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Secondary Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Preparation to Teach in Urban Schools

Jacquinne Reynolds
Walden University

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Jacquinne Reynolds

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Secondary Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of
Preparation to Teach in Urban Schools

by

Jacquinne Reynolds

MA, Walden University, 2005

BS, George Mason University, 1981

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

July 2016

Abstract

University officials have identified a problem among secondary preservice teachers (SPTs) who have expressed reluctance to teach in local urban schools. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of SPTs regarding their preparation for and experiences with teaching in urban school settings. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and Bruner's concept of scaffolding served as the conceptual frameworks that guided this study. Data were collected from 11 SPTs who completed the requirements of their field service experiences in urban schools. Data collection consisted of individual interviews, one focus group interview, and field observations. Findings showed that SPTs desire to make a difference in urban schools, lack confidence in managing culturally diverse classrooms, and desire more faculty guidance in working with diverse populations. SPTs asserted that they need more research-based teaching strategies and urban field experiences. Implications for social change include more collaboration among university faculty, urban school principals, mentor teachers, and community organizations. Findings may be used to prepare SPTs to serve culturally diverse populations, which may improve students' academic achievement in urban classrooms.

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Dedication

First, I dedicate this dissertation to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who have given me the strength and endurance to complete this educational journey. The following scriptures are in my memory: “The race is not given to the swift or the battle to the strong (Ecclesiastes 9:11) but [to] he [she] who stands firm to the end” (Matthew 24:13).

Second, I dedicate this dissertation to Mary Alice and Frank E. Reel, my grandparents (deceased), and Chester and Geraldine Cunegin, my parents (deceased) who instilled in me the values I live by today.

Next, I dedicate this dissertation to Kofi, Jamila, Kwesi, and Hannah, my loving children, who continuously tell me how proud they are of my determination and accomplishments concerning my educational career.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to Lawrence Austin Reynolds, MD, FAAP, my adorable and loving husband, for his 43 plus years of unconditional love, encouragement, and emotional and financial support. He is my anchor and always keeps it “real” for me.

I love you all very much! Thank you!

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

During the last two decades, the debate about preservice teacher preparation among education practitioners and policymakers has resulted in the call for a more skilled professional teaching force (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010; National Council for Teacher Quality, 2013). The discussion has been particularly concerned with the impact that poverty has on students in K-12 schools and with identifying strategies to determine what and how student teaching experiences can contribute specifically to preservice teachers' development as teachers in urban school settings. Celik and Amac (2012) studied the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban settings and how faculty in education programs addressed the issues of teaching in these settings. Celik and Amac found that a large number of preservice teachers do not have the necessary skills to effectively interact with students who differ from themselves. Celik and Amac further indicated that, although some progress was made in moving from stereotypes to greater understanding of the complexity of urban schools, a major gap still exists between the need to prepare preservice teachers to teach in an urban school setting and the reality that some teacher education programs are deficient in reaching this goal.

In response to the need for preparing preservice teachers for urban settings, many universities have implemented a variety of programs and projects to address preservice teachers' possible lack of awareness of cultural differences that they may encounter in urban schools. For example, Teach for Diversity (TFD), a graduate education program developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison by Ladson-Billings (2001), was

designed to prepare aspiring teachers to “face large numbers of students who are poor, who come from various racial and ethnic families, and who speak a first language other than English” (Davis, 2013, p. 67). A similar ongoing program, the Beyond Awareness Research Project, was created at Portland State University to “develop more effective ways to address culture and cultural differences in the preparation of preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and university faculty” (Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005, p. 86).

Despite such programs, many preservice teachers are reluctant to teach in urban school settings and are “frightened by the demands of teaching where the students’ cultures and backgrounds are significantly different from their own, thus illuminating the reality that, in spite of the progress that has been made, there is still work to be done” (Celik et al., 2012, p. 3). Darling-Hammond (2010) and others working in urban education programs have argued that preservice teachers need specific preparation in social behavior and interactions within urban school settings, successful role models on handling cultural differences, appropriate teacher education courses that address differences, and general teaching methods for successfully teaching in urban schools.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of preservice teachers at MWU regarding teaching in urban settings, to examine preservice teachers’ perceptions of their preparedness for teaching in urban settings, and to identify effective approaches and strategies to prepare preservice teachers to achieve success in teaching in urban school settings. My study took place at one of two satellite campuses in a public university in a Midwestern state. This satellite campus is located in an urban city and, for the purposes of this study, was referred to as Midwestern University (MWU). Preservice

teachers in MWU's School of Education have expressed difficulties with and reluctance to fulfill their field service obligations and student teaching assignments in the nearby urban school district.

Problem Statement

The problem that prompted this study is that preservice teachers have expressed concerns about and reluctance to teach in the local urban schools affiliated with MWU's teacher field service experience program. Two key informants in this study, MWU's director of field placement (DFP) and the resident educational consultant (REC), have identified the problem among preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of urban school settings, and about completing field service experiences in urban school settings. The DFP and REC stated that a combination of student concerns and changes needed for satisfying the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) certification prompted the School of Education to examine and improve their teacher preparation program (REC & DFP, personal communications, July 29, 2014). A committee was formed, standards and improvements were explored, and MWU's preservice teacher demographic profile was evaluated as key to changes needed.

The demographics of the preservice teacher cohorts in this study are described in the student profile generated by the university for Fall 2014. According to the MWU student profile report, the total enrollment for Fall 2014 was 8,574 students, of which 7,078 were undergraduates (59.61% female, 40.39% male). The average student age was 26 years, and the percentage of teacher candidates age 26 or older was 38%. Table 1 shows the ethnic/racial composition of the Fall 2014 student body, and Table 2 shows the gender breakdown by ethnicity.

Table 1

Ethnic and Racial Composition Student Body – Fall 2014

Ethnicity/race of students	Percentage
African American	23.5%
Asian	0.0%
Hispanic	3.28%
Two or more races	2.39%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.29%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.29%
White	66.27%
Other and Unknown	3.88%

Table 2

School of Education Enrollments – Fall 2014

Race/Ethnicity	No. Males and Females
Total enrollment = 335 students	Females = 291, Males = 44
American Indian or Alaska Native	Females = 1, Males = 0
Black or African American	Females = 62, Males = 17
Hispanic or Latino Americans	Females = 10, Males = 1
White Americans	Females = 198, Males = 24
Two or more races	Females = 8, Males = 0
Other/Unknown	Females = 11, Males = 2

Note. From the University “X” Student Profile Fall 2014

By contrast, the demographics of the largest percentages of students with whom preservice teachers were interacting come from working class bedroom communities within the immediate county (referred to as County G) that primarily consist of automotive and manufacturing industries. County G's overall profile as reported by this Midwestern state's county specific U.S. County Profile (2015) includes socioeconomic factors of high unemployment rates (11.8%), infant mortality rates (9.0%), adult obesity rates (35%), and diabetes rates (29%) that impact the well-being of families. County G's ethnic population consists of 75.2% White, 20.8% Black or African American, 0.6% American Indian, 1.0% Asian, 2.5% two or more races, and 3.2% Hispanic or Latino. The per capita income for County G is \$22,380 with a reported 21% of the population below poverty level.

The specific urban school district population in County G where preservice teachers complete their field service obligations, as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), is composed of 98% African American and Hispanic students who come from homes with a per capita income average of \$13,000, and with a 36.1% high school graduation rate among parents. Although MWU continues to be aware of these demographic differences, the School of Education became concerned when, in 2011, all 15 of its preservice teachers brought oral complaints to the DFP and REC about participating in the student intern program in this urban school district. These complaints centered around the most frequently expressed frustrations of "I can't teach these kids" and their difficulties and reluctance in being assigned to teach in this urban school setting (DFP & REC, personal communication, July 7, 2014).

These comments, complaints, and concerns were also present in 2012 and 2013 (DFP personal communication, July 29, 2014). The consistent expressions of various attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of these MWU's preservice teachers served as an alert for the department that something needed to be done. The School of Education recognized that it needed to effectively address current preservice teachers' concerns and be proactive in readying their preservice teachers who would complete field observations and student teaching assignments in the same urban school environment (DFP & REC, personal communication, December 20, 2014).

Taking into account the three areas mentioned (preservice teachers' concerns, NCATE certification requirements, and field service experiences), a university content area committee was tasked with identifying strategies for preparing preservice teachers to deal with potential cultural differences that might impact their level of success working in an urban school environment (REC, personal communication, July 7, 2014). As a result of the committee's determinations, both the elementary and secondary teacher education curricula were redesigned using the Danielson framework (Danielson, 2013). Both programs were structured within four successive phases. Two primary intersecting and complementary themes underwrite each phase: place-based education and equity in education. Place-based education within the Danielson framework was a self-reflection process of identifying and paying attention to the actual physical environment in which preservice teachers find themselves (Danielson, 2013).

Questions about perception, responsibility, identity, and interaction with others guided learning. Equity in education within the Danielson framework was a self-reflective process of describing equity and fairness (Danielson, 2013). Identifying

intersections of diversities, the impact of dominant group access and benefits, and strategies for equitable practice guided the learning. Both the elementary and secondary revised programs included earlier immersion into diverse school settings, newly designed courses about diversity in and outside the classroom with an emphasis on discourse, close supervision with university faculty, and collaborative co-teaching among all levels of educators. Preservice teachers complete their field service practicums in local urban schools with whom MWU's School of Education has partnered. Faculty conduct classes at school sites on a rotational basis rather than confine all teacher preparation courses to the university setting.

The new elementary program was approved and implemented as a one-year pilot in the fall of 2013. It included four elective courses: (a) the Mentoring Seminar course uses real-time online interaction with diverse geographically located teachers of K-12 classrooms who offers guidance to preservice teachers; (b) the Understanding Protective Services course consists of information about public and private sector roles of social work, courts, and community in schools; (c) the School Social Services course has lessons about roles and responsibilities of social workers and the policies and provisions to support those living in poverty; (d) the School-Community Relationships course consists of information about legal and ethical roles and responsibilities of schools in providing educational and social services to children, parents, and community members. According to the DFP and REC, the first year of the implementation of the new elementary curriculum is presently being evaluated, and results of the influence it has had on the problem are not yet available (REC, personal communication, April 16, 2015).

The new secondary education curriculum was piloted in the fall of 2015.

In redesigning their preservice teacher program, the leadership within the School of Education (field experience directors, field placement coordinator, faculty content coordinators, resident educational consultant) recognized that the lack of preservice teachers' preparedness to teach in urban school environments could be related to preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about themselves, about those who are different from themselves, and about what it means to teach in an urban classroom environment (DFP, personal communication, July 7, 2014; REC, personal communication, July 7, 2014; REC, personal communication, December 20, 2014). Nieto (2006), Moll and Arnot-Hopffer (2006), Lee (2012), and other multiculturalists have addressed the need for a more robust and meaningful approach in encouraging preservice teachers to examine themselves in relation to the urban populations they will encounter in their teaching careers.

Nieto (2006) proposed that for teachers to be prepared to teach students from diverse backgrounds, universities must begin to reform their teacher education programs and develop approaches that address preservice teachers' "attitudes, sensibilities and values" (p. 457) toward students "who have been marginalized by their school experiences" (p. 457). Moll and Arnot-Hopffer (2006) stated that teacher education programs must concentrate not only on subject content and technical capabilities but also on developing preservice teachers' sociocultural competence in working with diverse student populations. Lee (2012) discussed the need to transform teacher education programs by providing preservice teachers with school-based residency opportunities (community involvement in urban settings outside of school) earlier in the program and for longer duration. The certainty of a changing student population in relation to a

relatively stable preservice population has been studied and addressed by several institutions of higher education.

According to the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program (2010) report, the United States will continue to experience its greatest population growth in urban areas. This increase will result in a need for teachers “who are prepared and willing to meet the challenges and opportunities of working in urban school settings” (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2010, p. 42). Schaffer (2012) reported on the University of Nebraska at Omaha’s (UNO) teacher education program in which preservice teachers expressed their frustrations and low confidence in teaching in urban school settings. As a result of preservice teachers concerns about working with urban youth, UNO partnered with one of their urban K-12 school districts in which the goals of the program were to “dispel common misperceptions of urban K-12 schools and to prepare teachers to teach in diverse school settings” (p. 43).

These attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers being unprepared is supported by additional research that showed preservice teachers “are not prepared to meet the demands of the increasingly diverse populations of urban schools” (Bales & Saffold, 2011, p. 52). By partnering with local urban schools and by redesigning the university teacher preparation curricula, MWU’s School of Education is addressing the issue of preservice teacher unpreparedness for working in urban schools. However, because the university program revisions are new, the outcomes of these changes have not yet been assessed.

Summary

In this research study, I explored the perceptions of preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban settings, examined preservice teacher perceptions of preparedness for teaching in urban settings, and identified potentially effective approaches to prepare preservice teachers to help urban students achieve academic success. MWU is a satellite campus of one of 15 public universities and colleges in this particular Midwestern state. The preservice teachers participating in this study had completed their field experiences and will be completing their student teaching in their next and final semester in the university's teacher education program.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a case study to explore preservice teachers' perceptions of their preparation to teach in urban school settings. Secondary preservice teachers were interviewed about their perceptions and their behaviors were observed during discussions of their assignments and reported experiences within the urban school settings.

The three research questions that guided this study focused on secondary preservice teachers' perceptions of urban schools: (a) What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers about teaching in urban settings? (b) What are preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their preparedness for teaching in urban settings? (c) What approaches could the School of Education faculty implement to improve preservice teachers' preparation to teach in urban school settings? A purposeful sampling approach was used to select secondary preservice teachers who were participating in their field service practicums in one of the four urban school settings. Interviews (Phase 1: semistructured face-to-face), focus group (Phase 2: focus group),

and nonparticipant observation (Phase 3: observations) were used for data collection, and the data were triangulated to enhance validity.

The audiotaped data collected from the individual interviews, focus group, and seminar observations were transcribed verbatim. Alpha and alpha-numeric codes outlined by Yin (2014), Creswell (2013), Janesick (2011), and Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) were used to identify themes and patterns that emerged from each data source. Member checking (Harper & Cole, 2012) was used as a quality control process to ensure accuracy, credibility, and validity of the data once the data were interpreted. Further explanation of the research design and methodology used in this study will be presented in Section 3.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were (a) to explore the perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings, (b) to examine secondary preservice teachers' perceptions of preparedness for teaching in urban school settings, and (c) to identify potentially effective approaches for preparing secondary preservice teachers to achieve success in urban school settings. The goal of MSU's School of Education is to support secondary preservice teachers by delivering student-centered curricula by making continuous improvements across the university's content area courses. The results of this study may potentially provide insights concerning these preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that may help guide changes that are needed in MWU's School of Education's curriculum as faculty prepare preservice teachers to go into urban school settings.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the ideology, lens, or overall structure through which a particular focus of research is viewed, organized, and studied (Danielson, 2013; Goodson & Lindblad, 2011; Pickard, 2012). This study's conceptual framework was based on sociocultural theory as presented in the works of Vygotsky (1978) and Wertsch (1991). Vygotsky (1978) argued that an individual's social experiences shape ways of thinking and interpreting the world where development of the person is connected to her or his sociocultural environment. Wertsch (1991) posited that learning is the result of the interaction between individuals, other people within the environment, and cultural objects, all of which contribute to the social formation of the individual's mind. In addition, Scott and Palincsar (2009), using the work of Vygotsky and Wertsch, concluded that every aspect of a person's environment contributes to how the person interprets the world and solves problems. In addressing learning, Ainscow and Sandill (2010) showed that, in addition to cultural histories and worldviews, previous experiences and beliefs influence how an individual learns because learning requires interaction with and interpretation of new phenomena.

Johnson (2009) affirmed that within sociocultural theory human cognition is described and understood as developing through engagement in social activities as an individual interacts with other people, objects, and events. Johnson concluded that human cognitive development cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and historical contexts from which such development emerges. This social and cultural engagement is mediated by culturally structured tools such as language, materials, signs, and symbols that create uniquely human forms of higher-level thinking. Sociocultural theory, when

applied to learning, is concerned with the activities that individuals engage in to learn and is concerned with the ways in which learning is an act of enculturation. Panse (2011) asserted that sociocultural engagement can be further strengthened by providing a socially enriched environment in exploring knowledge and learning experiences. Panse emphasized that these engagements and enrichments are necessarily subjective because individuals come with cultures, practices, histories, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and worldviews that are unique to them.

Schools are identified as organizations with rich contexts of social culture and engagement. Bashir-Ali (2011) asserted that “teacher training in schools is influenced by the social and cultural realities that exist within those schools” (p. 107). In addition, Bashir-Ali claimed that “teacher education programs should take into account theories of sociocultural understanding of the environment in which student teachers learn and practice their profession” (p. 107). Approaches to teacher training based on sociocultural theory have at their core the recognition that teachers in training require collaboration and support from the educational institution. The development of professionals begins with the awareness of the social and cultural conditions in which the teachers work and the students learn. According to Tharp and Gilmore (1988), sociocultural theory’s profound implication for teaching and learning is rooted in its emergent view within human development that higher order functions are not isolated structures within the individual alone, but rather they develop out of social interaction. Drawing on Vygotsky’s argument that a learner’s development cannot be understood merely by studying the individual, sociocultural theorists maintain that the external social world in which the learner develops also must be accounted for and examined.

This study's conceptual framework highlighted two concepts: Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) and Wood, Bruner, and Ross's (1976) scaffolding. The significance of ZPD was that it related to the development of individuals, as well as their skill development in particular academic areas (Castellano & Matthews, 2014). ZPD offered a means to help university faculty identify attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers regarding field service assignments in urban school settings. Scaffolding is a structured supportive process that university faculty may offer preservice teachers to promote learning new behaviors. This conceptual framework may provide a structure for university faculty to organize, plan, and implement effective supports that may potentially assist preservice teachers and their students to experience success together.

The ZPD and scaffolding components are interdependent. ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Scaffolding involves one or more knowledgeable persons who, by example, show the learner how to solve problems. Scaffolding is "a process that enables a [learner] to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his [or her] unassisted efforts" (Wood, Bruner, & Ross as cited in Masters, 2013, p. 2). By definition, the ZPD reflects the distance between actual developments while scaffolding is the method to build development.

Edwards (2014) emphasized that ZPD and scaffolding are both concerned with the social interaction of the learner within her or his historical and cultural environment.

The ZPD is a concept that provides the instructor with a means to identify the needs of the student. The identified need required the assistance of what McLeod (2012) called “more knowledgeable persons” (MKP) to guide and direct the learner through a learning difficulty or incompetency and into a successful zone. The MKP used a scaffolding or layering step-wise process of behaviors and actions that were necessary to move from unsuccessful to successful, incompetency to competency within a given performance objective. The MKP identified the problem and, based on experience and expertise, selected the path to follow in the process (McLeod, 2012).

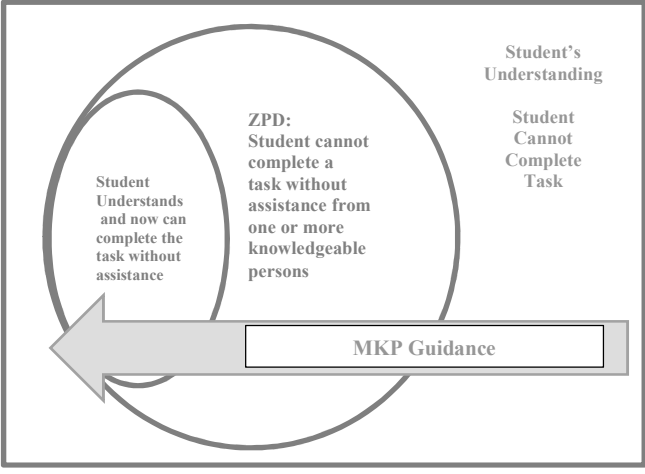
According to Howard and Milner (2014), preservice teachers frequently have little to no direct experience interacting with students who are different from themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, social class, and community norms; urban schools are characterized by these types of diversity. Because of their inexperience, preservice teachers often had no direct experience or knowledge base to draw upon to solve problems in real-world urban classrooms. Villegas and Lucas (2002) identified and addressed teacher preparation programs’ slow response to changes in K-12 population demographics. Villegas and Lucas stated that, regardless of preservice teachers’ backgrounds, preservice teachers must be prepared to meet the challenges of urban school environments.

Table 3 represents the process of a student acquiring the knowledge necessary to successfully complete a particular task. With the guidance of the MKP, the student progressed through the ZPD, acquired the information, developed an applicable understanding about the task, and completed the task. The student is then equipped with the knowledge to confidently repeat the task without the assistance of the MKP. This

partnership between the MKP and the novice or student involves coaching and guidance for the student from not knowing, through discovery, and learning which results in one or more successful outcomes.

Table 3

Visual Representation of Two Concepts of Sociocultural Theory

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)	Scaffolding
<p>ZPD refers to one or more tasks that a student is unable to complete alone, but is able to complete with the assistance of one or more knowledgeable persons (MKP i.e., tutor, teacher, parent, peers, coach, expert, etc.).</p> 	<p>According to Vygotsky when a student is in the ZPD she or he is unable to complete a task alone, but is able to complete the task with the appropriate assistance, what Wood, Bruner, and Ross called “scaffolding” – will give the student enough support to achieve the goal of the task (successful outcome). When scaffolding occurs, the knowledgeable person becomes a supportive tool for the student in the ZPD. Characteristics of a supportive knowledgeable person are those like a scaffolding on a building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides support • functions as a tool • extends range of the knowledgeable person • allows student to accomplish a task otherwise impossible • used selectively when needed.

