Multicultural Education and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Field Placements: Influence on Pre-Service Teacher Perceptions

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As public school student demographics continue to diversify, the employment of multicultural education pedagogy in special education becomes ever more critical. Multicultural education pedagogy supports the placement of special education pre-service teachers (SEPSTs) in culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) field placements; yet scholars warn field placements have the potential to reinforce deficit-centered perceptions. Therefore, this pilot study sought to examine SEPSTs perceptions of students who are CLD and their educational needs in response to placement in CLD field experience through interviews with three SEPSTs in one teacher preparation program (TPP). Findings align with previous work in the field, underscoring the importance of critical reflection and the alignment of multicultural content in required coursework. Future research and implications for teacher preparation are also discussed.

Keywords: multicultural education, cultural and linguistic diversity, field experiences, teacher preparation

Public schools continue to rapidly diversify across the nation (McFarland et al., 2017). This continued demographic shift necessitates the need for increased attention to the employment of multicultural education pedagogy in teacher preparation programs (TPPs) to better equip burgeoning educators for the diversity in public education. While demographic changes are increasing attention to this complex issue (Billingsley, Bettini, & Williams, 2017), the teaching profession remains predominantly white, female, and middle class, with inadequate training in cultural competency (Castro; 2010; Sleeter, 2001; 2017). One consequence of the continued cultural incompetence is the perpetuation of deficit-centered perceptions of students' who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) conduct, effort, and potential (Nelson & Guerra, 2014), insofar as these perceptions contribute to the over-,under-,- and mis-representation of students of color and learners of English receiving special education services (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009).

The teacher preparation literature defines multicultural education as content, practices, and strategies which prepare educators for the realities of pluralistic

public schools by providing them with the content knowledge and education practices of culturally relevant teaching (Banks, 1995; Gay, 2002; 2004). Through the use of multicultural education pedagogy during undergraduate required coursework for a degree in educationn, TPPs attempt to combat the prevalence and potency of negative perceptions of students who are CLD (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). Increasingly, special education TPPs are implementing multicultural practices in response to the growing awareness of the need. Yet, the level of implementation of multicultural education theory and practices found within special education TPPs is rarely comprehensive. Often, special education TPPs adopt multicultural practices in the form of specific diversity courses rather than as an inclusive curriculum.

Notwithstanding the positive findings from reviews of multicultural special education teacher preparation (Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008), a paucity of research exists that addresses this need (Davis, Brunn-Bevel, & Olive, 2015). Research on special education preservice teachers' (SEPSTs) perceptions is particularly sparse. In addition, studies examining multicultural special education teacher preparation have yet to examine the effect of CLD field experiences alone without the deliberate use of a multicultural curriculum in the required coursework.

Field experiences are touted as a core tenet of teacher multicultural teacher preparation (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011) but the findings on the impact of field experience on the development of cultural competency in pre-service teachers are mixed (Anderson & Stillman, 2013).

Anderson and Stillman (2013) call for future research which examines potential contextual mediating factors that influence the way pre-service teachers make sense of and learn from CLD field placements. Indeed, in the absence of alignment between CLD field placement and CLD course content, pre-service teachers are left to make sense of their experience outside the classroom without the support and guidance of knowledgeable facilitators and multicultural education content that challenges their socialized perceptions. A caution that Sleeter (2001) warns can result in the reinforcement of negative perceptions. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the effects of CLD field placements on SEPST's perceptions of students who are CLD and their educational needs. The literature review synthesizes research findings from studies that have examined how multicultural programmatic changes to special education teacher perpetration contribute to building more culturally competent SEPSTs. Next, preliminary findings from a qualitative pilot study on SEPST perceptions within one special education TPP are reported and discussed.

What is Multicultural Education?

