

An Inquiry into the Self-Evaluation of Star Teacher Characteristics Necessary for Successful Urban Teaching

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Abstract

This study examines the degree of agreement between three Haberman Foundation-trained facilitators' interviews and pre-service teachers' self-evaluations of behavioral attributes associated with successful urban teaching. Using a quasi-experimental design research approach, data for this investigation was collected from 17 subjects who are all pre-service teacher candidates enrolled in an urban, metropolitan, co-educational research university. The Star Teacher Selection Interview and the Urban Teacher Behavioral Self-Evaluation Assessment served as the assessment instruments. Overall, findings revealed that the trained interviewers rated the pre-service teacher participants much lower on many of the behavioral attributes associated with successful urban teaching than did the subjects themselves.

Keywords: *urban teaching, pre-service teachers, self-assessment, effective teaching*

The challenges that often impact urban school districts—*e.g.*, poor working conditions, low student academic performance, questionable teacher certifications and licensure, and under-resourced environments—have been the focus of attention in national legislation, educational scholarship, and reform efforts for decades. Nevertheless, the bleak portrait and observable disparities of many urban, high-poverty districts remain (Carter & Welner, 2013; Haberman, 2005; Harding, 2005; Hill-Jackson & Stafford, 2017). Especially alarming is the continuance of urban districts reporting difficulty attracting and retaining effective teachers (Haberman, 1995, 2005, 2017).

The inability to attract and retain effective urban teachers may be influenced by the demographics of current teachers and teacher education candidates. In 2019, a report from the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that 80% of teachers are white (McFarland et al., 2019), and this number mirrors pre-service teachers currently enrolled in teacher education programs. Given that there has been a decline in teachers of color (1999-2000, 8%; 2015-2016, 7%), and an increase in racially and culturally diverse students, it is projected that the majority of diverse students will be taught by a white teacher in the future (Gomez, 1996; Harding, 2005; McFarland et al., 2019; Swartz, 2003; Zeichner, 1996). This “cultural mismatch” (Harding, 2005) has the potential to negatively affect teacher-student relationships and high-quality instruction (Harding, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000; McAllister & Irvine, 2000), and is troubling since pre-service teachers will most likely be placed in schools with the greatest demand: urban, low-performing schools (Landsman & Lewis, 2011). Moreover, white pre-service teachers will be more likely working in multicultural environments with a diverse student body that may be different from their own personal schooling experiences and histories (Landsman & Lewis, 2011).

Although the new pre-service teachers may have been exposed to greater diversity and multicultural experiences, and even though perceptions of urban teaching may be changing, it cannot be presumed that new pre-service teachers are predisposed to high-needs contexts (Castro, 2010). For example, Swartz (2003) contends that white pre-service teachers’ perceptions of urban communities are media based and exogenous, and that many make negative assumptions (whether conscious or unconscious) about students of color. In light of these issues, and given the emergence of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that focuses on low-performing schools and the need for effective teachers in every classroom, developing teachers for the urban context should be at the forefront of teacher education programs (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Haberman, 1995, 2005, 2017; Weiner & Jerome, 2016), especially since 50% of teachers who do commit to teaching in

an urban environment leave within their first three years of teaching (Haberman, 1995, 2005, 2017). Although studies have communicated mixed results in the identification of factors influencing a teacher's decision to leave, educational researchers have identified classroom management, working conditions, and feeling unprepared for the sociocultural realities of urban schools as factors that affect their decisions to leave an urban environment (Chizhik, 2003; Dill & Stafford-Johnson, 2003; Haberman, 1995, 2005; Hill-Jackson & Stafford, 2017; McKinney et al., 2008).