Whittington (2014) studied preservice teachers going into urban school environments and found high levels of frustration regarding their preparation programs. One respondent said, “As an urban art teacher, I felt highly unprepared and disconnected from my preparation when I was placed in an inner city school, even though I was from an urban environment” (Whittington, 2014, p. 111). When preservice teachers find themselves in a ZPD with no MKP available, the necessary scaffolding cannot occur. Preservice teachers are left to their own preconceived attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of urban schools, urban school students, and how to solve a particular problem (McLeod,

2014). In this study, I explored the perceptions of a group of preservice teachers during their field service placements in urban schools. The conceptual framework of sociocultural theory served as a lens to interpret the data.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were used in this study:

Diversity: The mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, beliefs, and competencies as assets to the groups and organizations within which they interact (Rasmussen, 2007).

Diversity training: The raising of personal awareness about individual differences in the workplace and how those differences inhibit or enhance the way people work together and get work done (King, 2010).

Sociocultural theory: Stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. This theory examines the important contributions that society makes to individual development. This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live (Cherry, 2010; McLeod, 2013).

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The secondary preservice teachers in this study want to have a sense of preparedness as they engage in their field service obligation assignments.
2. Participants' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions will be evident in their responses.
3. Teachers and administrators will be willing to participate in this study.

4. Teacher and administrator participants will provide their best answers to each question and answer honestly without bias.
5. The chosen methodology is appropriate for this research study.

Scope of the Study

This study was conducted with secondary preservice teachers enrolled in Midwestern University's School of Education who had completed all requirements to begin their student teaching assignments in their next and final semester. The study was confined to data collection consisting of face-to-face one-on-one interviews (Phase 1), focus group (Phase 2), and observations (Phase 3). The data were used to create a profile of preservice teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for teaching in urban school settings.

Limitations

Acknowledging the limitations of a study can help enhance trustworthiness and indicate to readers how they should read and interpret the findings (Glesne, 2011). In this study, the limited sample size may impede generalization to the Midwestern University's total student population or to populations outside of Midwestern University. The demographics of the School of Education in this study had not changed, however, and the results were intended to provide insight into their plans for program improvement.

Delimitations

The study was limited to one department at one institution and one group of preservice teachers within that department at that institution. This group is delimited to MWU's consistent enrollment in their School of Education by color, gender, and social class. The study was limited to one group of preservice teachers entering their field

service obligations before their student teaching assignments in one urban school district environment.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because, although there is a considerable amount of research on teachers who are teaching in urban school environments, there was little research on preservice teachers and their experiences as they enter urban school environments for the first time. Specifically, few studies addressed the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers completing their practicums in urban schools. The results of this study may fill that gap in the literature. Locally, the results of this study may provide insight for MWU's concerns with preservice teachers' difficulties when going into urban schools. MWU has acknowledged the need for exploring the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions as a necessary element in improving their teacher education program. The results of this study may provide insight that support and strengthen MWU's pilot programs. In addition, the results may be used to stimulate self-reflection and may be applied to professional development for teachers within urban communities as active participants in creating positive social change.

Summary

Section 1 presented the problem and related research. The research questions were listed, the purpose of the study was explained, definitions were provided, and the delimitations, limitations, and scope of the study were given. The conceptual framework was detailed and the significance of the study was presented. Section 2 provides a review of the literature and research pertaining to the conceptual framework and the ideas of the ZPD and scaffolding as they relate to preservice teachers in urban school environments. I

address the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings, and identify effective approaches that have been used in educational programs to help secondary preservice teachers' experience success teaching in urban school settings.

Section 2: Literature Review

In this section, I review the content of the literature addressing the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings with an emphasis on preparedness to teach students who are culturally different from themselves. The organization of the literature review reflected the major topics, subtopics where applicable, and strategy used for searching the literature. First, I review the literature about urban settings. Second, I review preservice teacher education programs and how universities and colleges are preparing teachers for future projected demographic changes. Finally, I present an overview of successful university-based education and field service programs.

Strategy Used for Searching the Literature

To search for literature sources, I used the following databases and search engines: Thoreau (Walden University), Mirlyn (University of Michigan), Google Scholar, and Google. Key word and key phrase searches included the following: *zone of proximal development, preservice teachers and education programs, scaffolding and preservice teachers and education programs, preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, urban school settings, reluctance and urban schools fear teaching, urban schools, resistance teach urban schools, and avoidance teach urban schools*. I used variations and combinations of the key search terms; for example, ZPD and scaffolding were paired with preservice teachers. With the exception of the term reluctance, each of the search terms and phrases returned sufficient numbers (50 or more) of relevant sources consistent. The term reluctance returned three sources addressing teaching strategies for academic content and not attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, or preparedness of preservice

teachers teaching in urban school environments or settings. The terms reluctance, fear, resistance, and avoidance, however, appeared in content aligned with color and social class differences between preservice teachers and urban school environments, settings, and students.

Review of the Literature

I focused on providing extensive research and support of the problem statement by examining related topics. By exploring existing research about ways to create successful experiences for preservice teachers, I provided the information needed to increase knowledge on this topic. The research questions helped me to establish the subheadings for this literature review. The research questions (RQs) that guided this study were the following:

RQ1: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers about teaching in urban settings?

RQ2: What are preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their preparedness for teaching in urban settings?

RQ3: What approaches could the School of Education faculty implement to improve preservice teachers preparation to teach in urban school settings?

What Is an Urban Area?

Urban areas are commonly defined in terms of population density (National Geographic Education, 2014). Weeks (2011) defined urban as having the characteristics of being a place rather than a person. The U.S. Census Bureau classifies urban areas as “densely developed residential, commercial and other nonresidential areas” (United States Census Bureau, 2010, p. 1). Urban areas tend toward urban growth where urban

growth is described in terms of population trends (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2013). In 2008, it was estimated that 3.3 billion people lived in urban areas worldwide; however, by 2030 this number is expected to grow to almost five billion, more than half of the world's population (Schlein & DeCapua, 2012). The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported that the rate of population increase in urban areas was 9.7% greater than the overall rate of population increase across the country. This growth pattern of urban populations, along with the increased diversity of the populations, provided evidence to support the claim that teacher preparation programs must prepare preservice teachers to work with students who are representative of these changing demographics.

Definitions and Descriptions of Urban School Settings

Urban schools educate almost one quarter (23%) of all public school students in the United States (Howard, 2010). When studying these schools, however, Milner (2012) pointed out that a person can sometimes become confused because of the numerous definitions of what constitutes an urban school. Milner found that many definitions tend to focus only on the deficits of students and their families and seem to ignore the geographical or social context of the school. Milner suggested three conceptual frames when defining schools located in urban areas: (a) urban intensive—schools in urban intensive areas are large, heavily populated; (b) urban emergent—schools in urban emergent areas typically are located in cities with large city characteristics; and (c) urban characteristic—schools that are urban characteristic are those that are not located in areas with increasing city characteristics. According to Schaffer, Gleich-Bope, and Copich (2014), if Milner's (2012) definition for urban schools is to be used, then it would

indicate that the percentage of children attending urban schools may be even higher, thereby creating a greater need for education programs to adequately prepare preservice teachers to teach in urban school settings.

According to Jacob (2007), the phrase “urban school” frequently presents a negative visual image “of a dilapidated school building in a poor inner-city neighborhood populated with African American or Hispanic children” (p. 15). Jacob proposed that this is not an accurate description. He agreed with the definition that urban schools are located in large central cities but argued that “although these communities are often characterized by high rates of poverty, poverty itself is not unique to urban areas” (p. 15) and can be found specifically in many schools in rural areas. Russo (2013) described the characteristics of an urban school as one “where student poverty rates are high, student diversity is the norm not the exception, educational resources are extremely scarce, and where student achievement as well as teacher retention are the lowest” (p. 45).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), the definitions of urbanicity and poverty concentration vary somewhat across the sources of data. This report included three categories of urbanicity (urban, suburban, and rural) to classify types of schools. Urban schools referred to those schools located in central cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) as well as central cities of all sizes as defined by Census Bureau standards. Suburban schools referred to those schools located in areas surrounding a central city. Rural schools referred to those schools that were neither suburban nor urban and were located outside of an MSA.

Preparing Preservice Teachers for Changing Student Demographics

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2010), 75.6% of the teaching population in the United States is female, and 24.4% is male. In terms of ethnicity, 83.5% of the United States teacher population is White, 6.7% is African American, 6.9% is Hispanic, and 2.9% come from what the NCES reported as other ethnic groups. Cho and DeCastro-Ambrosetti (2011) confirmed that preservice teachers are “predominantly White females” (p. 42). In terms of student population, however, the 2013 National Center for Education Statistics Racial and Ethnic Historical Trends reported that, for the school year 2013-2014, and for subsequent projected years through 2019, there would be more students of color than White students in the U.S. public school system. Table 4 shows federal government projections for public schools from 2014-2019.

This disparity in color and ethnicity and lack of similarity between teachers and students may be problematic for several reasons. The majority of future teachers lack experiences with students of cultures different from their own and may have no firsthand knowledge of urban school settings (Howard & Milner, 2014). Additionally, upon entering teacher education programs, most preservice teachers already have developed preconceived attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about urban schools, the students who attend them, and what it may be like to teach in these settings (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2014).

Table 4

Racial and Ethnicity Projections for U.S. Public Schools

Student Ethnicity	2014 School Year	2015 School Year	2016 School Year	2017 School Year	2018 School Year	2019 School Year
White Students	24,766,000 (49.8%)	24,497,000 (49.2%)	24,250,000 (48.5%)	24,108,000 (47.9%)	23,952,000 (47.4%)	23,818,000 (46.9%)
Black Students	7,675,000 (15.4%)	7,638,000 (15.3%)	7,597,000 (15.2%)	7,611,000 (15.1%)	7,618,000 (15.1%)	7,642,000 (15.0%)
Hispanic Students	12,814,000 (25.8%)	13,148,000 (26.4%)	13,481,000 (27.0%)	13,854,000 (27.6%)	14,188,000 (28.1%)	14,506,000 (28.5%)
Asian/ Pacific Islander Students	2,564,000 (5.2%)	2,587,000 (5.2%)	2,613,000 (5.2%)	2,651,000 (5.3%)	2,681,000 (5.3%)	2,717,000 (5.3%)
American Indian/ Alaska Native Students	526,000 (1.1%)	522,000 (1.0%)	516,000 (1.0%)	513,000 (1.0%)	511,000 (1.0%)	510,000 (1.0%)
Biracial Students	1,405,000 (2.8%)	1,448,000 (2.9%)	1,494,000 (3.0%)	1,543,000 (3.1%)	1,592,000 (3.2%)	1,643,000 (3.2%)

Note. Adapted from National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013.

According to Howard and Milner (2014), preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are largely constructed by their own school experiences, the communities they live in, and the media. Furthermore, research indicates that, in many cases, preservice teachers have negative attitudes and beliefs about urban students and urban school settings—attitudes and beliefs that urban schools and settings are bad, wrong, or deficient, which could possibly carry over into their classroom teaching despite efforts to change their perceptions.

Hampton, Peng, and Ann (2008) discussed this point in their study on preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward underserved learners, stressing that student teachers presumed urban students are undermotivated and unmotivated, with fewer academic skills, poor discipline, and little parental support in comparison to suburban students. Hampton et al.'s research was conducted with participants from a rural college in New York that had a predominately White population. Hampton et al. explored the perceptions of preservice teachers concerning teaching in urban school settings. Although this teacher education program was specifically geared toward preparing preservice teachers to teach in urban settings, 38 of 41 participants had grown up in suburban or rural settings and had never attended or had any contact with an urban school.

The study included several open-ended questions regarding students' views of the physical aspects of urban schools, as well as the characteristics of urban students. Hampton et al. (2008) reported that the leading opinion of the participants toward urban schools was negative. One of the participants, for example, described her preconceived notions about urban schools as vandalized buildings with bars on windows, graffiti on walls, and large groups of loud unruly students congregated and smoking in hallways. Another participant claimed apprehension based on what she had heard about urban schools regarding violence, metal detectors, gangs, and the presence of security personnel.

Harris (2014) examined how students at "low wealth schools" (p. 12) were not afforded opportunities of senior teachers, those with successful years of experience, or those who had undertaken advanced training. According to Harris, these factors had a direct correlation to student learning. Harris's findings also showed that the difference in

the resources the school had and the resources the school received were based on the socioeconomic demographic of the school. Harris noted that the location as well as the income of the parents had a direct impact on what items were funded and what items were not.

Kraft et al. (2012) concluded that hiring and retaining effective teachers in urban schools remains a significant challenge. Kraft et al. examined two factors perceived by novice teachers as having more weight when making career choices: student demographics or the work environment. Ladd (2011) determined that the working conditions carried more weight than student demographic characteristics. The elements of the social context of teaching and learning (leadership, collegial relationships, and school culture) and the actual physical building mattered the most (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). In preparing preservice teachers to teaching in urban settings, all of these factors become important elements for preservice teachers to consider.

In another investigation, Waddell (2011) explored preservice teachers' perceptions of urban school settings and the teacher education program that had been redesigned to prepare them to teach in urban schools. Based on the position that changes in school demographics necessitate changes in teacher education programs, Waddell recommended that teacher preparation programs should offer opportunities for preservice teachers to "cross cultural borders to gain a broad and deep understanding of urban students and urban schools" (p. 24). Cultural borders, Waddell explained, are the stark differences that exist between groups that serve as each group's defining characteristics and norms. In cases of urban students and White preservice teachers, Waddell maintained that preservice teachers need to recognize cultural borders; learn how to cross over

borders by examining the urban school setting; understand their own backgrounds, the school district, and community as a whole; and appreciate how all of these factors influence the outcomes of teaching in an urban school setting.

Waddell (2011) emphasized the benefit of social experiences outside the classroom – preservice teachers getting to know their students on personal and community levels which tends to positively change their perceptions about urban schools students, schools, and environments. Through direct experience with students who are culturally different from themselves, preservice teachers could begin to develop an understanding of the students they will be teaching and the cultural differences that may occur. The results of this study revealed that preservice teachers shared many common misperceptions about urban communities and teaching in urban school settings. After spending time in communities and examining attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, however, common misperceptions were greatly modified and resolved. This study concluded that creating opportunities and carefully designed experiences outside the educational classroom can heighten learning and have a significant impact on preparing preservice teachers to teach in urban school settings.

When looking at reflection and developing reflective practices, Stevenson and Cain (2013) found a different viewpoint of preservice teachers' perceptions regarding their preparedness to teach. Four major themes that occurred regarding reflection on attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions and how teacher education programs can help prepare preservice teachers: (a) A teacher education program should “value and model reflection and facilitate reflective practices” (p. 79); (b) “Engaging with knowledgeable others (e.g., cooperating teachers and supervisors) supports the reflective process” (p. 80); (c) “A

sense of belonging and relationships in the classroom assist with reflection” (p. 81); and (d) Freedom over time and form encourages reflection (p. 82). The results of this study showed that the quality of reflection appears to be influenced not only by having the opportunity to reflect throughout the entire educational program, but also to model a variety of ways to develop reflection.

Yu and Bieger’s (2013) study explored preservice teachers’ motivations for choosing a teaching career and how motivation factors were related to their intentions to teach in urban school settings. The sample population included a group of 490 preservice teachers from 19 universities in the northeastern United States. Data were collected using the Factors Influence Teaching (FIT) Choice Scale (Watt & Richardson, 2007). The FIT-Choice Scale contained the values, beliefs, and socialization influence concepts, which was comprised of 60 questions. The results of the study showed how motivation factors related to preservice teachers’ intentions to teach in urban school settings and revealed the following: First, choices to teach in an urban school setting were the result of inspired feelings of mission to change society and make a difference in the lives of students that preservice teachers would be teaching. Second, reasons why these choices and decisions were being made, and attempts to overcome reluctance toward urban school teaching, must be addressed in teacher education programs. Finally, the study suggested that preservice teachers who wanted to “make a difference” might be the foundation for teacher preparation programs to build upon in developing strategies that direct positive motivations into positive experiences that then could lead to and result in successful outcomes for both teachers and students in urban school settings.

All preservice teachers, however, do not admit to feeling inspired or motivated to make a difference when it comes to teaching in urban school settings. Shernoff et al. (2011) confirmed and reinforced Yu and Bieger's (2013) findings and further concluded that unmotivated preservice teachers displayed little effort and gave up too quickly when faced with classroom challenges. This behavior, Shernoff et al. cautioned, can be a major concern and presented significant challenges to preservice teachers being placed in urban school settings. Siwatu, Frazier, Osaghae, and Starker (2011) suggested that, when preservice teachers are unmotivated and experience early setbacks in their field service teaching experiences, they could become more critical of the students they teach and will avoid trying new strategies. Baumi, Castro, Field, and Morowski (2013) found that teacher preparation programs that included both classroom instruction and field service practicums designed to focus on the issues of teaching in urban classroom environments resulted in more positive attitudes toward working in urban school settings. Motivation, personal choices based on inspiration to make a difference, the quality of field service experiences, and relevant teacher preparation curriculum all are necessary in building stronger foundations in better teacher education programs.

University-Based Education and Field Service Experience Programs

Across the United States, teacher education programs require students to complete field service obligations in actual classroom settings to get hands-on experiences in applying what they have learned in their teacher preparation programs. In addition to content area, preparing preservice teachers for diversity in the classroom – specifically urban school settings – is an increasingly more common focus (Davis, 2013). Numerous studies (Castro, 2010; Catapano & Huisman, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2011;

Grande, Burns, Schmidt, & Marable, 2009; Howard & Milner, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Schaffer, 2012; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011; Taymans, Tindle, Freund, Ortiz, & Lindsay, 2012) have examined the effect of field experiences on preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions towards teaching in urban settings.

For example, Catapano and Huisman (2010) created an alternative to standard field experiences by developing a community-based model (CBM) that recorded and evaluated the experiences of one group ($N = 23$) of preservice teachers who agreed to participate. The CBM centered on preservice teachers' involvement in a specific neighboring urban school community in collaboration with the group's university and included three main components: university coursework, field service obligation experiences, and community work experiences. Preservice teachers had contact on a daily basis rather than merely once per week; they worked with students in selected projects throughout the semester; participated in a poverty simulation; took a bus tour of the community; and worked directly with children, parents, and classroom teachers in identifying community values.

Upon completion, 100% of the preservice teachers rated the CBM as valuable due to daily direct experience, creating and implementing their own relevant curriculum, access to in-depth alternative and supplemental curriculum materials, and university faculty onsite support. The preservice teachers who participated in the CBM expressed dissatisfaction regarding the difficulty of depth of work and time required compared to peer preservice teachers in the same program who did not participate in this CBM. In addition, the results showed an increase in participating faculty improvement, motivation, and teaching as faculty themselves became involved which, in turn, affected preservice

teachers' overall experiences. Finally, the results of this study showed that the success of the CBM emphasized the import of dismantled preservice teachers' assumptions about poverty and urban school communities, and increased confidence as teachers.

In contrast to the previous study, some researchers suggested that urban field experiences may have negative effects on preservice teachers. For example, Howard and Milner (2014) examined how participating in urban experiences may be the first time that many preservice teachers come in contact with students who are culturally different from themselves. Castro (2010) showed that there are no assurances that teacher preparation programs have adequately prepared preservice teachers on issues of diversity which may add to already misinformed perceptions. For example, some studies had found that providing extensive information about specific ethnic or cultural groups can result in creating or re-enforcing stereotyped thinking, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions (Cochran-Smith, 2011; Haberman, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2010). Most recently, Goldhaber and Cowan (2014) argued that attrition rates of preservice teachers who had had diversity training had shown that the preservice teachers were not sufficiently prepared either "attitudinally or pedagogically" (p. 191).

Grande, Burns, Schmidt, and Marable (2009) reported that when preservice teachers who were placed in urban schools early in their program, there were little to no change in their (a) preferences for teaching students from the same or similar culture and social class (they still preferred teaching students who were like themselves); (b) interests in ability of recognizing and detecting their own or others' form of racism or confirmation bias; and (c) discomfort due to feelings of incompetence when interacting with urban school parents. Grande, Burns, Schmidt, and Marable (2009) noted that,

although urban field experiences provided actual teaching experiences which, by their nature, created opportunities to improve basic teaching skills and abilities urban field experiences did not positively influence preservice teachers' willingness or desire to teach in urban schools.

Similarly to Grande et al. (2009), Sleeter and Owuor (2011) found that some teacher preparation courses and field experiences had little effect or impact on preservice teachers' understanding of cultural differences, where their ideas and understandings of such things as equity pedagogy, and how to integrate culturally diverse perspectives showed little to no change or improvement. Sleeter and Owuor attributed this lack of developed understanding and transferable skill to length of program: When not enough time is allotted for learning and testing ideas, when what needs to be done cannot be done in short term seminars and only three or four week field experiences, then preservice teachers tend to not give importance to what is being taught.

Abernathy, Beck, and Taylor (2014) agreed that, although the literature consistently emphasized the importance of field service experiences, the details and characteristics of what these experiences should involve had not been clearly defined. Similar to Sleeter and Owuor (2011), Abernathy et al. (2014) claimed that the basis of a strong field-based experience should include continuous professional development, close supervision and observation of preservice teachers, and meaningful directed integration of what preservice teachers learn in their programs with what they experienced in the field.

