Enhancing preservice teachers' motivation to teach diverse learners

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H I G H L I G H T S

- Teacher educators can enhance preservice teachers' desire to teach diverse students.
- Preservice teachers should have multiple and diverse practicum experiences.
- Teacher coursework should explicitly focus on inclusive teaching practices.
- Preservice teachers need opportunities for culturally-oriented self-reflection.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This two-year mixed-method case study examined if and how a teacher preparation program can change preservice teachers' motivation to teach culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Survey data from Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) candidates demonstrated statistically significant changes in MATs' self-confidence for teaching diverse learners, their self-efficacy for culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), their perception of the value of multicultural teaching, and in their interest in teaching diverse learners. Interview and focus group data identified explicit instruction on CRP, diverse practicum opportunities, and an emphasis on culturally-oriented self-inquiry as factors that enhanced teachers' desire to teach diverse students.

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1. Introduction

Prior research suggests there are four categories of motivational factors that affect teachers' choice of profession: intrinsic values (e.g., intellectual stimulation, working with children), extrinsic values (e.g., time for family, job security), altruistic values (e.g., doing good for society, shaping children and adolescents' futures), and the working environment (e.g., autonomy, opportunities to develop a professional network) (Carson & Chase, 2009; Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2014; Sinclair, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2007). Once teachers enter the profession, their choice of where to teach is further influenced by neighborhood and school factors. Teachers are less inclined to work in schools located in high poverty neighborhoods with little access to amenities such as gyms, movie theaters, and coffee shops (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Ronfeldt, & Wyckoff, 2011). They are also less likely to choose to work in low performing schools and in schools with high percentages of racial

minorities and low income students (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a). Such selectivity has yielded a high teacher attrition rate and heavy reliance on alternatively licensed teachers to staff urban schools (Hanna & Pennington, 2015; Ingersoll, 2003; Papay & Kraft, 2015; Perda, 2013; Rockoff, 2004).

In an effort to increase the number of teachers choosing to work in urban schools, the purpose of this study was to examine how teacher educators can enhance preservice teachers' motivation to teach diverse learners by explicitly addressing the emotional and cognitive factors underlying their professional decision-making in multicultural contexts. Three research questions guided the study:

1) How do preservice teachers' self-schemata related to multicultural teaching evolve during their teacher training?
2) How do preservice teachers' beliefs about the value of multicultural teaching change during their teacher training?

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3) What elements of a teacher preparation program are most influential in changing preservice teachers' motivations to teach diverse learners?

2. Literature review

Teachers' preferences in where to work are partially explained by prior research that has found that teachers from all cultural backgrounds often enter the profession with negative perceptions of children from marginalized racial and economic groups (e.g., Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hollins & Torres-Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). For example, Kumar and Hamer (2012) found that approximately 25% of preservice teachers in their study endorsed stereotypic beliefs about poor and minority students, and expressed discomfort with student diversity. Similarly, Rizutto (2017) found that early career [1]ELL (English language learner) teachers were reluctant to view ELL students' cultural capital as beneficial to their learning, and thus refused to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. And even when teachers possess positive perceptions of their marginalized students, they often endorse colorblind instructional approaches that do not acknowledge the influence of race on students' educational experiences (e.g., Blaisdell, 2005; Castagno, 2013; Milner, 2012). For example, Russell and Russel (2014) found that preservice science teachers did not believe that their culture differed from diverse students' cultures, nor that they should identify students by ethnic or racial groups. Such colorblind ideologies are opposite of the color-conscious mindset that promotes an asset-based perspective of diverse students (Lopez, 2017).