Siwatu (2011) contends that another possible explanation of urban teacher attrition may be obtained from current and prior research on teacher self-efficacy, *i.e.*, teachers' belief in their ability to successfully influence students' academic performance (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Several studies support this connection. Brouwers and Tomic (2009) examined and confirmed the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and self-perceptions of capabilities to effectively perform tasks associated with PK-12 teaching and teacher burnout. Siwatu (2011) investigated the influence of school contextual factors on pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy and culturally responsive teaching. He found that pre-service teachers felt more prepared and had greater confidence to teach in suburban schools when compared to an urban school. Ford, McKinney, and Tomovic (2020) investigated urban teacher attrition from a different perspective. They identified factors that influenced the decision of "star teachers" to remain in an urban school environment beyond five years. A term attributed to Haberman to describe effective urban teachers (1995), "star teachers" are:

Teachers who, by all common criteria, are outstandingly successful: their students score higher on standardized tests; parents and children think they are great; principals rate them highly; other teachers regard them as outstanding; central office supervisors consider them successful; cooperating universities regard them as superior; and they evaluate themselves as outstanding teachers. (p. 1)

It is plausible to assume from this definition that star teachers have a high sense of teacher self-efficacy. Ford and colleagues (2020) concluded that job satisfaction and effectiveness when working with urban populations were key factors that influenced star teachers' decisions to remain in urban school settings.

There is an ongoing need to examine the impacts of self-efficacy of urban teachers (Siwatu, 2011), therefore, the research team sought to investigate self-efficacy through the criteria of star teachers as defined by Haberman (1995). The guiding research question was:

How do pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of their star teacher characteristics compare to trained raters' assessment of pre-service teachers' star teacher characteristics? The researchers hypothesized that pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of their star teacher characteristics would closely align with the trained raters' assessment of the pre-service teachers' star teacher characteristics.

Literature Review

The literature review concentrates on areas related to effective urban teacher characteristics: (a) characteristics of effective urban teachers and “star teachers” (b) urban teacher self-efficacy, and (c) urban teacher self-reflection assessments.

Characteristics of Effective Urban Teachers and “Star Teachers”

Most scholars, urban administrators, and urban teachers agree that teaching in an urban school environment is a life-altering experience. Haberman (1995), often referred to as the leading scholar in urban teacher education, describes urban teaching as “an extraordinary life experience” (p. 1). He stated that urban teaching is a “volatile, highly charged, emotionally draining, physically exhausting experience for even the most competent and experienced teacher” (p. 1).

In *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* (1995), Haberman identifies and describes 15 characteristics, or functions, of star teachers. Further, he elaborates on the ideologies that ground and empower urban teachers that enable them to be effective teachers of children in poverty. Of the 15 effective urban teacher characteristics, Haberman (1995, 2005) argues that a teacher's belief in his or her ability to successfully impact the academic performance of students at-risk is probably the most powerful indicator, or function, of an effective urban teacher. Haberman (1995, 2005) contends that ineffective urban teachers tend to “blame the victim” for their lack of success or find fault with their home environment, *e.g.*, lacking parental support and care. Star teachers, on the other hand, view the lack of academic success by at-risk students through a different lens and instead find fault with the schools, curricula, or teacher pedagogical practices (Haberman, 1995, 2005).

Making students feel needed is another important characteristic of star teachers (Haberman, 1995, 2005). According to Haberman (1995), this characteristic is centered on a star teacher's ability to build meaningful relationships with their students. Through these self-affirming relationships, stars enable students to feel important and that their lives

matter. Stars have the unique ability to restore hope in their students regardless of life's circumstances (Haberman, 1995, 2005).

Star teachers also have the necessary emotional and physical stamina to work effectively with students in poverty. Overwhelming life challenges pervade many urban at-risk students, and sympathetic teachers can be engulfed with a multitude of emotions that can impact their effectiveness in the classroom. Star teachers, however, expect problems in the classroom and do not let their emotions override their teaching methodologies, practices, and decisions. Additionally, star teachers have high energy and actively use this energy to ignite a passion for learning in their students (Haberman, 1995, 2005).

Other scholars have investigated the characteristics and behaviors of effective urban teachers for decades. Campbell et al. (1983) used a questionnaire format to compare responses of teachers identified as outstanding by their principals to others not identified. The researchers discovered that effective urban teachers often used a variety of teaching methods and frequently assisted their students with the development of values leading to success. The research of Baron and colleagues (1992) identified nine behaviors and practices of successful urban teachers based on an assessment of their interactions and relationships with students. Among others, the researchers identified positive classroom management, applicability, and implementing a variety of teaching methods as important behaviors.