The goal of multicultural educational pedagogy is to build an efficacious education system for students who are CLD by exposing students to diverse social perspectives in order to disrupt social constructions of power (Gay, 2004). Multicultural educationalists adopt different lenses (i.e., counter-narratives) to allow students to examine social constructions of power, such as those based on theories of class, gender, or race (Sleeter & Grant, 1997). Gay (2004) asserts that the result of this pedagogy is a transformed, civic-minded individual that can work to

socially reconstruct society in ways that are more inclusive and equitable. Thus, SEPSTs engagement with multicultural education prepares them to become more culturally competent by providing the content and practices necessary to implement culturally relevant practices in their classrooms.

A critical tenant of multicultural education curriculum in TPPs is the alignment of CLD field experiences with multicultural practices and content in required coursework (Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001; Nieto, 2006; Nuby, 2010; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2005). In addition to the development of SEPST instructional practices, field experiences are a hallmark of special education TPPs. In aligning CLD field experiences with multicultural education content and practices, pre-service teachers can make sense of their experiences in CLD field placements through reflection and classroom discussions, facilitated by a professor knowledgeable of multicultural education curriculum and instruction.

As such, another critical tenant of multicultural education is student reflection on their own educational experiences. McGee-Banks and Banks (1995) highlight the role of reflective practices in building multicultural educators stating, "[m]ulticultural awareness can result only from in-depth work on the self" (p. 156). Reflective practices are not unique to multicultural education having been heralded by many in education throughout the last few decades. Schön (1987) describes reflective practices in education as the process of learning through action by reflecting on one's knowledge acquisition, performance, and experiences. Reflective practices in the context of multicultural pedagogy moves beyond typical reflective practices in teacher education emphasizing

critical reflection of educational experiences, as well as of personal socialized biases and beliefs (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Last, the use of multicultural education pedagogy does not supplant typical teacher preparation practices. Rather, multicultural education content in TPPs must be used in conjunction with typical instructional methods of TPPs focused on instructional practices, content knowledge, and culturally-responsive classroom management. Examples of multicultural content include a) exploring participant biases and privileges b) the discussion of cultural connotations around topics such as motivation and engagement, and c) analyzing the effect that intersections of socioeconomic status, race, language, and (dis)ability have on child development.

Why Focus on Special Education?

It is without question; all teachers are in need of multicultural education. However, special education is a space highly sensitive to the intersectional socialized connotations of labeling. Special educators in particular are situated in a critically powerful position of ensuring equitable treatment for students who are CLD and at risk for or identified with disabilities within the education system (Erevelles, Kanga, & Middleton, 2006; Leko, Brownell, Sinclair, & Kiely, 2015). The use of multicultural education curricula in special education TPPs can better equip special educators to meet this charge to ensure more just treatment and equitable outcomes for students who are CLD with and without disabilities.

Conceptual Framework

From a theoretical lens, special education TPPs that espouse the use of multicultural education curriculum should

engage SEPSTs in critical dialogues and experiences in order to build SEPSTs' aptitude, and examine their own internal biases and privileges. In addition, these biases and privileges should be further interrogated through critical examinations of their manifestation in SEPSTs' teaching of students who are CLD to build their capacity to assess their teaching practice through a multicultural lens. By aligning CLD field experiences with multicultural content, SEPSTs have the experiences and content-knowledge to critically engage with and reflect on their experiences. In cultivating these reflective practices, SEPSTs have the potential to begin to combat negative perceptions and build more inclusive perceptions of their future students who are CLD.

Special education TPPs adopt multicultural curricula because it is assumed SEPSTs enter teacher preparation programs with socialized biases about students from CLD backgrounds (Foster, 1995; Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001; Smith, 2000). Multicultural educational practices in special education TPPs do present as a powerful antidote to inoculate ideologies that contribute to deficit-model perceptions in pre-service teachers (Alismail, 2016). Successful multicultural education preparation builds cultural competency in participants by equipping them with the tools necessary to incorporate content from a variety of cultures in order to critically examine how knowledge is constructed (Banks, 2015). Successful multicultural educators exhibit cultural competency by exposing their students to content that is relevant to their background knowledge, and that assists them in combating hegemonic constructions of power through asking questions such as, "Whose

perspective is this narrative from?" and "What socialized biases do I carry?"

The implementation of multicultural education curricula can vary, and the curricula itself can serve a variety of purposes. Schubert (1986) asserts that curricula can be described as descriptive, prescriptive, or critical. Miller and Seller (1985) posit different curricula serves to transmit information to students, engage students in transactions of information, or transform students' thinking and practices. Descriptive and prescriptive accounts of multicultural education curricula focus on the content knowledge designed within curriculum and the learning outcomes that result from curriculum enactment in classrooms, which places it in the transmission or transaction accounts of Miller and Seller (1985). The critical curriculum, on the other hand, moves into transformation. Gay (2002) describes multicultural education as a critical curriculum that aims to transform students by building an awareness within students of their socialized biases and prejudices, and the systems (including education) that builds and sustains these dominant narratives. Critical multicultural education is thus distinct from descriptive or perspective multicultural accounts that seek to expose and build content knowledge of multiculturalism without the exploration of socialized biases and prejudices. An important distinction given evidence from Kagan (1992) which suggests that teacher candidates confirm their existing beliefs in teacher preparation courses rather than challenge their pre-existing beliefs.

Using a critical multicultural education framework to examine the efficacy of special education TPPs in building the aptitude of SEPSTs to engage with multicultural education and reflect

upon their instructional practice, field placements, personal biases and privileges provides a needed heuristic in the field. In doing so, curriculum and experiential elements of teacher preparation that transform SEPSTs into more culturally competent educators can then be examined and revealed for future use in other teacher preparation contexts. To achieve the stated goal, critical multicultural education theory provides a framework for the researcher to study SEPST perceptions of students who are CLD in response to CLD field placements in one special education TPP.

Multicultural Teacher Preparation in Context

Researchers have examined changes in SEPSTs' cultural competency in response to the use of multicultural education curricula. Six studies (Correa, Hudson, & Hayes, 2016; Daunic, Correa, & Reyes-Blanes, 2004; Kea & Trent, 2013; Pae, Whitaker, & Gentry, 2012; Robertson, García, McFarland, & Rieth, 2012; Robertson et al., 2017) have examined what effect multicultural programmatic changes in special education TPPs have on SEPSTs cultural competency. All researchers taught classes in the special education TPP studied. Findings from these studies show that the incorporation of multicultural content into teacher preparation improved SEPSTs' cultural competence. Across the studies, results mostly aligned with Banks (1995) and Gay (2002; 2004) frameworks of critical multicultural education. Daunic et al.'s (2004) performance-based measure is the only study that did not appear to support a critical examination of SEPST practice. Results highlighted the significance of reflective practices and the importance of alignment between multicultural content and CLD field experiences for supporting more culturally competent mindsets and

practices of SEPSTs. That is, changes in SEPST perceptions occurred when participants engaged in reflective practices on multicultural content learning and CLD field experiences that were aligned.

The Prominence of Critical Reflective Practice

Correa et al. (2004), Pae et al. (2012), and Robertson et al. (2012; 2017) engaged the SEPSTs in reflective practices on topics such as 1) personal biases and privileges, 2) culturally competent instruction and 3) further needs regarding cultural competency. All studies appear to be in line with critical multicultural education as defined by Banks (1995) and Gay (2002; 2004) because their SEPSTs related their personal reflections to dominant narratives in society. In addition to SEPST's reflections on how their personal backgrounds contributed to their lesson planning and delivery, SEPST's reflections were juxtaposed to dominate narratives of power. For example, the special education TPP examined in Pae et al. (2012) was modified by "...now urge[ing] [candidates] to question the status quo, challenge prevailing ideas, and rethink the world from multiple perspectives..." (pg. 135). All studies supported SEPST's cultural competency by going beyond mere exposure to multicultural education content, to include interrogations of personal biases and systemic oppression.

The four studies described previously used reflections as a means to evaluate SEPST growth regarding cultural competency. Rather than use reflections for analysis, Daunic et al. (2004) focused their analyses on teacher practice. Kea and Trent (2013) analyzed SEPSTs' incorporation of culturally relevant teaching practices into SEPSTs' lesson development.

Daunic et al. (2004) developed a performance-based measure to assess the level of mastery SEPSTs exhibited related to multicultural awareness and practices in the classroom. The measure assessed SEPSTs' competencies regarding nine key indicators of culturally relevant teaching taken from the *Praxis III: Classroom Performance Assessment*. It does not appear from the assessment indicators if critical multicultural education practice was highlighted. The closest criteria assessed the maintenance of high expectations for students who are CLD, as research consistently notes, teachers tend to hold students who are CLD to lower academic standards than their white, English-speaking peers (Gay 2002). Interestingly, Daunic et al. (2004) included both general and special education pre-service teachers in their study, with SEPSTs exhibiting slightly higher levels of cultural competency. The authors attribute this finding to SEPSTs preparation which focuses on individualized instruction and equity, aligning more closely with culturally relevant teaching practices than general education preparation curriculum. That is, simply by exposure to content related to equity and persons with disabilities, SEPSTs showed a marked difference in Daunic and colleagues' summative measure of cultural competency.

For data analysis in Kea and Trent (2013), SEPSTs' use of a culturally responsive lesson plan template (Kea, 2008) was scored using a culturally responsive lesson plan rubric (Kea, 2008). Next, SEPST observations were completed using a checklist for teaching practices (Kea, 2008) and evaluated in conjunction with the lesson plan. SEPSTs learned culturally relevant teaching practices in a teaching methods course before creating and enacting the lesson in their CLD student teaching placements. The authors note the participants could have benefited from an increased emphasis on integrating diversity into content teaching. Therefore, while the authors did enact critical multicultural education within the methods course, the critical results did not manifest in SEPSTs lessons. That is, while the infusion of culturally relevant teaching practices was evident in SEPST lessons, no participants developed lesson plans that targeted social critique and action.

The Importance of Alignment between Field Work and Content

As mentioned, multicultural teacher education relies on the alignment of multicultural classroom content and field experiences. In all six studies, SEPSTs engaged in either observation or student teaching in a CLD field placement and were enrolled in required coursework that utilized multicultural education content. By deliberately aligning coursework and multicultural content, SEPSTs were able to "experience first-hand what [they] had been learning about in their [classes] all semester" (Robertson et al., 2017 pg. 42). This alignment was a specific aim of all six studies in response to mixed findings from previous literature on the role of field experiences in multicultural education teacher preparation programs (see Zeichner, 2010).

Across the six studies, the use of multicultural education content highlights how multicultural content assists SEPSTs in making sense of their learning to teach within multicultural frameworks. For example, aligning content and field placements dissuaded SEPSTs from viewing multicultural education as something distinct and separate from their instructional practices and subsequent

student achievement (Correa, et al., 2004; Pae et al., 2012; Robertson et al. 2012; 2017). Duanic et al. (2004) and Kea and Trent (2013) incorporated the interdependence of content and practice within their performance-based measure and lesson evaluation. Thus, CLD field experiences, when aligned with multicultural program content have the potential to inculcate cultural awareness and competencies as evidenced in SEPST reflections (Correa et al., 2004; Pae et al., 2012; Robertson et al., 2012; Robertson et al., 2017) and performance (Daunic et al., 2004; Kea & Trent, 2013).

The Current Study

Findings from the reviewed studies above provide continuing promise of multicultural education practices embedded within special education TPPs. Though the six studies previously reviewed aligned multicultural education content with CLD field experiences, not all special education TPPs employ multicultural practices in a comprehensive manner. In this study, the researcher used qualitative research methods to examine how CLD field placements without multicultural content in required coursework influence SEPSTs' perceptions of students who are CLD and their educational needs. By conducting interviews with SEPSTs, the researcher was able to gain a beginning understanding of CLD field placements (without multicultural education curricula) on SEPSTs' cultural competency.

The two primary research questions for this study are: (1) What effect do CLD field placements have on SEPST perceptions of students who are CLD? and (2) What effect do CLD field placements within one special education TPP have on SEPSTs' understanding of students who are CLD educational needs? SEPST perceptions and understanding of educational needs is used as a proxy for basic cultural competence which is the intended outcome of the employment of multicultural education pedagogy.

Participants and Setting

The researcher interviewed three SEPSTs enrolled in a special education TPP at a large, public mid-Atlantic university that promotes the use of multicultural education practices through the placement of SEPSTs in CLD schools. During the interviews, all three participants identified as coming from middle-class backgrounds and having attended schools in predominantly white districts. The SEPSTs were John, a white male; Melissa, a white female; and Jane, a white female (participant names are pseudonyms to protect participant identity). All three were in their junior year and their first semester of the special education TPP. During the first semester of the program, all SEPSTs take five classes focused on the instruction of students with severe disabilities, universal design for learning, language acquisition, curriculum and instruction, and behavior management in special education, respectively. While taking classes, participants are placed in CLD public schools near the university to observe special education instruction. These placements vary across grades, disciplines, and disability status. Participants were in both inclusive and non-inclusive educational (e.g., self-contained classroom) settings.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted interviews while being a teaching assistant TA for the behavior management course in special education in which the study participants were enrolled. The participants took this course at the same time they were completing observational field experiences.

All interviews took place over three weeks near the end of the fall academic semester in the researcher's office. Interview questions were semi-structured based on the researcher's knowledge of the special education program and individual course content to gain insight on topics the researcher wanted to cover. The researcher used a feminist interview method (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) because this method advocates for familiarity between interviewer and participant. The interviews were more conversational in style in order to accommodate the sensitive nature of the topics discussed. As a part of this, the researcher shared anecdotes and thoughts about her own experience teaching and invited questions from the participants.

The researcher recruited participants by describing the research purpose and passing out a flyer with the study description and the researcher's contact information at the end of one class session, midway through the semester. Eight students emailed the researcher to participate in the study. Despite attempts to recruit, non-white participants, all eight that agreed to participate identified as white. The researcher conducted all eight interviews with each volunteer and purposefully chose three through inductive thematic saturation (Saunders et al., 2017). After review of the participant responses, during initial data analysis, the researcher identified three interviews for more in depth data analysis. This purposeful sampling of interviews allowed for more in-depth data analysis of the chosen interviews. In addition, the three interviews represented the breadth of participant experiences to be represented and allowed for a comparative analysis of divergent participant perspectives.

Validity. Participant reactivity to a researcher can result in data that may not represent true participant thoughts and experiences. To limit the effect of participant reactivity, the researcher used convenience sampling. Maxwell (2012) asserts convenience sampling to be an adequate way to approach research on individuals' teaching practice because it can leverage the rapport between researcher and participant resulting in more authentic interview exchanges.

The researcher's lens also impacts data collection and analysis (Henstrand, 2014). As a former urban, special education public school teacher and as a white, middle-class female, the researcher's experiences certainly influenced interview question development, protocol, and data analysis. The use of the feminist interview method was also chosen to lessen the impact of the researcher's own biases during the interview. Further, the participants and the researcher engaged in member-checking of interview transcriptions and preliminary analysis. Participants read over each interview transcription and provided clarification and explanation on areas they deemed to be misrepresentative of their intended meaning.

Coding and Analysis

The researcher coded the data in two deductive coding sessions. The first coding session used the themes identified from the literature review: reflective practice, and alignment of coursework and fieldwork. For the second coding session, the researcher used theoretical codes developed from the theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2016). The researcher wrote an analytic memo after each coding session. Based on the data from these two coding sessions and analytic memos, three codes

guided the final data analysis: moments of transformation, the contribution of reflection, and references to the alignment of fieldwork and class content.

Preliminary Findings

Based on preliminary findings from the interview data analysis, it appears that CLD placements for SEPSTs have some effect on SEPSTs' perceptions of students who are CLD. However, little to no effect on their understanding of students who are CLD educational needs (i.e., the enactment of culturally competent teaching practices) was found. Overall, the development of the cultural competency of SEPSTs appears to be highly individual. What the data analysis revealed is an implementation gap between theory and practice, leading to variation in SEPSTs perceptions of students who are CLD, and SEPST cultural competence. The analysis suggests this variation is attributable to two phenomena: 1) a disparity among participant aptitude to engage with the multicultural education content and experiences, and 2) the creation of dissonance between SEPST perceptions of students who are CLD and their educational needs because of a lack of alignment between field experiences and their content in coursework.

