process-oriented. As the Jamaican EVP teachers continue to practice in their northeastern North Carolina school district, they will assimilate, assuming the American culture as their own, or acculturate, adapting American behaviors, values, rituals, and beliefs while maintaining their Jamaican culture.

The following is an analysis of the findings using the research question as the primary discovery tool. The overarching research question is answered through the analysis of six interview questions.

What Are the Differences Between Living in Jamaica and Rural Northeastern North Carolina?

This interview question focused on participant experiences of living in the U.S.

and their native-born country Jamaica. The subthemes of lifestyle change and interpersonal connections enabled the link to Gordon's (1964) theory of assimilation and Berry's (1977) theory of acculturation. A commonality in Figure 15, presented in Chapter 4, among all the study participants is lifestyle changes because of economic opportunity and a chance to experience a different culture.

Encountering Differences

When asked about the differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina, every participant referenced a better salary package that enabled them to purchase goods and services, save for future investments, support their families financially, and enjoy life after retirement. Annie-Joe explained, "When I compare my current salary to what the government would pay me in Jamaica, I earn almost three times that here. I can have a better life and provide for my family." Another female participant, Clarke, said, "The compensation package, compared to Jamaica, is better, well, I'd say, for teaching. I can do some things I always wanted but couldn't afford. I can send money home to help my mother, who is sick." Karin shared,

> If I can stay here for 10 years, at the end of the 5 years with EPI, I can go home and come back and work for another 5 years; I would be happy. I can save and finish paying for my house.

Further expounding on her lifestyle change, Annie-Joe explained that "Jamaica is a third-world country; there are certain things that I find to be more advanced here, just the infrastructure in general and the quality of care and customer service you receive here." Clarke shared similar sentiments: "I always joked with my friends that when you live in Jamaica, it's from the womb to the tomb [laugh]. Working here, I can save and

live a good life when I retire." Karin added,

> If I can stay here for ten years, at the end of the five years with EPI, I can go home and come back and work for another five years I would be happy. I can save and finish paying for my house. I can use my savings and pension to care for myself when I am older.

Interpersonal connections were another notable difference the participants mentioned when asked about the differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina. Resonating in the participants' stories were their experiences of the support they enjoyed, communicating challenges, and forming relationships within their host communities. In Gordon's (1964) theory of assimilation, he espoused that assimilation in America is a movement in which unrelated and distinct groups of people from different cultures integrate, forming a collective societal union.

Several persons explained that their cross-cultural relationships are person-person experiences and not collective. Sentiments surrounding their relationships with colleagues, church members, and community members ranged from friendly to being ignored. Participants such as DeMay said, "The members of my church are like family to me. Hosting events for church members has allowed me to meet many people and build friendships." Others, such as Darrion, GiGi, Duhaney, and Anie-Joe, shared their experiences in building friendships and earning acceptance as mixed. Darrion shared, "I don't have such a hard time because most teachers know and support me. But, I have heard of and have been ignored by other teachers at my school." Annie-Joe shared that she has experienced people's friendliness and open disrespect because of her accent. She explained that people have openly mocked her accent, but she stated, "Most people are

very friendly, and they say hello when you meet them. Sometimes they ask me where I am from. I would tell them, and they would say that the accent is beautiful." GiGi had some of the same negative experiences as others and shared, "Teachers and students will openly imitate me because of my Jamaican accent."

Duhaney, Darrion, and Halifax also spoke on the experiences of being ignored and the general friendliness of the American people. Darrion shared, "Here they will pass you without saying hello, or they sometimes pretend they do not understand what you are saying." Duhaney said, "People in Jamaica take pride in expressing pleasantries. In North Carolina, this is not so. You would say good morning, good evening, or good afternoon. You will pass others and say good morning, and they do not respond."

Halifax shared the differences between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina, stating,

> Living in rural northeastern NC is very different from Jamaica. Community relationships are more heartfelt in Jamaica, as Jamaicans are friendly to their neighbors and know them to some extent. Here, on the other hand, I find that people are too busy to be friendly with their neighbors and may not even know each other's names.

In 1964, Gordon surveyed various immigrant groups in the U.S. for multiple purposes, including slavery from Africa and improved living standards in the Far East and Europe; hence, Gordon promoted the theory of assimilation and declared that assimilation occurs when individuals of minority groups develop a sense of identity based on the influence of the host society's culture, acquiring opinions and approaches to economic mobility and absorbing the philosophical standards of the host community.

Describe Your Experience Adjusting to the Cultural Differences Between Jamaica and Rural Northeastern North Carolina.

Scholars assert that acculturation is an essential process; immigrants adapt to the culture of their community in their everyday life and are part of their local community while maintaining the values, traditions, values, and practices of their own culture (Crossman, 2021; Hall et al., 2016). Berry's (1977) acculturation posits that immigrants mold their lifestyles to accommodate the changes they are experiencing. Berry (1977) referred to psychological assimilation as changes in individuals' identities, behaviors, attitudes, and values. The experiences and adjustments are reflected in the cultural collision, the superordinate theme, as participants shared their experiences adjusting to the cultural differences between Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina.

The Cultural Collision

Every participant spoke of their experiences adjusting to music, food, dress, language, and accent, which were the main discussion topics. Adjusting to language and accent emerged as the most significant adaptation the Jamaicans had to make to fit into rural northeastern North Carolina, with dialects (Jamaican Patois) and pronunciation being significantly different and challenging for all, and did not come naturally as they tried to fit into their new northeastern North Carolina school district.

Jamaica is a major American tourist destination, 500 miles from Miami by air, thus they are exposed to American music, dress, and food. However, food was the most significant adjustment they had to make. GiGi expressed that the adjustments she had to make were her vernacular, the spelling of words, and the food. She said,

We are close to the U.S., and we are exposed to the U.S. culture regarding food

and music. The difference between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina is the way we talk, spell some words, and some food we eat.

Hall et al. (2016) posited that as individual groups assimilate into a host society, they will adopt the cultural elements of food, entertainment, etc. Clarke, like other participants, shared that the most significant cultural difference and shifts she had to make were acquiring the taste for some of the food and the pronunciation and spelling of some words. She said, “In Jamaica, we are exposed to many of the things that are here. Jamaicans send barrels home with food and clothes, so some of us have no problems eating the food.” She explained the adjustments: “The only significant adjustment I had to make was how I spell and pronounce some words. For example, the words neighbor and color are spelled differently in Jamaica; we spell the words with the letter ‘u,’ neighbour and colour.” Shauna also shared that the adjustments she had to make were regarding food: “The biggest adjustment I had to make was the food. I have had American food before. Jamaicans who live here send barrels back home with food and clothes. I found some food we eat in the Mexican stores.”

The Jamaican EVP teachers discussed cultural awareness at length. It represented various challenges and adversities and is vital in the stories of their journeys to acclimatize and assimilate into their host communities. Many participants, including Darrion, GiGi, DeMay, Duhaney, and Georgia, shared ways they have adopted parts of the American lexicon to communicate more effectively with their colleagues, parents, and students. They shared how they have used aspects of their culture to educate their host communities. The participants’ adaptation of the U.S. lexicon is aligned with Berry’s (1977) acculturation theory.

They shared that they had to become more culturally aware of language and the context in which the two countries use words. Darrion shared,

> Talking to my roommate and her friends helped me a lot. In my first year, I made a big mistake by telling one of my students he was lying. We say lying all the time in Jamaica. I learned that I should not say lie I should have said fibbing after a phone call from his parents. It was a rough conversation.

Georgia shared how students are more respectful at this juncture of her journey and are fascinated by Jamaicans' different names for certain things. She shared,

> During the World Cup soccer tournament, my students and I had a fun debate about why every country except the U.S. is right for naming the sport football and not soccer. We had a long back and forth and some good laughs. I also learned the hard way that if you say hush, you are telling someone to stop talking, and it is offensive in Jamaica say for example, if someone falls and you say hush, it means you are showing empathy, you are telling them I understand, I hope you feel better or saying never mind.

