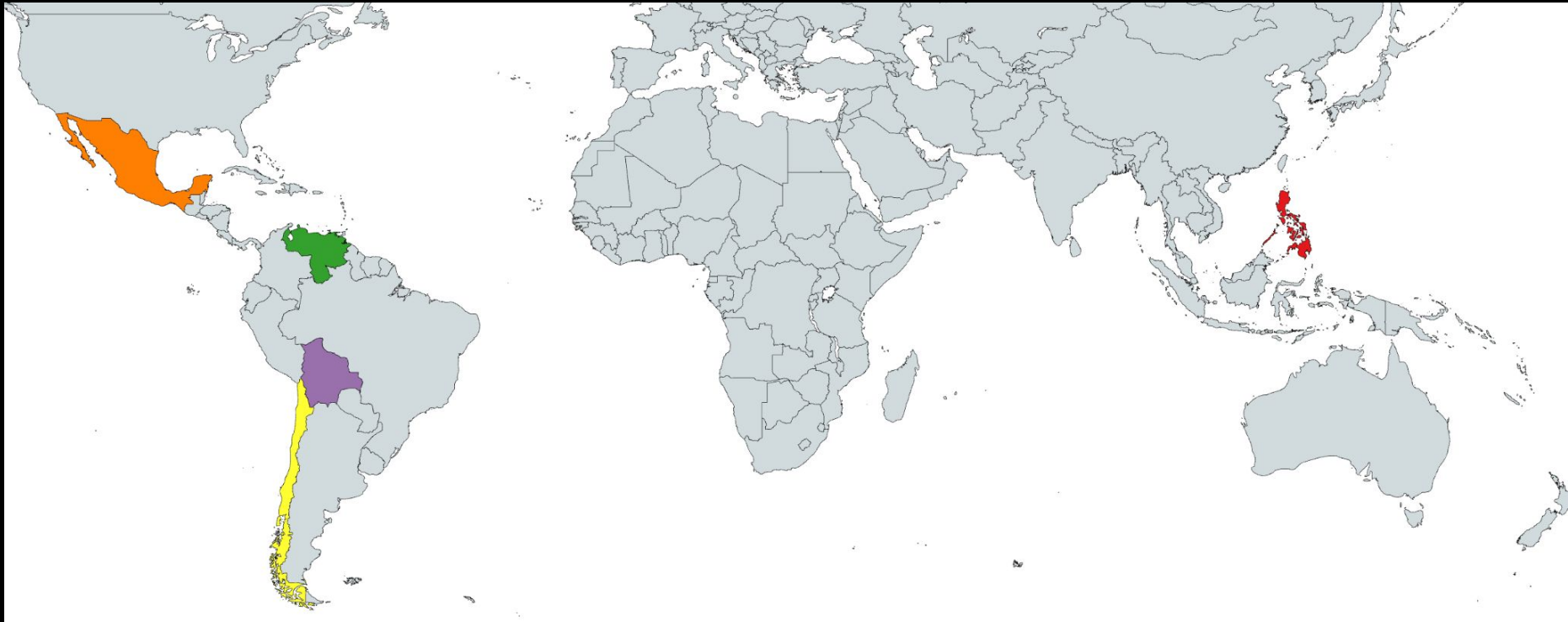# The Glass Ceiling of International Schools: A Comparative Case Study on the Experiences of Teachers of Color in Recruitment, Retention, and Career Advancement

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Positionality

Employment practices and systems that marginalize teachers of color in international schools

Research Questions

- RQ1: How do teachers of color describe their **recruitment** process experiences in international schools?

- RQ2: How do teachers of color describe their experiences with the **retention** process in international schools?

- RQ3: How do teachers of color perceive their **career advancement** opportunities and leadership aspirations within international schools?

Research gap in exploring the experiences of teachers of color

Impact on policy-making in international schools

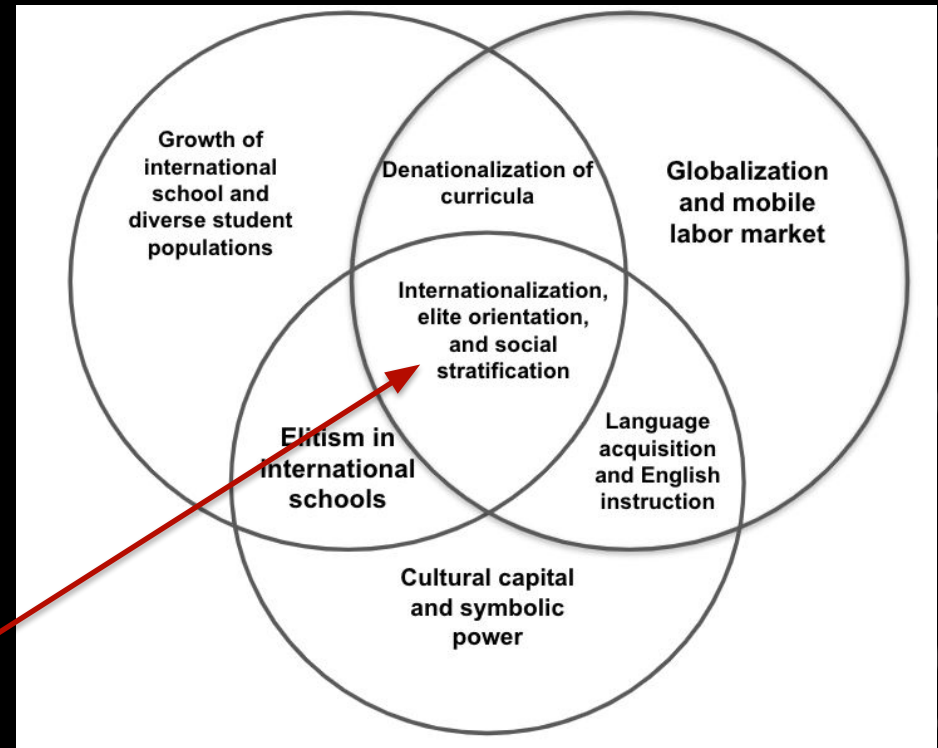**Promoting equity & international mindedness**