Participant Engagement with Multicultural Education

Data analysis revealed differences in participants' engagement with multicultural education, which impacted their growth regarding culturally competency. The data suggests that multicultural education topics are discussed within the special education TPP, but a differential effect on SEPST learning occurs. Jane did not acknowledge that discussions around multicultural education content were occurring. Jane states, "In my college classes? Have teachers brought up this sort of topic of race? The topic of disability but couched in more like talking about stigma and talking about otherness? No." John does acknowledge the conversations were being had, expressing a different take, "We do talk about issues of race and disability stigma, especially in our UDL class, and in behavior management, like working with English language learners, and some strategies to do that and understanding functions of behavior.". Melissa not only acknowledges the conversations but moves to deeper analysis to describe how those conversations can be changed to increase their leverage, which appears to signify a differential engagement with multicultural education topics that Jane and John. Melissa identifies instances where multicultural education topics are discussed but notes limitations, "I think we talk about differentiation very clinically...we don't necessarily talk about how to differentiate the actual content, the background of the content. Because when you teach non-dominant groups, right, they have a different background than you so how do you differentiate for that?" Melissa adds that she sees where multicultural content could be included in the TPP, "I don't see a lot of [multicultural content] in this program currently, but it definitely has the potential to be incorporated, I don't see why it couldn't be incorporated, but it's just not talked about much." The different responses appear to expose the special education TPP's lack of explicitness in connecting multicultural education topics to SEPST learning in field experiences.

The differential effect in SEPST engagement with multicultural education outside the classroom was also evident. John and Melissa expressed the importance of outside of class engagement with multicultural education topics through

conversations with their peers. These conversations assisted them in making sense of their experiences within the CLD field placements. In contrast, Jane conveyed the lack of conversations that occurred amongst her colleagues that focused on multicultural education topics. However, based on the interview data, it was not entirely clear whether the difference between participants is attributable to difference in their individual engagement or more of a result based on personal experiences outside of the special education TPP. The different responses to questions about peer dialogue may be representative of their situation and experience, rather than an indication of their abilities to engage with multicultural education content. Nevertheless, the data appears to support the impression that SEPSTs enter TPPs with different levels of ability to engage with multicultural education content and experiences.

Finally, differences in participant engagement with multicultural education content is also evident in participant responses to the topic of alignment between their coursework and field experiences. Jane comments, "There's definitely some disconnect, and I'm trying to look and see how, you know, it would apply to the students I'm observing and looking at now, and it's difficult." Though Jane's engagement seems to be lowest amongst the three participants, she expresses an awareness that her needs related to cultural competency are not being met by the special education TPP. John remarks, "I need to learn more about instructing different groups of students. My classes haven't really addressed that." Here, John is advocating for the clearer incorporation of multicultural education content to help him address a need that he

sees within his practice, in response to his CLD field experiences. Contrary to John and Jane, Melissa states, "I think seeing different examples of things even just in our class or all the other classes, having other people in the class speak up about what they've, who they've worked with, what they've done, stuff like that has helped with understanding different types of student populations, ages, and disabilities." It seems Melissa's needs are being met by her engagement in classroom discussions that incorporate her and her colleagues' experiences, but John and Jane remain wanting more explicit guidance.

This set of data suggests that varying levels of participant engagement with multicultural education content necessitate the alignment of field experiences and coursework content. By not explicitly aligning participants' fieldwork with classroom content, only some participant needs are being met that address the capacity for the development of culturally competent teaching practices. With some needs left unmet, a creation of dissonance seemed to occur between the intended purpose of CLD field placements and participant outcomes.