Stroud Stasel (2021) asserted language barriers as standard features of culture shock and acculturative stress for immigrants. Gordon (1964) contended that assimilation occurs when minority groups or individuals of a minority group develop a sense of identity based on cross-cultural experiences and absorb the philosophical standards of the host country. Foreign-educated teachers in the U.S. will adjust their vernacular as a strategy to fit into their host community, function in everyday life, make friends, and have a successful life and career (Cole, 2020; Starz, 2017).

What Are the Differences Between Teaching in Jamaica and Rural Northeastern North Carolina?

From Table 8, Chapter 4, it is essential to note that during the participants' face-to-face semi-structured interviews, all participants could share at least three differences between teaching in Jamaica and rural northeastern North Carolina; however, the lack of association of the question and theme to a specific participant does not denote that it is a missing factor in their lived experience since they are all Jamaican-born and educated and have at least 2 years of experience teaching in the Jamaican school system. The systematic and cultural diversity theme encompasses the differences, challenges, and opportunities of working in the American school system and collectively underscore the differences between teaching in Jamaica and northeastern North Carolina.

Systematic and Cultural Diversity

During the discussions, the most important differences that resonated in the participants' responses were school structure, respect for each other, and social and PD. Gordon (1964) argued that the human desire to understand and precisely envision human behavior in a setting is pivotal to human interactions, transferred from one ethnic group to another. Structural and cultural diversity aligns with Gordon's description of cultural assimilation and Berry's (1977) phenomenon of acculturation. Gordon and Berry asserted that once structural assimilation occurs, the remaining process of assimilation follows.

While there were similarities between the two countries' educational systems that helped the participants assimilate into the rural northeastern North Carolina school districts, the differences were of interest to the study. The differences in the school systems include student groupings, teaching single or multiple grade levels, curriculum,

and the availability of resources. Many of the other teachers shared the same sentiments about the differences between teaching in rural northeastern North Carolina and Jamaican schools. Darrion shared, “Everything is pretty much laid out for you. My only challenge was learning how to use the technology they provide.” Duhaney expressed that he also spends less time planning his lessons and loves that each student has their own Chromebook and school-issued textbooks: “In Jamaica, students have to either rent or buy their own textbooks and do not get to take their school-issued Chromebooks home if they have Chromebooks at their schools. They have endless free resources here; not so back home.” Halifax mentioned that Jamaican schools lacked the resources needed to educate the students: “I remember spending my own money to get supplies for science class. Here I have everything I need all I need to do is ask if it’s not already in my classroom.”

DeMay’s response summed up the responses of all the participants. She shared her experiences of teaching seventh grade along with two eighth-grade math classes. She explained,

> It was tedious and took a lot of time for her to write four lesson plans in Jamaica because students were grouped by abilities there, and find it easier here to plan and teach her students. Here the curriculum is pretty much laid out for you. It is easier to prepare for my lessons since I teach the same lesson four times daily to one grade level. Also, in Jamaica, we do not have access to many computers, reliable internet services, manipulatives, and other resources, it was basically chalk and talk as the saying goes. Here students spend a lot of time on the computer completing work. Here students take the End of Grade exams online,

> while Jamaican students take paper and pencil End of Year exams. North Carolina schools are better equipped with technology, manipulatives, and other resources for teachers and students.

The participants shared that rural northeastern North Carolina classrooms differ from those in Jamaica in how students follow teacher directives and interact with others. Explicitly teaching classroom expectations and having rules posted in their classrooms are new to them. Shauna shared,

> Although teachers are not paid well in Jamaica, they are revered. I am from a small community, and everyone who knows me knows I am a teacher. Some people in my community do not even know my name; they call me teacher. Here that does not matter.

Other teachers like DeMay could relate to Shauna and shared,

> Students will tell you they don't have to do anything you tell them to do. They will disrespect you, especially if you hold their feet to the fire. This was a shock to me. It almost killed me [laugh]. In the same breath, some of these students are respectable and try to help me sometimes.

One of the aspects of acculturation is culture shock (Berry, 2005). Oberg (1960) was the first scholar to use the term culture shock, likening it to an instantaneous feeling of disorientation a person experiences when encountering an unfamiliar culture.

Another teacher, Duhaney, shared,

> Students in Jamaica seemed more respectful because they tend to listen and follow the teacher's instructions, while the students here question your directives. I am guessing it's because of their upbringing; American children question

> anything they disagree with. When I give instructions to children here, I explain my rationale for such instructions, and they are more likely to follow these instructions.

Some researchers assert that the lack of respect in American schools results from parental indulgence or the lack thereof, school climate, leadership, and the constantly changing school discipline policies (Welsh & Little, 2018).

The participants also spoke at length about their preparedness to teach in American classrooms and how they had to adapt and acquire new skills to be effective. The use of technology, unfamiliar educational jargon, and acronyms were challenges for them. They expressed how they felt limited when they arrived without the technical knowledge and background of acronyms commonly referred to in Professional Learning Community meetings. They shared that technology has enabled them to enhance instruction and classroom management. Karin shared, “PDs, workshops, and frequent training in the use of technology devices in the classroom have helped my teaching and classroom management.” She went on to talk about how PDs have helped her to grow socially. Clarke, like Karin, said, “The PD sessions have helped me to flip my classroom from a teacher-centered approach that I was used to in Jamaica to a student-centered approach in the U.S., students are doing the thinking and hard work, not me.”

Studies indicate that international teachers experience different cultural, societal, and professional expectations previously unknown to them before they were recruited to teach in American schools (Goodroad, 2019; McDaniel et al., 2017).

Describe Your Experiences Adapting Your Teaching to the Needs of Rural Northeastern North Carolina Students.

This interview question focused on how the participants changed how they taught in their native-born country Jamaica to accommodate the needs of their students in rural northeastern North Carolina classrooms. All participants acknowledged that Jamaican and American students are different, and the values they place on education are different. Participants shared that how they taught their classes in Jamaica differs in how they plan, deliver their lessons, and assess students here. Opportunities and student responses to learning emerged as a theme from an analysis of the interview transcripts.

Opportunities and Response to Learning

The concept of opportunities and student responses to learning refers to the indulgent behaviors of teachers, students, administration, and families. The teachers recounted that in Jamaica, students are grouped by academic abilities, and teachers and students have limited resources, such as textbooks, lab equipment, math manipulatives, computers, or reliable internet connection. Karin shared,

> I have to plan and differentiate lessons for students with IEPs and other accommodations, academic abilities, and learning styles. In Jamaica, everyone in the classroom was at about the same level, so I did not have to change the lesson or make many accommodations for them. Here, my school has a lot of resources; they have textbooks, student workbooks, and computers with hundreds of online platforms that the students used daily. My students in Jamaica did not have all these resources. They had a textbook, if they can afford it, and a notebook to write their notes in. That should tell you that the way I taught in Jamaica differs from

how I teach my students here.

Duhaney also shared that he had to change how student work was graded. He shared how student attitudes toward work have impacted how he assesses students:

> In Jamaica, we don't give make-up work or accept late work. I had to quickly make room to accept late assignments, and even give make-up work to students who failed to complete given assignments. This is not something I am used to, but I discovered that it was a norm for students to make up work that they did not do the first time. This was new to me, but that's the school policy, so you must follow it.

In the study's context, adjusting how students are taught and how work is assessed aligns with Gordon's (1964) description of assimilation by acculturation. Gordon and other assimilation scholars denote this pattern of adapting to educational and emotional environments as mono-operational, meaning that people of a minority group accept and implement the traditional mainstream group's philosophies.