However, research suggests that multicultural coursework infused within preservice teacher education positively affects teachers' attitudes and sense of efficacy toward teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students (Bodur, 2012; Rodriguez, Adams, & Zimmer, 2016; Thompson, 2015). Goldenburg (2014) found that multicultural education can provide teacher candidates an opportunity to explore their own racialized identities and their related participation in dominant school structures. This exploration, according to him, allowed white preservice teachers to recognize diverse students' cultural capital as valuable, despite it being different from their own. Similarly, Jacobs (2015) suggests that fieldwork in urban schools can be sites of 'un-learning' and 're-learning' what it means to be a teacher of diverse students. In her study, Jacobs found that teacher candidates began their fieldwork with deficit-oriented perspectives of urban students and urban schools, but with the aid of in-class reflection and analysis, ended their teaching practicum understanding both the challenges and possibilities of urban teaching. Mensah (2016) similarly noted the importance of explicit discussions about race and racism within teacher education coursework to changing preservice teachers' understanding of how issues of race permeate K-12 classroom cultures and teachers' instructional practices.

These studies suggest that it is possible to disrupt preservice teachers' negative perceptions of diverse students through intentional and explicit multicultural education within teacher preparation programs. Such cognitive shifts are important because there's a strong positive relationship between teachers' multicultural mindsets and positive perceptions of diverse students, a willingness to utilize inclusive teaching methods, and enthusiasm for teaching (Aragón, O. R., Dovidio, J. F., & Graham, M. J., 2016;

Betoret, 2009; Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders Y, & Kunter, 2015; Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

3. Theoretical framework

While Bandura's body of work on self-efficacy is commonly used to study teacher motivation, we extend the theoretical framework by using expectancy-value models to examine not only teacher candidates' self-efficacy for multicultural teaching, but also their emotional response to envisioning teaching in a multicultural classroom. Self-efficacy beliefs reflect what a person *thinks* about their abilities, while self-confidence describes how a person *feels* about their abilities. Psychological and neuroscience scholarship propose that motivation is heavily informed by emotional factors through a recursive relationship between thoughts and emotions (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Fiedler, 2000; Fiske, 1995; Forgas, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001; Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Schutz & DeCuir, 2002); thus, relying solely on cognitive assessments to capture motivational processes omits an influential source of behavioral action.

This study is grounded in work by expectancy-value theorists who argue that expectancies and values influence choice, persistence, and performance in that how one perceives their ability to successfully complete a task, coupled with the usefulness they attribute to a task, determines if performing a behavior is a worthy investment of personal resources (Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Weiner, 1985, 1986). Importantly, expectancy-value models of motivation are multi-dimensional, including affective elements (feelings associated with prior performances) and social influences (others' attitudes about a task and their expectations of your capability to complete a task).

Though originally designed to measure children's achievement motivations, given its broad analytical lens and its task-specific application, the Eccles et al. Expectancy-Value Model (1983) (Fig. 1) is useful for understanding teacher motivation as well. Indeed, constructs within the model, such as self-efficacy and self-confidence, are frequently studied with respect to teachers' professional practices and decision-making (e.g., Loreman, Sharma, & Forlin, 2013; Malinen et al., 2013; Sadler, 2013; Zee & Koomen, 2016). This study draws variables from the latter half of the model that emphasizes preservice teachers' self-schemata (feelings and beliefs about oneself), their expectation of success, and the subjective task value (one's perception of the rewards and costs of a behavior) as factors affecting teacher candidates' interest in, and choice to, teach diverse students.

4. Method

This study was a two-year mixed-methods case study. The small sample size allowed for a focused examination of how preservice teachers' self-schemata related to multicultural teaching changed during their teacher training. Substantiating survey data with interview and focus group data provided context and in some cases, explanations, for why participants' emotional and cognitive motivational factors did or did not change as a result of their teacher preparation. The study design tests the meditational hypothesis that teacher education can influence preservice teachers' feelings and beliefs about teaching diverse students, and that this in turn influences preservice teachers' motivation to teach in diverse settings.

4.1. Participants

4.1.1. Program
Mountain View College (pseudonym) is a 4-year predominately

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[1] Abbreviations: English Language Learner (ELL); Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT); Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP); Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD).