

Six Elements of Diversity: Teacher Candidate Perceptions after Engaging Native American Students



Citation

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Abstract

Teacher education serves an important role in preparing teacher candidates to engage with diverse student populations. This study supports a need for candidates to practice Invitational Theory and Practice when teaching students from diverse backgrounds. To assess candidate growth, we used Schmidt's (2007) Six Elements of Diversity as a lens for evaluating 38 candidates' reflections after interacting with Native American students in a diversity workshop at a Mid-Western University. The findings reveal that the Six Elements of Diversity were present throughout the reflections with some elements more evident than others; the analysis points to strengths and weaknesses in candidate preparation.

Introduction

As teachers across the country take roll this school year, they are likely to find more diversity in their classrooms than ever before. U.S. Census Bureau (2010) data reveal the changing demographics of schools and the predicted increases of minority school-age populations. This demographic trend requires teachers to understand and communicate effectively with students from a variety of backgrounds. However, according to Howard (2007), most teachers are white, female, and middle class, and they may not be comfortable working with students from diverse cultures and ethnic groups.

This difference in ethnicity and culture can translate into different classroom expectations, values, and priorities between teachers and students and can create barriers to student success (Banks, 2006; Dudley-Marling, 2007). For example, a teacher might emphasize competitive learning practices as a way to promote engagement from students. Students with cultural backgrounds that value collaborative rather than competitive approaches, such as Native American students, might find this classroom strategy marginalizing (Lomawaima, & McCarty 2006). At the school level, policies for excused/unexcused absences might not take into account family priorities or employment needs of some cultures (Horowitz, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). Such practices and policies that create barriers to student success could be labeled "unintentionally disinviting" in terms of invitational theory and practice (ITP) (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996).

To eliminate or reduce these barriers and sensitize school personnel to cultural differences, teacher preparation programs and accrediting bodies emphasize the critical importance of understanding and meeting the needs of all students. As an example of expectations from The National

Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education, NCATE Standard 4 focuses on diversity, stating, "The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn" (NCATE, 2008, p. 34). This requirement applies to teachers of all racial and cultural backgrounds as they strive to educate all students (Howard, 2007).

Giving teacher candidates experiences working with diverse students fosters the development of these competencies (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, & Duffy, 2005).

Just as teacher education programs need to assess candidates for multicultural competencies, programs also assess candidates' experiences to work in multicultural settings and the effectiveness of those experiences in helping candidates engage with diverse students.

One such assessment tool is the Six E's, or "elements of diversity" (Schmidt, 2007, p. 17), as described in a call for research that applies ITP to diverse settings. The Six E's are empowerment, encouragement, enlistment, enjoyment, equity, and expectation. Schmidt's schema was designed as a lens through which practitioners might look more carefully at places, people, policies, processes, and programs in terms of diverse cultures (2007).

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This study used the Six E's as a tool to assess the perceptions of teacher candidates regarding their interactions with Native American high school students.

University/Indian School Collaboration

Native Americans constitute the largest minority population in the state where this university is located; therefore, it is especially important for our university graduates from all majors to work effectively with this group. Recognizing needs for mutual support and cross-cultural interactions, the university and school administrators entered into a memorandum of agreement to create the Success Academy. Now entering its 12th year of operation, the Academy operates as a cross-cultural program that builds a sense of community between diverse populations by honoring their differences and encourages the university at large to adopt a respectful perspective of Native American cultures (Lee, 2007). The Academy brings Native American students to the university campus periodically over the course of the students' high school careers to expose them to the college environment and the career opportunities available through post-secondary education. At the same time, the Academy achieves an equally important goal for the university to become an inviting place that encourages success.

Diversity Workshop for Teacher Candidates within the Academy

Working within this philosophy, several instructors in the teacher education program developed a diversity workshop for teacher candidates as part of the Academy. Since the candidates come from a relatively homogenous white population, many have not had experiences interacting with students from diverse backgrounds. As a service-learning project, the workshop goals for the candidates are to practice the role of inviting educators; to reflect on their development as inviting educators; to teach Academy students about Multiple Intelligences Theory and to help students apply their Multiple Intelligences Inventory results to their own lives (Gardner, 1999). As such, these goals also support the fundamental beliefs of ITP, which include accepting and affirming individuals as valuable, capable and responsible; recognizing individual power and responsibility to empower others by creating intentionally inviting places, programs, policies and processes (Schmidt, 2004).

In creating the teacher education workshop, instructors in a teacher preparation diversity course asked the candidates to serve as workshop hosts. The five workshop sessions were designed to provide a one-to-one ratio of teacher candidates and Academy students; in practice, this ratio varied according to the number of students attending the session.