When asked to describe their experiences adapting their teaching to the needs of rural northeastern North Carolina students, Halifax shared how he begged students to learn. He also shared about the value he believes students place on education and how he sees the school system as a part of the problem why some students do not value education. To emphasize his point, Halifax compared his personal experience with that of his students, saying,

> I grew up in a single-parent household. When I was in high school, my mama always told me that the only way out of poverty was through education, which has stuck with me and my approach to teaching. Back home, students are responsible

> for their learning, whether rich or poor or representing the school by playing a sport. I do not allow students to opt out of participating in class and completing their work, but sometimes they do. It can be called begging, but at times I literally have to beg some of them to do some work. Some will do the work after much begging, and some will straight up ignore you. If they turn work in that is not done properly, I will ask them to redo it, sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't. They also know you can't put them out of class for not working, or you can't fail them; they will get a 50%. My students back home know that whatever grade they get, that stands, no makeup, and no late work. The first grade is what goes in the grade book. It also seems that the students who play sports are given more leeway regarding expectations about their work. But it is what it is; you must follow the school's policies, written and unwritten.

Gordon (1964) shared that a person's uniqueness is constantly developing, adjusting, and evolving as they make sense of new knowledge that is entwined with previous paradigms in their nature. Valente and Berry (2016) argued that foreign-born teachers experience several processes as they learn to adjust, improve, and exist in their new environment. They argued that migration and adaptation are present-day philosophies and that immigrants must relinquish their traditional way of life to acculturate to their new society.

What Support Should the School/School Districts Provide Jamaican Teachers to Assist Their Adjustment to the American Schooling/Culture?

This interview question focused on the support the Jamaican EVP teachers perceived they should have received or still be receiving from their schools or school

districts as they assimilated and acculturated to the American culture while practicing in northeastern North Carolina. Onboarding and navigating the new terrain emerged as the theme when the Jamaican EVP teachers shared their stories of the support schools or school districts should provide to assist in their adjustment to the American schooling and culture.

Onboarding and Navigating New Terrain

Participants' stories individually and collectively reflect their views about the support they received and what they believe should have been provided by the schools or school districts as they adapted to life in northeastern North Carolina. Their stories of how challenging it was for them to adapt or how easy it was for them to adapt depended on the level of support they received from their sponsors, school districts, schools, or mentors.

Hendriks and Burger (2019) found that subjective well-being in terms of happiness and life satisfaction affects the assimilation of immigrants. Immigrants' expectations and aspirations of better conditions follow them from their home country to their host country. This theme aligns with Hendriks and Burger's theory of subjective well-being. According to Furuya et al. (2019), the assimilation theory was born out of suppositions supported by investigations of the progression of immigrants' integration into their host communities. Immigrant individuals and families develop various surviving and adaptive strategies and assimilate into their host communities.

The support the participants desired overlapped with that of their school, school district, and sponsors (recruitment agency). The teachers believe that the school districts should provide them with mentors, preferably EVP Jamaican teachers or other mentors

who have studied and understand the Jamaican culture, who will assist them in settling into their new community. Teachers like Annie-Joe shared,

> New teachers need mentors, someone to answer their questions, to help with simple things like lesson plans, how to get a driver's license, or even how you will get your pay. There is Google, but google can't answer every question.

DeMay said, "Coming here for the first time, I had no idea what to expect I only knew what I Googled and what they told us at the three-day new teacher orientation." Halifax shared, "Support us with mentors who are either Jamaicans or someone who studied and understands the Jamaican culture. It would not have been that difficult if we had genuine advisors who cared about us when we first arrived." He said that besides assigning each teacher a mentor, the participants shared that they needed help finding housing, getting reliable cars, and even locating the basic Jamaican food store. Georgia was pleased with her mentorship and explained,

> They also assigned me a mentor that checks on me. We need mentors who will meet with us, not about schoolwork and evaluation, find housing, get our social security cards, and get our driver's licenses. They helped me the best way they could. I stayed in a hotel for a week, and they helped me find an apartment close to school.

Some participants need support finding needed housing and classroom observations before teaching. Annie-Joe said, "We need at least a week or two when we get to our new school to observe, get our driver's license, and find a good place to live." Annie-Joe continued,

> We should be able to go into schools and observe before we are thrown into the

> classrooms. Seeing it and living it are two different things. We need mentors or advisors who are Jamaicans or someone who understands the Jamaican school system and could help us acclimate to this new system.

When asked the same question, Karin said, “I don't think the school administration understands that not every school operates like the American school system. They tend to use a lot of acronyms without anyone to help us navigate this new terrain.” Duhaney went on to share, “Providing a handbook that explains all the various acronyms used in the North Carolina school system would help. Life would have been easier if there were a book explaining all these acronyms.” Karin expressed her struggles early in the program and shared, “Sometimes I feel incompetent because I get lost in data or PLC meetings because I don't understand their terminologies.”

What Else Would You Like to Tell Me About Your Experiences as a Jamaican EVP Teacher Living and Working in Northeastern North Carolina?

When the opportunity came for the participants to freely share anything else that the previous interview questions did not capture about their experiences as Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in rural northeastern North Carolina, the subordinate themes of settling down, autonomy, and self-efficacy emerged. References of needing support from their sponsor (recruitment agencies) and hints of pedagogical strength are embedded in each story of their lives in northeastern North Carolina.

Support for Success

Participants shared the support they received from their recruiting agencies as they established new living conditions and navigated and got acclimated to their new environment in northeastern North Carolina. Some participants applauded the support

their sponsors provided, while others did not. Halifax shared,

> Global did a decent job checking on us, but they could support us holistically it is not just about work. Yes, we're here for that, but they must cater to all our needs. We are paid on the same salary scale as our American counterparts, and while we don't pay taxes for the first two years, we have to pay full price for medical and dental insurance. If we sign a five-year contract, we should at least be provided with these services at the same rate as the American teacher. We are doing the same job, aren't we?

Clarke shared their onboarding experience, saying,

> It is a big adjustment when teachers leave their home countries to come to the United States. I've heard stories of these programs just dropping off teachers at different district offices and just leaving them there. My program, Global, does a good job of welcoming the teachers and finding or helping them to find accommodation. I think other programs can take on that approach.

Darrion, Annie-Joe, Georgia, and Shauna are sponsored by EPI. Darrion, in the second year of his second 5-year contract with EPI, shared that he is pleased with his experience and is thus the reason for returning on his second 5-year contract with the sponsor. Annie-Joe, Georgia, and Shauna shared that they wanted their recruitment agency, EPI, to know that they did not fulfill their promise to support them like they promised when they arrived in America. Annie-Joe said, "EPI promised us support. In all my years with EPI, they came to the school once. I get emails from them, but they are general emails for every international teacher, regardless of where they come from." EPI also recruited Georgia to teach English language arts in a middle school; she shared her

disappointment with the EPI and expressed,

> EPI needs to come into the schools and support us. They need to visit us, especially when you're in your first year, so we can share the good things happening and the changes they can make to improve the program.

Shauna shared,

> Since we don't have a credit rating, transitioning from Jamaica to America would be easier if EPI built business relationships with apartment complexes and car dealerships. It was difficult for me to find a decent and reasonably priced car and pay the deposit and first month's rent on an apartment with the money I brought with me. They gave me an interest-free loan, but I did not want to start my life here in the U.S. owing money to anyone.

The participants who spoke on this topic affirmed that despite being foreign-trained educators, they earned the trust and autonomy to plan their lessons and teach their students. Some of them alluded that this may be because the school leaders were familiar with the work of other Jamaican teachers previously employed at their schools.