Organizational culture towards diversity

Figure 2.A visualization of the glass ceiling based on the key factors.
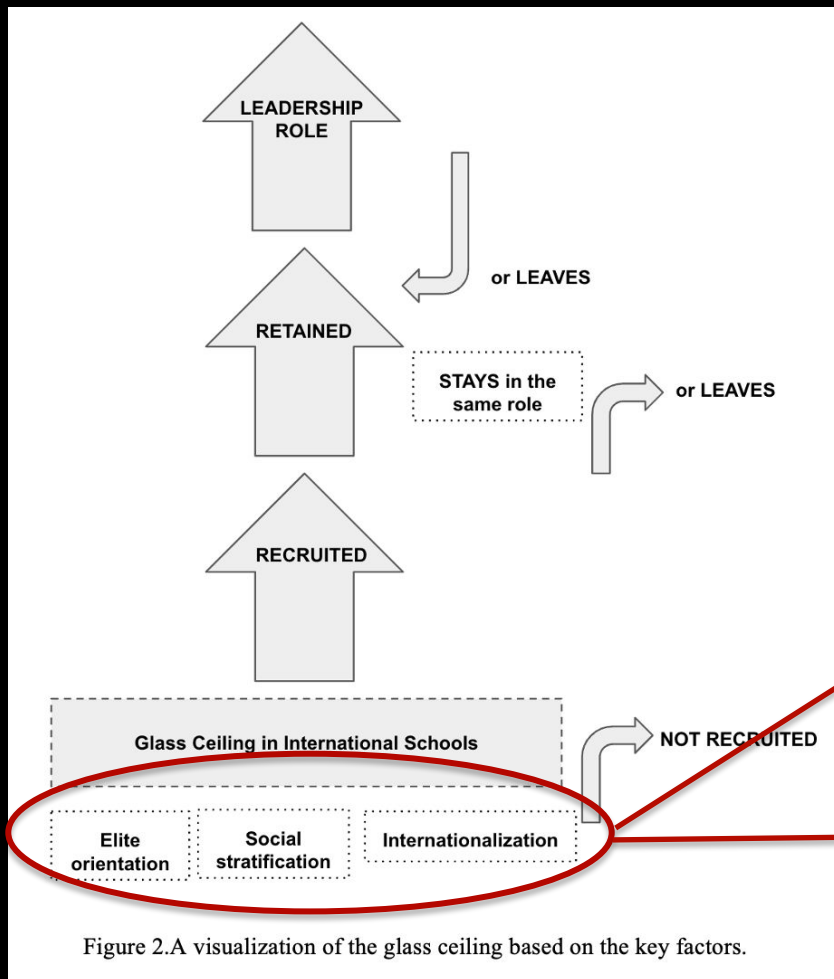
Literature gap in understanding and exploring the experiences of teachers of color