Accomplished urban teachers were investigated by Abbate-Vaughn et al. (2010) based on the dimensions proposed by Ladson-Billings and Darling-Hammond (2000). The dimensions included a focus on relationships and shared authority, connecting subject content with student experience, incorporating cultural communication patterns, and challenging typical conceptions of at-risk students. Poplin and colleagues (2011) sought to identify the instructional practices, personal characteristics, and behavioral attributes of highly effective teachers in low-performing urban schools. The researchers followed 31 teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools and discovered common characteristics among effective urban teachers. The characteristics included strictness, instructional intensity, movement, traditional instruction, exhorting virtues, and developing strong and respectful relationships. Five core beliefs among the identified effective urban teachers were also identified by the research team. Two of the core beliefs were seeing the potential within all students, and believing that they, the teacher, could turn any situation into a positive experience. Further, a typology of effective essential behaviors required of urban learning environments was proposed by Robinson and Lewis (2017). Such qualities as kindness,

caring, loving, and knowing were identified as essential behaviors of urban teachers. The emphasis was placed on meaningful relationships between teachers and students.

When reviewing the research on effective urban teacher characteristics over the past 40 years by several authors, it is clear that the behaviors identified demonstrate considerable agreement with the initial 15 Star Teacher Characteristics first proposed by Haberman (1995, 2005). Of the 15 star teacher characteristics, Table 1 presents seven of the midrange characteristics of star teachers that are the focus of this study.

Table 1
Star Teacher Characteristics

Characteristic	Description
Persistence	Teachers constantly pursue strategies and activities so that all students can meet success.
Approach to At-Risk Students	Teachers take responsibility for children's learning, regardless of the conditions they face.
Putting Ideas into Practice	Teachers can relate theory and practice.
Professional/Personal Orientation to Students	Teachers expect and are able to develop rapport with children.
Fallibility	Teachers take responsibility for their own errors and mistakes.
Emotional and Physical Stamina	Teachers are able to endure the challenges and crises of urban settings.
Response to Authority	Teachers can adjust and cope with the demands of the bureaucracy.

Urban Teacher Self-efficacy

It is without exception that successful urban teachers believe in their ability to motivate and effectively work with students in high-poverty schools. Rooted in Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1986) which contends that cognitive, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes are necessary and prerequisites to initiating and sustaining human change, teacher self-efficacy has become a popular topic among educational researchers over the past 25 years (Labone, 2004, Ross, 1998, Siwatu, 2011). For the purpose of this investigation, the research team will reference the Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and

Hoy's (1998) definition of self-efficacy as "a teacher's belief in her or his ability to organize or execute the courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific task in a particular context" (p. 117).

A focused examination of Bandura's social cognitive theory reveals that self-efficacy, as a construct, is not an unwavering or established attribute (Bandura, 1977; Bong, 2006; Ross, 1998; Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu & Starker, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), but is subject to vary based on contextual factors such as school demographics and student characteristics (Bandura, 1977; Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). According to Bandura (1977), mastery experiences, defined as a task completed successfully, generate strong efficacy beliefs. Practicum students who efficaciously complete their field experiences primarily in white, middle class, suburban schools may develop strong self-efficacious beliefs about their effectiveness as teachers. However, if the same practicum students were placed in a high-poverty, low-performing school with no prior productive field experiences, they may not believe themselves to be as self-efficacious (Siwatu, 2011).

Siwatu (2011) argues that because self-efficacy judgments fluctuate among different contexts, it is vital to understand how self-efficacy appraisals are made. Self-efficacy appraisals entail a task analysis where an individual scrutinizes a context and assesses their ability to perform an identified task successfully (Bandura, 1997). When referring to teachers (pre-service or in-service), they first analyze a task and individually assess their perceived competency for successfully completing the task (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), after which a self-appraisal is made (Siwatu, 2011).

Many studies have investigated the development of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy when placed in an urban school environment. Chester and Beaudin (1996) explored the relationships between change and the variables of self-efficacy beliefs, teacher characteristics, and school practices of beginning teachers placed in urban schools. They found that, contrary to earlier research, self-efficacy beliefs did not decline over the course of the first year, but rather were mediated by the teacher's age, prior experience, and school practices, *e.g.*, collaboration opportunities, supervision attention to instruction. Knoblauch and Woolfolk Hoy (2008) examined 102 student teachers to assess their individual efficacy beliefs and collective efficacy beliefs, across various school contexts, *e.g.*, rural, suburban, and urban. They concluded that even though student teachers in all three settings demonstrated significant increases in their sense of efficacy following student teaching, urban student teachers demonstrated significantly lower perceived collective efficacy. A year-long study conducted by Varen (2002) followed three first-year urban teachers who

underwent professional development training that focused on teaching in an urban context and investigated their growth and change as teachers. Her analysis indicated noticeable stability in the subjects' personal and teaching efficacy.