The Creation of Dissonance

Similar to differential participant engagement with multicultural content, the lack of explicit alignment between participant field placements and coursework content seem to manifest in varying participant perceptions of the use and purpose of multicultural content in the special education TPP. The lack of alignment between field experiences and classroom content was noticeable in participants' reported reactions to and reflections on their CLD placement. John comments on his CLD placement, "I couldn't believe how bad that school is, just the way it looks and the

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facilities. Like I said, I was really blessed to go to great schools, and this place was really bad. I didn't know that was a thing still." Jane describes, "It's clear there isn't supports at home, because it's not a very good district. It's not a place where you want to be." Melissa remarked, "our internships are in places where specifically the demographics have provided a population of students with color, I think that definitely has given me more insight."

For Jane, her CLD placement did not seem to inculcate cultural sensitives, but rather reinforce negative perceptions of CLD communities. John engaged with his field placement through reflection upon his own schooling experience. It appears that he may have been in the beginning stages of building cultural sensitivity through his reflection by comparing his own school experiences with what he sees students in his CLD field placement experiencing. Melissa recognized the value of her CLD placement in offering her a way of thinking that provides more understanding into the experiences of students who are CLD which also suggests the beginning stages of cultural sensitivity. Despite the positive findings for John and Melissa, it should be of severe concern that Jane's negative perceptions are seemingly reinforced. The dissonance between the expected and lived experience of the participants seems to imply that CLD field placements alone are not effective in achieving the intended purpose of developing more culturally competent special educators without the alignment of multicultural education content. In fact, in Jane's case, the data could suggest CLD field placements without the aligned content indeed have the opposite effect of the intended purpose.

A final telling example of dissonance between what is intended and what is reality is represented in participant responses to questions related to reflection on their teaching practice and experiences in their CLD placements. John and Jane indicated no change in their teaching practice in response to their engagement in CLD field placements. John states, "I'm not going to let a student's skin color change the way I teach them." Jane says likewise, "I wouldn't have any issues serving in a Title 1 District that serves predominately of color. It wouldn't change how I teach or see different students." If the intended goal of multicultural education pedagogy is to disrupt the socialized constructs SEPSTs come into special education TPPs with, data from John and Jane suggests that CLD field experiences are not enough. Contrary to John and Jane, Melissa reflects, "I think students who come from different backgrounds challenge educators to understand their perspectives, but that's who we are as special educators. We're trying to put the puzzle pieces together of somebody else's perspective." While John and Jane remain colorblind in their reflection on their teaching practices, Melissa shows the beginning of growth to transforming her approach to teaching from a multicultural lens.

Discussion

Within the higher education context, multicultural education theory builds on assertions of curriculum theory by positing to transform SEPSTs into culturally competent educators that will be aware of their privilege (i.e., understands how privilege and bias manifest in interactions with students) and enact culturally competent teaching practices (Gay, 1995). The overall findings make sense given the special education TPP promotes the use of multicultural education through SEPSTs' CLD field placements yet does not mandate

or reference the use of any multicultural education curriculum or instruction.

From the preliminary findings, no definitive explanations of participant responses to CLD field placements were found, but the data does suggest that CLD field placements alone are ineffective in transforming some SEPSTs into more culturally competent educators. CLD field placements seemed to reinforce Jane's negative perceptions of CLD communities and families and made no impact on her teaching practice. Though John experienced some growth toward culturally competent thinking, no tangible change in his teaching practice is evident in his responses. Melissa on the other hand, did note a change in her teaching practice in response to her experiences in her CLD field placement.