Within the workshop, the candidates had multiple opportunities to send inviting messages to Academy students and to practice intentionality. The two-hour workshops began with candidates welcoming Academy students to the campus and helping them get settled into work groups. Next, the candidates led small-group icebreakers similar to musical chairs; the icebreaker helped candidates and students to learn each other's names and to begin making connections to one another. Then, in a large group setting, the candidates and students listened to a short explanation of Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner, 1999) accompanied by a PowerPoint slide show. The candidates then assisted students in taking an online Multiple Intelligences inventory (<http://www.bgfl.org/>), printed their results, and discussed them with students. In the final workshop component, Academy students created an art project to reflect their individual personalities. At the conclusion of the workshop, Academy students and candidates ate supper together in a university cafeteria.

Methodology

Population

Thirty-eight teacher candidates served as workshop hosts for the Native American high school students. Participation in the workshop was required as a part of a teacher education diversity course at a Mid-Western university. The workshop times, high school participant selection, teacher candidate participant selection, and permission to observe and collect documents were arranged prior to the first workshop. As preparation for their service-learning experiences, teacher candidates had read and discussed selections from *Inviting School Success* (Purkey & Novak, 1996). They wrote about what an inviting teacher looked like from their own experiences and about their perceptions of themselves as inviting teachers. Candidates had not been exposed to the Six E's schema (Schmidt, 2007); however, students were asked to compare their own recollections of what constituted an inviting teacher with their own behaviors in this experience.

Data Collection

Immediately following their role as hosts of the workshop with Native American high school students, teacher candidates responded to questionnaires containing the following prompts:

1. Describe what the workshop experience was like for you. Think of the role you played in all components of the workshop. Which roles felt the most successful from your perspective? Why?
2. What did you discover about yourself as an intentionally inviting teacher?

3. What did you discover about working with the Academy students?

Candidates constructed reflections to include specific examples, quotes, details and stories. Completed questionnaires were submitted to a graduate student, rather than the course instructor, as a means of ensuring anonymity and encouraging honest responses. These constructed responses became the data for this study. This sample reflects a single case study of five workshops of identical structure and content. The only differences in the workshops were the dates and the participants.

Data Management and Analysis

Qualitative research design was used to analyze the perceptions of teacher candidates who served as workshop hosts for the Native American high school students. The candidates responded to open-ended questions in post-experience reflections. The reflections were evaluated independently by three workshop facilitators, also the researchers, using open perception coding to reveal themes related to ITP (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Due to the nature of qualitative study, the researchers were intentionally aware of their assumptions and biases (Patton, 2002). Themes were compared and a literature search was conducted for relevant studies. Researchers discussed the relevant studies and determined that theoretical codes integrating the Six E's as proposed by Schmidt (2007) had emerged in the reflections (Boyatzis, 1998). This schema seemed to be an appropriate way of assessing the candidates' perceptions of their interactions within the context of the workshop "in terms of accepting, embracing, and celebrating diversity" (Schmidt, 2007, p. 17). The Six E's, or elements of diversity, are empowerment, encouragement, enlistment, enjoyment, equity and expectation. The researchers discussed each element according to Schmidt's (2007) definitions, and

used terms and concepts within the Six E's as key ideas to code the same data set.

Three researchers worked independently to score all candidates' reflections for each of the Six E's, and then met to compare findings. The initial inter-rater reliability was 68%. Differences in coding were then discussed to clarify the understanding of the Six E's, and, reach an agreement of code definitions. "Check-coding" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 64) was conducted, revealing an inter-coder agreement of 92%. Findings were compiled by tabulating the number of candidates' responses that exemplified a specific element of diversity. That number was divided by the total number of reflections to determine the percentage of responses for each element of diversity. Table 1 summarizes the frequency of the Six E's (Schmidt, 2007) as identified in the candidates' reflections.

Delimitations and Limitations

One series of workshops during one semester of teacher candidate coursework served as the site for this study. The variable of interest focused on teacher candidate perceptions of their interactions regarding ITP strategies with a diverse group of students. The Success Academy workshop participants were all members of the freshman class at a Bureau of Indian Education school, and the teacher candidates were self-selected by enrolling in the course. Because of the narrow scope of the study, inferences and generalizations to the larger population are not appropriate.