These components were developed into their model, the Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP), and observational case study was conducted over three

semesters and included 31 preservice teachers pursuing dual teaching licenses in elementary and special education. Results included the following: Preservice teachers showed general improvement in teaching skills as they progressed through the program, but struggled in their assignments from one semester to the next as expectations and intensity of teaching assignments increased. The data also suggested, however, that, with continuous feedback and support, preservice teachers could continue to develop and learn to “integrate their knowledge of practice into knowledge in practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999 as cited in Abernathy, Beck, & Taylor, 2014, p. 13). This study also substantiated the call for increased time spent in field service experiences during the educational programs and an emphasis on understanding cultural differences.

Roselle and Liner’s (2012) case study reported on how a field experience in an urban school setting impacted 15 preservice teachers’ visions of teaching in general. The 15 preservice teachers represented all content areas and grade levels, were second semester seniors enrolled in a five-year program, and their field service experience in an urban partner school setting was their first full time teaching experience. Data were collected via written responses to three journal prompts given at beginning, middle, and endpoint of an education course running concurrent with field experiences. Beginning semester prompt described vision of teaching; middle of semester prompt described changes in vision of teaching and an ideal classroom; end of semester prompt described how vision of teaching and ideal classroom were affected specifically by an urban school experience. Five categories emerged that described what preservice teachers experienced while trying to implement their visions of teaching in an urban school setting.

The first category reflected no mention or acknowledgement of the urban context. The second category illustrated new realizations in defining the role of teacher. The third category demonstrated cognitive dissonance in the difference between ideal visions of teaching and reality of experience. The fourth category showed establishment or reinforcement of negative perceptions. The last category revealed a progressively developed self-acknowledged appreciation for, acceptance of, and openness to the urban context before, during, and after experience. The researchers concluded that teacher education programs need to focus on how to support preservice teachers during field service experiences to create opportunities that will result in shifting and re-shaping preservice teachers' visions of teaching in urban school settings.

Ronfeldt (2012) examined the effects of another significant component of teacher education programs and the impact it had on the field service experience: the kinds of schools used for field experiences during preservice teacher preparation. Ronfeldt (2012) stated that many educators supported an erroneous idea that it is better to place preservice teachers in easier-to-staff schools and in those with underserved populations because “these schools are typically better functioning and thus promise a more supportive setting for developing professional practice, rather than overwhelming preservice teachers with classroom management issues” (p. 6).

Catapano and Thompson (2013) and Garza and Harter (2014), however, argued that preservice teachers who are placed in easier-to-staff schools would be unprepared for effectively teaching in difficult-to-staff schools. Sprague (2014) examined how difficult-to-staff schools did and were more likely to provide preservice teachers with opportunities that were necessary in learning to be successful, competent, and effective

when working in difficult conditions, schools, and with those student populations that are underserved. In an earlier study, Haberman and Post (1998) supported this position, stating that teacher training programs should be trials by fire under the worst conditions because only the strong and competent will survive.

Ronfeldt (2012) challenged support for both positions, citing the ongoing debate within teacher education and little to no theoretical support and, instead, brought to bear an overlooked variable: the connection “between field service placement, school characteristics, and student and preservice teacher outcomes” (p. 23). Ronfeldt surveyed all New York City (NYC) first year teachers within the context of a larger study being conducted about teacher preparation programs in all of New York City. Ronfeldt had first-year teachers identify where they did their field placements which made it possible to identify field placement schools for 2,860 of 4,303 survey respondents.

The purpose of Ronfeldt’s study was to examine retention and teacher effectiveness when learning to teach in difficult-to-staff and underserved schools. The results showed that preservice teachers whose field service placement were in easier-to-staff schools had increased rates in raising student test scores, stayed in NYC schools for at least 5 years, and eagerly relied upon modeling for extending their own learning and improving instructional practices (increased effectiveness influenced retention). Ronfeldt’s results were consistent with an earlier study by Jackson and Bruegmann (2009) who reported that, when using student achievement gain as a measurement for teacher effectiveness, about one-fifth of teacher effectiveness could be attributed to exposure to and interaction with successful classroom teachers, university faculty during

field experiences, and easier-to-staff schools that were more inviting and promote retention.

The variations and opinions formally expressed by researchers regarding teacher education programs are examples of what Zeichner (2010) called “The Traditional Divide Between Campus and Field-Based Teacher Education” (p. 483). Zeichner suggested that the problem that has persistently impeded college and university-based preservice teacher education programs for many years is not so much whether exposure to and experience within urban schools occurs early or late in preservice teachers’ programs but, rather, that universities did not know what schools are doing and schools did not know what universities were doing. In short, “the disconnect between what students are taught in campus courses and their opportunities for learning to enact these practices in their school placements is often very great” (p. 483).

Zeichner (2010) asserted three reasons for this disconnect: (a) supervising teachers in K-12 settings do not know enough about preservice teachers’ university method courses; (b) university instructors do not know enough about curriculum or specific practices taught and implemented in K-12 settings; and (c) the length of field service experiences is too short. Zeichner (2010) reiterated what Turney, Eltis, Towler, and Wright (1985) had observed – that the time designated for field service experiences is not as carefully planned out the way that university course work is planned out specifically with regard to support and clinical experiences prior to actually going into the field and having to perform competently.

Further, and drawing on the work of others (Gorodetsky & Barak, 2008; Gutierrez, 2008; Smagorinsky, Cook & Johnson, 2003), discussions about teaching in

traditional colleges, new learning opportunities for preservice teachers, edge communities in school-university partnerships, and university models of teacher education programs. Zeichner (2010) posited the need for what he called establishing a “third space” and described as a “hybrid space” – a deliberately constructed synthesis of collaboration between a university and school environment that brings together the best of both worlds, what is known about best education and teaching practices, and the mutual commitment toward egalitarian principles and practices in a shared goal of delivering quality education for all students. The concept “third space” comes from hybridity theory and Zeichner (2010) used it to acknowledge that individuals draw on many conversations to make sense of the world (Bhabba, 1990).

Zeichner (2010) proposed creating teacher education programs that adopted and implemented the notion of hybrid spaces in bringing together schools and what schools do with universities and what universities teach. Third spaces, Zeichner (2010) maintained, run contrary to traditional approaches and assumptions of universities as highest authorities about teaching and learning because they reduced hierarchical relationships between practitioner and academics and, thus, create and support more egalitarian ways of teaching, learning, and doing. Over the past decade, teacher educators had tried various approaches to bridge the connection between the university and school-based teacher education and some had claimed that field service practicums should be the focal point for preservice teacher education programs and everything else in the program should originate from it (Allen, Ambrosetti & Turner, 2013).

These approaches had included the following: university-based laboratory schools, university clinical laboratories (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Cohn, 1981; Fraser, 2007)

on campus courses that model innovative classroom practices, creative simulations, assignments that preservice teachers are expected to implement in their field placement classrooms (Giles & Kent, 2014; Hill, 2012); and often the teacher educators served in dual roles as the methods instructors and field supervisors (Sharplin, 2010; Sprague & Perry, 2014; Turney et al, 1985). Currently, a few institutions had adopted some or all of these modalities in designing and implementing effective approaches to help prepare preservice teachers to achieve success teaching in urban school settings.

Lee, Nelson, Auffant, and Perveiler (2012) examined an effective approach that helped bridged the divide between the university and the school-based experience in a study of Illinois State University's (ISU) four week immersion and residency program – the Chicago Teacher Education Program (CTEP) that partnered with Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Lee et al. (2011) used four perspectives to examine the university and community school-based teacher preparation partnership: the university, the community, the school, and the teacher. Twenty preservice teachers worked with CPS veteran teachers; engaged service-learning projects with community-based organizations; and completed seminars and workshops taught by ISU faculty, CPS teachers, and community organization partnerships staff.

The results showed that early exposure and immersion, supported by relevant curricula and interaction at community levels, provided positive growth in preservice teacher competencies; strengthened the relationship between the university and partner schools; increased community service self-efficacy; and facilitated genuine shifts in preservice teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions toward urban communities. Results also showed that an early immersion component facilitated early connections within the

urban school settings and within the community, assisted in effective preparation of preservice teachers, increases preservice teacher personal success, and helped urban school students achieve successes in and out of the classroom.

Another collaborative plan, developed by Klein, Taylor, Onore, Strom, and Adams (2013), resulted in a longitudinal study that explored their creation of an innovative approach in a teacher education program that began a successful working relationship between the university and the school-based setting. The Urban Teacher Residency (UTR) program originated as a collaborative endeavor between the Newark, New Jersey Public Schools and Montclair State University that resulted in the Newark Montclair Teacher Residency (NMUTR) program. The study focused on the widespread challenges facing UTRs and described specific challenges they faced developing the program. The researchers pointed out that there is very little literature that describes the challenges involved in designing a UTR field-based teacher education program that incorporates the components of the school district, the school teachers, the community members, and community organizations. Most of the literature on UTRs focuses primarily on the program design and the successes they have achieved.

Klein et al. (2013) emphasized that creating such a program is not easy, cannot be done quickly, and it is never completed. They referred to the process as “a continual construction, a utopian prospect that is never fully achieved” (p. 28) that includes such things as institutional regularities – reliance on the support of individuals and encouragement to take risks; sustainability costs impact on university-based residency programs; inventing and borrowing tools and supportive resources for generative and emergent curricula; recruitment challenges; and the paradigm shift from traditional to

constructivist and inquiry based instruction. In conclusion, the researchers suggested that this notion of a third space – moving out of university buildings and into partner school buildings and communities – conceptualizes a new and different vision of teachers as individuals who not only are true experts in their fields and nurturers, but also who are committed to social change as change agents because they are personally and professionally invested in the underserved students whom they serve.

In recent years, increased attention has been given to the dual responsibilities and challenges of teacher educators at the university and in the school district. The focus has been on how the horizontal movement between the university and the school district tends to overlap and how it needs to be addressed at both levels (Bullock, 2012; Cuenca, 2012; Martin, Snow, & Torrez, 2011; Washburn-Moses, Kopp, & Hetttersimer, 2012; Williams, 2014). A closer view of this position in teacher education is beginning to appear as researchers and teacher educators such as those mention in the following paragraph have begun to look at their own practices, examine the details and implications of this work, and determines how it relates to the preparation of preservice teachers enrolled in educational programs.

Martin et al. (2011), for example, looked at the real-life difficulties and problems that teacher education university faculty faced when taking what they taught into actual classrooms and schools when their universities entered into agreement with school-based programs. Martin et al. (2011) found that faculty educators discovered that working at the school-based level was basically about developing and negotiating relationships, an important component of success that had not and was not covered in academic teacher education curricula. Additionally, central to the work of creating more realistic and robust

ways of designing and implementing effective preservice teacher field experiences is the necessity for “redefining the nature of university-based teacher educators’ work” (Martin et al., 2011, p. 308). This, the researchers acknowledged, not only adds dimensionality but also recognizes and builds upon the complexities of negotiating and relationship building.

Washburn-Moses et al. (2012) stressed the complex and personal nature of this horizontal movement from university to school district and suggested that teacher education faculty who are working in this type of a newly created negotiated space learn to acknowledge and identify that each holds three different but simultaneous perspectives about the self: the individual learning to teach, the teacher in the school, and the teacher educator in the university setting (p. 11). This idea leads to the recent documentation concerning teacher educators’ self-examination of identity, practices, and supervision of preservice teachers during field service practicums (Williams, 2014). For example, Ritter (2007) stated that, in looking back at his early years supervising preservice teacher field service practicums, as faculty, he “experienced feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty” (p. 43). Ritter identified what he perceived as his sense of self as a “source of expertise” (p. 43) gained as a classroom teacher and applied it to being a teacher educator; relied upon his own well-defined role play for security; and acknowledged his assumptions about professional responsibility to be an expert over preservice teachers, as one who deposits information into preservice teachers’ minds.

Similarly, Cuenca (2012), in a self-examination of his experience working with preservice teachers in his new position, documented his struggle to define himself and his role as a field service practicum teacher educator supervisor. His initial reactions were to

instruct preservice teachers as he had been taught to teach. He realized that this method was ineffective and he had to change his way of thinking to allow preservice teachers the freedom to find themselves and their own answers to classroom challenges, rather than setting himself up as the expert showing and telling what to do and how to do it. Bullock (2012) also found that, as a teacher educator supervisor, he could not presume the role of an advisor but, rather, he needed to change his approach from assuming an “automatic success of his ways to problematizing and offering support as preservice teachers found their own answers, styles, and strategies” (p. 316). Bullock noted a recognition that being a teacher educator was different from and not the same as being a K-12 classroom teacher. Further, he concluded from this realization that part of the process was his own learning that involved first identifying and then re-conceptualizing his identity in moving from a K-12 classroom teacher to a university faculty teacher educator.

Finally, the results of Williams’ (2014) self-study as a teacher educator working as a teacher educator supervisor revealed that there are many challenges and rewards included in creating innovative areas to prepare preservice teachers to teach in unique school settings. Williams identified three key dimensions involved in the process: (a) “shifting identities between related but distinct professional selves” (p. 317) – between former K-12 teacher and current university teacher educators; (b) “changing perspectives as different understandings of learning and teaching emerged during practicum supervision” (p. 317); and (c) negotiating and navigating conflicting or frustrating relationships as they develop in meeting needs and addressing perspectives among supervising teachers, preservice teachers, and teacher educators. A review of this topic within the literature suggested that it is important to understand that the work of teacher

educators who supervised during the field service experience can be very complex. Creating this atmosphere for learning and preparing preservice teachers to be successful in their teaching careers will involve crossing and re-crossing boundaries between the university and the school, negotiating and re-negotiating between professional levels and personal levels between the university, school, and community.

Literature Related to the Methods

In reviewing the literature related to the methods, a number of case studies were found. Hampton et al. (2008) conducted a study that investigated preservice teachers' perceptions of urban schools. Participants were asked about their perceptions in four areas (appearance and atmosphere, resources, students, and teachers) and to identify the sources of their perceptions. Hampton et al. (2008) found that preservice teachers enter classrooms with preconceived notions about urban schools in general in both negative and positive perceptions with regard to specific aspects of urban schools. They concluded that the need to explore the challenges that preservice teachers' perceptions about urban schools presents mandates that teacher preparation programs identify and implement effective strategies of preparation.

Waddell (2011) conducted a comparative case study that explored preservice teachers' perceptions of both urban school settings and their teacher education programs that had been redesigned to relate to teaching in urban schools. Using the results from his study, Waddell (2011) showed that creating learning opportunities for preservice teachers outside of the university campus can result in positive experiences. He demonstrated that carefully designed teacher preparation programs can have significant impact on the preparation of urban teachers, and the implications for implementing cultural immersion

experiences in teacher education programs are far-reaching for preservice teachers in K-12 urban school settings. Similarly, Baumi et al. (2013) found that teacher preparation programs that include both classroom instruction and field service practicums designed to focus on the issues of teaching in urban school settings resulted in more positive attitudes and perceptions about working in urban schools.

Numerous studies examined the effect of field experiences on preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions towards teaching in urban settings (Castro et al., 2010; Catapano & Huisman, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2011; Grande et al., 2009; Howard & Milner, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Schaffer, 2012; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011; Taymans et al., 2012). For example, Catapano and Huisman's (2010) showed that 100% of the preservice teachers who participated in the community based model (CBM) field service program rated the CBM as a valuable experience due to the daily direct interaction within the urban school setting. In addition, they showed that the success of the CBM emphasized the import of dismantled preservice teachers' assumptions about poverty and urban school communities, and increased confidence as teachers. In contrast, some researchers suggested that urban field experiences may have negative effects on preservice teachers.

Howard and Milner (2014) examined how participating in urban experiences may be the first time that many preservice teachers come in contact with students who are culturally different from themselves. Castro et al. (2010) showed that there are no assurances that teacher preparation programs have adequately prepared preservice teachers on issues of diversity which may add to already misinformed perceptions. For example, some studies have found that providing extensive information about specific

ethnic or cultural groups can result in creating or re-enforcing stereotyped thinking (Cochran-Smith, 2011; Haberman, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2010). Grande et al. (2009) noted that, although urban field experiences provided actual teaching experiences which, by their nature, create opportunities to improve basic teaching skills and abilities, urban field experiences did not positively influence preservice teachers' willingness or desire to teach in urban schools.

Roselle and Liner's (2012) case study reported on how a field experience in an urban school setting impacted 15 preservice teachers' visions of teaching in general. The outcome of this study showed that preservice teachers (a) realized that they had redefined their role of a teacher, (b) demonstrated cognitive dissonance when confronted with differences between their perceptions of ideal and actual experiences of real within urban schools, and (c) noted a shifted view of urban schools that included appreciation, acceptance, and openness to the urban context. Zeichner (2010) suggested that the problem that has persistently impeded college and university-based preservice teacher education programs for many years is not so much whether exposure to and experience within urban schools occurs early or late in preservice teachers' programs but, rather, that universities do not know what schools are doing and schools do not know what universities are doing.

Lee et al. (2012) examined an effective approach that helped bridge the divide between the university and the school-based experience in a study of Illinois State University's (ISU) four week immersion and residency program – the Chicago Teacher Education Program (CTEP) that partnered with Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The researchers found that early exposure and immersion, supported by relevant curricula and

interaction at community levels, provided positive growth in preservice teacher competencies; strengthened the relationship between the university and partner schools; increased community service self-efficacy; and facilitated genuine shifts in preservice teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions toward urban communities. Lee et al. (2012) also found that an early immersion component facilitated early connections within the urban school settings and within the community, assisted in effective preparation of preservice teachers, increased preservice teacher personal success, and helped urban school students achieve successes in and out of the classroom.

Although these researchers reported on preservice teachers' perceptions and experiences in urban school settings, they did not directly ask preservice teachers to identify or address beliefs about and preparedness to teach in urban school settings. Preservice teachers also were not asked to identify what they perceived as missing components in their teacher education program that would have prepared them for effective teaching in urban school settings. In other words, preservice teachers were not used as primary sources reporting their own direct experiences about discrepancies and gaps between what they believed, what they were taught, and what they actually experienced. The purpose of my study was to explore the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings; to examine preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their preparedness to teach in urban school settings; and to identify effective approaches to prepare preservice teachers for greater successes in teaching in urban school settings. In order to achieve this goal, a qualitative method, specifically case study design, was been selected as the best method of choice.

Literature Related to the Use of Differing Methodologies

In conducting the literature review, 65 research studies were examined in which the focus was preservice teachers' perceptions of teaching in urban school settings. Of the 65, nine used quantitative methods only and five used mixed methods. Collectively, these studies used similar data collection tools: pre and post-test, Likert-scale type surveys, and short answer open-ended questions. The instruments used in these studies did measure preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of urban school settings, and preservice teachers' field service experiences; however, these methods did not use one on one interview or directed focus group to allow for detailed understanding of preservice teachers attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about preparedness to teach in urban school settings or perceptions of urban school setting in general.

Although these studies were informative and helped to define this study, the need still remains for a more in-depth understanding of preservice teachers' perceptions about preparedness to teach in urban school settings. Qualitative methods that gather data using preservice teachers' own words are needed to fill this gap. My study, used a case study method that included one on one interviews, directed focus group, and researcher observations as preservice teachers' use their own words to describe their field service experiences to begin to fill this gap.

Conclusion

The research studies included in this literature review used a variety of methods including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research. During the last two decades, the debate among classroom teachers, teacher educators, and policymakers regarding the design of teacher preparation programs across the United States are calling

for a more skilled and professional teaching force (Darling-Hammond, Friedlaender, & Snyder (2014). According to Catapano and Huisman (2010), teacher education programs need to seriously examine the following question: “Can a teacher education program, committed to the surrounding community, help prepare preservice teachers to work in the most challenging urban school settings?” (p. 34). The problems that prompted my study are that many preservice teachers are expressing concerns about preparedness to teach in urban school settings.

Through my literature review, I demonstrated that some schools of education are assessing their programs and are requiring new approaches rooted in broad ranging shifts in perspective; essentially, they have had to re-conceptualize preservice teacher education, preservice teacher field experiences, and university curricula and faculty. In my review of the literature, I addressed main components that affect preservice teachers’ success and failure when interacting with students and communities who are different from themselves and where preservice teachers have the least amount of experience. I also presented studies that addressed preservice teachers’ perceptions about teaching in urban school settings, preservice teachers’ perceptions about their preparedness for teaching in urban school settings, and identified effective approaches and program changes that resulted in successful outcomes in better preparing preservice teachers to teach in urban school settings.

When considering attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers teaching in urban school settings, Howard and Milner’s (2014) study suggested that these perceptions were largely constructed by preservice teachers’ personal school experiences, the mostly homogeneous communities in which they grew up, and the steady influence of

media. Howard et al. (2014) emphasized the critical need for educational institutions to develop and put into action curriculum that addresses in the university classroom these preconceived perceptions. They further suggested that if these concerns that stem from the negative attitudes and beliefs which deem urban school settings as bad, not safe, and deficient were not addressed early in the program then those attitudes, beliefs and perceptions would likely carry over into preservice teachers' classrooms.

With regard to university school-based programs and preservice teachers teaching in urban school settings, it is critical to consider the import of Zeichner's (2010) third space and hybrid space collaborations, attention to time devoted to careful planning of field service placements, and student teaching placements. Catapano and Huisman's (2010) suggestions of more intense and in depth experience for student teaching can have a direct relationship to positive change in preservice teachers' assumptions about poverty and urban school communities. Ronfeldt's (2012) discussion of the debate among teacher education programs and teacher educators regarding field service placement assignments showed that, until there is consensus between both sides, preservice teachers' preparedness to teach in urban settings is in jeopardy.