Urban Teacher Self-reflection Assessments

The merits of student self-assessment have been debated in the literature for years. While some studies acknowledge the benefits of self-assessment on student goal achievement in higher education, other studies document disparities between students' self-perceptions of academic abilities when comparing them to objective measures of academic performance (Jackson, 2014). Self-assessments are used to measure sentiments and dispositions of individuals doing the evaluation and are subject to respondents' biases. Objective measures, on the other hand, measure what respondents can or cannot do, or propensities, and rely on well-defined fact-based items. While self-assessments can provide information on student attitudes and dispositions can be helpful when designing courses and programs (Karsten & Roth, 1998), accuracy of self-assessment of competencies may be questionable due to the subjective nature of self-assessments.

Evidence of self-assessment studies can be dated as early as 1932 when agreement between self-agreements and teacher-issued grades were examined (Sumner, 1932). Based on an early meta-analysis of the literature (Boud & Falchikov, 1989), challenges related to the accuracy of student self-assessments were traced to issues related to 1) measurement tools and scales, *e.g.*, validity and reliability, and 2) impact of students characteristics, *e.g.*, level of ability, maturity of students, demographic differences, and student experiences. Jackson (2014) documented difficulties in capturing accurate student self-assessment data that aligned with academic performance. The results suggested that the accuracy of student self-assessment data could be improved by students receiving coaching periodically on the benefits of self-reflection.

Leach (2012) and Papinczk and colleagues (2007) found that higher achieving students tended to underrate themselves, whereas lower achieving students tended to demonstrate leniency bias and overestimate their abilities. Porter (2013) determined that while typically thought of as opportunities to inform students about their future careers, early program and vocational experiences—in-service, internships, and service-learning opportunities—were associated with students' tendency to develop false impressions of themselves. In this case, students tended to inflate their self-assessment of their abilities and professional dispositions.

Several studies from multiple professional fields found that participants overestimated their abilities based on subjective self-assessments, especially those who perform at the lower end of objective measured assessments. Investigating the accuracy of self-assessment instruments across multiple content domains, Kruger and Dunning (1999) found that subjects in the bottom quartile of objective measured assessments overestimated their performance based on self-assessments conducted prior to being administered objective tests. Likewise, Parker and colleagues (2004) found that medical students, prior to being administered an objective measure of their abilities, poorly predicted their scores in all content areas, and that subjects in the lowest quartile were the poorest predictors, with a range between 3%-23% accuracy. On the other hand, Milgrom et al. (1978) found that dentists were more critical of their own work than were other evaluators. Winefield and Chur-Hansen (2001) found that medical students self-assessed their performance on communication skills more severely than did their instructors. Registrars in higher education self-assessed their work-related abilities lower than others with whom they worked (McKinstry et al., 2003). Thus, the literature on the accuracy of self-assessments is ambiguous. Self-assessments should be considered suspect as subjective self-assessments and may fail to provide accurate data unless accompanied by objective measures or observations of others.

In an attempt to better understand what accounts for why some teachers are more effective than others at teaching at-risk students in an urban setting, the researchers reviewed the literature on (a) characteristics of effective urban teachers and “stars,” (b) self-efficacy, and (c) self-reflection assessments. The researchers conclude that based on a cursory review of the literature in these three areas, the initial “star” characteristics that were first identified by Haberman have remained stable, more or less, overtime. Through the years, authors have collectively addressed either the same or similar themes. Nonetheless, because the manner in which data was collected, *i.e.*, self-assessments versus objective measures, can impact the validity of the data collected and hence the reliability of the results, attention must be paid to how studies are conducted if we are to better understand why some teachers are more successful than others at improving the academic performance of at-risk urban students.