The data support the assumption that differences in participant engagement create a continuum of ability to engage with multicultural experiences in transformational ways, highlighting the need for direct alignment and reference to field experiences within content classes. Perhaps changes in SEPSTs culturally competency is more a reflection of the participant's values, experiences, and beliefs rather than transformational experience granted by their field experiences. Indeed, this finding is in line with Smith's (2000) interrogation of participant backgrounds which found that participant backgrounds did impact receptiveness to multicultural education practices. The data further suggests that the lack of alignment between field experiences and classroom content create a dissonance between the intended purpose of CLD field placements and the reality of participant response. An assertion that can be made is that in special education TPPs, unequal SEPST engagement with multicultural education content combined with the lack of alignment between field experiences and coursework content result in highly varied outcomes in SEPSTs cultural competency.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study. The study lacks participant diversity and lack of observational data. The researcher would have liked to observe other classes within the certification program and observe the students in their field placements to gather more variety and richer data on the certification program. The researcher also could have employed repeated interviews over the course of the semester to examine the participants' perceptions over time. This would have allowed the researcher to identify spontaneous instances of multicultural education instruction within the clinical setting of the special education TPP. These instances could have revealed greater insight into the impact of the CLD field placements by helping the researcher be attentive to more purposeful and focused interview topics. If the researcher could have captured critical moments of transformational experience or thinking and incorporated them into my interviews, data from the interviews would represent more of a narrative and lend itself well to the telling of the SEPSTs' evolution in response to the special education TPP's instruction and educational practices. Last, the researcher could have compared participants across different special education certification programs or across discipline (e.g., general education pre-service teachers vs. SEPSTs).

Implications

It is not enough for SEPSTs to intellectually understand the concept and value of cultural competency. What matters is action. Through action, SEPSTs can

continually strive to become better, given the right supports and opportunities. We want to instill action in our SEPSTs because in education, cultural competency is not a destination but rather a way of teaching and living that attempts to make our schools a more just place for all our students. This line of research can assist special education TPPs in reviewing curricula in order to incorporate more effective multicultural education practices such as teaching reflective practices, aligning SEPSTs field experiences with coursework content, ensuring that syllabi and program objectives incorporate multicultural themes and emphasize multicultural competencies, and affirming the commitment to multicultural education practice from all faculty and staff.

Furthermore, Daunic et al.'s (2004) comparative analysis of special and general educator competencies with culturally relevant teaching suggests that that general education teacher preparation programs should incorporate more content and field experiences related to special education in order to increase the cultural competency of program participants. Their work provides an adequate model for future work as inclusive practices continue to grow, blurring the lines between special and general educators.

Future Directions

Exploring the experience of SEPSTs in traditional special education TPPs that do not explicitly state the use of a multicultural education curriculum is significant to the field because special education TPPs' use of multicultural practices is not uniform across programs and institutions. Future findings from this line of research could inform how special education TPPs could refine their pedagogy to more effectively implement multicultural education practices and

consequently produce SEPSTs with greater culturally competency. Across and within TPPs, SEPSTs' different levels of engagement with multicultural education instruction imply the need for wide-ranging scaffolds of support for SEPSTs as they make sense of their experiences and learning within a multicultural education framework. To achieve greater generalization, the use of a multicultural education framework should begin to examine how participants' backgrounds and experiences interact with multicultural education curricula in order to reveal situational and attributional confounds that lead to variance in levels of cultural competency across programs' SEPSTs.

Further, the need for more research that directly tracks how both general and special education pre-service teachers' perceptions of students who are CLD change over time remains pressing. In the studies reviewed, SEPST initial perceptions of students who are CLD went unreported. Moreover, no longitudinal studies have examined the maintenance of multicultural practices once SEPSTs move from pre-service to in-service, and the role of multicultural professional development for teachers. Professors within special education TPPs could engage in teaching as research activities similar to the studies reviewed for this study that pre- and post-test SEPSTs for levels of culturally competency. By doing so, scholars can investigate the effect of individual courses and experiences that assist in building cultural competency in SEPSTs over the course of a semester and across the years of the special education TPP. If possible, longitudinal studies could help reveal how cultural competence changes over time across SEPSTs' transition to in-service educator positions.

Conclusion

With the current cultural chasm between public school educators and their students, understanding the differential effects of multicultural education pedagogy in special education TPPs is needed. We know the benefit of multicultural education but garnering a greater understanding of the variance in outcomes of multicultural teacher preparation will allow for more effective implementation of multicultural education pedagogy in special education TPPs. The findings from this study assist us in beginning to understand how SEPST differential engagement with multicultural education content interacts with CLD field placements in order to illuminate how the transformation of SEPSTs occurs.

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