Lee et al.'s (2012) approach for transforming teacher education through a community and school-based "residency" model for urban teacher preparation showed that the bridge between the university and the school-based partnerships can result in success for preservice teachers at the university, school, and community levels. These researchers (a) explored the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings, (b) examined preservice teachers' perceptions regarding their preparedness to teach in urban school settings, and (c)

identified effective approaches to prepare preservice teachers to be successful in urban school.

The findings in these studies revealed that preservice teachers going into urban school environments were presented with unexpected challenges and concerns and addressed the issues of preservice teachers' unpreparedness for working in urban school settings. The researchers also showed that self-examination by teacher educators is essential to adequate preparation for preservice teachers teaching in urban school environments. All of the studies cited in this literature review concluded that further research is necessary to identify the deficiencies of teacher preparation programs in training future teachers to teach effectively in urban school settings.

Section 3: Research Method

In this study, I explored the perceptions of secondary preservice teachers' preparedness to teach in urban school settings. The problems that prompted this study, specific to MWU, were that (a) many preservice teachers have expressed concerns regarding teaching in urban school settings, and (b) there was no university or school-based program in place to prepare preservice teachers for successful experiences teaching in urban school settings. To answer my research questions, a case study approach was the best method because it allowed me to collect the reported perceptions and opinions of secondary preservice teachers about working in urban school settings and to record their ideas about the types of preparation that would best serve future preservice teachers to be more prepared to teach in urban school settings.

According to Willig (2008), a case study focuses on gaining a thorough understanding of a particular entity at a specific time. Willig (2013) asserted that case studies "are not characterized by the methods used to collect and analyze data, but rather its focus on a particular unit of analysis: a case" (p. 74). According to Stake (2010), "what makes for a good case and what does not are challenged and sometimes understated" (p. 444). For example, Stake argued that the topic of the case can be an individual, but not the means by which the individual engages in a particular practice. He stated, "A doctor may be a case. But his or her doctoring probably lacks the specificity, the boundedness to be a case" (p. 444). Case studies tend to be used in examining either one or more organizations or entities. Case studies involve data that are usually gathered through a variety of means such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and document collection (Creswell, 2012). I selected a qualitative case study design because qualitative

research is used for in-depth studies that seek to understand phenomena, experiences, and situations from one or more participants' point(s) of view. I explored a specific phenomenon related to a group of secondary preservice teachers' perceptions of their preparation to teach in urban school settings.

This section presents the research methods used in the study. This section includes the research design, setting, participant selection process, data collection process, and data analysis process.

Research Design

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings, to examine secondary preservice teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach in urban school settings, and to identify effective approaches to prepare secondary preservice teachers in achieving successes in teaching in urban school classrooms. A qualitative case study design was chosen because a qualitative study is used to look for an understanding of a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives or worldviews of the individuals involved (Merriman, 2014). Qualitative research is used for in-depth studies that address phenomena, experiences, and situations from the participants' points of view (Creswell, 2012).

Leedy and Ormond (2010) stated that qualitative research studies have two things in common: The research focuses on phenomena that occur in the real world and addresses a phenomenon in all of its complexity. Denzin and Lincoln (2009) addressed the importance of qualitative research in studying the meanings of and sense that people make in understanding and interpreting phenomena. Denzin and Lincoln emphasized the

need to recognize that qualitative studies, first and foremost, take place in natural settings. Qualitative research permits an interpretive approach to phenomena; that is, it offers methods that provide a venue for the researcher to ascertain how people make meaning as they interact with people and events in their world. According to Yin (2014), case studies are widely used in organizational studies across the social sciences. Yin stated that “we can say that [u]sing case studies for research purposes remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavors” (p. 1). Stake (2010) concurred and acknowledged the case study as the most common method of doing qualitative inquiry.

In framing this qualitative inquiry and prior to choosing a case study method, I looked at several approaches. I considered ethnography, but because my study did not focus on the experiences of a different culture by living and observing within it, ethnography was eliminated. A phenomenological study was not chosen because the focus of my study centered on the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of individuals about a topic; Creswell (2012) and McCaslin and Scott (2003) described phenomenological studies as the discovery of the shared lived experiences regarding one phenomenon. A grounded theory approach was also an option, but because there was no intent to develop a theory that would be grounded in the data (Merriam, 2014), grounded theory was not suitable for my study. With a narrative approach, the research centers on the meaning of one person’s lived experiences using stories to collect the data in the forms of biography, autobiography, life history, and oral history that have a beginning, middle, and end from which the experiences are described. My study addressed a specific phenomenon related to a group of secondary preservice teachers; therefore, the narrative analysis approach

was rejected. After careful consideration, I concluded that a case study approach was the best method of achieving the goals of this research study.

Data were collected from 11 secondary preservice teachers enrolled in MWU's teacher education program who had completed their field service experiences in an urban school setting. Suri (2011) noted that case study researchers often gather data through multiple sources of information, but one of the best ways to understand a subject is to personally observe participants. To this end, one-on-one interviews, focus group, and observations (nonparticipation) were used to explore, examine, and identify secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their preparedness to teach in urban school settings. Creswell's (2013) guidelines on case studies were followed. They included, but were not limited to, analysis of categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, patterns, themes, description, and examination of one or more phenomena. The phenomenon in this study was the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the participants. According to Creswell's guidelines on examining learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life, the overall format of this study was descriptive with a high level of detail. A case study also requires extensive verification using such methods as triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2013; Harper & Cole, 2012), both of which were used in this study.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were derived from the problem statement and were intended to focus data collection to satisfy the research purpose. The following research questions were central to the collection of data:

RQ1: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about teaching in urban settings?

RQ2: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about their preparedness for teaching in urban settings?

RQ3: What approaches could MWU's School of Education faculty implement to improve secondary preservice teachers preparation to teach in urban settings?

Setting of the Study

The setting of this study was a teacher education program at MWU located in a Midwestern state. In meeting MWU's confidentiality and Human Subjects and Privacy guidelines, there were two key informants in this study: director of field placement (DFP) and the resident educational consultant (REC). MWU is located in the downtown area of a Midwestern urban city. MWU entered into a school-based partnership with two urban school districts located in urban communities. The DFP and REC reported that some of the preservice teachers enrolled in MWU's School of Education and participating in their field service practicums expressed reluctance to teach in the urban school settings. The School of Education recognizes the difficulty in placing secondary preservice students in the urban schools and the need to effectively address these concerns and improve communication between university faculty, preservice teachers, and urban schools and communities.

Participants for this study were selected from among the volunteers of secondary preservice teachers who were students enrolled in MWU's School of Education field service practicum. According to Creswell (2012), sample size for qualitative research is driven by concerns about data saturation. Data saturation occurs when "participants cease

to make novel and significant additions to the body of data collected by the qualitative researcher” (Creswell, 2012, p. 126). Creswell (2012) suggested that 10-12 participants are sufficient to reach the point of data saturation. A purposeful sampling approach was used to identify participants. A purposeful sample is selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. The participants should be selected because of some shared characteristic (Patton, 2014).

Currently, 33 secondary preservice teachers have met the university’s criteria to begin their field service practicums. The DFP reported that several (an unspecified number) preservice teachers had chosen not to complete their field service obligations in an urban school setting (personal communication, December 20, 2014). Therefore, my sample depended on the number of preservice teachers who agreed to complete their field service practicums in an urban school setting. I sought to have between 8 and 12 secondary preservice teachers volunteer to participate in my study.

Ethical Considerations

After receiving approval from Walden University IRB, (IRB # 11-19-15-0095694) I contacted MWU’s REC to discuss data collection for this study. The DFP and REC made arrangements for me to contact via email the instructors of two methods classes to schedule a meeting to discuss the topic of my case study, timeline, procedures for data collection, and recruitment of prospective participants. At this meeting faculty were given an instructor consent form to review and had 48 hours to email me their decision to participate. The form included the following information:

- a statement explaining the research study, purpose, and procedures;
- explanation of qualifying criteria;

- disclosure of researcher identity and roles;
- time commitment for the observation phase of the study;
- description of known and potential risks and benefits associated with participation in the study;
- information about how confidentiality would be maintained; and
- information about whom to contact regarding the research and/or individuals' rights as participants.

After meeting with the instructors, I scheduled a day and time during the beginning or ending of a class session when I could meet with the preservice teachers who were assigned to urban schools to explain my research study, answer questions, and seek volunteers. Each preservice teacher was given a student consent form to review and had 48 hours to decide whether to participate in the study. Volunteers were instructed to email me with their decision to participate. The first 12 preservice teachers who agreed to participate were accepted as participants. I returned in two days to collect the signed consent forms from the selected volunteers. I scheduled the dates, times, and locations for Phases 1, 2, and 3, and participants were notified. To protect the identity of participants, I assigned a unique identifying number that would remain consistent throughout the study.

The consent form explained in detail the following: (a) each participant would have the right to respond or refrain during the data collection process; (b) each participant could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty; (c) each participant could skip a question if they felt uncomfortable at any time; and (d) each participant had the right to not complete Phase 1, 2, or 3 of the data collection without consequence. All

transcriptions of participant responses were saved in a password protected file on my personal computer and on a password protected external portable hard drive that will be stored in a home safe for 5 years. I will be the only person who will have access to the data collected.

To ensure the ethical protection of each participant in this study, I explained the procedures to each potential participant. Participation would be strictly voluntary. No individual would be coerced into participating in this research study, and no participant would be offered payment for their time and services as participants in this study. Each potential participant would be fully informed about all procedures and any risks that may be involved and would be informed that written consent would be required. I would not put any potential participant in a situation in which he or she might be harmed as a result of participating in this study. Each potential participant would be guaranteed confidentially. Each individual was assured that any identifying information would be available only to me and my doctoral committee. Potential participants would be identified by a predetermined identification number that would be used during all three phases of data collection.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to focus on understanding and exploring the issues shared by the participants in the process (Creswell, 2012). I am a former middle school social studies teacher who taught 12 years in the partner urban school district identified in this study. MWU's School of Education entered into a partnership with this school district where a selected group of preservice teachers would complete their field service obligations. During the 12 years I was employed in the middle school, I was a

supervising teacher to five preservice teachers, a mentor for 3 years to three first-year teachers who were enrolled in MWU's School of Education, and an assistant principal for 1 year. During the study, I had no professional role at this urban school setting and I did not have any current or previous relationships with any of the participants.

To establish a researcher-participant working relationship, I maintained a nonjudgmental, accommodating, and positive attitude throughout all interactions with each participant. In the first meeting with the secondary preservice teachers I shared information about myself, my educational journey, and allowed the preservice teachers to ask questions to build a working relationship. I recognized potential possible personal and professional bias related to this research. Everything possible was done to minimize the potential for unnecessary and unreported bias during both the collection and data reporting phases of this project. Biases inherent in this study included the value that I place on the concept, theory, application of and necessity for teachers to be prepared to teach students who are culturally different from themselves and to feel confident to teach in an urban school setting, and I was well aware that I must maintain a neutral position on this topic so I did not influence or bias others with my values.

Throughout my years as a classroom teacher, mentor, and school administrator, it became clear to me that the model within education – that students come first – most often was not evident when mismatches between teachers and students were present. Given the lack of formal training in many schools of education regarding differences and how to successfully navigate those differences, coupled with the tendency in what is deemed “multicultural education” to focus only on students and not on teachers (Howard, 2010; Milner, 2013; Sleeter, 2012), preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions

about themselves is of great concern to me. To that end, it is fair and reasonable to say that I am invested in this study. It is also fair and reasonable, however, to acknowledge that preserving the integrity of the data by not imposing myself onto the study serves to strengthen the value of the results in contributing to the literature and add to potential improvement in education.

Data Collection

Three interview protocols (Appendices C, D, and E) were developed for data collection respectively via one on one interviews, focus group, and observations of the weekly field service practicum seminar courses. All interviews were held in the privacy of a lockable conference or classroom located on Midwestern University's campus. The focus group was held in a secured, designated area on Midwestern University's campus, and all observations were held in a classroom during the field service practicum seminar course on Midwestern University's campus.

Face to Face: One-on-One Interviews

Semistructured face-to-face interviews (Appendix A) were conducted with all selected participants. Creswell (2012) and Van Teijlingen (2014) stated that semi-structured interviews are used when the researcher plans one face-to-face interaction with each participant. Van Teijlingen explained the main components, basic organization, and characteristics of semi-structured interviews as first and foremost occurring in a formal interview setting. Within that formal setting the interviewer engages each participant individually using a guide of predetermined open-ended questions prepared in advance. These predetermined open-ended questions were on a specific topic and the questions were asked in a particular order.

All participants were asked all questions in the same order. Creswell (2012) pointed out that the very nature of open-ended questions allows for more thoughtful responses that do not lock a respondent into a predetermined finite set of possible choices. Van Teijlingen (2014) supported Creswell's assertion and explained further that the respondent's freedom to express within the interview establishes a greater reliability of the data. Because questions are open-ended and freedom of expression can facilitate lengthy responses, the researcher is advised to tape record each interview and work from transcribed tapes for data analysis.

The participant interviews were approximately 45 minutes each. All interviews were held in a private lockable conference room. Participants were informed and consented to the entire interview being recorded for the purpose of analysis and later transcribed verbatim. Participants also were informed that they had the right to ask that any part of their response or statement to any question not be recorded and, upon request, the tape recorder would be temporarily paused and resumed at their approval. I asked 10 questions related to the secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding teaching in an urban school setting. The questions were developed to elicit information regarding the research questions. The interview questions (Appendix A) are aligned with the research questions: questions 1-5 represent RQ1, questions 6-9 represent RQ2, and research questions 10-11 represent RQ3. Using the semi-structured interview method will allow me to pursue additional areas of concern that might emerge during the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Focus Group

My second data collection method was a structured focus group. A focus group is a form of qualitative research that provides a forum for selected participants to dialogue about a specific topic, idea or concept in a controlled setting (Kitzinger, 1995). The selected participants were encouraged to engage in a discussion with one another by sharing information and commenting on the responses of other participants. In the focus group setting, the researcher had the ability to guide the discussion in order for the participants to interact with one another by sharing experiences, asking questions, and commenting on each other's points of view and opinions (Morgan, 1997). Smithson (2000) emphasized that the participants' responses to the questions are as important as the interactions that occur among the participants; new ideas and creative solutions often result from the engagement of participants.

The individuals who were invited to participate in this structured focus group, were selected from the original 12 participants. According to Krueger and Casey (2002), the focus group needs to be large enough to have an interactive discussion, but it should not be so large that some of the participants are left out of the discussion. For this reason, I emailed an invitation to all participants detailing the time, location and purpose of the focus group, and I invited the five volunteers to join the focus group.

I secured a lockable conference room located on the campus of MWU to conduct the focus group. The participants were assigned a place card with a number that would be used to identify them. The numbers were displayed on place cards that were referred to during the discussion to assist the participants in remembering all participants' assigned numbers. The focus group began with introductions, clarifications of the purpose of this

study, and references to the consent letter received by each participant prior to the date of the group meeting. Participants had already been informed and given consent to the focus group discussion being audio taped. The focus group protocol and questions are specified in Phase II: Focus Group Questions (Appendix B).

Verd (2010), in discussing focus group protocol, suggested that there are three phases in conducting a focus group: (a) Phase 1 – Before the Focus Group; (b) Phase 2 – Conducting the Focus Group; and (c) Phase 3 – Interpreting and Reporting the Results. I will use Verd's (2010) protocol to conduct this focus group. Before the focus group, I identified the participants, generated the interview questions (Appendix B), wrote out the script to be used (Appendix B), and selected the location. On the day of the focus group, I brought all materials needed to the location; I arrived at the location before participants and set up the room; I introduced myself to all participants; and I conducted the focus group discussion. As the researcher, I addressed Verd's (2000) third protocol, by summarizing my meeting notes, analyzing the data collected, and identifying the ideas and topics that would generated lively and passionate discussions. The average length of the focus group meeting were 45-60 minutes. The focus group questions were designed to elicit responses that would reveal attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about urban schools, preparedness to teach in urban schools; they were aligned with the research questions and designed to inform the research problem.

Observations (Nonparticipation)

Creswell (2012) stated that, in qualitative research, the act of observation occurs in one of two ways—participant and nonparticipant. Kawulich (2005) noted that participant and nonparticipant also is referred to as “insider” and “outsider” (p. 34)

particularly when addressing access. In participant or insider observation, the researcher becomes directly involved in the activity and participants' lives and then records experiences as an active participant; in nonparticipant or outsider observation, the researcher does not become directly involved but has limited or no direct interaction and observes only.

Kawulich (2005) stated that when using observation in a case study approach, the type of observation differs depending on the degree of participation – whether the researcher is considered an insider or an outsider and, thus, how much access is granted to the researcher by those being observed. Hannon (2006) explained that the differing degrees of participation in a case study method also depend on what occurs at the actual research site, what conditions are and are not present and how time constraints help shape the type and degree of participation that is feasible. In Phase 3 of my study, I was a nonparticipant observer of the preservice teacher practicums: I did not directly interact with the participants during these sessions. I observed the discussions between the university faculty and the preservice teachers to capture the perceptions and experiences of the preservice teachers' daily work in urban schools.

The site of my Phase 3 nonparticipant observation took place on MDU's campus where secondary preservice teachers were attending a mandatory course that ran concurrent with their field service practicum. The DFP and REC described the course as a weekly 75-minute debriefing session where preservice teachers recall and share incidents that occurred during their classroom teaching, discuss problems and difficulties, ask questions, and present areas of concern. The university faculty instructor moderated the session, helped preservice teachers navigate and identify

difficulties, and guided preservice teachers in possible solutions. Preservice teachers relate their experiences in a casual conversational manner, group efforts elicit insights, and a scaffolding method of problem-solving guide the instruction (REC, Personal Communication, and April 16, 2015). As a nonparticipant observer, I watched, listened, and took notes during two of these class meetings.

The purpose of Phase 3 was to complement, reinforce, and build upon the interviews and focus group by gathering more data on the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban schools as they describe their experiences in their own words and without researcher prompting. Cooper, Lewis, and Urquhart (2004) stressed that the primary reason for observation is for the researcher to experience, first-hand, how participants express meaning-making within their surroundings. The meanings that participants give to their own experiences, in their own words and without promptings, provides a rich environment for “truthful reporting” (p. 24) in gaining a deeper understanding of the research problem. In my study, the focus is preservice teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding urban schools and what kinds of meanings influence, drive, and give rise to their behaviors in urban school settings.

Creswell (2012) addressed the need for orderly, effective note-taking in qualitative research and provided an Observation Protocol model (Appendix C). I used the Observation Protocol to write descriptive and detailed reflective notes that will include my observations, impressions, and questions. The goal of using this form and protocol was to record specific details so that, along with capturing the content of the

class, I also recorded the use and arrangement of space specifically identifying the location and participation levels of participants.

Data Analysis

All interviews and focus group sessions were tape recorded and transcribed by me. When the verbatim transcription was completed, the files were uploaded to a password protected file on my personal computer and a password protected file on an external hard drive. I analyzed the data using pattern coding to guide the identification and coding of data identifying patterns, themes, descriptions, and the examination of one or more phenomena that may occur in the data (Yin, 2014). I used the four steps outlined by Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) in developing the coding process to organize the transcripts:

1. Stated the concern of my research and the conceptual framework used. This is what the researcher hopes to learn about and why (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 44). The conceptual framework refers to “the set of beliefs about psychological and social processes with which [the researcher] approach [es] the research study” (p. 46).
2. Condensed the text to information that is important. Auerbach and Silverstein, (2003) referred to this as “relevant text” (p. 46), which means re-reading the data for information that directly relates to the research concerns. I highlighted direct quotations and added keywords or phrases in the margin to reduce the data into manageable concepts. I created a separate password-protected document in which I copied and pasted the relevant text from each transcript. Each interview transcript was be assigned a different color and number so that I could distinguish

between the interviews once all relevant text had been added to the same document.

3. Searched the relevant data for repeating ideas as different participants often use similar words or phrases to describe the same idea (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Thompson, 2011; Yin, 2014). I identified repeating ideas by reviewing the relevant text. I created an additional password-protected document in which I copied and pasted all repeating ideas. The same color-coded and numbered transcript was maintained for each document.
4. Organized groups of repeating ideas into common themes which will help organize the findings into categories (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The purpose of this step is to create a visual picture of the emergent themes by further condensing the data into thematic categories. Data was reviewed by using a recursive process of continuously reading the text until categories of themes emerged (Merriam, 2014). A researcher's interpretation of the data is only one of several ways of understanding the data, but any interpretation of the data must be supported by the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Merriam 2014; Morgan, 2013; Yin, 2014).
5. In the final stage of the data analysis, a thematic analysis was completed to organize the data into themes which comprised the findings of the study. The effectiveness of the categories were ensured by continuously adding new information until (a) all relevant information had been assigned a category, and (b) each unit of information fitted into one category only (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

Patton (2014) discussed how to improve the accuracy of qualitative research findings. He stated that a “systematic search for alternative themes, divergent patterns, and rival explanations enhances credibility” (p. 553). To address this issue, Patton suggested looking for other ways to interpret the data that might elicit alternative categories. Instead of neglecting these seemingly discrepant cases, the author suggested looking for data to support the new categories. However, if there is no strong evidence to support the new findings then it is likely that the original findings are accurate (Patton 2014). As such, discrepant cases were sought according to the procedures outlined above but none were found. All data were included in this study’s findings and categorized to provide a complete description of participants’ perceptions. For dependability purposes the transcripts then were reviewed a final time and re-coded.