Research Design

Figure 6. A model of the comparative case study adapted from Type 4 category of Yin's multiple case study model.
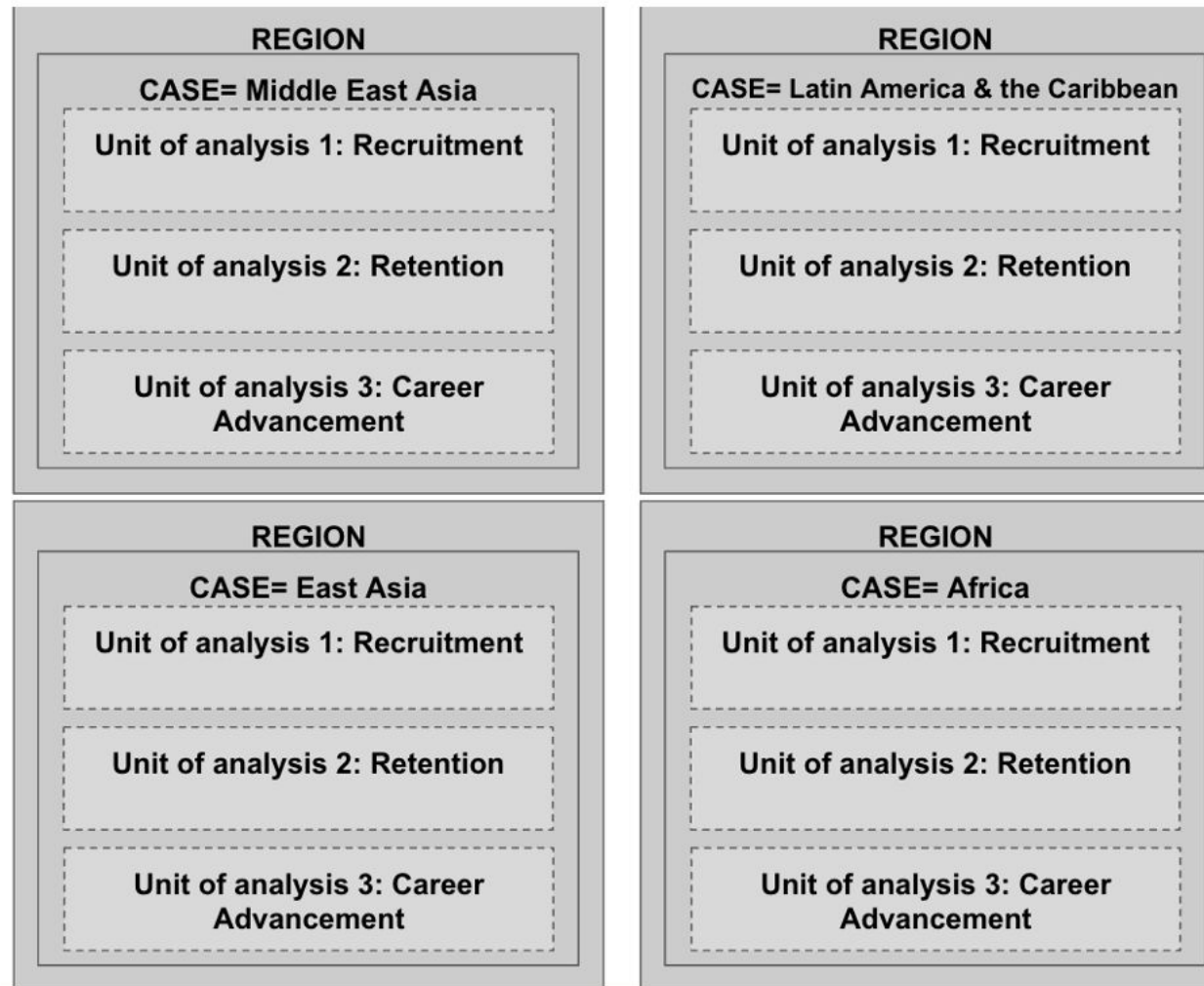
90% of participants hold advanced degrees; only 20% have less than 10 years of experience

Tajfel & Turner, 1979

Schein, 1985

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Organizational Culture Theory (OCT)

Social Categorization
In-group bias & Out-group discrimination
The role of self-esteem

How organizational practices shape social identity

The intersection of leadership roles and in-group bias

Artifacts
Espoused values
Basic underlying principles

Role of cultural capital in defining in-groups and out-groups

The interplay between social identity, organizational culture, and cultural capital in influencing teachers' experiences

The effect of organizational values and norms on social exclusions

Intersectionality of social identity and cultural capital in the hiring process

The impact on recruitment, retention, and career advancement for teachers of color

Influence of organizational culture on the validation of certain types of cultural capital

Nobility and elitism
Social Exclusion & selective confinement
Habitus and Symbolic power

Cultural Capital Theory (CCT)

Bourdieu, 1977

Recruitment Themes and Subthemes

Table 6

Frequency of Recruitment Themes and subthemes.

Recruitment Themes	Africa		Latin America & the Caribbean		Middle East Asia		East Asia	
	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded
T1: Observed disproportionate representation of people of color	6	19	5	24	4	24	5	25
T2: Recruiters' behavior and interactions during interviews	4	9	4	5	8	12	12	29
ST1: Microaggressions and offensive line of questioning	0	0	1	1	3	6	4	8
ST1: Dismissive behavior during interview sessions	3	8	3	4	4	4	4	15
ST3: Overtly racist remarks towards people of color impact recruitment experience	1	1	0	0	1	2	4	6
T3: Recruiters' perceived biases impact the recruitment experience of people of color.	6	36	6	15	6	28	6	48

T4: Parents' preference for white teachers as an excuse to reject people of color.	0	0	2	4	4	5	3	5
T5: Recruiters impact the emotions and self-concept of candidates during recruitment.	9	14	8	15	11	31	15	45
ST1: I know I'm qualified, but I need to prove myself and work harder than the others	2	2	4	5	4	10	6	19
ST2: Participants expressed feelings of inferiority and self-deprecating sentiments	1	1	2	5	3	11	4	18
ST3: Qualified but overlooked: Feeling dissonance and unwritten recruitment expectations.	6	11	2	5	4	10	5	8
T6: Tokenism and exoticization of people of color	5	7	4	6	3	3	0	0

Findings: Recruitment

Observed pattern of underrepresentation of POC in recruitment fairs

"Every director and every principal were all white men."-Kate

Recruiter Behavior towards participants impacted their recruitment experiences

"we don't hire people from your country." - Maria

Implicit and explicit biases towards nationalities, racial background

"We are only accepting candidates from, and they listed, like, Australia, New Zealand, and the US." - Axel

Self-concept and the emotions of participants were impacted by recruiters' behavior

- "I felt like I could express myself the way that I expressed myself. I did not, because I have felt like I had to act a certain way and prove that I have cultural capital." - Beth

Retention Themes and Subthemes

Table 7

Frequency of Retention Themes and subthemes.