Methods

Data Collection

An exploratory study was conducted to understand and compare pre-service teachers' self-assessment of star teacher characteristics to those conducted by professionals who were trained to use the Star Teacher Selection Interview (Haberman, 1995, 2005). Using the inventory, trained professionals performed a star characteristic assessment of each participating pre-service teacher via a 40-minute interview. Each professional rater individually discussed the responses and ranked each participant. Next, the pre-service teachers self-reported and gauged their efficacy on each of the star teacher characteristics, or functions, using the inventory. The pre-service teachers' scores were then compared to the professional raters' scores to identify commonalities or discrepancies among the different star teacher characteristics ratings.

Pre-service Student Participants

There was a total of 14 undergraduate and graduate students, majoring in early childhood education. Participants were near the end of their training program and were enrolled in a 400/500 level, 70-hour, pre-service teacher practicum course. Demographics for the 14 subjects include 11 females and three males; one was African American and 13 were Caucasian; 11 of the participants' ages ranged from 20-25, and three of the participants' ages ranged from 26-30.

All participants took part in the study as part of the instruction in the practicum course. Participants were asked about their willingness to participate. If they chose not to participate, they still engaged in the self-report activity and rater assessments; however, their data was not used in the analysis. No participant refused to participate. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was applied for and obtained. In accordance with IRB, to protect participants' confidentiality, all identifying information was stripped from the data once it was collected.

Professional Raters

There was a total of three professional raters, each of whom were professors in colleges of education. Among them, there was 13 years of classroom experience in early, middle, or high schools, and 11 years of college-level teaching. Each professor received extensive training on the use of the Star Teacher Selection Interview developed by

Haberman (1995, 2005) and had an average of 8 years of experience with the instrument, ranging from 5 to 12 years.

Star Teacher Selection Interview

The Star Teacher Selection Interview measures seven of the 15 effective urban teacher characteristics, referred to as “mid-range functions” (The Haberman Educational Foundation, 2017). They include persistence, response to authority, application of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal/professional orientation, burnout, and fallibility. These mid-range functions are translated into a series of oral questions, allowing the professional raters to grade 0-3 for each response. Based on a Likert-type scale, 0-6, student participants were asked to rate their perceived self-efficacy of the seven star teacher characteristics.

Several reliability and validity studies have been conducted by the Haberman Educational Foundation on the Star Teacher Selection Interview. Predictive reliability ($r = .93$) was established by the Foundation by using extensive prior pre/post interview scores. In reference to content validity, identifying factors that discriminated between “Star Teachers” and “Failures” were developed and tested (The Haberman Educational Foundation, 2017). One hundred percent of the “Star Teachers” passed the interview; 0% of “Failures” passed. The inventory has been periodically tested to revalidate the level of discrimination; results indicated that no changes in the original seven mid-range functions were necessary. There are no significant differences between male and female respondents or age in pass/fail rates. No test bias has been identified among other cultural groups, *e.g.*, Southeast Asian or Hispanic. Haberman reported that 60% of African Americans and 51% of Caucasian passed the interview (The Haberman Educational Foundation, 2017). The Star Teacher Selection Interview has been used by many school districts to identify both pre-service and in-service teachers who would be effective instructors with urban populations.

Data Analysis

All statistics were conducted using SPSS. Using the Star Teacher Selection Interview, the research team could calculate an individual score for each of the participants by each characteristic, as well as a cumulative score for all participants by each characteristic, and total characteristics. An intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated to confirm interrater reliability. The ICC for the raters’ interview scores was .99, which is considered to be excellent reliability (Cicchetti, 1994).

A non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was used to determine if there were significant differences between participants' and raters' star teacher scores. A Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was appropriate because the researchers were comparing two scores on the same population (Salkind, 2017). Univariate and exploratory descriptive statistics were used to check for underlying assumptions of a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. All three assumptions were met; the dependent variable was continuous, two scores on one group, and the distribution between the two groups was symmetrical.