Trustworthiness of Findings

Data can be interpreted by researchers in different ways, it is important to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings using various approaches (Merriam, 2014). Therefore, the data for this study was gathered from the perspectives of the secondary preservice teachers as “a means of checking the integrity of the inferences” (Seidman, 2012, p. 163) that I drew from the data (Schwandt, 1997, p. 163). Methods used to heighten trustworthiness were member checking, triangulation, and verbatim quotes in the findings.

Merriam (2014) explained that the procedure known as member checking can be used to help maximize the trustworthiness of the findings. Member checking is primarily used in qualitative research. According to Harper and Cole (2012), member checking is a quality control process used by researchers to improve the accuracy, credibility, and

validity of what is recorded during a research interview. During an interview the researcher restated or summarized the information stated and then asked the participant questions to determine the accuracy of the responses. The member checking process was used to provide each participant in this study with a copy of the findings (along with verbatim transcript), to have them review those findings, and to provide each an opportunity to discuss those findings with me. I contacted the REC via email to secure and schedule dates, times, and MWU locations for individually and privately meeting with each participant to complete the member checking process.

Cohen and Crabtree (2006) stated that the benefit of conducting member checking is that it allows the researcher the opportunity to verify the accuracy and completeness of the findings which will help to improve the validity of the study. Member checking was conducted to ensure that an accurate representation of each participant's experience was represented and to receive participant feedback about the findings. Through this process of respondent validation, I eliminated the possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpreting the participants' experiences, a critical component in the triangulation process. A final meeting was scheduled where I presented a 2-page summary of the results to the DFP, REC and all participants (stakeholders in the study).

According to Yin (2014), the principal of triangulation relates to the purpose of trying to find at least three ways of verifying a particular event, description, or fact being reported in a study. These data collected from three different methods was triangulated to provide evidence and substantiate the attitudes and beliefs of secondary preservice teachers' perceptions about preparation to teach in urban school settings. The three data collection processes used were the following: one on one interviews (Appendix A); a

focus group (Appendix B); and field service practicum seminar observations using the observations recorded on the protocol instrument (Appendix C).

Finally, the alignment of each question for both the interview and focus group to the problem and the research questions were discussed with my chairperson and committee member. In addition we examined the interview questions for the following components: language, clarity, and terminology; appropriate spelling and grammar; and sufficient depth and breadth of questions according to qualitative research guidelines (Brinkmann, Jacobsen, & Kristiansen, 2014; Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Only interview questions approved were presented to the participants.

Conclusion

This qualitative study used a case study design to gather data to address the problem of secondary preservice teachers' reluctance to work in urban schools. Participants were selected using a purposeful sampling of preservice teachers assigned to work in one of three urban schools. I used three data collection methods to draw rich, detailed data to inform my problem and research questions. My data collection methods were one on one interviews, a focus group, and seminar observations. Pattern coding was used in the data analysis to identify themes and trends. To ensure data reliability and validity, I employed triangulation of all data sources and member checking.

Section 4: Results

In this study, I explored the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings. I also examined preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their preparedness to teach in urban school settings, and identified effective approaches to help preservice teachers to achieve successes in teaching in urban school classrooms. In this section, I describe the procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data. I present the patterns, relationships, and themes from among the data, and draw conclusions based on the themes. Finally, I provide evidence of the study's quality.

Process for Collecting and Analyzing Data

Before I collected data, I received permission from Walden University's IRB and MWU's IRB office (the research site). The Walden University IRB granted permission on November 19, 2015 (IRB # 11-19-15-0095694) for me to begin collecting data. I received a letter of permission from MWU's IRB office on October 15, 2015. I received a letter of cooperation on October 18, 2015 as a consent of approval from MWU's faculty partner. To begin the data collection process, I contacted the faculty participants via telephone and email to explain the purpose of this study and to schedule a time and place to recruit participants. The faculty participant arranged for me to meet with two classes of secondary preservice teachers. During the meeting, I gave the preservice teachers a consent form and I asked them to respond within 48 hours by email. Before the interview process and data collection, I made sure all consent forms were signed. Six secondary preservice teachers participated in the one-on-one interviews, and five secondary preservice teachers participated in the focus group discussion. Creswell (2012) suggested

that 10-12 participants are sufficient to reach data saturation. Creswell further stated that this number of participants is an important part of the data collection process to gather enriched information. In addition, each participant was guaranteed confidentiality. Participants were identified by a predetermined identification number that was used during the interviews and focus group for data collection. The third phase of this study, nonparticipant observation, did not require identification numbers and was limited to my observations of secondary preservice teachers in a field service practicum seminar.

Data were collected by using three different sources to gather evidence of the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers' preparation to teach in urban school settings. The three data sources that were used to gather information to answer the research questions were the following: one-on-one interviews with six secondary preservice teachers (Appendix A), a focus group with five secondary preservice teachers (Appendix B), and two field service practicum seminar observations that I recorded on the protocol instrument (Appendix C). The collected data were triangulated. According to Yin (2014), the principle of triangulation involves finding at least three ways of verifying a particular event, description, or fact being reported in a study. The purpose of triangulating the data is to provide evidence of quality, credibility, and trustworthiness. I used data triangulation to compare different sources of data and to find consistent themes among those sources to confirm the validity of the findings. The data collection process is described in the section below.

Face-to-Face One-on-One Interviews

I began the data collection process with Phase 1: semi structured Interviews. I used the interview protocol (Appendix A) and notified participants of the time and

location for the interviews via email. The face-to-face interview consisted of 10 predetermined open-ended questions with follow-up and probe questions (Seidman, 2012) to gain knowledge about the participants' experiences. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were held in a private secured room reserved at MWU's library, which was convenient for the participants. All participants were asked all of the questions in the same order. Each interview was tape recorded and notes were taken to record body language and tone of voice of the participants. All audiotapes, notes, and transcripts of participant responses were saved in a password-protected file on my personal computer and on a password-protected external portable hard drive that will be stored in a home safe for 5 years. I will be the only person who will have access to the data collected.

In the first data collection phase, I interviewed six secondary preservice teachers to explore their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about teaching in urban schools. In situations where participants' responses were not clear, transcripts were shared for clarification through email, and a meeting was held to discuss participants' concerns. Participants were assigned a predetermined identification number to protect their identities.

Focus Group

In the second data collection phase, I conducted a focus group discussion with five participants to examine secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their preparedness for teaching in urban school settings. The focus group discussion lasted approximately 50 minutes. I served as the facilitator for the discussion. Each participant was assigned a place card with a number to be used to identify him or

her. The numbers were displayed on place cards that were referred to during the discussion to assist the participants in remembering all participants' assigned numbers. The focus group began with introductions, clarifications, and the purpose of this study. Participants had already been informed about and given their consent to the focus group discussion being audiotaped. All audiotapes, notes, and transcripts of participant responses were saved in a password-protected file on my personal computer and on a password-protected external portable hard drive that will be stored in a home safe for 5 years. I will be the only person who will have access to the data collected. The focus group protocol and questions are specified in Appendix B.

Observations (Nonparticipation)

In Phase 3 of the data collection, I observed participants attending a mandatory seminar course that ran concurrently with their field service practicum. The course was a weekly 75-minute debriefing session in which secondary preservice teachers recalled and shared incidents that occurred during their classroom teaching, discussed problems and difficulties, asked questions, and presented areas of concern. I served as a nonparticipant observer of the preservice teacher practicums. I did not directly interact with the participants during these sessions. I observed the discussions between the university advisor and the secondary preservice teachers to capture the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions as they were described by participants regarding their experiences of their daily work in urban schools. As a nonparticipant observer, I watched, listened, and took notes during two of these class meetings. Creswell (2012) addressed the need for orderly, effective note taking in qualitative research and provided an observation protocol model (Appendix C). I used the observation protocol to write descriptive and

detailed reflective notes that included my observations, impressions, and questions. The purpose of Phase 3 was to complement, reinforce, and build upon the interviews and focus group by gathering more data on the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban schools.

Process for Recording Data

In recording the responses of the participants during the interviews and focus group discussion, I used two types of digital recording devices. Each of the audiotaped interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, and the focus group discussion lasted approximately 50 minutes. Once I completed the interviews and focus group discussion, I transcribed the data from the digital recording using transcription software Express Scribe, which is professional audio player software for personal computers designed to assist the transcription of audio recordings.

System for Keeping Track of Data and Emerging Themes

I used a digital recorder for all six interviews. After each interview was completed, I transcribed the interview data verbatim into a password-protected file on my personal computer. Once the transcribing was completed, the interview recording was removed from the digital recorder and saved as a separate file labeled "Participant 1 through 6." No names were used in the transcripts or the recordings. After the transcription was completed, I read through each transcript while listening to the recordings to ensure that all responses were exactly what the participant said in the interview. The member checking process was used to provide each participant with a copy of the findings (along with verbatim transcript), to have them review those findings, and to provide each an opportunity to discuss those findings with me.

Through this process of respondent validation, I eliminated the possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpreting the participants' experiences, a critical component in the triangulation process. I contacted each participant via email to schedule dates, times, and locations for individual private meetings to complete the member checking process. I then reviewed the transcripts for relevant data that related to the problem statement and research questions guiding this study. As I read through each participant's transcript, I created a storyboard by writing repeated ideas, themes, quotations, and keywords on note paper. Each participant's comments were assigned a different color because participants often used similar words or phrases to describe the same idea.

In the second phase of analyzing the data, I searched the relevant data again for repeated ideas among the participants. I then organized the groups of repeated ideas into common themes. The purpose of this step was to create a visual picture of the emergent themes by condensing the data into thematic groupings. The data were reviewed again using a recursive process of continuously reading the text until groups of themes emerged. According to Stake (2013), during data analysis the researcher's purpose is to analyze the data by identifying the general themes. I used the participants' responses from the interview questions to look for general categories of ideas related to the research questions. Once I generated this list of general categories, I reviewed the remaining comments from the focus group and observations for repeated ideas from the participants, which were ultimately reduced to four. I matched each of the four themes with the related research questions, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Research Questions and General Categories of Data

Research Questions	Categories of Responses
RQ1: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers about teaching in urban schools?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservice teachers are motivated and excited about teaching but they lack confidence about potential success. 2. Preservice teachers face challenges in building relationships specific to urban school students. 3. Preservice teachers feel a cultural disconnect with urban school students.
RQ2: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers' about their preparedness for teaching in urban schools?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservice teachers are unaware of how urban school students learn. 2. Preservice teachers are unaware of urban school students' behaviors. 3. Preservice teachers are unaware of urban school environment features. 4. Positive support from some university faculty. 5. No support from some university faculty.
RQ3: What approaches could the School of Education faculty implement to improve preservice teachers' preparation to teach in urban school settings?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning classroom management skills specific to urban classrooms. 2. Translate theory into practice. 3. Feeling disconnected from university faculty. 4. Provide more daily time spent in urban schools. 5. Provide experiences in urban schools to occur earlier within their program. 6. Provide experiences in urban schools longer than twelve weeks.

Next, I explored how these themes came together to develop a significant case from which to examine the perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about their preparation to teach in urban schools. In doing this, I identified 14 categories that were condensed into four themes: (a) preservice teachers are excited and concerned about making a difference in urban school classrooms; (b) preservice teachers are comfortable

with the subject content but feel unprepared to manage culturally diverse classrooms; (c) preservice teachers are supported and challenged by faculty in their preparation to teach in urban school settings; and (d) preservice teachers have the desire to thrive in urban school classrooms, and they identified the need for increased research-based practices and urban school experiences throughout their undergraduate education. Finally, to ensure alignment, I matched each theme with the most relevant research question, as shown in Table 6. I used these themes to construct my narratives.

Table 6

Research Questions, Categories of Data, and Themes

Research Questions	Categories of Data	Themes
RQ1: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers about teaching in urban schools?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservice teachers are motivated and excited about teaching but they lack confidence about potential success. 2. Preservice teachers face challenges in building relationships specific to urban school students. 3. Preservice teachers feel a cultural disconnect with urban school students. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservice teachers are excited and concerned about making a difference in urban school classrooms. 2. Preservice teachers are comfortable with the subject content but feel unprepared to manage culturally diverse classrooms. 4. Preservice teachers have the desire to thrive in urban school classrooms, and they identified the need for increased research based practices and urban school experiences throughout their undergraduate education.

(continued)

Research Questions	Categories of Data	Themes
RQ2: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers about their preparedness to teach in urban school settings?	<p>4. Preservice teachers are unaware of how urban school students learn.</p> <p>5. Preservice teachers are unaware of urban school students' behaviors.</p> <p>6. Preservice teachers are unaware of urban school environment features.</p> <p>7. Positive support from some university faculty.</p> <p>8. No support from some university faculty.</p>	<p>3. Preservice teachers are supported and challenged by faculty in their preparation to teach in urban school settings.</p> <p>4. Preservice teachers have the desire to thrive in urban school classrooms, and they identified the need for increased research based practices and urban school experiences throughout their undergraduate education.</p>
RQ3: What approaches could the School of Education faculty implement to improve preservice teachers' preparation to teach in urban school settings?	<p>9. Learning classroom management skills specific to urban classrooms.</p> <p>10. Translate theory into practice.</p> <p>11. Feeling disconnect from university faculty.</p> <p>12. Provide more daily time spent in urban schools.</p> <p>13. Provide experiences in urban schools to occur earlier within their program.</p> <p>14. Provide experiences in urban schools longer than twelve weeks.</p>	<p>4. Preservice teachers have the desire to thrive in urban school classrooms, and they identified the need for increased research based practices and urban school experiences throughout their undergraduate education.</p>

Findings

The purposes of this qualitative study were to (a) explore the perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings, (b) examine secondary preservice teachers' perceptions about preparedness for teaching in urban school settings, and (c) identify potentially effective approaches for preparing secondary preservice teachers to achieve success in urban school settings. Taking positive steps to put into practice continuous improvement across the content area was the goal of this university's School of Education in delivering student centered curricula and support for their preservice teachers. The results of this study may potentially provide insights concerning these preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that may help guide changes that are needed in MWU's School of Education's curriculum as faculty prepare preservice teachers to teach in urban school settings.

In this section, I identify the four findings that correspond to the research questions, themes, and the problem that prompted this study. I provide evidence from the collected data that support each of the findings, and I illustrate the findings with examples and comments that were captured in the three phases of data collection. When referring to participants' comments, the predetermined numbers assigned to the participants are used for identification. The problem that prompted this study is that preservice teachers have expressed concerns about and reluctance toward teaching in the local urban schools affiliated with MWU's teacher field service practicum program. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about teaching in urban settings?

RQ2. What are secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their preparedness for teaching in urban settings?

RQ3. What approaches could the School of Education faculty implement to improve secondary preservice teachers' preparation to teach in urban school settings?

These three research questions about identifying the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding their preparation and experiences in urban schools formed the foundation for one on one interview questions (Appendix A), focus group discussion questions (Appendix B), and nonparticipant observations (Appendix C).

Theme 1: Preservice Teachers Are Excited and Concerned About Making a Difference in Urban School Classrooms

This finding aligns with RQ1 and focuses on the experiences of secondary preservice teachers during their field service practicums at MWU's partnered urban school. It encompasses three themes that include motivation and excitement, building relationships, and cultural disconnect.

In the one on one interviews, participants expressed feelings of excitement about becoming teachers and entering the field of education. Participant 1 shared that, "As long as I can remember I always wanted to be a teacher." Participants 2 and 4 provided similar statements. They all remembered that, when they were young and played school with their siblings and friends, they were always the teacher. Participant 3 said, "When I got to this urban school to begin my field service observation, I was excited because this was where I graduated from. So, I was like, I can connect with these kids; these are my kids." Participant 2 stated, "The time I got to do my mini lesson, and I was actually fairly

successful with it, was my first indication that I really could do this as a career.”

Participant 5 said,

I think my experience went well. I really enjoyed it. It was not what I thought it was going to be. I was so nervous. I remember thinking how am I going to do this in real life like every day? I taught my lesson and the students were listening and paying attention. I think it went well. The kids were welcoming.

During one of the seminar observations, the students had a discussion regarding the partner urban schools where they were assigned for their field service practicums. All the participants seemed to be pleased with their assignments. One participant commented, “I feel our university tries to place us in urban settings so that we know what to expect, because we do not know where we are going to be placed for our student teaching or where we will get a job...this might be one of the schools.” All participants expressed entering their field service placement classrooms with feelings of excitement and confidence in their abilities to teach.

Some participants, however, despite excitement and motivation, were concerned that they did not know what to expect when specifically teaching in an urban school. Four participants stated that they experienced some feelings of anxiety and uncertainty as they entered the urban classroom on their first day. During the individual interviews, participants often used words like *different* and *foreign* to refer to the urban setting, particularly when they made comparisons to their own lives and experiences as K-12 students. According to Howard and Milner (2014), preservice teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are largely constructed by their own school experiences, the communities they live in, and the media. Furthermore, the researchers indicated that, in many cases,

preservice teachers have negative attitudes and beliefs about urban students and urban school settings – attitudes and beliefs which deem urban schools and settings as bad, wrong, deficient – which could possibly carry over into their classroom teaching despite efforts to change their perceptions. Participant 6 related the following account:

I was nervous at first because I heard frightening stories about urban schools. I went to a suburban school, and my experiences in high school were very different. I heard about the urban school to which I was assigned for my field service experience, and I thought it was a bad school because it was located in a bad part of the city and that the students who attend that school act badly. I did not know what to expect, and I did not feel prepared to begin.

All participants revealed that they experienced challenges developing relationships with urban school students. According to Howard and Milner (2014), the majority of future teachers lack experiences with students of cultures different from their own and may have no firsthand knowledge of urban school settings. In the focus group discussion Participant 1 stated, “I wanted to try to level with the students, try to connect with them on a personal level, find a connection, like the music they listen to. I think it is important for me to learn how to interact with the students.” Participant 4 said,

It was hard for me... it was different. I was only there once or twice a week for like an hour. My mentor teacher was great. She was good with relationships. I watched her when I was in her classroom. She let me talk to them. I did a little presentation in the beginning explaining who I was and telling them about myself. And then when we did small group; they were very receptive to me, but I was not able to develop as deep of relationships as I wanted to.

Participant 5 stated,

It is hard for me because I am so young, and I am not much older than them and they know it. So I decided I needed to start subbing in the district to try to get to know the kids because it was hard for them to see me as an authority figure.

When I substituted for them I tried to learn their names. I asked questions like: “How is your day going?” “How has school been?” “What are you excited about?” I wanted to know what was going on in their life because I feel like it helps me better know them in the classroom.

Participant 2 added, “Building relationships with the students is important. They have to know you care about them because otherwise they do not care about you or what you say.” According to Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2014), upon entering teacher education programs, most preservice teachers have already developed preconceived attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about urban schools, the students who attend them, and what it may be like to teach in these settings.

In addition, secondary preservice teachers’ expressed feelings of a cultural disconnect between the urban students and themselves. According to Gay (2014), preservice teachers frequently have little to no direct experience interacting with students who are different from themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, social class, and community norms; urban schools are characterized by these types of diversity. Because of their inexperience, preservice teachers often have no direct experience or knowledge base to draw upon to solve problems in real-world urban classrooms.

Focus group participants 1, 3, and 5 agreed that urban school students have a “culture of their own” that they (preservice teachers) know nothing about. Participant 1

stated, “I see there is a culture of its own in this urban school that gives them their identity. It is something that I was pretty much unaware of.” Participant 3 commented,

I feel like the kids at this urban school have a different culture than I have. I come from the suburbs. I have only lived here while attending the university. So I am getting acclimated to the city’s culture. But teaching them is going to be difficult because I do not know what kids in this area like. It is really different from me. I was trying to teach myself on their culture, but I learned that I actually had to learn from them.

Participant 4 said, “I think I have been pretty open minded. I try to talk to them and figure out their culture. I did not say, ok well, this student’s Black so they fit in this culture. I just try to figure how do they interact and what is their main objective in the world.”

All of the participants in this study agreed that developing relationships with individuals who are culturally different from themselves had been a challenge and cannot be learned from a textbook. During her interview, Participant 6 said, “I do not think you can prepare yourself with a book. I think you have to prepare yourself by immersing yourself in it.

There is a lot you cannot learn at college, you just have to be in it.” Finally, Participant 1 stated that the cultural disconnect was real for him. He said,

This was probably the hardest area for me, because I am from a middle class family in a rural area. We did what we were supposed to do, we came in, we sat down, and we did our thing. Preparing myself to understand the culture of these kids was hard for me. I had to learn how to mentally understand where these kids are coming from.

Secondary preservice teachers are motivated and excited about beginning their teaching careers; however, they recognize that these emotions are not enough to be successful in the urban school classroom. As Participant 2 said, “Teaching in an urban environment is either for you or it is really not for you.” In her interview, Participant 3 stated,

It was interesting to see and then to watch their attitudes and behaviors change, how they acted differently towards me. It wasn't always positive. I feel like you have to go through this initiation. Once I spent time with them it got better. I think it depended on who they trusted more. I had to work to build up the relationship.

Participants recognized that, in order to make a difference, they had to connect with urban students. Connection involved trust and trust had to be earned.