Annie-Joe stated, "Of course, I have to follow the curriculum, but they trust me to do my job. I am not micromanaged. Every time I am observed and given feedback about something I need to adjust, I have implemented the feedback." Darrion shared the same point of view Annie-Joe and other participants shared:

> My principal had no reservations rehiring me when EPI asked them. We do a good job, and that's why they continue to recruit us. As Jamaicans, we are respected for our teaching skills and the diversity that we bring to the school.

Darrion explained,

> I have heard that a Jamaican math teacher who worked at my school was awarded Teacher of The Year, which makes me feel good. I am not micromanaged and have worked hard to gain respect from the staff and students.

Other participants like GiGi, Shauna, and Karin shared that they have gained the trust of their school administration and are trusted to make decisions about their teaching. Karin said, "No one is breathing down my neck or interfering with how I teach. They don't interfere; they may not understand algebra enough to interfere anyway [laugh]. I have been there for a couple of years, so they trust me." On the same topic, GiGi said, "I take the standards and make decisions every day about how to deliver the content to my students. It's about using the curriculum, standards, or syllabus to give the students what they need." Shauna's experiences are similar to the other participants. She shared, "I teach Family and Consumer Science I am the only Family and Consumer Science teacher at the school, so I have the freedom to make all the decisions about how to teach the lessons. I am confident in what I do."

Implications for Practice

EVP teachers are more than a solution to the teacher shortage and retention issues plaguing North Carolina schools over the past several years. However, beyond the numbers and the headlines of immigrant teachers practicing in the U.S. are their complicated stories of acculturation and assimilation into their host communities. The study could inform schools, school districts, and international teacher recruitment agencies (i.e., Global, EPI, etc.) about the experiences of foreign-born and educated teachers (Jamaicans) practicing in American schools and about approaches they could take to adequately prepare immigrant teachers for the exchange experience specifically in

rural northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools.

The study could inform teacher recruitment agencies recruiting international teachers to teach in the U.S. about specific approaches to better equip EVP teachers for their experience teaching in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. It also enables the school and district leaders to have a broader understanding of the intercultural experience the staff, students, and international teachers will experience. Based on the research findings, the implications for practice are as follows:

- Teacher sentiments emphasize that recruitment agencies, host schools, and districts do not offer enough preliminary support and preparation for their new school assignment. Predeparture and arrival orientations and other support, including school district-level activities about relocation support, including but not limited to assisting participants in finding housing, transportation, and financial assistance, are essential factors that could help ease transitions. This support can increase the possibility of acculturating and a successful teaching experience in their respective school district.
- Participants cite relationships as one of the reasons for their successful transition. Schools and school districts should identify and implement practices that would more intently capitalize on building positive relationships among the exchange teachers, students, families, and staff from the host school district immediately upon the EVP teachers' arrival in their host school district, which could lead to and relate to positively impact the overall transition.
- Coupled with the effects of culture shock resulting from migrating to teach in

an unfamiliar setting, teachers seemed overwhelmed in PD and professional learning community meetings as they tried to learn new education acronyms and jargon and navigate the unfamiliar curricula and learning platforms. Program sponsors, schools, and school districts could have support groups of Jamaican EVP teacher alums still practicing in the school district or returning Jamaican EVP teachers providing comprehensive support to help those new to teaching in the U.S. understand the practices of the school system.

- The North Carolina State Board of Education requires every teacher in their first 3 years of teaching to be assigned a mentor. Most EVP teachers fall outside of this category because they have taught for over 3 years and are assigned a buddy instead; however, a well-designed buddy program can provide immigrant teachers the guidance they need to succeed in the new setting. Strong, mandated, ongoing mentorship and PD for the EVP teachers for the first 3 years of teaching in the U.S. will strengthen their classroom practices and build relationships and sustainability.
- Schools and school district leaders should continuously liaise with recruitment agencies' human resource offices to develop comprehensive recruitment and mentoring processes aligned with research on best practices for assisting the teachers in navigating the diverse challenges they experience assimilating and acculturating in America. This initiative will facilitate the assimilation and acculturation of EVP teachers into the schools where they will thrive.
- The need exists for schools and school districts to educate students, faculty, and community members on the importance of immigrant teachers in their

school communities as they simultaneously introduce new EVP teachers to their school community, making it a lot easier for acculturating and lessen some of the anxiety the teachers may feel in their new environment. Therefore, schools that hire multicultural teachers should seek ways to broaden staff and student multicultural experiences, which will help them be more receptive and tolerant of immigrant teachers.

- Once teachers have signed their contract, signaling they have accepted the offer to teach in America, they should be obligated to participate in formalized online PD programs and specialized mentorship programs geared towards equipping them with the tools necessary to acculturate successfully to their new environment when they arrive and feeling supported to increase student learning outcomes. International teacher recruitment agencies (such as EPI and Global), schools, and school district leaders should start providing high-quality personalized predeparture PD and mentorship sessions to the EVP teachers through online learning platforms orienting them to the American culture and teaching in American classrooms. Through the online learning platform, teachers could engage in relevant conversations with their school-assigned coaches and mentors or someone from the district office or recruitment agency serving as a proxy when the assigned school coaches and mentors are unavailable.

Recommendations for Further Research

These teachers' lived experiences and challenges vary by district, by school, and by the teacher recruitment agency. The following are recommendations for future

research regarding these individuals' lived experiences.

- Conducting a longitudinal study that tracks different EVP teachers in different teaching contexts, districts, and school levels (primary, middle, and high) at different stages of their contracts could provide indications of the transitional exchange experiences at different points of the EVP teacher's employment in the schools. Such knowledge will help anticipate and mitigate difficulties that emerge during the initial months and even years of an EVP teacher's experience in the U.S. It may decrease the likelihood of the participant returning home or vowing not to return to teaching in the U.S. if allowed to do so.
- Teaching internationally can be a life-changing experience for many educators. After finishing their contract, international exchange teachers return to their home countries to fulfill their 2-year home country physical presence requirement. There is no available literature addressing international teachers who return to their home country after their first 5-year teaching contract in the U.S. ends to fulfill their 2-year physical home presence contractual obligation and then return to the U.S. for a second-term contract. Exploring this phenomenon may deepen the understanding of how returning EVP teachers' experiences affect their teaching practices and cultural immersion in the U.S. during their second-term contract.
- Assimilation and acculturation are phenomena of migration; therefore, further studies are needed to compare the assimilation and acculturation of Jamaican EVP teachers with EVP teachers from other nations in the same or different

geographical locations in the U.S. to see the extent to which the lived experiences are similar or different based on the participant's country of origin or specific geographic area within the U.S. The study could utilize the same interview questions and protocol. Exploring this phenomenon may deepen the understanding of how the EVP teacher sponsors, schools, and school district leaders could tailor or adapt their support to meet the needs of the teachers depending on their country of origin or the geographical location within the U.S. where they are practicing.

- As the racial and ethnic minority populations grow in the U.S., further research may be significant to explore and compare the lived experiences of Jamaican EVP male and female teachers' contributions to the American education system. The consideration of gender will add knowledge to understanding the evolving cultural implications of assimilation and acculturation of minority male teachers in America's classrooms and its support or contradiction to Gordon's (1964) assimilation and Berry's (1977) acculturation theories.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of a study are flaws or shortcomings beyond the researcher's control, while delimitations are the study's parameters (Jansen, 2023). Limitations of the study included whether or not the participants were honest in recounting their stories when answering the interview questions. While the interviews were face-to-face and participants were encouraged to share their true stories, not knowing me may have influenced them to share only a portion of their stories. The participants' honesty and

how they interpreted and shared their stories were out of my control.