Results

Descriptive statistics of participants' self-report scores, raters' scores, and the differences between the two scores by star characteristic are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Mean Self-Report, Rater Score, and Difference by Characteristic

Star Teacher Characteristic	Self-Report Score	Rater Score	Difference
Persistence	5.14	2.12	3.02
Response to Authority	4.71	1.98	2.74
Theory to Practice	5.00	2.52	2.48
At-Risk	4.21	1.40	2.82
Personal/Professional	4.86	2.13	2.73
Burnout	5.64	2.40	3.25
Fallibility	5.57	2.59	2.98

The descriptive statistics revealed that on average participants rated their star teacher characteristics very high. On a scale of 0-6 most participants rated themselves a 4 or higher. In fact, only one participant scored him/herself a 3 on two characteristics, response to authority and at-risk. Two other participants scored themselves a 3 on one characteristic, at-risk. The raters, on the other hand, scored the participants' star teacher characteristics lower. On a scale of 0-6, all the raters scored the participants 2.6 or lower on every star characteristic. Participants received the lowest rater scores on the at-risk and response to authority characteristics, 1.40 and 1.98 respectively. Participants received the highest rater scores on the theory to practice and fallibility characteristics, 2.52 and 2.59 respectively. The greatest differences between the participants' and raters' scores were found among the persistence and burnout. The closest scores between the participants and the raters were on the theory to practice characteristic.

According to the Haberman Educational Foundation (2017), star teachers score greater than 37 total points on the Star Teacher Selection Interview. A total score of all characteristics for each participant was computed and is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Summative Self-Report, Rater Score, and Difference by Participant

Participant	Self-Report Score	Rater Score	Difference
1	31	10.00	21.00
2	34	13.25	20.75
3	38	14.33	23.67
4	34	16.83	18.58
5	34	16.83	17.17
6	41	15.92	25.08
7	35	20.33	14.67
8	38	17.17	20.83
9	36	12.17	23.83
10	35	15.58	19.42
11	35	15.58	19.42
12	27	10.25	16.75
13	35	16.17	18.83
14	39	18.67	20.33

Four participants rated themselves as star teachers with scores of 38, 41, 38, and 39. Nine participants rated themselves as having high scores of attributional features, which suggests they believe they possess the characteristics but may be hesitant implementing ideas. Only one participant scored him/herself as high average attributional features, suggesting they may have difficulty explaining ideas and plans. Overall, however, the participants reported having the seven star teacher characteristics and are confident in implementing them in an urban classroom environment. None of the raters, however, scored the participants high enough to receive a star teacher rating. In fact, five of the participants failed the star teacher rating by scoring less than 15 total points. The remaining nine participants scored a low average rating from the three raters.

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test revealed there was a significant difference between the sum of the raters' perceptions of the students' star teacher characteristics ($M = 15.12$, $SD = 2.93$) and the sum of the students' perceptions of their star teacher characteristics ($M = 35.14$, $SD = 3.44$), $Z = 3.30$, $p < .001$. These findings reveal that the participants in this study were not accurately assessing their star teacher characteristics.

Furthermore, an examination of the numeric difference (Table 3) for each characteristic between the pre-service teachers' scores and raters' scores were calculated to determine the direction of the differences. The researchers purport that a positive number difference would suggest overconfidence and a negative number difference would suggest under confidence. Surprisingly, every pre-service teacher reported higher scores than the raters for every characteristic. This finding suggests an overconfidence in the participants' beliefs in working with urban children in an educational setting.

Overall, the results of this study showed a significant discrepancy between the pre-service teachers' scores and the professional raters' scores of the star teacher characteristics. The data revealed that the pre-service teachers were very confident in their abilities to effectively teach in an urban setting; overconfident in fact. The professional raters, however, were not confident in the pre-service teachers' abilities to teach effectively in an urban setting and rated all the participants as either low or failing the star teacher interview.

Discussion and Implications

Urban educators and administrators agree that teacher attrition is of particular concern for those schools with a high percentage of low-income students facing poverty (Moon, 2007; Siwatu, 2011). Several researchers have noted that a teacher's decision to leave the urban teaching environment may be influenced by personal feelings of inadequate capabilities and doubts in reaching this population of students (Fives et al., 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). In lieu of these assertions, this research team sought to investigate self-efficacy through the criteria of effective urban teachers, or "Stars" to determine how pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of their star teacher characteristics compare to raters' star teacher characteristics assessment of the pre-service teachers. We hypothesized that pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of their star teacher characteristics would closely align with the trained raters' assessment of the pre-service teachers' star teacher characteristics. The data, however, did not support our hypothesis, and in fact, contradictory results were revealed; the pre-service teachers' self-assessments were not closely aligned to the trained raters' assessments.