Researchers have suggested that preservice teachers' educational attitudes, beliefs and perceptions are important for at least two reasons. First, preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions can impact their academic success as a university student (Akey, 2006). For example, preservice teachers who believe in their abilities to teach and who are motivated in developing their skills are more likely to engage in their learning activities (Pintrich, 2003). Second, pre-service teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions will have a major influence in their teaching practices when they begin to teach (Garvis, Fluckiger & Twigg, 2011). As a result, preservice teachers, who acknowledge and incorporate their motivation toward teaching, have the potential to improve the quality of their educational delivery.

Manuel and Hughes (2006) investigated the motivations of a cohort of preservice teachers in a five year teacher education program. Results showed three motivational factors: seeking personal fulfilment, making a difference in the lives of young people,

and genuine interest in engaging and passing on information in one or more subject area contents. Merseth, Sommer and Dickstein (2008) reported that preservice teachers' identities, both personal and professional, not only were affected by their experiences in their urban school teaching practicums, but also those very identities affected their teaching experiences and environments. The authors found that as preservice teachers engaged with students who were different from themselves and in classroom environments that were different from their own experiences, understanding of personal identities, and professional roles essentially deepened.

Researchers in preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about urban schools, classrooms, and students emphasized the importance of addressing what motivates preservice teachers to willingly or unwillingly engage their urban school practicums (Manuel & Hughes, 2006). The willingness to engage involves how preservice teachers process their experiences in terms of identity and role, making a difference in students' lives, and the degree to which they feel that initial excitement is supported in their own learning endeavors as new professionals (Merseth et al., 2008). This literature and research aligns with and supports the finding because it demonstrates that preservice teacher excitement about teaching and about making a difference in the lives of urban students can be common among preservice teachers whose motivations and drives are to improve their own personal and professional development in the urban classroom.

Theme 2: Preservice Teachers Are Comfortable With the Subject Content but Feel Unprepared to Manage Culturally Diverse Classrooms

This finding aligns with RQ1, and it encompasses themes that include motivation and excitement, building relationships, and cultural disconnect. With regard to motivation and excitement with subject matter content but unprepared to manage culturally diverse classrooms, participants in all three phases of data collection eagerly talked about their desires to teach in their academic content areas. Participants talked about how they felt that their method courses prepared them for presenting the subject content, but they all expressed strong feelings of not being confident in their abilities to be successful teaching that subject in the urban school classroom. During the one on one interview, Participant 5 commented,

All I have been told is what I should do as a teacher in the classroom. In all of my method classes this semester, developing, planning, and writing lesson plans were the focus, but I learned how to do those things last semester. When are we going to learn how to implement the lesson plan along with everything else we will be expected to do as a teacher in the classroom?

From the focus group, Participant 5 stated, “You take all these wonderful classes, but they do not teach you what else is expected of you in the urban classroom, like how to manage everything.” Participant 3 agreed by stating the following.

We are taught about the best case scenarios using the textbook. To better prepare us to teach in the urban school, we need to talk about the worst case scenarios.

What do you do when everything is going wrong?

In the seminar observations, the instructor facilitated a discussion about the newly implemented and anticipated changes in the School of Education teacher preparation program. Several of the participants acknowledged that the university faculty appears to recognize that changes need to be made in the programs, and several of the participants identified that they have witnessed changes in both the elementary and secondary teaching preparation courses. For example, they talked about the elementary and secondary teacher education curriculum that has been redesigned using the Danielson Framework (Danielson, 2013). The Danielson framework (2013) focuses on how to retain student culture in the content being taught. Participants 3, 5, and 6 valued this approach because it helped them to recognize and to close the gap in the cultural disconnect that they were feeling. Participant 3 specifically addressed this: “I never thought about the importance of recognizing cultural differences when teaching math. I mean, you know, math is math, right?”

With respect to the cultural disconnect and to building relationships with students, the seminar instructor explained that the university staff is attempting to align the revised elementary and secondary courses and to build a closer alliance between university faculty and the local urban school educators. The university staff members have established a collaborative co-teaching initiative with the teachers in the local schools. Participants shared that two of their instructors are presently teaching their methods classes at the urban school site where secondary preservice teachers are doing their field service practicums and that these two instructors meet with their classes twice a week on a rotational basis at the local urban school. Participant 4 claimed that having university faculty on site not only helped strengthen relationship building between local school

faculty and preservice teachers, and it has become a model for relationship building in the urban classroom. Participant 4 stated the following.

Having [professor name] right there where I was doing my practicum gave me somebody to come to when I had questions about the students or when a situation occurred with the students that I was unprepared to manage. But more importantly, at least to me, was showing me that teaching in an urban school wasn't what you read about or heard about in the movies.

All of the participants in the one on one interviews, focus group, and observation seminars agreed that learning subject content is important; however, they also communicated their concerns about the absence of focus on building student relationships and on valuing and appreciating diversity in classrooms. They voiced their dismay with not being provided with learning across the curriculum tools to address the differences that exist in culturally diverse classrooms, effective teaching strategies to build cultural and ethnic awareness, relationship building techniques to foster and engage students in meaningful ways. Differences that exist were identified by participants during the general discussion in the seminars. These differences, which were concerns of the preservice teachers, included establishing classroom rules, facilitating smooth transitions between activities, monitoring student performance, and relationship building with the student population.

The literature on this finding presents several viewpoints concerning preservice teachers being comfortable in their subject content but unprepared to manage the culturally diverse classroom. Oliver and Wehby (2011) reiterated not only the essentialness of learning effective classroom management skills, but they also stated that

a lack of training in preservice teacher education works to the detriment of all. Specific to urban classrooms, however, Ladson-Billings (2013) stated that effective classroom management skills demand a working knowledge of culturally responsive teaching. According to Bales and Saffold (2011), over the last two decades, the United States has become more diverse, yet most of the pre-service teachers in education programs do not feel prepared to teach in diverse school settings. They further reported that teacher preparation programs that partner with urban school preservice teachers should have a “working understanding of the systemic structural inequality extant in urban environments” (p. 83). It is important that preservice teachers are comfortable in their teaching environment.

Atkins-Coleman (2010) concluded that adequately preparing preservice teachers to teach in diverse classrooms requires informed university faculty and mentors who are able to model effective management skills in engaging students. Their results showed that for the study participants, the key element in student engagement that facilitated effective classroom management skills was culturally responsive teaching. Cochran-Smith and Fries (2011) concluded in their study that, due to the lack of knowledge about diversity of pre-service teachers throughout this country, there is a growing cultural disconnect between students and teachers. Sleeter (2012) suggested that cultural immersion programs have been advocated as a way to prepare pre-service teachers to meet the challenge of teaching in a diverse setting.

During the one on one interviews, Participants 2, 3, 5, and 6 talked about the need for MWU’s School of Education to implement more research-based practices into their methods courses across the curriculum. They expressed their concerns of not feeling

confident to teach a lesson in an urban school classroom so that the urban students would understand the content being taught. These participants also noted that there was a lack of opportunities to observe and practice what they learned in the university classroom so that they would be prepared to transfer that knowledge to the urban school classrooms during their field service practicums. Participant 2 said, “I need to be taught concrete ways that work- research based strategies.” It is imperative that preservice teachers have exposure to multiple ways of learning in all their methods classes.

According to Laframboise and Shea (2010), preservice teachers need to receive support from university faculty in learning research-based strategies. Based on the results of their study, they reported that although preservice teachers have little difficulty appreciating research-based strategies which they learn in their preparation program, most have great difficulty incorporating those strategies into actual classroom practice. When faced with challenges, preservice teachers are more likely to revert to strategies that they experienced as K-12 students rather than use the research-based strategies they have learned. Laframboise and Shea concluded that two things are necessary for preservice teachers to make the transition from reverting to personal experience to applying research-based strategies: (1) they have to be exposed to multiple ways of learning in their methods classes; and (2) faculty must model each strategy taught before preservice teachers are required to attempt to use them.

Theme 3: Preservice Teachers Are Supported and Challenged by Faculty in Their Preparation to Teach in Urban School Settings

This finding aligns with RQ2, and it encompasses themes that include (a) secondary preservice teachers are unaware of how urban school students learn, (b) they

are unaware of urban school students' behaviors, (c) they are unaware of urban school environmental features, they receive positive support from some university faculty, and (d) they receive little support from some university faculty members. In response to the interview question, "What did faculty do to prepare you for teaching in an urban school?", two participants stated that they felt they were supported by university faculty, while four participants believed that they were not supported by faculty in their preparation to teach in urban schools. Participant 5 said, "I haven't really had a class that talks about how they [urban school students] learn." Participant 2 said, "In preparation, you take a whole lot of theory and not a lot about practicality. There is not a lot of true planning or true focus on educational technique. But truly prepared at MWU? Not at all." Participant 1 commented:

I did not get it. For example, maybe they have an IEP. Those were the students that I am not prepared to know what to do with. What do you do to get them to reach those goals? Some students are autistic, and some students are emotionally impaired or cognitively impaired. I do not think I am prepared to know what to do.

Participant 4 agreed, but broadened the context:

Faculty did not prepare us to teach in urban schools. We really did not talk about it. When we looked at the ACT scores for the different schools, I noticed that the urban schools were low, but we did not talk about why. We could have talked about it.

These participants indicated that they did not received support or feedback from university faculty about mini-lessons which they implemented during their practicums.

Participants believed that lack of support and feedback was directly due to university instructors working with secondary preservice teachers in groups only, instead of working with them individually.

In contrast, Participants 3 and 6 felt that they were supported by faculty in their preparation to teach in the urban school. Participant 3 noted the following:

For me, it was more about the staff I encountered. Having my English professor as my guide, I think, was very valuable in my perception of urban schools and students in that environment. It was the same with my communications professor, who is very place-based and conscientious about community connectivity; he focused on things that [are about] mindfulness.

Participant 6 stated, “It was probably reading strategies. This class was taught by my English professor.” The two participants acknowledged that these two classes were taught by two university faculty who chose to teach their methods courses at the partner urban school.

The majority of participants indicated that they were unaware of urban school students’ behaviors, and all of the participants in the focus group discussion agreed that they were not supported by university faculty as a whole and were not prepared for what they experienced during their field service practicums. Participant 3 said, “Student behaviors change with different teachers. Students act differently towards teachers who they trusted or who they connected with more.” Participant 2 added the following:

For me it was [understanding] the students with documented behavioral issues that was difficult when compared to the students with learning and emotional

disabilities. There was a student whose stepdad did not want him in the house. I have never seen that before.

Participant 3 added the following to the discussion:

I think the situations I was least prepared for were the ones that just popped up when working with children. For example, there was a girl who was always fine. They (the teachers) took her cell phone away, and she freaked out. Just things like this, which are not related to the curriculum but arise when working with children, is what I would like to know more about.

During the one on one interviews, Participant 1 said, “The attitudes of the students were completely different than those I was raised with and those of the students I went to high school with.” Participant 6 said, “Here you have more than I thought you would have. The behavior issues are different, but I did not see anything threatening.” Others disagreed with Participant 6. Participant 3 stated, “I was really surprised to see the level of disrespectful and out of control behavior.” Participant 2 commented, “What I observed is that the urban school is always a battle; if you cannot manage behavior, you cannot teach.” Participant 4 further noted the following:

My being a permanent sub helped prepare me for the behavior problems. I learned that I had to be strict on the kids. But I still had a lot to learn. There were kids who defied authority. As I subbed, I had to learn how to call parents, and I had to sometimes talk to other teachers to see how they were doing in their classes.

During the debriefing session in the seminar observation, one of the participants asked the instructor this question:

How do you deal with students who do not care and do not want to be in class? I was so frustrated when my mentor teacher asked me to cover her class while she stepped out. The kids were disruptive, and I could not tell them to get out. I was so frustrated to see this behavior.

In conversations about the realities of working in urban school environments, all participants in the individual interviews and the seminar observations responded that they were not supported by university faculty in their preparedness to teach in urban schools. In the individual interviews, I asked the participants to tell me what they learned in their university coursework about the characteristics of an urban school. Participant 1 shared the following observation:

Nothing really specific.... There is nothing really geared towards urban, rural or suburban schools. I think it might be a good thing to be able to study about our assigned schools in advance of working there. For example, we could learn about the school's budget and how materials and resources are acquired. If a staff member from the school presented this information, they could share, "Here is what we have to deal with. What do you think?" I am still trying to understand budgets and Title I. I think it is so important for teachers to understand where money comes from and how things get done within the school.

Participants 2, 4 and 6 expressed that they could not recall any information being provided. They identified that they would rely on learning through their experiences and through the information shared among secondary preservice teachers. Participant 5 added, "... there is no course, and I have not been taught anything about it." Participant 3

did offer a comment which suggested that the collaboration of the university faculty and the school educators leads to information sharing which is practical and site-based:

The only course in the education program in which I learned about the characteristics of an urban school was when I attended a class conducted at the partner urban school and taught by my English professor. But as far as my education courses preparing me, there was not a lot of information.

During the debriefing session in the seminar observations, one participant shared a situation for which she stated that she definitely had not been prepared. She told the class, "While I was in my mentor teacher's classroom, I witnessed an armed police officer with a large dog walking up and down the hallways." Another preservice teacher in the class clarified, "They were there looking for drugs. The dogs are trained to sniff for marijuana and chewing tobacco." The first preservice teacher then noted, "I had never seen anything like that; I was scared. When my mentor teacher returned, she closed the door and told me they were going to search the parking lot, too." This preservice teacher then asked the discussion group why students chew tobacco. One participant in the group responded, "They chew it to get high." The university instructor did not respond to the preservice teachers exchanges or continue the discussion of reported experiences in the urban school environment.

All participants recognized that having informed and supportive university faculty in their teacher preparation courses would help them to maintain motivation and foster confidence, whereas less informed or less engaged university faculty were sources of frustration. All participants expressed the need and desire for increased research-based

practices that would help to develop learning strategies related to teaching in urban school environments.

Researchers have supported the finding that preservice teachers feel supported and challenged by faculty in their preparation to teach in urban school settings (Barron, 2015, Lafferty, 2015, Ronfeldt, 2012). The decisions made by two MWU faculty to move their methods classes from the university to the partner urban school is an example of bridging what Zeichner (2010) called “the traditional divide between campus and field-based teacher education” (p. 483). Zeichner suggested that the problem which has persistently impeded college and university-based preservice teacher education programs for many years is not so much whether preservice teachers’ exposure to and experience within urban schools occurs early or late in their programs, but rather, that university educators do not know what schools are doing, and school educators do not know what universities are doing. In contrast, Darling-Hammond, Friedlaender, and Snyder (2014) posited that the reason that younger teachers are more likely to leave the teaching profession early in their careers is due to lack of preparation for the reality of the classroom, particularly the urban classroom. Henry (1996) stated that a major problem with new teacher retention is the lack of support from seasoned teachers and other educational professionals in the field. As Participant 1 stated, in the one on one interview, “It is like once you are done, that is it. They just throw you out and forget about you.” To truly prepare preservice teachers to become effective in the classroom, university educators within the teacher education programs must provide preservice teachers with the support they need to develop the skills for classroom success throughout their earlier years as teaching professionals (Hoaglund, Birkenfeld, & Box, 2014).

Theme 4: Preservice Teachers Have the Desire to Thrive in Urban School Classrooms, and They Identified the Need for Increased Research-Based Practices and Urban School Experiences Throughout Their Undergraduate Education

This finding aligns with all three research questions, and it encompasses themes that include the following: (a) learning classroom management skills specific to urban classrooms; (b) translating theory into practice; (c) feeling a disconnect from university faculty; (d) providing more daily time spent in urban schools; (e) providing experiences in urban schools earlier within their program; and (f) providing experiences in urban schools longer than twelve weeks. During the focus group discussions, participants were asked, based on their experiences, what prepares a teacher to work in an urban school? In response to learning classroom management skills specific to urban classrooms, Participants 4 and 5 expressed the importance of learning how to manage an urban school classroom. Participant 2 added the following:

For me, the thing about teaching in an urban school that I have not learned a lot of is classroom management. In the university setting, I think, there needs to be more classroom management classes. Also, just being out in urban schools, it would be helpful to observe what the teachers do and to step in the classroom to experience how to handle certain situations.

During the one on one interviews, all participants had concerns about classroom management in urban schools. Participants 3, 4, and 5 agreed that all they have learned about classroom management has been experienced and learned on their own through their substitute work in the urban schools. Participant 2 clarified this:

The biggest thing that is lacking is there are no classroom management classes for secondary teachers. And classroom management is key [to success]; it is the be all and end all. You cannot teach if you cannot manage, and in an urban school it is always a battle.

Participant 1 pointed out that she used her observations in her mentor teachers' classrooms and asked questions about classroom management issues. She commented:

I observed how students act differently from classroom to classroom, and so I tried to gauge the other teachers by what they were doing and how that was enticing the students to act worse or better. I asked questions, and I saw how different teachers managed their classrooms, and saw how the students reacted to the teachers. If we observed more, it would help.

In the seminar observations, the faculty instructor addressed classroom management by showing a number of short videos from Wong (2013). These videos included lessons about effective teaching, well-managed classrooms, classroom readiness, seating, roll call, and effective discipline plans. The secondary preservice teachers were instructed to take notes for open discussion following the videos. They were then asked if they had observed their mentor teachers using any of the strategies shown in the films. Some commented that they had observed their mentor teachers using the same procedures, and some had not. One preservice teacher commented, "At my school, the assigned seating does not work because there are not enough seats for all of the students."

During one of the seminar sessions, secondary preservice teachers completed two activities relative to the video topics: (a) designing their classroom for 35 students and (b) discussing why they should have classroom rules. The instructor emphasized that

successful teachers present their classroom rules clearly and give their students the reasons why the rules are needed. In another seminar session observed, preservice teachers discussed classroom interruptions and what they can do to eliminate them. The instructor suggested that they talk to their mentor teachers for suggestions. Preservice teachers suggested that they needed more time to observe in their mentor teachers' classrooms, and one preservice teacher suggested rotating classrooms to observe different teachers would be extremely helpful.

Translating theory into practice was another theme related to this finding. In the interviews, participants were asked what recommendations for change they would have to better prepare future teachers to teach in urban schools. A repeating theme was the need for more practice and less theory. Participant 1 was explicit: "I do not know if theory is enough. I just think you have to be in it." Participant 3 acknowledged the need for theory and did not devalue its importance, but stressed a greater need for actual practice and more of it. Participant 3 was concerned with the frustration and confusion that occurs when what has been taught formally falls apart in actual practice. "Those theories break down and then you are kind of stuck. You are, 'like why didn't this theory work? That's what they told me to do.' So, you definitely need the practical experience." Participant 2 believed that not only was it necessary to be physically present in urban classrooms or to ascertain how theory might look, but also stressed the element of understanding urban communities.

We should have actual course work, not in African American history and social inequality and injustice, that is all well and good and needs to be known, but at the same time I need to know how to deal with the community specifically, how

to teach kids specifically, concrete ways that work, research-based strategies, specifics not theory and history. It is important, but it is not multiple course work that is important, the concrete needs to be taught.

Others also recognized the need for developing teaching skills on site, within the actual community. Participant 4 felt that more observations were needed during secondary preservice teachers' field work and that "the university needs to offer more classes of campus." Participant 1 believed that specific classes needed to be taught off-campus and onsite: "Your methods classes should all have to be in an urban school setting because you cannot learn all you need to know in the university classroom."

To achieve a more practical understanding of urban school environments, participants named specific means by which they believed that this could occur. Participant 5, for example, focused on school of education faculty and a form of education that is discussed frequently in the literature that is tied to basic sociology concepts.

University faculty should be following or at least be versed in the ideas of place-based education and how community shapes an environment. Even if they do not follow that philosophy, I feel like it needs to be taught across the board.

In the focus group discussions, Participants 2 and 4 agreed that they have been taught a lot of theories on what to do and what not to do, and they have been presented with a lot of content and basic skills. What they feel they need, however, is more practice and more exposure to the students in the urban classrooms. Participant 2 said, "I think it would be a good opportunity to go out in the field to test those theories before you are at the end of your degree so you know what works and does not work for you." Participant

6 agreed and added, “I do not think we are given enough practice time in the urban classroom learning how to implement the theories and procedures we learn in the university classroom.” Participants expressed feelings of disconnect from university faculty. In the focus group, Participant 3 stated the following:

If the teachers in the education department had a better support system for students in the program, our experience and preparation would be a lot better.

There are a lot of university faculty members that do not know what we do in our school assignments. I have talked to students who are going to be doing their student teaching next semester, and they have made statements such as, “I am placed at this school, and I have no idea what I am doing or how it is going to go because nobody is telling me anything. I do not know what I am supposed to do.”

Participant 4 expressed frustration with unequal standing between professors and secondary preservice teachers when it comes to practicing what one preaches and teaches and failing to model good teaching methods themselves.

One thing I have noticed is that our professors do not do the things themselves that we are told that we have to do. Like the way they write exams, the way they plan their days. They do not do any of it for us the way they make us do it in planning for our students. That has been weird for me. I am being tested on my work and it has to be like followed to a tee and yet my professors do not have to do that, they do not even use those methods themselves. They do not write out clear directions for assignments like they teach us that we have to do. This is frustrating. They should do what they ask us to do.

Participant 5 added to the discussion:

I agree with Participant 4. In my methods class, we were taught to make a bubble map, and the professor informed my class about how and why we should use it, but the instructors in the urban schools do not have to do that because they have been doing it for so long, they do not need it. I get that; they are really efficient at their jobs, but the professors at the university should lead by example, and show us that they are doing it, so when we see it, we can model it.