This study will add to the sparse literature on immigrant teachers practicing in the U.S. It will also close the knowledge gap about Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in rural northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. The nature of the qualitative phenomenological study yielded valuable data; however, the findings and analyses cannot be generalized beyond the sample of participants in the study. The delimitations of the study included a convenience sample of 10 participants who took part in a face-to-face semi-structured interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. While they presented stories of their lived experiences, they do not represent all Jamaican EVP teachers in northeastern North Carolina school districts, North Carolina, or the U.S. A larger sample of participants across North Carolina may have produced different themes and recommendations. Nonetheless, the conclusions and implications can be helpful to North Carolina international teacher recruitment agencies, school district leaders, schools considering teacher exchange programs, and international educators interested in becoming EVP teachers in North Carolina.

Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of 10 Jamaican EVP teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina school districts. This study aimed to contribute to the dearth of literature on EVP teachers practicing in America. This study allowed them to share their stories, offering a deeper and richer understanding of how they navigated life in the rural northeastern North Carolina school districts where they practiced. While the stories of these 10 Jamaican EVP teachers do not represent every immigrant teacher or every Jamaican EVP teacher, their accounts

offer insight for examining the successes, opportunities, and challenges Jamaican EVP teachers encounter. Specifically, classroom management, social norms, and communication barriers were common challenges faced by each of the 10 Jamaican EVP teachers who participated in the study.

The themes uncovered in the stories are supported by literature and the theoretical frameworks that undergird the study. Additionally, the stories shared have highlighted unique perspectives and experiences of overt and covert racism and how the teachers navigated working in a multicultural society to expand their horizons while teaching others to become more tolerant and respectful towards others of a minority culture. They have reflected on their methodologies and have made adjustments to meet the needs of their students as well as solve some of the problems associated with differences in culture. Besides, they have become more reflective practitioners.

It is not enough to share their stories without being compelled to examine the implications for practice and offer recommendations for future research regarding international teachers practicing in America. It is also not enough to share their stories of challenges, growth, and successes without reminding school district leaders, school leaders, and international teacher recruitment agencies that Jamaican EVP teachers are more than a simple answer to the teacher shortage and retention issues plaguing the school districts and they should be treated as international educators in America educating America’s children.

References

AbiHanna, R. (2014, December). Examining acculturation: Can one theory really explain all experiences of migration? *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education, 5*(4), 1837-1844. https://infonomics-society.org/wp-content/uploads/ijcdse/published-papers/volume-5-2014/Examining-Acculturation.pdf

Alba, R. (2016). Assimilation in the past and present. In R. H. Bayor (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of American immigration and ethnicity*, (pp. 183-196). Oxford University Press.

American Federation of Teachers. (2009). *Importing educators: Causes and consequences of international teacher recruitment.* https://www.aft.org/pdfs/international/importingeducators0609.pdf

American Immigration Council. (2020). *The exchange visitor program and J-1 visas.* https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/the_exchange_visitor_program_and_j-1_visas.pdf

Amin, N. S. (2020). Assimilation and educational achievement: The case of Coptic Orthodox Egyptian immigrants in Texas. *International Social Science Review (Online), 96*(2). https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr/vol96/iss2/2

Barnum, M. (2021, Apr. 6). *Despite pandemic, there's little evidence of rising teacher turnover yet.* Chalkbeat. https://www.chalkbeat.org/2021/4/6/22368846/teacher-turnover-quitting-pandemic-data-economy

Beck, M., & Nganga, C. (2016). Narratives of foreign-born international teachers: Implications for dialogic leadership for social justice. *Education Leadership Review*, 58-71.

Berry, J. W. (1977). Introduction. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *8*(2), 131-133. https://doi.org/10.1177/002202217782001

Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 697-712.

Blad, E. (2019, November 7). *Governor Sisolak asks President Trump to reverse J-1 visa suspensions to impact state teachers*. EdWeek.org. https://www.8newsnow.com/news/politics/governor-sisolak-asks-president-trump-to-reverse-j-1-visa-suspensions-to-impact-state-teachers/

Bindah, E. (2019). Adoption of snowball sampling technique in an exploratory study of disabled entrepreneurship. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526487438

BridgeUSA. (2021). *Creating global leaders, creating lasting impact.* https://j1visa.state.gov/programs/teacher/

Buckingham, S. L., & Suarez-Pedraza, M. C. (2019). "It has cost me a lot to adapt to here": The divergence of real acculturation from ideal acculturation impacts Latinx immigrants' psychosocial wellbeing. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 89*(4), 406-419. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000329

Cai, J. (2019, May). Fixing holes in the teacher pipeline: three ways for school leaders to act. https://www.nsba.org/Perspectives/2019/Fixing-Teacher-Pipeline-Holes

Caravatti, M., Lederer, S., Lupico, A., & Van Meter, N. (2021). Study on teacher migration: Getting teacher migration & mobility right. https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/25652:getting-teacher-migration-and-mobility-right

Carothers, D., Aydin, H., & Houdyshell, M. (2019). Teacher shortages and cultural mismatch: District and university collaboration for recruiting. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, *10*(3), 39-63. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1229410.pdf

Chacko, J. B., & Lin, M. (2015). Teacher preparation for the global stage: International student teaching. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education, 2*(2), 41–56. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1133936.pdf

Cole, N. L. (2020, August 27). How different cultural groups become more alike. https://www.thoughtco.com/assimilation-definition-4149483

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Critchfield, H., & Donovan, L. (2020, December 12). Trump's ban on foreign workers has left schools with teacher shortages. https://theintercept.com/2020/12/12/j-1-visa-ban-teachers/

Crossman, A. (2021, September 8). What is the "American melting pot?" https://www.thoughtco.com/melting-pot-definition-3026408

Crul, M. (2015). Super-diversity vs. assimilation: How complex diversity in majority-minority cities challenges the assumptions of assimilation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 42*(1), 1-15. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2015.1061425

Darling-Hammond, L., Bastian, K., Barnett, B., Carver-Thomas, D., Kini, T., Levin, S., & McDiarmid, W. (2022, January 14). *Educator supply, demand, and quality in North Carolina: Current status and recommendations.* Learning Policy Institute.

Davis, A. (2021, January 22). More teachers could take flight. *Jamaica Star.* https://jamaica-star.com/article/news/20210122/more-teachers-could-take-flight

Dey, B. L., Alwi, S., Yamoah, F., Agyepong, S. A., Kizgin, H., & Sarma, M. (2019). Towards a framework for understanding ethnic consumers' acculturation strategies in a multicultural environment: A food consumption perspective. *International Marketing Review, 36*(5), 771-804. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-03-2018-0103

Eddles-Hirsch, K. (2015). Phenomenology and educational research. *International Journal of Advanced Research, 3*(8), 251-260.

Edelman, A. (2021, June 6). *Biden wants to fix the nation's teacher shortage. Educators say the problem is worsening*. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/joe-biden/biden-wants-fix-nation-s-teacher-shortage-educators-say-problem-n1269340#:~:text=Teacher%20demand%20exceeded%20supply%20for,effects%20of%20the%20teacher%20shortage

Elliott, V. (2018). Thinking about the coding process in qualitative data analysis. *The Qualitative Report, 23*(11), 2850-2861. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3560

Encyclopedia.com. (n.d.). Race relation cycle. https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/race-relations-cycle

Encyclopedia.com. (2018, May 17). *Fulbright act of 1946.* https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/fulbright-act-1946

Falk, B. (2015). Teacher leadership for educational quality and equity: Learning across Singapore, Canada, Finland, and the United States. *The New Educator, 11*(2), 105–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688X.2015.1026781

Fickey Martinez Law Firm (2022, July 13). *Top 6 states hiring J1 teachers: Statistics and interesting info*. https://www.fickeymartinezlaw.com/immigration/top-5-states-hiring-j1-teachers-statistics-and-interesting-info/

Foner, N. (2014). Immigration history and the remaking of New York. In N. Foner, J. Rath, J. Duyvendak & R. Reekum (Ed.), *New York and Amsterdam: Immigration and the new urban landscape* (pp. 29-51). New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814738221-003