Assessment of Teacher Candidate Reflections

Three workshop facilitators analyzed the 38 teacher candidate reflections using Schmidt's (2007) proposed six elements of diversity as codes. The analysis that follows is organized according to frequency of findings related to Schmidt's six elements of diversity. See Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequency of the Six E's as Identified in Teacher Candidates' Reflections*

Elements of Diversity	Occurrence in Reflections	%
	N=38	
Enlistment	27	71
Equity	22	58
Expectation	20	53
Empowerment	19	50
Enjoyment	18	47
Encouragement	13	34

Enlistment

The element of enlistment was identified in the responses more than any other. Schmidt (2007) defined enlistment as the “total involvement of all members in their respective communities” (p. 19). Everyone’s participation is important to move a group forward toward common goals. The two goals of the Success Academy also center on the concept of enlistment: first, “to help more American Indian students prepare for and succeed in college:” and second, “to make the university into the kind of place where that can happen” (Lee, 2007, p. 103). Strategies to facilitate involvement of all candidates and Success Academy students were intentionally built into the teacher education workshop activities because cross-cultural interactions are vital to reaching these goals.

Teacher candidates noticed the importance of initiating these interactions, and this reflection described the effort in creating an invitational environment for all by stating:

I decided to take on the role of a leader. I chose to go upstairs and be one of the first people the students encountered...I stepped in and tried to get everyone comfortable...The two boys were quite shy, at first, and were a little reluctant to stand up when anything at all was said, but after joking with them a little bit, they let their guards down and joined the fun. ...this was my most successful role.

The candidate intentionally moved into a leadership role and was aware of the overall goal to engage all participants.

As such, candidate self-awareness appeared to be part of the enlistment process. Goleman (2006) connects self-awareness to intrapersonal intelligence, which is critically important to achieving goals. Several reflections revealed that candidates understood they were accountable for encouraging participation. For example, one commented, “As a teacher, one should constantly check...what is working, what is not working, and what one can do to improve certain situations.” Overall, candidate comments indicated a strong self-awareness and recognition of when they were being inviting teachers. However, some candidates appeared to realize this more clearly during the reflection process, not during the workshop.

This reflection showed regret for not being more accountable at the time of the workshop:

The experience was intimidating and quite difficult to get into at first...Our whole group did what most people would have if given the opportunity—we divided up and did our own projects while basically ignoring the other group...it seemed silly to me that the students had anything to fear...I learned through this process that I am not as openly inviting as I wish

I could be...I realized how difficult it will make my job as an educator if I cannot be openly inviting to my students or parents.

In this instance, the prompt, “What did you discover about yourself as an intentionally inviting teacher?” elicited an honest reflection expressing lack of comfort or competence in interacting within a diverse group.

The element of enlistment sets a necessarily high standard for teachers to strive to reach. Enlistment is the work of the teacher, and implicit in this work is the expectation that teachers, as well as students, are completely engaged.

Equity

To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, there is nothing more unequal than treating all students equally. Because each individual brings something unique into a classroom, teachers should recognize differences in order to meet students’ distinctive needs. More than half (58%) of the reflections revealed signs of this recognition, as evidenced here: “I need to learn ... how to give each student an opportunity to learn at his or her level.” However, instructors noted that teacher candidates in this program had occasionally described fair teaching practices as treating all students in the same way. Examples of this misunderstanding emerged in the next two reflections: “I found that working with the students they are exactly the same as all the other students I have worked with through the schools here;” and, “They are exactly the same as all the other students I have worked with [in spite of the classroom] stress placed on the fact that these students are Native American.” These statements indicate a disregard of the potential that students from culturally diverse backgrounds can bring to the classroom (Purkey & Novak, 1996) by failing to notice the differences among students; however, their revealing responses should enable teacher educators to continue the dialogue regarding personal strengths and weaknesses with the issue of equity.

Equity was mentioned in over half of the candidates’ reflections; therefore, it can be assumed that many of the candidates have an understanding of the teacher’s role to create equity in the classroom in accordance with ITP. The candidates had the opportunity to recognize differences in the Native American students and respond to those differences as the leaders of their small groups during the various workshop activities: the icebreaker, a Multiple Intelligences quiz (<http://www.bgfl.org>), and discussion of outcomes, a hands-on art project, and dinner following the workshop.

Expectation

Human expectations are related to human perceptions because they “help us establish expectations of what we believe will likely occur” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 18). As such, expectations affect how people will act in situations and influence the outcome of what happens. Classroom teachers should be especially mindful of their perceptions of student ability levels because those perceptions influence student performance in a negative manner (Schmidt, 2007). Researchers who are concerned about the achievement gap of minority students examine how negative perceptions in the form of unexamined myths about student ability “form the bedrock on which we build educational policies and practice” (Ullucci, 2007, p. 1).

Inviting educators have an awareness of preconceived notions, as explained in this reflection:

To be intentionally inviting, first off for me, was to leave my past experiences with a group and the stereotypes I have seen at the door. Keeping myself in check with what I was to experience made the entire situation better for me and for the students...Had I not kept myself in check about the issues I have had with a group of people, I know I would have had a different expression that would have hindered my ability to be inviting.