There was agreement among all participants in the one on one interviews, focus group and seminar observations that MWU's School of Education should provide more daily time spent in the partner urban schools, and that the field service practicum experiences should begin earlier within their program. The last theme related to this finding is providing experiences in urban schools longer than 12 weeks. Participants in the focus group and interviews were candid in sharing their responses.

During the interviews, Participant 1 suggested,

I think it would be best if you could work like a block-on and a block-off. Half of the semester should be spent only in the urban classroom working with the students. Half of it should be back on the campus. And I am not just talking about walking in to the urban classroom and sitting there while a teacher teaches. I am talking about you walk in and the teacher teaches first hour and you get the rest of the day. Because the more you are in there teaching, I think the better teacher you are going to be.

Participant 2 responded,

True experiences prior to student teaching. Have the field work start right there on campus where they have the Early College and they have the Early Childhood

Development Center on campus. Students need to be pushed in and get the experience sooner and longer than year four or five of college.

Participant 3 stated,

It was really profound to me when my mentor teacher said that most teachers are prepared to teach from a middle class perspective, but a lot of students are not coming from that perspective anymore. I think we need more classroom time at the urban schools. I know it might not be easy, but if they want us prepared to teach we need more time interacting with the kids.

Participants 4, 5, and 6 agreed that if the School of Education really wants to improve their preservice teachers' understanding about teaching in an urban setting then they have to be immersed into the school sooner and longer.

A study by Waddell (2011) explored preservice teachers' perceptions of both urban school settings and their teacher education program which had been redesigned to relate to teaching in urban schools. Waddell recommended that teacher preparation programs offer opportunities for preservice teachers to "cross cultural borders to gain a broad and deep understanding of urban students and urban schools" (p. 24). Cultural borders, Waddell explained, are the stark differences that exist between groups that serve as each group's defining characteristics and norms. Waddell concluded that creating opportunities and carefully designed experiences outside the educational classroom can heighten learning and have a significant impact on preparing preservice teachers to teach in urban school settings.

Klein et al. (2015) described a collaborative effort undertaken by the researchers as preservice teacher residents in a state university program while doing their internships

at a local urban school district. They investigated the impact of implementing researched based teaching practices in an urban setting. The research-based practices described by the authors included the following: building and emerging teacher identity, modeling effective teacher leadership, and providing a total or partial immersion residency teacher education program. In examining research-based practices, the authors concluded that the myriad approaches to teaching and learning in urban schools that are the mainstay of research-based practices – immersion, introspection, collaboration, mentor modeling, and support – are necessary for successfully preparing preservice teachers. Central to research-based practice is the self-awareness that is developed by the preservice teacher as a teacher and a learner. Waddell (2011) and Klein et al. (2015) recognized frustrations experienced by preservice teachers entering urban school environments. Addressing those frustrations and remedying the situations through research-based practices required willing collaborative efforts from all parties involved – preservice teachers, schools of education faculty, and the urban schools themselves. Feelings expressed by all participants in this study emphasized not only their need but also their want of more and in depth preparation with research-based practices along with strong support from an informed faculty.

Discrepant Cases

In this qualitative case study, the data collected from one-on-one interviews, focus group, and observations were used to explore, examine, and identify secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of their preparedness to teach in urban school settings. All data were aligned with the research questions and the emerged themes; therefore, there were no discrepant cases.

Evidence of Quality

To address the evidence of the quality of the findings, all data were collected and analyzed in accordance with the plan approved by Walden IRB. No data were collected until I received IRB approval and a signed letter of cooperation from the research site. All participants were contacted via email regarding their participation in this study. Each participant received and signed a student participant consent letter. Any questions participants had were addressed at that time. Only the participants who signed a consent letter were interviewed in this study.

First, I conducted one on one interviews with individuals in a secured office located at the research site. I gave all participants sufficient time to answer each question. I used probing and follow-up questions during the interviews. All interviews were conducted using the proper protocol. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and stored in a password protected Microsoft Word document labeled Participant A through F to protect participant identities.

Secondly, I facilitated a focus group discussion, held in a secured classroom on the research site. Each participant was assigned a place card with a number to be used for identification. The numbers were displayed on place cards that were referred to during the discussion to assist the participants in remembering all participants' assigned numbers. The focus group began with introductions, clarifications, and the purpose of this study. Any questions or concerns were addressed at that time. Participants had already been informed about and given their consent for the focus group discussion being audio taped. As the facilitator, I kept the participants engaged and on topic, all the

participants were comfortable in answering the questions, and participated enthusiastically in the discussions.

Lastly, I was a nonparticipant observer of two 45-minute preservice teacher practicum seminars. I did not directly interact with the participants during these sessions. I observed the discussions between the university faculty and the secondary preservice teachers to capture the perceptions and experiences of the preservice teachers' daily work in urban schools. The site of my nonparticipant observation took place on the research site campus where preservice teachers were attending a mandatory course that ran concurrent with their field service practicum. The university faculty instructor moderated the session, helped preservice teachers navigate and identify difficulties, and guided preservice teachers in possible solutions. Preservice teachers related their experiences in a casual conversational manner, shared insights, and problem solved with the instructor's guided scaffolding method. As a nonparticipant observer, I watched, listened, and took notes. The purpose of the observations was to complement, reinforce, and build upon the interviews and focus group by gathering more data on the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban schools as they described their experiences in their own words and without researcher prompting.

The data were collected by using three different data collection sources to gather evidence about the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers' regarding their preparation to teach in urban school settings. The three sources that were used to gather data were the following: one on one interviews with six preservice teachers (Appendix A); a focus group with five preservice teachers (Appendix B); and two field

service practicum seminar observations which I recorded on the protocol instrument (Appendix C). I reviewed the transcripts from the interviews, for relevant data that related to the problem statement and research questions guiding this study. As I read through each participant's transcript, I created a story board by writing repeating ideas, themes, quotations, and keywords on note paper. Each participant's comments were assigned a different color as different participants often use similar words or phrases to describe the same idea. In the second phase of analyzing the data, I searched the relevant data again for repeating ideas among the participants.

When participants consented to participate in this study, I explained to them that I would be using member checking. Member checking was completed to provide the participants with an opportunity to review the findings to verify the accuracy of their input. I made appointments with the participants to review the findings in person to confirm the accuracy or to suggest revisions to the findings. Three participants suggested minor changes, which I incorporated into the language of the findings. Member checking provided credibility of the findings and interpretations.

To maintain trustworthiness, triangulation was completed and the findings were compared across the three data sets to substantiate the perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about teaching in urban settings. I observed participants in university seminar settings to collect data on experiences and perceptions shared with university personnel. I interviewed those same participants to gather their perceptions of their experiences and feelings about teaching in urban school settings. Finally, I conducted a focus group to allow participants to explore ideas about urban school teaching. To triangulate the data, I compared the data collected from the three sources in order to gain

a greater perspective about the data. By comparing one data source with another, I was able to cross check for less obvious findings, potential bias, and possible issues within the data. “The most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of enquiry” (Yin, 2009, p. 115). Yin (2014) further stated that the findings of a case study are more authentic and convincing when a variety of data sources are available. By interviewing 11 secondary preservice teachers, I was able to gather various perspectives on my research questions. This cross-verification process provided assurance that the data were consistent and aligned. By using the process of member checking and triangulation, I made every effort to ensure that the findings captured the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban schools in their own words and without researcher prompting.

Conclusion

By exploring the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about their preparation to teach in urban schools, I addressed three research questions. The research questions were related to the participants’ perceptions of preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings, participants’ perceptions about preservice teachers’ preparedness to teach in urban school settings, and to identify participants’ recommendations for potentially effective approaches that the School of Education could implement for preparing preservice teachers to achieve success in urban school settings. In Section 4, I explored the three research questions as they related to the four findings:

- RQ1: What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about teaching in urban settings?

- RQ2: What are secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their preparedness for teaching in urban settings?
- RQ3: What approaches could the School of Education faculty implement to improve secondary preservice teachers' preparation to teach in urban school settings?

These findings reflect the concerns of secondary preservice teachers about their university education preparation. The data collection methods gave a voice to concerns of the preservice teachers.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Through analyzing the data, I discovered that secondary preservice teachers are excited and concerned about making a difference in urban school classrooms. The preservice teachers reported their comfort with the subject content of their university majors, but they felt that they are unprepared to manage culturally diverse classrooms. Preservice teachers felt both supported and challenged by faculty in their preparation to teach in urban school settings. Teachers indicated that they have the desire to thrive in urban school classrooms, and they identified the need for increased research-based practices and urban school experiences throughout their undergraduate education. These ideas were verbalized during the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with the participants in this study.

The purposes of this qualitative case study were (a) to explore the perceptions of secondary preservice teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings, (b) to examine secondary preservice teachers' perceptions of preparedness for teaching in urban school settings, and (c) to identify potentially effective approaches for preparing secondary preservice teachers to achieve success in urban school settings. The university's goal is to prepare teachers to deliver student centered curricula. The School of Education is supporting preservice teachers through positive measures to improve the university's preparation program.

I chose a case study approach because it allowed me to collect the reported perceptions and expressed ideas of secondary preservice teachers about working in urban school settings and to record their ideas about the types of preparation that would best serve future preservice teachers to be more prepared to teach in urban school settings.

Data were collected in three phases: interviews (one on one, face to face), focus group, and observations (nonparticipant). A purposeful sampling approach was used to select secondary preservice teachers for this study. Data were collected from 11 secondary preservice teachers who were enrolled in MSU's teacher education program and who were completing their field service practicum experiences in a local partner urban school setting. Three research questions guided this study: (a) What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about teaching in urban school settings? (b) What are secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their preparedness for teaching in urban school settings? (c) What approaches could the School of Education faculty implement to improve secondary preservice teachers' preparation to teach in urban school settings?

Four themes emerged from an analysis of the data: (a) secondary preservice teachers are excited and concerned about making a difference in urban school classrooms; (b) secondary preservice teachers are comfortable with the subject content but feel unprepared to manage culturally diverse classrooms; (c) secondary preservice teachers are supported and challenged by faculty in their preparation to teach in urban school settings; and (d) secondary preservice teachers have the desire to thrive in urban school classrooms, and they identified the need for increased research-based practices and urban school experiences throughout their undergraduate education. Section 5 presents my interpretation of findings, recommendations for further study, and implications for social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

The purposes of this study were (a) to explore the perceptions of secondary teachers regarding teaching in urban school settings, (b) to examine secondary preservice teachers' perceptions of preparedness for teaching in urban school settings, and (c) to identify potentially effective approaches for preparing secondary preservice teachers to achieve success in urban school settings. Guided by the conceptual framework of Vygotsky's ZPD (1978) and the concept of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), I analyzed the data and explored the connection between these concepts and the gap in practice that exists between preservice teacher learning needs and the university's program delivery.

The conceptual framework, based on sociocultural theory, ZPD, and scaffolding, is an organizing feature that states that individuals' social experiences shape their ways of thinking and interpreting the world. The academic development of people is connected to their sociocultural environments, and learning is the result of the interaction with individuals, other people within the environment, and cultural objects, all of which contribute to the social formation of an individual's mind (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). In addition, the two concepts of ZPD and scaffolding are interdependent. ZPD refers to individuals' skill development in particular academic areas (Castellano & Matthews, 2014) described by Vygotsky (1978) as "determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). The concept of scaffolding involves the most knowledgeable persons (MKPs) who, by example, show the learner how to solve problems. This interpretation of the study findings is organized around the three research questions and addresses the pertinent roles of ZPD and

scaffolding in secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of teaching in urban schools.

The following conclusions are based on the four emergent themes that address the research questions. Each conclusion encompasses one or more of the themes based on the outcomes in Section 4 and supported in the literature. From these general categories of data, four themes emerged, which frame the conclusions.

Theme 1

The first conclusion is that secondary preservice teachers need specific preparation in the university classroom to teach in urban schools. The preservice teachers in this study were enthusiastic about their career choice to be teachers. Their university program, partnered with the local urban school district, brought preservice teachers face to face with challenges they had not anticipated when they began their studies. The biggest challenge they encountered was confronting a university decision to require the preservice teachers to complete their internships with an urban school environment experience. During the interviews, I asked the participants about their practicum experiences teaching in urban schools. Although their overall responses could be characterized as positive, six of the 11 participants expressed surprise at one or more conditions of their program. These six participants expressed feelings of anxiety and nervousness regarding the unknown experiences they would encounter when they arrived at the urban school.

During the interviews, several secondary preservice teachers used the word *different* to describe the school, indicating that this urban school setting was different

from what they had experienced in their K-12 education. Howard and Milner (2014) explained that preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are largely constructed by their own school experiences, the communities in which they live, and the media. This difference, preservice teachers expressed, not only encompassed the urban school environment, but also affected their ability to build relationships with urban school students. When asked to describe experiences with urban school students during the interview, Participant 2 acknowledged that she was able to build some relationships, "but not very deep." She attributed this to the fact that, during the field service practicum, she did not have the opportunity to work directly with the students and she was only in the classroom twice a week. She noted, "I was told to hang back and just watch." Participant 6 said that she felt challenged when faced with building relationships with urban schools students. During her interview, she expressed her nervousness and shared that, "My mentor teacher was great. She was good with relationships. I watched her when I was in her classroom and was able to ask her questions." These two experiences are examples of ZPD and scaffolding.

In the first example, the mentor teacher in the role of the MKP did not take advantage of the opportunity to provide the scaffolding needed for the preservice teacher to solve her problem of building relationships with urban students. In contrast, the second experience is an example of the mentor teacher modeling the way a teacher should build a relationship with a student in the classroom setting. In this experience, the mentor teacher took on the role of the MKP and provided the scaffolding for the preservice teacher to help with the challenge (problem) of building relationships specific to urban school students.

In the interviews and focus group discussions, the participants communicated that they felt a cultural disconnect with urban school students. Secondary preservice teachers said that they were not prepared for how urban school students interacted with one another. Participant 4, for example, described two male students making chest and hand physical contact when engaging each other in the hall. Initially, Participant 4 was undecided as to whether this was the start of a fight or simply a greeting style.

Secondary preservice teachers also stated that they were not familiar with the music that urban students listened to, or the way that urban school students dressed. Preservice teachers shared that they had “these ideas” of what they thought urban school students would be like from what they saw on television, in the movies, and heard from their friends. In the focus group, Participants 2, 3, and 5 agreed that urban students were really into what they, preservice teachers, identified as hip-hop culture. They noted that urban school students would hum what preservice teachers labeled hip-hop songs and listen to hip-hop music when walking through the halls. Further, preservice teachers’ perceptions included descriptions of students listening to music “all the time on their phones” and “during class.” Participant 3 emphasized that he saw students “listening to the music even when they were in the bathroom!” All of the participants in the focus group felt that everything that the urban school students did revolved around hip-hop music, including the way urban school students dressed and the way they talked.

In the focus group, Participant 5 summed it up by saying, “I see it as there is more of a culture of its own in urban schools, that I know nothing about.” All other participants’ nodded in agreement. According to Washburn-Moses, Kopp, and Hettersimer (2012), the field service practicum is the most significant component of the

learning experience for novice teachers. In order for preservice teachers to see the big picture of learning and teaching, Washburn-Moses et al. maintained it is vital that preservice teachers receive hands-on experiences with the students they will be teaching so that they can be allowed to interpret their own experiences. Interpreting their own experiences occurs within their ZPDs, and requires support and scaffolding from one or more MKPs. The university faculty must review and revise the educational program to align with their partnership with the urban schools.

Theme 2

The second conclusion is that university faculty need to reevaluate their functioning knowledge of urban schools and what is needed for secondary preservice teachers to be successful in the urban classroom. Teacher education programs must prepare preservice teachers for a classroom that may be far different from the ones they experienced during their K-12 educations. According to the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program (2010), many preservice teachers are from White middle class backgrounds and were raised in suburban and rural areas. The program reported that the future workplace for many preservice teachers will be in urban classroom settings with increasing racial and ethnic diversity. Schaffer et al. (2014) stated that teacher preparation programs are falling short in their goal to train preservice teachers to work with diverse student populations. This is a crucial point because research indicates that teacher effectiveness is directly tied to teacher proficiency (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Gay, 2014). As preservice teachers expressed their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding their preparedness to teach in urban school settings, there was unanimous

agreement. From the interviews, focus group, and observations, participants felt that they were not prepared to teach in urban school environments. During the interviews, all of the participants shared feelings of being unaware of how urban school students learn, student behaviors found in urban schools, and urban school environmental features.

Participants agreed that they knew little about the learning characteristics of urban school students when they began their practicum experience. I asked the participants, “What did you learn in your course work about the learning characteristics of urban school students?” Participants 1, 3, and 6 indicated that they only remembered reading and discussing Wong’s (2013) *The First Days of School*. Participant 6 stated, “That helped me to know how to start the year off, but that didn’t have anything to do with learning how students learn or anything to do with teaching in an urban school.” In the focus group, Participant 3 noted that there were no specific classes that dealt with the learning characteristics of urban students. Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5 agreed that, in the classes they had taken, they learned how to write lesson plans and unit plans but learned nothing related to how urban students learn.

Participants described experiences that they were not expecting when observing classrooms at the urban schools. For example, Participant 3 described a situation in which she was asked to substitute teach for her mentor teacher, and she said the students were “terrible” and she had “never seen the class that bad.” She wanted to cry, and she was frustrated because she was not prepared and did not know what to do in this situation. Although difficulties in substitute teaching have been well documented (Driedger-Ennis, 2014; Kivunja, 2015; Lai, 2013; Zubrzycki, 2012), Participant 3 attributed the difficulties she had as a substitute in the classroom to teaching in urban schools. In this situation, a

MKP would have benefited the preservice teacher's learning and understanding by conducting a debriefing session and by providing the necessary scaffolding.

Haberman (2012) stated that managing student behavior can be a major concern and a difficult task for novice teachers entering urban schools. Further, on average 30% of teachers who leave the profession often cite a lack of adequate preparation as one of the reasons for their departure (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The National Commission for Teaching and America's Future (2012) however, recorded an even higher rate of 50% of urban teachers leaving the profession within their first five years of teaching. These teachers cited behavior problems as a major factor influencing their decision to leave. In my study, the participants of both the interview and the focus groups, expressed that they were not prepared for the student behavior observed and encountered during their field service practicums.

In the focus group, Participant 3 stated that she was least prepared for the situations that "just happened." For example, during her observations, a female student whom the preservice teacher described as "normally well behaved" had her cell phone taken away. Participant 3 explained, "The student started yelling at the teacher and freaking out." She explained "These types of behaviors that are not related to the curriculum, but arise when working with students, we do not discuss in our classes." Participant 1 and 2 shared that they were not prepared to work with special needs students who were included in the general education classrooms. They related that they witnessed students who were, as Participant 2 referred "out of control and who did not listen." Participant 2 suggested that "maybe we could go a little bit further in our courses

about this type of situation and what that means and some of the things that could be put into place to help those students.”

Participants in the interviews, focus group, and observations acknowledged unawareness of environmental features throughout the classrooms and the building. The attrition of new and experienced teachers has become a challenge for school districts throughout the United States, particularly in urban districts. Buckley, Schneider and Shang (2004) investigated the importance of facility quality as a predictor in the decision of teachers to leave or stay in their current position. According to their study, "teachers might be willing to take lower salaries in exchange for better working conditions" (p. 10). Hanushek and Luque (2000) argue that, although teacher salaries are a main criteria when looking for a job; school conditions may be just as important as salary in the retention decision.

In the observations, one preservice teacher described her astonishment when she saw armed police with dogs looking for drugs in school lockers. She communicated that she had never seen anything like that before. When I asked participants about prevalent, urban school-wide concerns, such as facilities, maintenance, safety, and supplies, Participant 5 commented on having to be “buzzed in” before entering the school building, something she had not experienced in her K-12 schools. Participant 6 said, “They keep it pretty clean here.” Participant 6 added, “You walk in and people from other schools even say, oh, my God, it’s so clean here.” Participant 4 said, “I feel safe here; there is always a police officer here, and I like that I do not have to go through a metal detector like I am going to jail.” I asked the focus group to describe the urban school setting; Participant 2 said, “There just doesn’t seem to be enough resources and money going to the school to

improve the infrastructure and to improve the resources available for students to continue their learning.”

Theme 3

The third and final conclusion addresses the School of Education program. Although there have been program changes in the classroom curriculum, the School of Education needs to implement changes that include an increase in direct experiences in urban schools and communities. Direct experiences need to be action oriented that engage preservice teachers in community projects, more time on task, and personal interaction with urban students, their families, and the community in general. There is a need, not only to acknowledge the disconnect between the university and the partner school based program but also how that disconnect affects preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about urban students, urban schools, and teaching in general.

Zeichner (2010) suggested that the problem that has persistently impeded college and university-based preservice teacher education programs for many years is that universities do not know what schools are doing and schools do not know what universities are doing. Zeichner, Payne, and Brayco (2015) addressed this specific to urban schools and asserted three reasons for this disconnect: (a) supervising teachers in K-12 settings do not know enough about preservice teachers' university method courses; (b) university instructors do not know enough about curriculum or specific practices taught and implemented in K-12 settings; and (c) the length of field service experiences is too short.