Furuya, Y., Nooraddini, M. I., Wang, W., & Waslin, M. (2019). *A portrait of foreign-born teachers in the United States*. George Mason University Institute for Immigration Research. https://d101vc9winf8ln.cloudfront.net/documents/29869/original/Teacher_Paper_FINAL_WebVersion_012219.pdf?1548268969

Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (2019, March 26). *The teacher shortage is real, significant, growing, and worse than we thought.* Economic Policy Institute. Epi.org/163651

Gecker, J. (2021, Sep. 22). COVID-19 creates dire U.S. shortage of teachers, school staff. *AP News.* https://apnews.com/article/business-science-health-education-california-b6c495eab9a2a8f1a3ca068582c9d3c7

Gogol, F. (2021). Guide to teacher visas in the USA. https://www.stilt.com/blog/2019/05/teacher-visa-usa/

Goldhaber, D., Krieg, J., Naito, N., & Theobald, R. (2021, April). Student teaching and the geography of teacher shortages. *Educational Researcher, 50*(3), 165–175. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20962099

Goodroad, E. (2019). *Experiences of foreign-born faculty in US two-year colleges* (ProQuest No. 13806261) [Doctoral dissertation, Edgewood College]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Gordon, M. (1964). *Assimilation in American life. The role of race, religion, and national origins*. Oxford University Press.

Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your "house." *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research, 4*(2), 12-26.

Güzel, H., & Glazer, S. (2019). Demographic correlates of acculturation and sociocultural adaptation: Comparing international and domestic students. *Journal of International Students, 9*(4), 1074-1094. http://dx.doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i1.614

Hall, E., Chai, W., & Albrecht, J. A. (2016). A qualitative phenomenological exploration of teachers' experience with nutrition education. *American Journal of Health Education*, *47*(3), 136-148. https://doi.org/10.1080/19325037.2016.1157532

Healey, B. J. (2019). Assimilation and pluralism: From immigrants to White ethnics. https://www.coursehero.com/file/46026288/Healey-Notes-Ch-2-Assimilation-2docx/

Heidegger, M., & Hofstadter, A. (1982). *The basic problems of phenomenology* (2nd ed.). Indiana University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bz3w2k

Hendriks, M., & Burger, M. J. (2019). Unsuccessful subjective well-being assimilation among immigrants: The role of faltering perceptions of the host society. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *21*(6), 1985-2006. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00164-0

Heubeck, E. (2022, October 21). *School districts look overseas to fill teacher shortages*. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/school-districts-look-overseas-to-fill-teacher-shortages/2022/10

Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher positionality - A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - A new researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, *8*(4) 1-10. https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232

The International Labor Recruitment Working Group. (2013, February). The American dream up for sale: A blueprint for ending international labor recruitment abuse. https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/international_labor_recruitment_abuse.pdf

Jackson, M. (2022, October 24). *Perspective | International teachers more than just solutions to teacher shortages*. EducationNC. https://www.ednc.org/perspective-international-teachers-more-than-just-solutions-to-teacher-shortages/

Jacobs, S., & Olson, L. (2021, October). In demand the real teacher shortages and how to solve them. https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FutureEd_EdCounsel_Teacher_Shortages.pdf

Jansen, D. (2023, January 13). *Research limitations vs. research delimitations*. Grad Coach. https://gradcoach.com/research-limitations-vs-delimitations/#:~:text=Limitations%20reflect%20the%20shortcomings%20of%20your%20study%2C%20based%20on%20practical,research%20aims%20and%20research%20questions

Johnson, D. (2022, July 10). International teachers flocking to NC prepare state students for the global marketplace: *WRAL.com*. South Carolina News. https://localtoday.news/sc/international-teachers-flocking-to-nc-prepare-state-students-for-the-global-marketplace-wral-com-1651.html

Jotkoff, E. (2022, February 1). *NEA survey: Massive staff shortages in schools leading to educator burnout; alarming number of educators indicating they plan to leave profession*. National Education Association. https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/nea-survey-massive-staff-shortages-schools-leading-educator

Joy, B. & Gopal, B. (2017). A review on acculturation and adaptation strategies of migrants. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321718656_A_review_on_Acculturation_and_Adaptation_strategies_of_migrants/citations

Keung, T. H. (2022, March 22). *NC Supreme Court will hear Leandro case. Will they order more money for schools?* The Independent Tribune. https://independenttribune.com/news/state-and-regional/nc-supreme-court-will-hear-leandro-case-will-they-order-more-money-for-schools/article_9d35cab4-2056-594b-9e64-2f62162ed7eb.html

Koo, K., Baker, I., & Yoon, J. (2021). The first year of acculturation: A longitudinal study on acculturative stress and adjustment among first-year international college students. *Journal of International Students, 11*(2), 278-298. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1300759.pdf

Krsmanovic, M. (2022). Encountering American higher education: First-year academic transition of international undergraduate students in the United States. *Journal of Global Education and Research*, *6*(2), 148-165. https://doi.org/10.5038/2577-509x.6.2.1164

Li, S., & Zhang, W. (2021). Living in ethnic areas or not? Residential preference of decimal generation immigrants among Asian Indians, Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, and Vietnamese. *Social Sciences*, *10*(6), 222. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10060222

Majid, M. A., Othman, M., Mohamad, S. F., & Lim, S. (2017). Piloting for interviews in qualitative research: Operationalization and lessons learnt. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 7*(4), 1073-1078. https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v7-i4/2916

May, T. & Perry, B. (2017). *Reflexivity: The essential guide*. Sage.

McCluskey, L. (2020, January 20). *Culture shock stages: Everything you need to know.* https://www.now-health.com/en/blog/culture-shock-stages/ Culture shock stages

McDaniel, P. N., Harden, S. B., Smith, H. A., & Furuseth, O. J. (2017). Increasing immigrant settlement and the challenges and opportunities for public education in Charlotte, North Carolina. In P. R. Portes & S. Salas (Eds.), *US Latinization: Education and the new Latino south* (pp. 23-42). State University of New York Press.

McLeod, S. (2019). What's the difference between qualitative and quantitative research*? Simply Psychology*. https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Middleton, F. (2022, May 3). *Reliability vs. validity: What's the difference?* Scribbr. https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/reliability-vs-validity/

Modesto, O. P. (2020). A phenomenological study of Filipino immigrant teachers in South Texas. *The Qualitative Report, 25*(8), 3149-3162. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4225

Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal of General Practice, 24*(1), 9-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Sage.

Murayama, K., & Nagayasu, J. (2021, March). Toward coexistence of immigrants and local people in Japan: Implications from spatial assimilation theory. *Sustainability, 13*(7), 3849. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13073849

Nast, C. (2022, September 16). *What's really going on with the teacher shortage*? Teen Vogue. https://www.teenvogue.com/story/why-teacher-shortage-in-us

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2020). *Changing expectations for the K-12 teacher workforce: Policies, preservice education, professional development, and the workplace*. The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25603

New American Economy Research Fund. (2021, August 18). *Immigrants and the U.S. educational system.* https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/covid-19-immigrant-education-workers/

North Carolina Department of Commerce. (n.d.). NC commerce: Employment projections. https://www.nccommerce.com/data-tools-reports/labor-market-data-tools/employment-projections

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2022, February 17). 2020-2021 State of the teaching profession in North Carolina. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/district-human-capital/surveys-and-reports#StateoftheTeachingProfessionReports-1177

Oberg, K. (1960). Culture shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology, os-7*(4), 177-182. https://doi.org/10.1177/009182966000700405

Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation. (2019). *Teacher category*. https://j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Teacher-Flyer-2019.pdf

Ospina, N. S., & Medina, S. L. (2020). Living and teaching internationally: Teachers talk about personal experiences, benefits, and challenges. *Journal of Research in International Education, 19*(1), 38-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240920915013

Pacheco, E. (2020, August). Culture learning theory and globalization: Reconceptualizing culture shock for modern cross-cultural sojourners. *New Ideas in Psychology, 58*(2020), 100801. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2020.100801

Pappas, S., & McKelvie, A. (2021, December 15). *What is culture?* https://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html

Participate Learning. (2018, August 23). The four stages of culture shock. https://www.participatelearning.com/blog/the-4-stages-of-culture-shock/#:~:text=It%20tends%20to%20impact%20travelers,of%20each%20stage%20vary%20widely.