Retention Themes	Africa		Latin America & the Caribbean		Middle East Asia		East Asia	
	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded
T1: Social dynamics and experience	10	19	4	29	7	20	8	19
ST1: Social Stratification and disparity in Salary	4	9	4	6	4	10	5	12
ST2: Social Segregation and Exclusion	6	19	4	23	3	10	3	7
T2: Visible favoritism and retention of white colleagues	8	15	5	10	9	30	10	35
ST1 parents' preference towards white teachers	3	4	3	8	4	20	4	19
ST2 retention and marketing bias toward white educators	5	11	2	2	5	10	6	16
T3: Colleague interactions impact retention experience of people of color	8	18	8	10	5	6	5	9

Retention Themes and Subthemes

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8
ST1: POC experienced sense of community and support among peers	2	6	3	4	0	0	0	0
ST2: POC experienced lack of support and apathy from peers	2	7	1	1	2	3	2	3
ST3: POC experienced stereotyping and social comparison	4	5	4	5	3	3	3	6
T4: Leadership behavior towards diversity impact retention experience of POC	14	38	9	25	7	24	13	31
ST1: Apathetic, dismissive, and performative actions of leaders affect retention experience	6	20	4	14	5	18	6	12
ST2: Leaders assume the POC need to work harder	5	9	2	2	2	6	3	10
ST3: Supportive leadership and affirmative counternarratives empower POC	3	9	3	9	0	0	4	9

Findings: Retention

The quality of retention experiences are significantly impacted by social interactions with colleagues and leaders

"My principal helped navigate my emotions when I was having a conflict with a parent." - Margaret

Social stratifications continue during retention and affect social integration and compensation

"A lot of the schools don't have pay scales. They pay Black people less than they pay white people. They pay Asians less than they pay both Black and white people. There's a whole hierarchy." - Daisy

Parent and school biases in marketing and retaining white teachers

"We were dividing classes between me and my white South African colleague... The next day, parents said that they wanted some children to move out of my class into her class." - Susan

Negative experiences outweigh the positive interactions with colleagues and leaders

"but when it comes to a Black teacher, this is an issue. We need to get rid of this person. And so, you see a lot of people lose their contracts." - Sharon

Career Advancement Themes and Subthemes

Table 8

Frequency of Career Advancement Themes and Subthemes.

Career Advancement Themes	Africa		Latin America & the Caribbean		Middle East Asia		East Asia	
	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded	Participants coded	Experiences coded
T1: Positive leadership aspiration and upward mobility	7	18	7	11	4	8	9	16
ST1: School leaders impact positive leadership aspirations of POC	4	13	4	8	2	2	5	11
ST2: Self-confidence in professional qualification and leadership ambitions	3	5	3	3	2	6	4	5
T2: Barriers to leadership aspiration and upward mobility	6	23	2	9	6	27	9	32
ST1: It feels impossible for a person of color	1	2	0	0	2	3	3	5
ST2: Institutional bias, lack of encouragement, and constant rejection	5	21	2	9	4	24	6	27

Positive leadership aspiration is influenced by positive interactions with leaders and positive self-concept

"I've noticed that he also puts people of color in positions of power in the school. Like, I lead my own department." - Michelle

Self-confidence drive positive self-concept and leadership aspirations

"I was a department head already. I love coaching teachers and I have an experience of doing that.- Guen

Barriers to leadership aspirations are rooted in institutional biases and belief systems

"My administrator treats us as if we're all the same. We treat everybody equally, and we don't see color. And as we all know, that's a harmful thing." - Sarah

Observed pattern of rejection of POC and appointment of candidates of Caucasian background

"There are people I know who have zero experience, lied about their credentials, and have actually become a coordinator, head of department, or even director." - Kate

The Glass Ceiling of International Schools
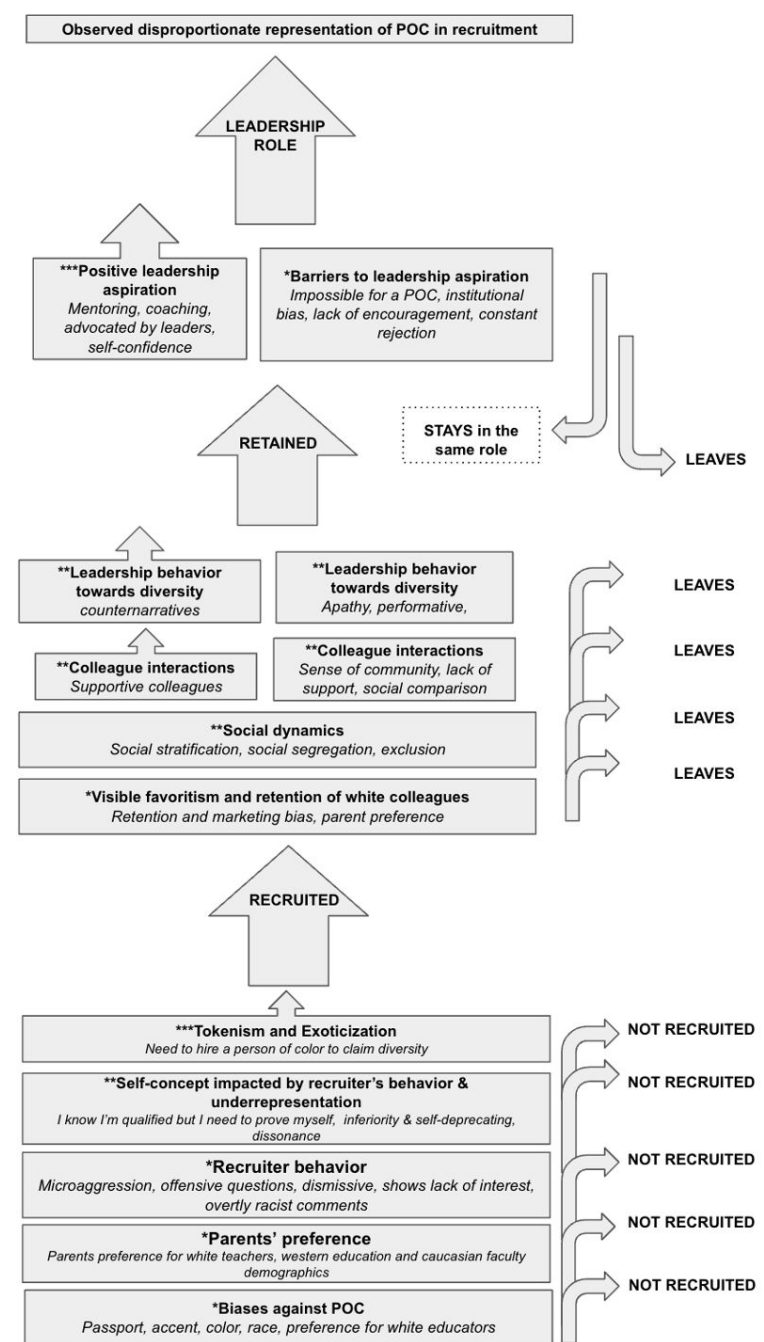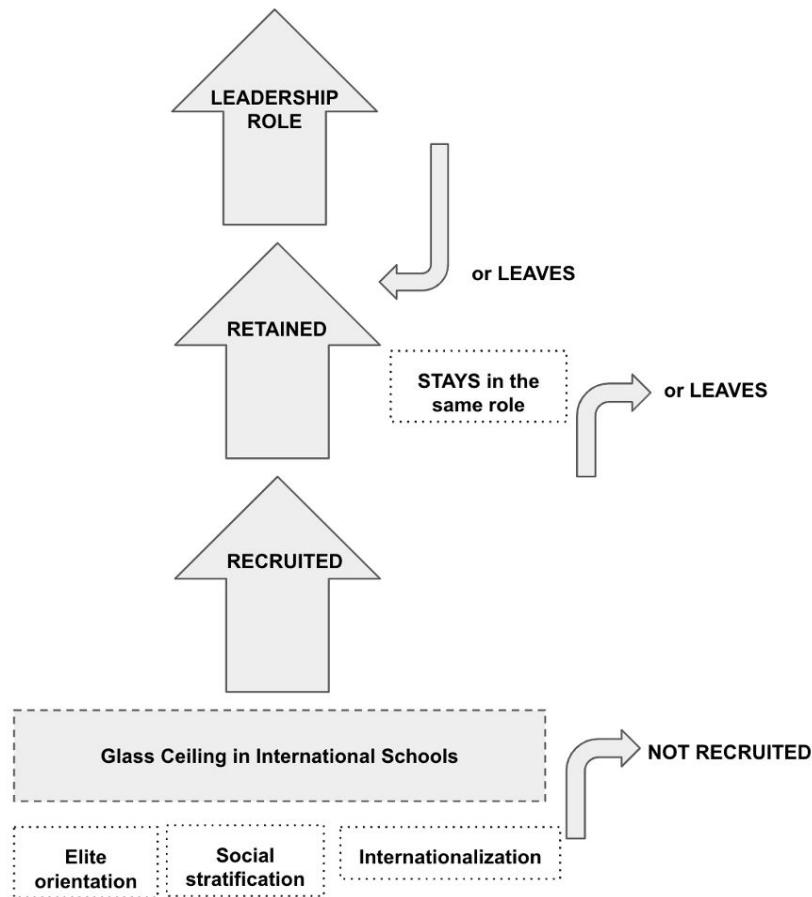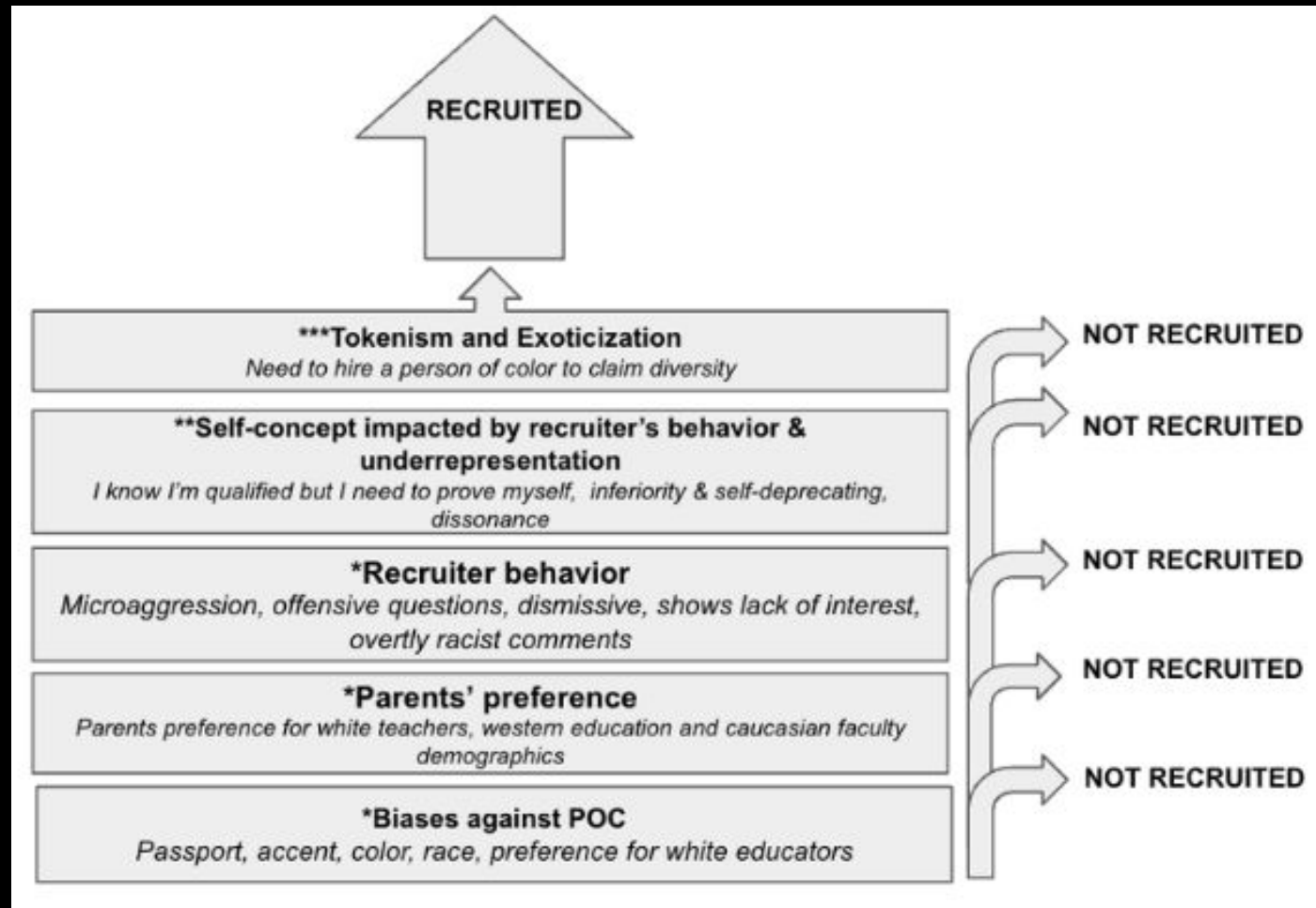