This study is not the only one to indicate discrepancies between one's perception and actual evaluation (Ford & Bol, 2020; Pennequin et al., 2010). Ford and Bol (2020) found that high school students have difficulty accurately assessing their abilities. In an effort to improve self-assessment accuracy among the students, even after training, the students

still struggled to assess their abilities accurately (Ford & Bol, 2020). In this particular study, it was possible that pre-service teachers were not explicitly taught star teacher characteristics during their pre-service education program, which would make it difficult for them to accurately assess their development of these characteristics. In addition, the pre-service teachers were not professionally trained, as the raters were, to assess star teacher characteristics and the ideology that is grounded in their beliefs. Perhaps, training the pre-service teachers to properly assess star teacher characteristics, with practice, would reveal different results.

Comparing pre-service teachers' scores to professional raters' scores can provide a focus for teacher education programs. There is often a discrepancy between pre-service teacher preparation and actually teaching (Garza et al., 2016). Because teacher education programs provide a universal approach to teacher preparation, many pre-service teachers believe that they have the necessary skills, knowledge, and understandings for all school environments. Our investigation confirmed this. Pre-service teachers are not adequately introduced to the unique challenges of urban settings and how to effectively deal with these challenges. More often than not, university faculty have limited experience in urban school settings themselves, thus limiting their expertise in assisting pre-service teachers in understanding that urban settings are different from other school settings. Allowing pre-service teachers to self-assess on the identified characteristics will offer them a greater awareness of the functions needed for effective urban teachers. Further, reflection and self-assessment will assist them in transitioning these values of urban teaching from implicit to explicit. This allows for a deeper understanding of actually practicing the star teacher functions.

Surprisingly, every pre-service teacher reported higher scores than the raters for all seven star teacher characteristics. These results suggest that the pre-service teachers believe they are well prepared to teach in an urban setting but, in reality, they are not. This may be a common theme among teacher education programs, which might help to explain why urban teacher attrition is so high. If half of the teachers who teach in an urban environment leave within their first three years of teaching (Haberman, 1995, 2005, 2017), it is reasonable to assume that teacher education programs are not properly preparing teachers to teach in urban settings. In fact, Haberman (1995) contends that teacher education programs have adopted a universal approach for teacher preparation, specifically developing teachers with the needed confidence and competence for suburban schools with a less culturally diverse population (Siwatu, 2011).

Researchers in this study maintain that pre-service teachers must be equipped with cross-cultural skills and racial self-awareness if successful urban teaching is to be realized. The researchers also maintain that it is the responsibility of teacher education programs to provide opportunities that focus on multicultural and social justice issues (Chizhik, 2003; Harding, 2005). Perhaps the ability to realistically *assess* one's own star teacher characteristics utilizes the same skills needed to *apply* star teacher characteristics in an urban setting. Thus, the results of this study could be used to help inform the teacher education program in which the subjects were enrolled. Conversely, teacher education programs might be inappropriately tempted to use the self-assessment scores based on the Star Teacher Selection Interview as a selection criteria for program admittance. In any case, pre-service teachers' ability to accurately assess their star teacher characteristics should be a future focus of research because they may not be aware of their abilities or deficits for teaching in urban school environments.

The abundant overconfidence found in the participants' beliefs in working with urban children is a concern, since personal experiences and family backgrounds of teachers have been identified as factors that inform teachers' pedagogy and practices (Haberman, 2005). The majority of our subjects were Caucasian females, and from an empirical point of view, there is limited research that contributes to our understanding of white teachers' personal histories, teaching methodologies, and personal motivations to teach in urban schools (Harding, 2005; Irvine, 2002). All of the pre-service teachers were overconfident in their star teacher characteristics and in their abilities to teach in urban settings, suggesting a need for further training that includes specific skills and experiences working with urban populations.

Pre-service teachers in this study were scored lowest on their approach to at-risk students and response to authority by the professional raters. Approach to at-risk students is the understanding that schools may themselves produce at-risk students and that the responsibility for instruction is on the teachers and the profession, not the student or the home environment. Response to authority is the belief that doing what is best for the students comes before all other requests, regardless of the opinions of those in authority.

