Diversities in Teacher Education:
Self-Identity and Self-Efficacy Among Preservice Teachers from Marginalized Groups

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ABSTRACT

In the teacher workforce, approximately two-thirds of teachers are White. While the population of diverse learners has grown in school, we lack teacher diversity. Diversifying voices and perceptions of all students is important. Teachers from minority groups can contribute to this diversification. This study examined teacher self-identity and teacher self-efficacy among 22 diverse preservice teachers at a university. The researcher looked at (1) how these preservice teachers self-identify through the teacher education programs and (2) how their teacher education programs and field teaching experiences shape their teacher self-efficacy. Results showed that they developed their identities based on their ethnic and racial identities and family backgrounds. They also believed they can make positive impacts on students. Results showed no significant differences on the overall of self-efficacy and on three subscales of efficacy between first- and second-year preservice teachers and third- and fourth-year preservice teachers. Implications for teacher educators are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In the teaching profession, the majority of teachers in the United States are White and products of the middle class. The 2015-16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which is part of the U. S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), indicated that the number of racially and ethnically diverse teachers in 2015-2016 was low (Taie & Goldring, 2020). Among 3,348,000 teachers who responded to the NTPS, 80.4 percent were White. On the other hand, 8.6 percent were Hispanic teachers; 6.7 percent were Black teachers; 2.4 percent were Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander teachers; and 0.5 percent were Native American teachers. The student population has become more racially and ethnically diverse in K-12 schools. In public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2017, 48 percent were White students. Researchers projected that this number will decrease to 44 percent by fall 2029 (Hussar, Zhang, Hein, Wang, Roberts, Cui, et al., 2020). On the other hand, 42 percent of public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2017 were made up of Black students and Hispanic students (15 percent and 27 percent, respectively). Researchers project the number of Black and

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Hispanic students will increase to 43 percent (15 percent and 28 percent, respectively) by fall 2029 (Hussar, Zhang, Hein, Wang, Roberts, Cui, et al., 2020).

Despite the increased number of students from diverse backgrounds in schools, the majority of teachers remain White; only a limited number of racially and ethnically diverse teachers represent minority groups. This fact is problematic because ethnic and racial representation within the teaching workforce does not align with the diverse student population. Ethnically and racially diverse teachers help racially and ethnically diverse students experience higher expectations and provide culturally relevant instruction, which can improve these students' academic learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Self-identity reflects the beliefs and values individuals possess. Teacher self-identity affects the classroom environment and student learning. Sachs (2015) explains that teacher self-identity offers individual teachers a foundation to "construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society" (p.15). Beijarrd (1995) documents teaching experiences in school as a key element for identity development. Other researchers document reflection in teacher education as another key element for developing teacher identity (Beltman, Glass, Dinham, Chalk, & Nguyen, 2015). While preservice teachers can develop teacher self-identity grounded in their personal factors experienced before entering teacher education programs, they augment teacher self-identity experiencing professional factors during the teacher education programs (Lamote & Engels, 2010). Teacher educators must prepare preservice teachers to actively and professionally reflect on and develop their teacher self-identity (Izadinia, 2013).

With self-efficacy, individuals believe that they have the ability to manage and perform tasks (Bandura, 1977). Teacher self-efficacy impacts individual teachers' behaviors, attitudes, motivations, instructional strategies, and student engagements (Sharp, Brandt, Tufy, & Jay, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Wookholk Hoy, 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy create better learning environments for students, offer appropriate instruction, and engage students in learning (Allinder, 1994; Onafowora, 2004; Pajares, 1996; Sharp, Brandt, Tufy, & Jay, 2016). These factors which result from teacher's high self-efficacy positively influence student achievement (Bandura, 1977).

Researchers have studied self-identity (e.g., Beijarrd, Meijier, & Verloop, 2004; Chong, Low, & Goh, 2011; Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013) and self-efficacy (e.g., Clark & Newberry, 2019; Guo, Justice, Sawyer, & Thompkins, 2011) among pre- and in-service teachers. However, few studies examine self-identity and self-efficacy among preservice teachers from racially and ethnically diverse groups. Therefore, the researcher in this study aims to explore how preservice teachers from underrepresented groups identify themselves given their diverse backgrounds (self-identity) and their perceptions as future teachers (self-efficacy).

The purpose of this research is to understand experiences and perceptions of racially and ethnically diverse preservice teachers regarding teacher identity and self-efficacy in teacher education programs at a midsized university in the United States.

Two research questions were:

1. How do racially and ethnically diverse preservice teachers self-identify themselves as teachers through their teacher education programs and field teaching experiences?
2. How do their teacher education programs and preservice field teaching experiences shape their teacher self-efficacy?

In this paper, the researcher will first offer a literature review covering self-identity, self-efficacy, and preservice teachers of color in teacher education programs. She then will describe the participants, instruments, and data collection method and analysis. She will share findings of the study and address issues related to racially and ethnically diverse preservice teachers' self-identity and self-efficacy. The researcher addresses issues linked to an urgent demand in the teacher education field: to embrace a global population and augment diversity in teacher education.

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