Figure 9. A detailed visualization of the complex layers of the glass ceiling in international schools. (*elitism; **social stratification, ***internationalization)

Layers of the Glass Ceiling in Recruitment

(*elitism **social stratification ***internationalization)

Layers of the Glass Ceiling in Retention

(*elitism **social stratification ***internationalization)

Layers of the Glass Ceiling in Career Advancement

Observed disproportionate representation of POC in recruitment

LEADERSHIP ROLE

***Positive leadership aspiration**
Mentoring, coaching, advocated by leaders, self-confidence

*Barriers to leadership aspiration**
Impossible for a POC, institutional bias, lack of encouragement, constant rejection

RETAINED

STAYS in the same role

LEAVES
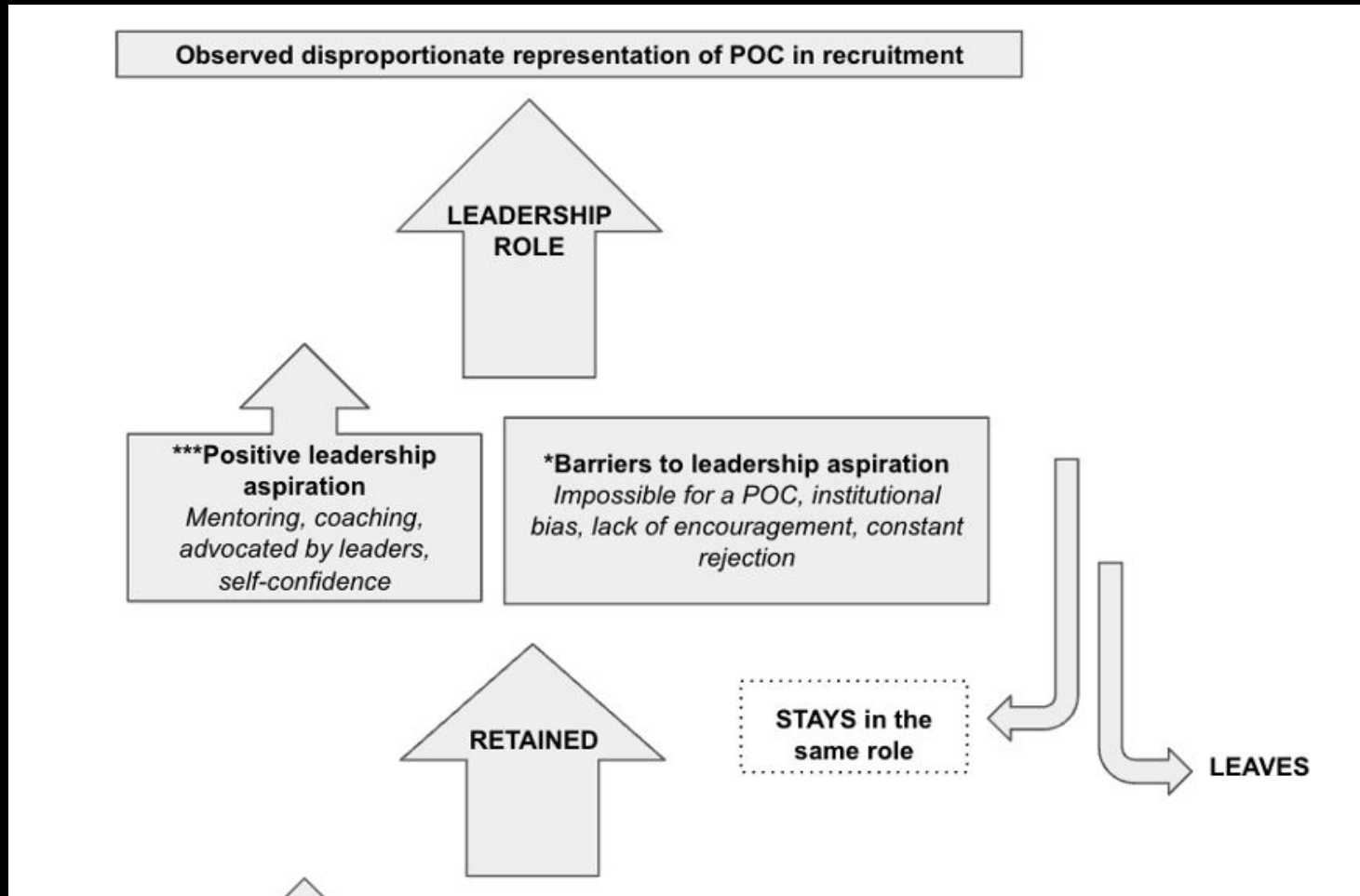
(*elitism **social stratification ***internationalization)

The Glass Ceiling of International Schools

Microfractures of the glass ceiling
a rival explanation

Layer of the glass ceiling
theoretical replicability

Observed disproportionate representation of POC in recruitment

LEADERSHIP ROLE

***Positive leadership aspiration**
Mentoring, coaching, advocated by leaders, self-confidence

*Barriers to leadership aspiration**
Impossible for a POC, institutional bias, lack of encouragement, constant rejection

RETAINED

STAYS in the same role

LEAVES

Leadership behavior towards diversity
counternarratives

Leadership behavior towards diversity
Apathy, performative,

LEAVES

Colleague interactions
Supportive colleagues

Colleague interactions
Sense of community, lack of support, social comparison

LEAVES

Social dynamics
Social stratification, social segregation, exclusion

LEAVES

*Visible favoritism and retention of white colleagues**
Retention and marketing bias, parent preference

LEAVES

RECRUITED

***Tokenism and Exoticization**
Need to hire a person of color to claim diversity

NOT RECRUITED

Self-concept impacted by recruiter's behavior & underrepresentation
I know I'm qualified but I need to prove myself, inferiority & self-deprecating, dissonance

NOT RECRUITED

*Recruiter behavior**
Microaggression, offensive questions, dismissive, shows lack of interest, overtly racist comments

NOT RECRUITED

*Parents' preference**
Parents preference for white teachers, western education and caucasian faculty demographics

NOT RECRUITED

*Biases against POC**
Passport, accent, color, race, preference for white educators

NOT RECRUITED

*Figure 9. A detailed visualization of the complex layers of the glass ceiling in international schools. (*elitism; **social stratification, ***internationalization)*
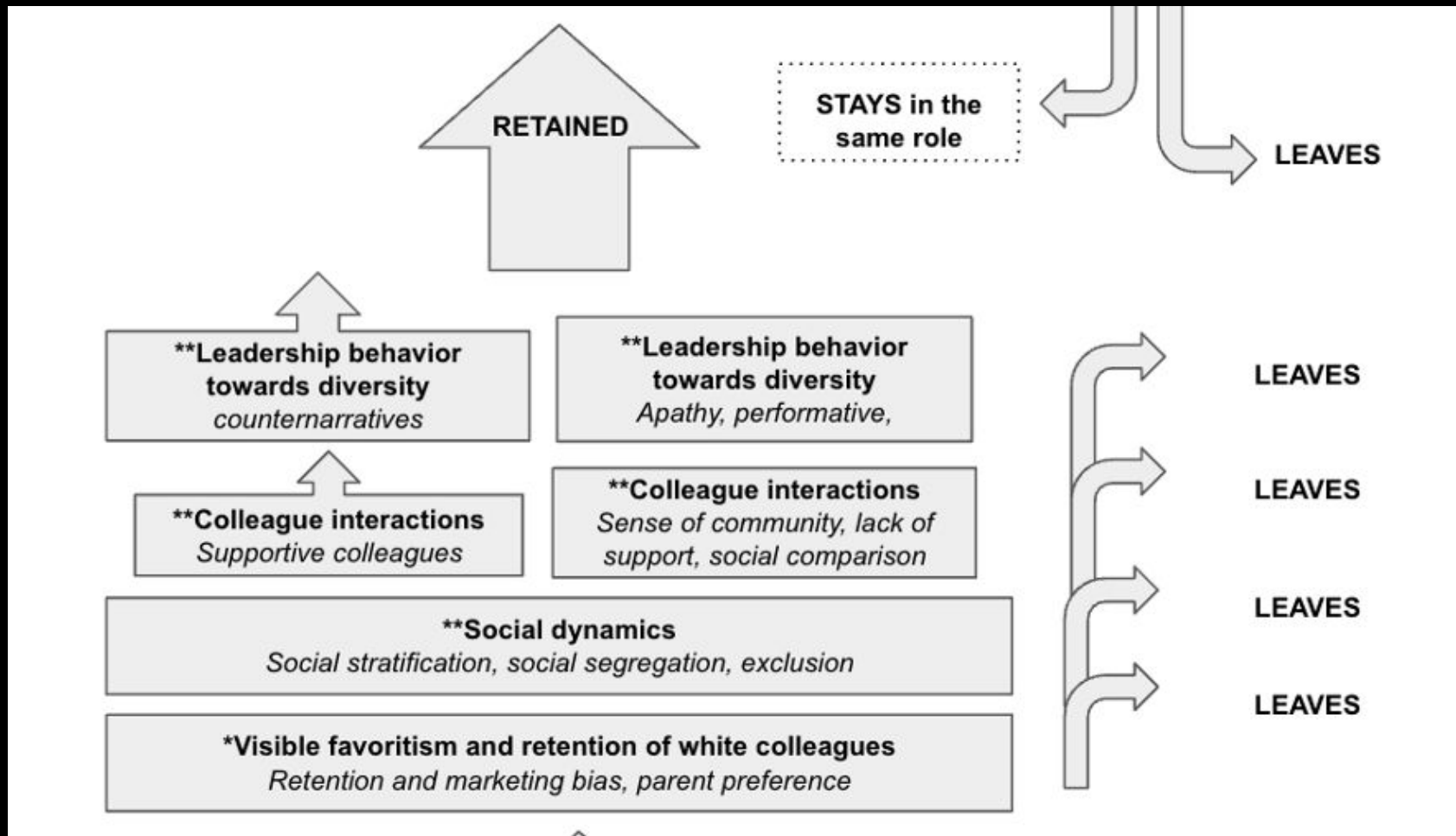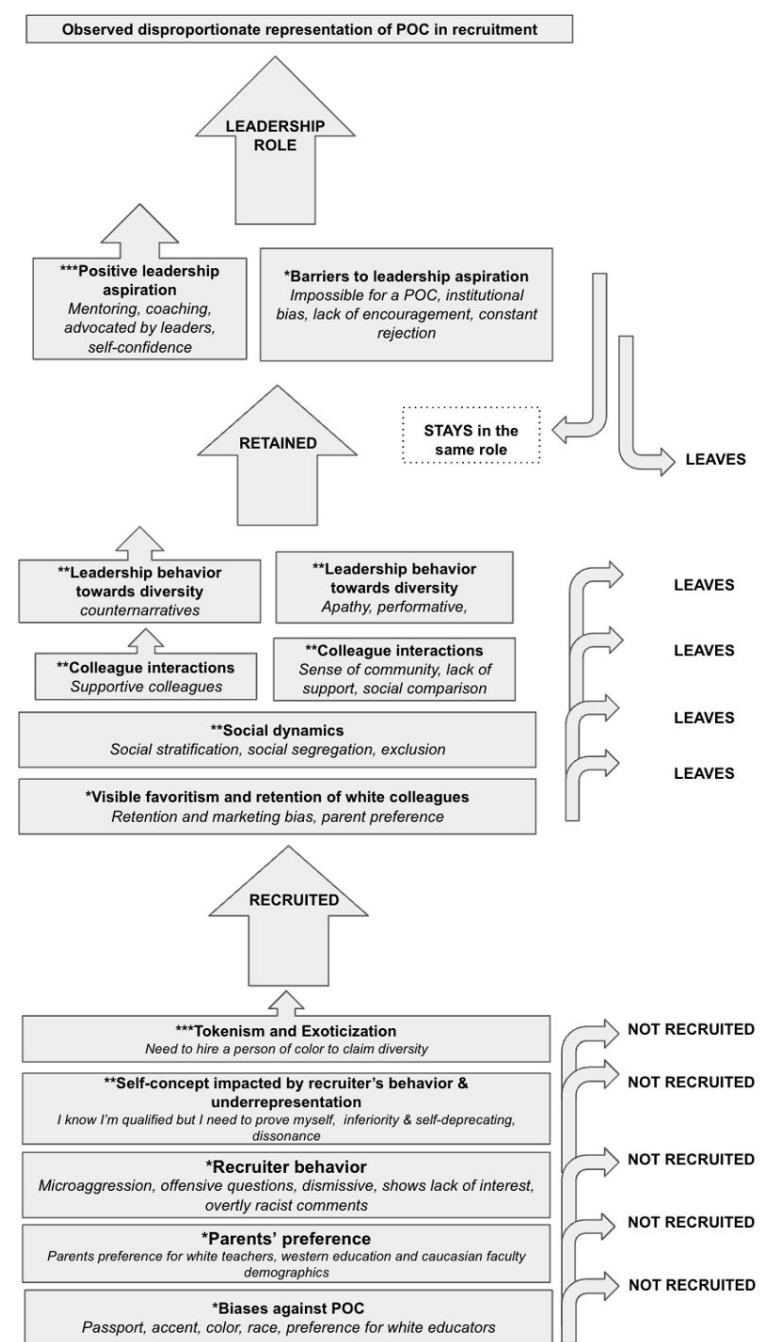
Policy Recommendations for Leaders

- review your school's artifacts (photos)
- Communicate and celebrate diverse backgrounds (as an international school)
- Determine your parent allies
- Be explicit about your support towards BIPOC
- Re-evaluate who goes to your hiring/interviews
- Be conscious about your demeanor
- Plan out leadership pathways/pipeline
- Rethink your "faculty games/sports groupings"