The researchers find it interesting that the pre-service teachers in this study scored lowest by the raters on approach to at-risk students and response to authority. The researchers question whether these characteristics are teachable or fixed beliefs, since little is known and understood about white teachers engaging in cross-cultural teaching, racial identity, and the definitions they hold for success (Harding, 2005). We recommend

continued research regarding the development and change in approach to at-risk students and their response to authority among pre-service teachers. The researchers contend these characteristics should be explored in pre-service education programs prior to the teachers entering a classroom in an urban setting. Another plausible explanation for pre-service teachers' overconfidence may simply be pre-service teachers' naïve assumptions and unfamiliarity of the complexities of urban teaching (Ross, 1998; Siwatu, 2011).

The greatest difference between the pre-service teachers' assessment and the raters' assessment was the characteristics of burnout and persistence. Interestingly, the two appear to be related. A star teacher would view burnout as something that can happen to everyone, even the best teachers, and it could happen perhaps because bureaucracy may have made the job too difficult. A star teacher would view persistence as having many problems and could think of several solutions to the problems. The pre-service teachers in this study, however, were least accurate at assessing burnout and persistence. Education programs that focus on teaching pre-service teachers to problem-solve in multiple ways could reduce the discrepancy between these two characteristics. It is plausible that the ability to find several solutions to problems could engender persistence. Instead of experiencing feelings of burnout, teachers empowered to find solutions to problems may be more inclined to persist in the face of adversity, which could impact their motivation and performance.

Siwatu (2011) argues that pre-service teachers' own bias and stereotypes plays a vital role in their self-analysis. If pre-service teachers hold an erroneous perception of urban schools, this may influence their analysis. Several pre-service teachers who participated in this study previously participated in a university-school partnership program that involved an urban school, though this particular partnership school did not meet the criteria of a low-performing school (80% or more of the students receive free or reduced lunch prices). In this case, the experience may have concealed the realities of urban poverty and served as a reference point for the pre-service teachers as they completed their self-assessments.

Overall, findings from this study have several implications for practice. Since pre-service teacher's self-efficacy beliefs are usually impressionable during their teacher education program (Bandura, 1997), schools of education could foster and provide explicit instruction, training, and practice of star teacher characteristics in teacher training programs in an effort to reduce discrepancies between beliefs, realities, and practice. Exploring pre-service teachers' beliefs and ideology towards urban students, teaching, and learning (approach to at-risk students and response to authority) could provide deeper insight into their personal bias and stereotypes. By providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to

become more aware of their beliefs and bias prior to entering the classroom may allow them to more accurately assess their star teacher characteristics and potentially reduce teacher attrition rates in urban environments

Regarding the results of this study, caution should be taken because the sample size was small and homogeneous. The sample of 14 participants included mostly Caucasian, female pre-service teachers, with only three males and one African American participant, and all the participants were less than 30 years of age. The small sample size, however, did afford a detailed evaluation of participants' responses to the interview questions posed by the raters.

One potential limitation is the single assessment used to determine participants' star teacher characteristics. Both the participants and raters only conducted one assessment during the duration of the study. Future research could assess pre-service teachers' star characteristics several times through a longitudinal study over a period of two years, the duration of the entire teacher education program. A longitudinal study could show the development, or growth, of pre-service teachers' star characteristics over time. This would be particularly valuable if the teacher education program was focusing on developing pre-service teachers' star characteristics.

This study has the potential to contribute to teacher education programs by focusing on star teacher characteristics. The results can inform teacher education programs in their efforts to produce high quality effective urban teachers, and in the process, possibly reduce urban teacher attrition. Future research should continue to explore the relationships between and among the start teacher characteristics and their impact on developing effective urban teachers that work with at-risk students.

The self-efficacy beliefs of novice pre-service teachers definitely holds the potential to impact attrition rates in urban, low-performing schools. If these pre-service teachers have a strong belief in their capabilities to be successful with urban populations, this, in turn, may influence their decision to remain in urban environments. In order to combat the disconnect between teacher preparation and actually being a teacher (Garza et al., 2016), colleges of education and urban school districts need to collaborate and work together to offer opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop the star teacher characteristics required to effectively work in the uniquely challenging and immensely rewarding urban environment, serving at-risk and deserving students.

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