Secondary preservice teachers recommended approaches that MWU's School of Education could implement to improve their preparation to teach in the urban school

classroom similar to those suggested by Zeichner et al. (2015). Participants felt that, specific to the urban school classroom, they were not prepared and needed preparation in specific areas. Some of those specific areas included that the program needs to address the feelings of disconnect between faculty and preservice teachers during the field service practicum. Also, the program needs to provide training in classroom management skills specific to the urban classroom with methods courses that translate theory into practice. Additionally, the program needs to provide more daily time spent in the urban school, experiences in urban schools need to occur earlier within the program, and need to be longer than 12 weeks.

Participants 3 and 6 said that they received positive support from two specific faculty. Participant 3 praised the two faculty instructors for making the decision to teach their methods courses twice a week at the partner school site. In addition, Participant 3 indicated that having her professor on site as her guide to talk to was “valuable in developing my perception of urban schools and students in that environment.” Participant 6 commented that the two faculty instructors were “phenomenal.” She emphasized that they were there to answer her questions, she was able to be honest with them, and if she did not understand something, she was not embarrassed to admit that she did not understand and that made her feel good.

In contrast, Participants 1, 2, and 5 stated that they received no support from university faculty. Participant 1 said, “I think they tried, but I really did not get the support that I needed. I felt like they push you through, and you are just left there, hopefully you do well and maybe you do not.” Participant 2 said that she was “thrown into a teacher’s classroom” where that teacher was “definitely on the burnt-out spectrum

of her career.” Participant 2 determined that she did not “glean very much” from that observation experience. Participant 5 said, “Honestly, I feel I was not given any support. I have just kind of been told what I should be doing as a teacher, but I am not prepared.”

In comments made by participants in both the focus group and in my observations of the debriefings, they agreed that classroom management is a major concern. In the focus group, Participant 5 indicated that a teacher can know his or her subject, but “if you cannot manage the classroom everything can go wrong.” Participant 4 agreed, “I have not had any classroom management training or experience.” Participant 2 said, “In the university classroom setting, there needs to be more classroom management classes.” During the observations, several participants talked about classroom management concerns and how they did not think they had been prepared with strategies to use to keep the classroom under control.

In the interviews, Participant 1 described how the mentor teacher did not have control of her classroom: “The students would not stop talking and the mentor teacher was just screaming at the students to be quiet.” Participant 1 said the whole experience was very frustrating and she had no idea how she would have handled it if she had been the teacher. Garland, Garland, and Vasquez (2013) found that preservice teachers have feelings of uncertainty about managing urban classroom behaviors and want earlier access to actual classroom experiences. Participant 5 expressed a need for more instruction specifically in evidence-based practices for behavior management when working with diverse student populations.

Participants in the interviews and focus groups agreed that they needed courses that used research-based practices specific to urban school settings. Participants wanted

training in effective practices in dealing with difficult classroom situations not just the “best case scenarios” usually presented by faculty. Participants identified that they needed more practice and less theory. In the focus group, Participant 2 recognized that the university faculty teaches a lot of theory, but expressed her concern by stating, “Sometimes those theories break down and then you are stuck. Then you ask yourself why this theory didn’t work, what do I do now?” In the interview, Participant 2 said, “All my classes have been about theory and not a lot about practicality.” Waddell (2013) stated, “Understanding of self can be critical in the formation of individual candidates’ development of cultural critical consciousness as their identity as a teacher in urban communities develops” (p. 10). Waddell emphasized that research-based practices can have a profound effect on preservice teachers.

There was unanimous agreement from the participants in the interviews, focus group, and observations that the program needs to provide secondary preservice teachers with more daily time spent in urban school, and provide field service practicums earlier and longer within the program. During the interviews, Participant 1 suggested that the field service practicum rotate through the school year “like a co-op program” allowing preservice teachers to spend time totally immersed in the urban school and then exclusive time in the classroom. Participant 2 suggested “immersion in the urban classroom early. Beginning in the sophomore year of the program, not waiting until the last year.” During the focus group, all participants indicated that they needed more time per day, more days per week, and more weeks throughout their entire education program in the urban classroom and school. In the observations, the preservice teachers, in discussion with the

faculty instructor, identified feelings of unpreparedness and attributed that to not spending enough time in the urban school classroom.

Washburn-Moses et al. (2012) showed that early field experiences have positive outcomes with the preservice teachers who participated in their study. Their results showed that early field experiences increased preservice teachers' desires to become teachers, increased preservice teachers' understanding of diverse student populations, and gained knowledge of the characteristics of a good teacher and good teaching. Shaffer, Gleich-Bope, and Copich's (2014) findings indicated that early and longer field service practicums, where preservice students collaborate with university faculty and related course work, can have positive influences on preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about teaching in urban schools. Early and extended immersion, research-based practices in classroom management, and active problem solving with university faculty can inform preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions in meeting their needs for becoming successful in urban school environments.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change from this research study concern benefits for secondary preservice teachers, for teachers and administrators in the school of education, and for urban school students and educators. Identifying preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about urban schools, teaching in urban schools, and their preparedness to teach in urban schools helps inform responsible decision making in college and university teacher education programs. Schools of education may address gaps in preservice teachers' understandings of urban environments by creating courses and establishing support networks that provide real-world solutions to problems that

preservice teachers face. Additionally, research-based strategies for classroom management can be put into practice as preservice teachers complete their practicums and student teaching.

As preservice teachers develop personally and professionally, the urban students they teach benefit. As schools of education struggle to continuously improve their programs to meet the needs of their preservice teachers, faculty will necessarily need to become more informed as well. As preservice teachers enter increasingly diverse classrooms, knowing and understanding the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that preservice teachers bring with them can guide teacher education curricula and faculty professional development. Faculty would then be prepared to work with preservice teachers to expand awareness of self and others in developing relevant and culturally responsive pedagogies in urban classrooms. This in turn, would benefit the urban schools in which preservice teachers find themselves.

The findings of this study can help to develop and promote the social well-being of urban schools and students by contributing to the knowledge base about the needs of secondary preservice teachers and by initiating strategies and approaches to effectively address the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about teaching in urban schools. The findings of this study can help encourage and develop collaboration between the university faculty, partnered urban school, administrators, teachers, students and community. By implementing these procedures and plans, the process towards social change can begin to develop.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the findings in this case study, there are two recommendations for action. The recommendations are based on faculty collaboration and research-based practices to address secondary preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about preparedness to teach in urban school settings.

Recommendation #1: Establish direct collaboration among university faculty, partnered urban school principals, mentor teachers, and community organizations to create experiences that include course work, field work, and community work. The findings of this study revealed that preservice teachers felt that they were not prepared to teach in urban school classrooms and needed more direct, ongoing experiences. Discussions in the literature related to the reform of teacher preparation programs suggested the need for more collaboration between university and school, especially when preparing preservice teachers to teach in urban school environments (Catapano & Huisman, 2010; Schaffer, 2012).

To date, there has been no substantial collaboration or planning between the MWU's School of Education and their partnered urban schools. At present, there are only two MWU School of Education faculty members who have agreed to teach their courses at the urban school site. Based on the data collected, I recommend that the university faculty meet with urban school administrators, mentor teachers, and representatives from the community to determine some possible activities or experiences that preservice teachers can participate in prior to their student teaching that relate directly to the teacher preparation program. These experiences could be designed to give preservice teachers

opportunities to work in urban schools and experience first-hand what is like to work in urban school environments on a daily basis.

Recommendation # 2: Provide more research-based experiences in the urban school environment. The findings in this study revealed that preservice teachers desire to thrive in urban schools, and they identified the need for increased research-based practices and urban school experiences. Participants in this study stated that they had feelings of a cultural disconnect with urban school students. In addition, they expressed an unawareness of urban school environmental features. The literature stresses that when new teachers are comfortable in the urban community that surrounds the school where they teach, then they feel comfortable as part of the urban school community (Davis, 2013; Delpit, 2012).

At present, because there are only two university faculty who have agreed to teach their methods courses at the urban school site, I recommend that MWU's School of Education leadership faculty meet with the partnered school principals and mentor teachers to discuss plans for year-long preservice teacher project-based learning experiences. This project-based learning would be specific activity based experiences. Activity based components within the project should address the needs identified by urban school key participants (principals and mentor teachers) pertaining to preservice students' involvement in service-oriented projects that would benefit the urban community. Activities should be based on the needs of the community.

Projects such as student youth councils, neighborhood enhancements, after school community center programs, and community newsletters would give preservice teacher's opportunities to be involved in meaningful programs and engage with urban school

students outside of the classroom. Projects could be centered on the community in which the urban students live and where the preservice teachers will be completing their field service practicums. Through collaborative efforts of educators within the school of education, preservice teachers, and urban school teachers and administrators, urban school students are served.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study opens the door for further research in the area of cultural proficiency and secondary preservice teacher preparation. If the goal of teacher preparation programs is to prepare all teachers to provide quality education for all students, then teacher education programs need to address the levels of cultural proficiency of preservice teachers related to their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. Preservice teachers include those who are entering teacher education programs, participating in field service practicums, and preparing for student teaching. One area of future research that might be explored is bridging the cultural disconnection that exists between the university and preservice teachers, university and urban schools, and preservice teachers and urban schools.

The findings from my study can serve as a foundation upon which to build future inquiry in the area of cultural proficiency and preservice teacher education. By acknowledging attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that secondary preservice teachers bring with them when they enter these programs, leaders of teacher preparation programs have the opportunity to encourage preservice teachers to experience, reflect upon, and analyze more informed beliefs that develop their levels of cultural proficiency. Specifically, a similar qualitative case study with a group of preservice teachers who have

made a commitment to teach in an urban school setting, and who will be starting their student teaching could be conducted. The purpose of this study would be to develop strategies and tools for preservice teachers to identify, confront, and begin to understand their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions and the challenges they will experience in the urban school classroom.

Gay (2014) maintained that the changes needed in the current ideology of teacher education programs mandates a commitment to developing cultural proficiency, a commitment which, to date, has not been implemented in teacher education reform programs. Delpit (2012) criticized the deficits of teacher education programs that avoid and repress the multicultural voices found in U.S. classrooms today. Delpit affirmed the argument for the reform of teacher education programs, emphasizing that the core of reform must include acknowledging differences. According to Ladson-Billings (2012) and Davis (2013), preservice teachers need to be taught to become change agents with skills for critical self-analysis, self-reflection, and understanding culture.

Howard (2010) insisted that the inner work of personal transformation has been the missing piece in the preparation of White teachers who are new to the diversity of an urban school setting. Gorski (2002) stated that the underlying goal of education is to affect social change; therefore, educators need to be aware of three levels of change: transformation of self, transformation of schools and schooling, and transformation of society. Transformation at personal and greater levels is acknowledged as problematic and commonly categorized within what is known as cultural disconnect. Cultural disconnect takes place when the teacher is unfamiliar with one or more students' diverse backgrounds which results in being unable to implement connected instruction, develop

effective strategies, and deliver meaningful content relative and sensitive to one or more student cultures (Brazron, 2005; Cannon, 2009). Cultural disconnect, Howard and Miller (2014) explained, is remedied through extended exposure to cultures different from one's own participation and immersion within a culture, and informed support structures that guide new awareness.

In the present study, the themes that emerged in the findings revealed that the secondary preservice teachers experienced cultural disconnect, and this caused problems. During the interviews, two areas that are crucial to further research were identified: (a) preservice teachers face challenges in building relationships specific to urban school students and (b) teacher education programs need an informed faculty and curriculum specific to effectively preparing preservice teachers to teach in urban schools.

After an analysis of the findings in this study, I recommend additional research on evaluating the cultural proficiency levels of secondary preservice teachers prior to student teaching. Cultural proficiency is defined as "knowing how to learn and teach about different groups in ways that acknowledge and honor all people and the groups they represent" (Lindsey, Robins, & Campbell-Jones, 2005, p. 74). Lindsey et al. (2005) identified two characteristics of cultural proficiency: First, individuals who are culturally proficient have behaviors that enable them to effectively interact in culturally diverse environments. Second, the culturally proficient educator is aware of how a person's cultural and ethnic presentation may offend some and yet be accepted and valued by others. The culturally proficient educator recognizes communication and social interaction pattern differences and then either uses these differences or at least

appropriately reacts to these differences to improve the effectiveness of communication with their students and their students' families (Lindsey et al., 2005).

The findings from one or more proposed studies in cultural proficiency, combined with findings from this study, would create a deeper understanding of the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about their preparedness to teach in urban schools. In addition, I recommended that the study focus on the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of secondary preservice teachers about cultural proficiency as it is presented in the cultural proficiency model of Lindsey, Robins and Terrell (2005) using the Cultural Proficiency Beliefs Inventory of Campbell, Jones, and Lindsey (2006). I believe that the findings of this study would contribute to the current discussions between conventional teacher preparation programs and those program leaders who are willing to take risks and step outside the university campus and implement research-based strategies and practices.

Summary

As the demographics in the United States continue to change, teacher preparation programs are faced with challenges to design programs that will respond in effective ways to the changing K-12 student populations in relation to the established and continuing unchanged teacher demographic. Teacher education programs across the United States are being mandated to redesign their programs to provide preservice teachers with more comprehensive, hands-on urban school experiences (Allen et al., 2013; Bullock, 2012; Catapano & Thompson, 2013; Hoaglund et al., 2014; Zeichner, 2010). Changes that are necessary in teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers adequately to be effective in urban classrooms are not just for or about

preservice teachers. The changes are for and about everyone because they involve and affect all.

Sir Isaac Newton remarked, “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” The field of education is not without its own giants, specifically when it comes to differences between and among students, teachers, classrooms, and the programs that prepare teachers and ultimately shape school environments. Cross (1989) maintained that first one must look inwardly and proceed from there rather than first looking outwardly and focusing on others: “What we value and believe [about ourselves and others] gives rise to the actions and behaviors that we see [within ourselves and others]” (p. 18).

Identifying and then examining attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are the starting points. Recognizing where those starting points lead and how they affect interactions in classrooms is to make visible “the invisible, taken-for-granted flow of beliefs and assumptions [that] gives meaning to what people say and do...[and] how they interpret hundreds of daily transactions” (Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 7). Pewewardy (1992) claimed that the basis for difficulty in schools with diverse populations is that educators traditionally have attempted to insert culture into the education, instead of inserting education into the culture. The inside-out process is missing.

Educating preservice teachers in a culturally responsive pedagogy and the sociology of the urban school environments is the foundation for addressing differences and effectively acting on behalf of all persons engaged in educational processes. Teacher education programs not only have responsibilities, but they also have opportunities to stand on the shoulders of giants who are among them; to accept responsibilities for

developing programs that challenge institutional and individual faculty and preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about teaching in urban schools; and to become the agents of social change that benefit all.

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Appendix A: Phase I – One-on-One Face-to-Face Interview

Participants will be asked 10 questions related to the three research questions guiding this study. Audiotaped responses will come through a 30 to 45 minute Face-to-Face Interview.

The following questions were designed to address RQ1 – What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers about teaching in urban schools?

1. How would you describe your experience in the urban school you were assigned as part of your field service practicum? **Follow-up:** What was your most memorable moment about your experience?
Probe: Describe your first day in the school and compare that experience to your current experience.
2. How would you describe your experience with students during you field service practicum?
Follow-up: Describe some of the characteristics of the students as learners. **Probe:** Tell me how you developed a relationship with your students.
3. Please describe your field service teaching experiences. **Follow-up:** What did you observe during your field service practicum? **Probe:** As a preservice teacher what teaching strategies did you find effective? As a preservice teacher what strategies did you find ineffective?
4. Please describe the instructional resources available to you during your field service practicum.
Follow-up: What resources were available to enhance classroom instruction? What resources were not available to enhance classroom instruction? **Probe:** Tell me about the how you used available materials to support your lessons.
5. Given your field service teaching experience, what would motivate you to teach in an urban school environment? **Follow-up:** Why would you or would you not consider working in an urban environment?
Probe: Please talk about your future plans to apply for teaching jobs. Will you consider working in an urban environment?

The following questions were designed to address RQ2 – What are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of preservice teachers' about their preparedness for teaching in urban schools?

6. What did faculty do to prepare you for teaching in an urban school? **Follow-up:** In your opinion what things could be improved in in the curriculum to support teaching in an urban school?
Probe: Tell me about a teaching experience where you relied on implementing something learned in your preparation program.
7. What did you learn in your course work about the characteristics of an urban school? **Follow-up:** What can you conclude from the struggles you have witnessed?
Probe: Tell me about your concerns outside the classroom that are prevalent in urban schools, such as facility maintenance, safety, and supplies?
8. How did you prepare yourself for teaching students who are culturally different from yourself?
Follow-up: What strategies did you use? **Probe:** Tell me about any courses you have taken or books you have read regarding teaching in culturally diverse communities?
9. **What** experiences in your teacher education program helped you to work with students in an urban school setting? **Follow-up:** Describe some situations you experienced in the urban school. **Probe:** Tell me about a time when you believe you made a positive difference with a struggling student.

The following questions were designed to address RQ3 – What approaches could the School of Education faculty implement to improve preservice teachers' preparation to teach in urban school settings?

10. In what ways do you think this preservice program can be improved? **Follow-up:** Based on your experience thus far, what recommendations for change would you make to better prepare preservice teachers to teach in urban schools? **Probe:** Tell me about your personal experiences with the new preparation courses and the support of the education department faculty.

Appendix B: Phase II – Focus Group Questions

Greetings, Colleagues. I am so pleased that we could gather today, especially considering how many responsibilities you have. My name is **Jacquinne Reynolds** and I will be facilitating our conversation. You have been selected for our focus group because you are a participant in this study, you volunteered for this specific task, and your experiences and perceptions are of great value. You should contribute to our discussion, as you feel moved to do so without any expectations from me or anyone in this group about what you say or how you say it. Respectful communication is a group norm, so even if you may not agree with the statements that others may make, all of the participants' ideas are most welcome. I will be recording our conversation to make sure that I capture everything. When you speak, do your best to speak clearly. When one member of the group is sharing, please know that he or she alone will have the floor. We will use the assigned numbers to identify one another during our conversation. Furthermore, I would like to ask you not to name your school or colleagues, but to say instead, "my school" or "the music teacher" without further identification. Finally, let me ask you to turn off any electronic devices including cell phones, if you have them. Before we begin, do you want to ask me any clarifying questions? I am going to begin now as I press the voice recorder button.

1. Urban school settings have been defined in many ways. Having had some experience in an urban school setting, what is your definition of an urban school? **Follow-up:** What words would you use to describe urban school? **Probe:** Why do you believe those are the words you have chosen?
2. Has your current definition changed from how you would have defined urban schools before your experience? **Follow-up:** Describe the experiences that changed your definition of an urban school. **Probe:** Did these experiences change your understanding of the community?
3. Why did you select to do your field service obligation in an urban school setting? **Follow-up:** Were there similarities and/or differences you expected? Were there similarities and/or differences you did not expect? **Probe:** What advice would you give to a preservice teacher going into a similar field service experience?
4. Did something happen during your field service experience that made you feel good, or positive, or accomplished? **Follow-up:** If so, what happen? Share that experience please. **Probe:** Overall, would you consider it a positive or negative experience? Please explain?
5. Based on your experiences teaching in an urban school, what prepares a teacher to work in an urban school? **Follow-up:** How well do you feel you were prepared for

teaching in an urban school? **Probe:** What type of training do you feel would benefit preservice teachers going into an urban environment?

6. What were the situations during your urban school field service obligation for which you were least prepared? **Follow-up:** What were the situations during your urban school field service obligation for which you were most prepared? **Probe:** What could have been done to help prepare you to be successful? Please explain

7. Describe the components of the teacher education program that you believe helped prepare you to be successful during your field service practicum experience. . **Follow-up:** What specific courses do you believe were most helpful in preparing you for your field service practicum experience? **Probe:** Was there any coursework that you believe was counterproductive in your field service preparation?

8. Based on your teaching experience thus far, what recommendations for change would you make in the field courses to better prepare preservice teachers to teach in urban schools? **Follow-up:** What recommendations for change would you make in course instruction to better prepare preservice teachers to teach in urban school? **Probe:** What coursework would you recommend for preservice teachers before teaching in an urban school environment?

9. Did something happen during your urban field service experience that made you feel good, or positive, or accomplished? **Follow-up:** What strategies did you find the most effective in building relationships with students? **Probe:** What mistakes did you make that helped you better your understanding of student needs?

10. What advice would you give future preservice teachers to prepare for teaching in an urban school? **Follow-up:** What was the most influential advice you were given prior to your urban school experience? **Probe:** Was there a particular mentor or other resource that assisted you during your field service experience?

Appendix C: Phase III – Observation (Nonparticipation)

The researcher will use the **Observational Protocol** form during two weekly seminar sessions that are part of the preservice teacher curriculum. Preservice teachers will be attending a mandatory course that runs concurrent with their field service practicum. The researcher will observe two of the weekly 75-minute debriefing sessions where preservice teachers recall and share incidents that occurred during their classroom teaching, discuss problems and difficulties, ask questions, and present areas of concern. The university faculty instructor will moderate the sessions. Preservice teachers will be asked to relate their experiences in a casual conversational manner. The **Observation Protocol** form below will be used to write descriptive and detailed reflective notes that will include my observations, impressions, and questions. The goal of using this form and protocol is to record specific details, reflections, and the content of the class.

Observation Protocol

Location: University Classroom

Length of Activity: 75 minutes

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Chalkboard Faculty Desk</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Student Seating Area</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Observer</p> </div> </div>