Participate Learning. (2021, April 6). *The pros and cons of teaching abroad*. Author. https://www.participatelearning.com/blog/the-pros-and-cons-of-teaching-abroad/

Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Bishop, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016, September 15). Solving the teacher shortage: How to attract and retain excellent educators. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/solving-teacher-shortage

Public Schools First NC. (2021, June 2). NC public ed at a glance. https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/NC-Public-Ed-at-a-Glance-2021.pdf

Public School Forum of North Carolina. (n.d.). Leandro v. State of NC: Background & resources. https://www.ncforum.org/leandro/

Rao, N. (2019, September 11). *Transcendental phenomenology*. http://phd-research-methodology.blogspot.com/2013/07/transcendental-phenomenology.html

Roger, K., Bone, T. A., Heinonen, T., Schwartz, K., Slater, J., & Thakrar, S. (2018). Exploring identity: What we do as qualitative researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 23*(3), 532-546. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.2923

Saudelli, M. G. (2012). Unveiling third space: A case study of international educators in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. *Canadian Journal of Education, 35*(3), 101–116. https://journals.sfu.ca/cje/index.php/cje-rce/article/view/1097/1327

Schroll, J. (2017, January 10). *VIF announces name change to participate to reflect broader commitment to educator development*. PRWeb. https://www.prweb.com/releases/2017/01/prweb13967335.htm

Seah, K. C. (2018, April). Immigrant educators and students' academic achievement. *Labour Economics, 51*(2018), 152-169. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2017.12.007

Segal, T. (2021). *Culture shock.* https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/culture-shock.asp

Serin, H. (2017, September). The effects of teaching abroad on personal and professional development. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies, 4*(1), 110-114.

Smokowski, P. R., Bacallao, M., & Evans, C. B. R. (2017). Acculturation. In R. Levesque (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of adolescence.* Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32132-5_300-2

South Carolina Department of Education. (n.d.). *Private programs for exchange visitor teachers*. https://ed.sc.gov/educators/recruitment-and-recognition/private-exchange-programs

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (n.d.). Phenomenology. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/

Startz, D. (2017). Immigrant teachers play a critical role in American schools. The Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/browncenter-chalkboard/2017/03/16/immigrant-teachers-play-a-critical-role-in-americanschools/

Stroud Stasel, R. (2021). Towards an acculturation framework for K-12 educators who live and work abroad: The role of teacher training institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies, 2*(4), 53-75. https://dx.doi.org/10.52547/johepal.2.4.53

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2019). Understanding teacher shortages: An analysis of teacher supply and demand in the United States. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *27*, 35. https://epaa.asu.edu/index.php/epaa/article/view/3696/2228

Teach For America. (n.d.). What we do. https://www.teachforamerica.org/what-we-do/our-impact#teach-for-america-s-reach

Teach for America. (2023, February 10). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved February 18, 2023, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teach_For_America

Tran, N., & Birman, D. (2017, December). Acculturation and assimilation: A qualitative inquiry of teacher expectations for Somali Bantu refugee students. *Education and Urban Society, 51*(5), 712–736. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517747033

United States Census Bureau. (2022, March 17). *American community survey 5-Year data (2009-2020)*. Census.gov. https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

United States Cultural Exchange Program. (2022). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved September 25, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Cultural_Exchange_Programs

United States Department of Education. (2020). Fulbright-Hays act. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/fulbrighthaysact.pdf

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2022, January 11). *Temporary (nonimmigrant) workers*. https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/temporary-nonimmigrant-workers

U.S. Department of State. (2020, November 19). Connecting global leaders, creating lasting impact. https://j1visa.state.gov/programs/teacher

Uytico, B. J., & Abadiano, M. N. (2020, July 4). Teachers' tales: In-depth exploration on experiences of millennial Filipino teachers abroad. *Journal of Critical Reviews, 7*(17), 1952-1960.

Valente, R. R., & Berry, B. J. L. (2016). Acculturation of immigrant Latinos into the U.S. workplace: Evidence from the working hours-life satisfaction relationship. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, *12*(2), 451-479. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-016-9471-x

Vasquez-Parraga, A. Z., Alonso, S., & Valencia, H. (2015). Hispanic acculturation: Does the acculturation of Hispanic consumers follow the assimilation paradigm of other ethnic groups in the U.S.? In *Proceedings of the 1998 Multicultural Marketing Conference* (pp. 312-314). Springer International Publishing.

Welsh, R. O., & Little, S. (2018). The school discipline dilemma: A comprehensive review of disparities and alternative approaches. *Review of Educational Research, 88*(5), 752-794. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654318791582

Worthy, L. D., Lavigne, T., & Romero, F. (2020). *Culture and psychology. How people shape and are shaped by culture.* https://open.maricopa.edu/culturepsychology/chapter/culture-shock/

Yi, E. (2018, August 17). *Themes don't just emerge – Coding the qualitative data*. Medium. https://medium.com/@projectux/themes-don't-just-emerge-coding-thequalitative-data-95aff874fdce

Zhou, M. (2014). Segmented assimilation and socio-economic adaptation of Chinese immigrant children in the USA. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37*, 1172-1183. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.874566

Appendix A

Governor Sisolak's Letter to President Trump

ONE HUNDRED ONE NORTH CARSON STREET
CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89701
OFFICE: (775) 684-5670
FAX NO.: (775) 684-5683

555 EAST WASHINGTON AVENUE, SUITE 5100
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89101
OFFICE: (702) 486-2500
FAX NO.: (702) 486-2505

Office of Governor Steve Sisolak

July 2, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Request for teacher exemption from Proclamation 10014

Dear President Trump:

As Governor of the State Nevada, I write to express my profound concerns with the suspension of the J-1 visa program for our educators. The suspension of these visas undermines access to talents and skills that have historically enriched and enhanced our State and our nation and will potentially leave thousands of special education students without a teacher.

According to the Nevada Department of Education, there are about 250 educators on a J-1 visa at any given time in our State. While we are thankful that your Proclamation does not impact teachers already in the country, it will hinder our State's ability to hire approximately 100 teachers for the upcoming school year.

The Clark County School District (CCSD), one of the largest school districts in the country, recruited 135 teachers benefiting from a J-1 visa, and extended offers to 95. Importantly, 88 of the 95 teachers were recruited by CCSD to fill critical special education vacancies in our State. These teachers were scheduled to arrive in our State as early as this month and begin instruction in the upcoming school year. However, unless immediate action is taken to exclude these teachers from the suspension, additional students will be deprived of licensed and highly qualified teachers.

I know we both share a common interest for our children's future. As such, I urge you to amend the Proclamation and provide an immediate exemption for these teachers. I strongly believe that an exemption is necessary to avoid a devastating impact on our most vulnerable students, not just in Nevada, but across our entire nation. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Governor Steve Sisolak
State of Nevada

Cc: Secretary Betsy DeVos, U.S. Department of Education
Acting Secretary Chad F. Wolf, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Secretary Michael R. Pompeo, U.S. Department of State
Secretary Eugene Scalia, U.S. Department of Labor

Appendix B

Pilot Study Semi-Structured Interview Assessment Response Form

Name of Reviewer: _____

Instructions: This pilot study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the semi-structured interview questionnaire that is designed to answer the research question*: A phenomenological study: the lived experiences of Jamaican immigrant teachers practicing in Northeastern North Carolina (NC).*

Please review each question below and rate it by marking an X in the appropriate column. Space is provided for you to make comments or suggest revisions.

Semi-structured Interview Questions	**Check only one row**			
	Essential to answer the research question	Not essential but useful to answer the research question	Not essential to answer the research question	Comments
1. What are the distinctions between living in Jamaica and rural northeastern NC?				
2. Describe your experience adjusting to the cultural differences between Jamaica and rural northeastern NC.				
3. What are the distinctions between teaching in Jamaica and rural northeastern NC?				
4. Describe your experiences adapting your teaching to the needs of rural northeastern NC students?				
5. What supports should schools/school districts provide Jamaican teachers to assist in their adjustment to the American schooling/culture?				
6. What else would you like to tell me about your experiences as a Jamaican EVP teacher living and working in rural northeastern NC?				

Thank you for participating in this pilot study.

Sincerely,

Dianne Campbell-Barton

Appendix C

Recruitment Email/Text Message/Phone Call Script

Name: _____

Date: _____

My name is Dianne Campbell-Barton and am a doctoral candidate at Gardner-Webb University in the School of Education in Boiling Springs, NC. I am sending this email to ask that you consider taking part in my research study titled- A phenomenological study: the lived experiences of Jamaican immigrant teachers practicing in Northeastern North Carolina (NC). I am looking for Jamaican exchange visitor program (EVP) teachers who have been living and working in a northeastern NC K-12 public or charter school for at least one academic year.

If you know of anyone who might be interested and available to participate in the study with their permission please share their contact information (phone number and or email address) at dcampbell-barton@gardner-webb.edu or by text at (252) 673-3259.

Thanks for assisting.

Sincerely,

Dianne Campbell-Barton

Appendix D

Participant Letter/Email Invitation

Introduction

My name is Dianne Campbell-Barton and is a doctoral candidate at Gardner-Webb University, School of Education in Boiling Springs, NC. I have chosen to explore a qualitative phenomenological study for my dissertation. This study focuses on the lived experiences of a group of Jamaican-born and educated Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) teachers living and practicing in Northeastern North Carolina (NC). I am interested in obtaining your personal story about your challenges and successes as a K-12 Jamaican immigrant teacher in America.

This study aims to make the personal experiences of EVP Jamaican teachers teaching in Northeastern NC explicit and visible. By highlighting your story, you will be providing firsthand information to international teacher recruitment agencies, host school district leaders, principals, teachers, parents, and students, about how to adequately assist international teachers and mainly Jamaican teachers as they assimilate and acclimate into a new environment in the US.

Please note that if there are interview questions that you are unwilling to provide answers to or at any point in the process you do not wish to proceed, feel to inform me and discontinue the process. I will share the verbatim transcribed notes of your interview for your confirmation. The entire interview process is estimated to last about 30 minutes.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study.

Sincerely,

Dianne Campbell-Barton

Please complete the information below and return it to me via email within 5 days.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

☐ Yes, I am interested in participating in the study at this time.

☐ No, I am not interested in participating in the study at this time.

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Part A

This interview is divided into two parts. The first part of the interview is designed to capture data about you and your work experience.

Participant: _____

Interview Date: _____

Age: _____

Marital status _____

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

- What is your highest level of educational attainment? _____
- What area(s) are you certified to teach? _____
- How long did you teach in Jamaica? _____
- How long have you been teaching in northeastern NC K-12 public/charter schools? _____
- What subject(s) do you currently teach? _____

Part B

This second part of the interview is designed to answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of a group of Jamaican EVP teachers while living and working in northeastern North Carolina (NC) K-12 public and charter schools? The semi-structured interview session is estimated to last 30 minutes. Please let me know at any time during the interview process if there are any questions you are unwilling to answer or would like to discontinue the interview or leave the study.

Questions

1. What are the differences between living in Jamaica and rural Northeastern NC?
2. Describe your experience adjusting to the cultural differences between Jamaica and rural Northeastern NC.
3. What are the differences between teaching in Jamaica and rural Northeastern NC?
4. Describe your experiences adapting your teaching to the needs of rural Northeastern NC students?
5. What supports should schools/school districts provide Jamaican teachers to assist in their adjustment to the American schooling/culture?
6. What else would you like to tell me about your experiences as a Jamaican EVP teacher living and working in rural Northeastern NC?

Appendix F

IRB Informed Consent Form

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Informed Consent Form

Title of Study
A Phenomenological Study: The Lived Experience of Jamaican Immigrant Teachers Practicing in Northeastern North Carolina

Researcher
Dianne Campbell-Barton/Doctoral Candidate/School of Education

Purpose
The purpose of this research is to investigate the lived experiences of a group of Jamaican-educated teachers, particularly those who were recruited by teaching agencies to fill vacancies in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools.

Procedure
As a participant in the study, you will be asked to respond to questions about your lived experiences teaching and living in northeastern North Carolina. It is anticipated that the interview will require about 30 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed for data collection purposes only. You can skip, or chose not to answer any question or parts of a question that causes discomfort. You can also stop the interview at any time.

Time Required
It is anticipated that the study will require about 60 minutes of your time. The semi-structured interview is expected to last for 30-minutes, and then it will take about another 30-minutes for you to review the data for accuracy.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

Confidentiality
All of the information that you share during this study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a pseudonym. Any information connecting your identity to this code will be kept in locked and password-protected files. When the study has been completed, and the data analyzed the information will be destroyed. Your name and any identifying markers linking you to the data will not be used in any report. The

transcribed notes of your interview will be destroyed upon completion of all aspects of the study. The audio recordings will be destroyed three years after the study's completion.

Anonymous Data
The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your name will not be collected or linked to the data.

Risks
There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us to understand the lived experiences of a group of Jamaican-educated teachers, particularly those who were recruited by teaching agencies to fill vacancies in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public and charter schools. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

Payment
You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw From the Study
You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your audio tape will be destroyed.

How to Withdraw From the Study
If you want to withdraw from the study at any time for whatever reason, please notify the researcher. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact dcampbellbarton@gardner-webb.edu

If you withdraw from the study at any time, all interview data will be destroyed.

If you have questions about the study, contact: (*List all researchers and contact information)*
Dianne Campbell-Barton
EdD Candidate
School of Education, Gardner-Webb University
Researcher telephone number: XXXXXXXX
Researcher email address: dcampbellbarton@gardner-webb.edu

Faculty Advisor name; Dr. Stephen Laws
Faculty Research Advisor:
School/ of Education, Gardner-Webb University

Faculty Advisor telephone number: 704-406-4403
Faculty Advisor email address: slaws@gardner-webb.edu

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Sydney K. Brown
IRB Institutional Administrator
Gardner-Webb University
Telephone: 704-406-3019
Email: skbrown@gardner-webb.edu

Voluntary Consent by Participant

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me. I agree to participate in this study.

_____ Date: _____
Participant Printed Name

_____ Date: _____
Participant Signature

Appendix G

Member Checking Letter/Email

Date: _____

Dear _____,

Thank you for being a willing participant in my dissertation research titled- A phenomenological study: the lived experiences of Jamaican immigrant teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina (NC). To ensure the reliability and validity of the research it is imperative that I have transcribed your interview correctly to reflect your experiences. With this in mind, I would like to give you the opportunity to revise the interview transcripts and provide feedback on how well the information represents your experience. If there are discrepancies in the data please contact me immediately at dcampbellbarton@gardner-webb.edu or text me at XXXXXXX. Likewise, if the data is accurate please send me a quick note letting me know I can proceed with further analysis of the data. Once again, I value your time and thank you for participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Dianne Campbell-Barton