Over half of the teacher candidates mentioned anticipating that the workshop would go a certain way or that the students would behave in a certain way. Teacher candidates commented on how their expectations were proven true or false and anticipated how the workshop experience will affect their professional attitudes in the future. This candidate reflection showed an awareness of disconfirmed expectations regarding Native American students. “I misjudged them all. My thoughts were that these students are probably mean students who do drugs and that they never listen. That was me being ignorant because what I came to find out is that they are just students who need a little help.”

Other candidates left the workshop with new expectations for working with diverse students: “If I ever had the opportunity to teach students like these...it would be a very rewarding position.” “The students were much better behaved than I thought they would be.” Still others showed awareness of a lack of knowledge by stating, “Originally I was nervous for the experience. I think I was unsure of what kind of backgrounds these kids came from.”

The teacher candidates appeared to have entered the workshop with a wide range of expectations, some of which were confirmed while others were disconfirmed.

Empowerment

The sense of empowerment felt by the teacher candidates after completing their workshop experiences was evident in reflections revealing a growing confidence. When used as a noun, empowerment is the result of establishing positive relationships with others (Schmidt, 2007). Much like the element of enlistment, empowerment is communal in nature. Candidates noted the reciprocal way in which they felt empowered as their students felt empowered. “I seem to work well with students at this age level...my personality seemed to fit in with the students and they responded well to it.” Candidates experienced an increase in confidence as they and the students became more at ease.

As part of their awareness of empowerment, several candidates identified their ability to listen and pay close attention. The next reflection illustrated the point that effective teachers are personally accountable for how their behavior helps or hinders the creation of an inviting environment: “I did learn that if I put enough effort into it, I can make myself seem inviting...I had to stay engaged.” Teacher candidates learned that teaching requires intentional focus and attention to individual differences and needs, and this field experience helped them understand the effort and focus required.

Additionally, empowerment appeared to increase as candidates assessed what was happening within the students and recognized moments of comprehension or discovery. Meaningful interactions empowered the candidates as well as helped them recognize areas where they could improve their interpersonal skills.

One candidate stated:

The last thing I learned was, the more I open up the more willing the students are going to open up with me... when I had the chance to talk to one of the males about basketball and track as soon as he found out we had something in common he began to talk more to me... I need to be willing to open up so they open up to me and build strong relationships with each and every one of them.

In addition to finding common ground through sports discussions, another candidate discovered that he could develop relationships through laughter: “This is where I figured out that I can use my humor to interest my students.”

Another teacher candidate noted, “Being confident at all times and acting like I knew exactly what was going on gave her confidence in me, which in turn encouraged me and gave me more confidence.” As teacher candidate confidence and self-efficacy increased, candidates continued to experience more success in their ability to establish relationships. The

momentum to build upon successful experiences appeared to be an essential component in the practice of ITP, as evidenced in this reflection: “I felt accomplished for what I had done...most of the time we think what can we do for the students, but for me it was what can the students do for me.” Empowering others and being empowered by their success created synergy for candidates.

Enjoyment

A key part of enjoyment is the ability to build rapport with students, which opens opportunities for laughter, lightheartedness, and fun. Although fewer than half of the reflections revealed this element, several reflections indicated a level of surprise at the enjoyable atmosphere: “more fun than expected,” and “being with students I actually find myself opening up to them and having fun. I believe that’s what being a teacher is all about.” Candidates also noted students who seemed pleased: “[one student] saw his art work from years before and that brought a smile to his face. It was great seeing the students enjoying their time here.”

Since most reflections did not identify the element of enjoyment, workshop facilitators recognize the need to emphasize the idea of simply having fun as an important way to create an inviting environment. Enjoyment should also be an essential element when creating an inviting environment at the workshop, starting with the icebreaker. As observed by the workshop facilitators, the ability to create fun in this initial activity was critical in helping both teacher candidates and students relax and begin to create a relationship. Similarly, another reflection noted, “The ice-breaker game was also fun for me because it helped the two students in my group relax and feel more welcome.”

Encouragement

Analysis of the reflections for the last E, encouragement, revealed relatively little evidence (34%) that the candidates perceived they were using this element. In addition, several reflections suggested that candidates used praise rather than true encouragement as a means of reaching out to students, such as during the craft activity; it was difficult to assess the authenticity of the candidates’ compliments. For example, one reflection reported, “There was not much contact between any of us, besides a few comments of ‘Your picture is so cool.’” Candidates should recognize the difference between offering a student shallow praise versus encouraging a student using genuine compliments and empathy. Schmidt (2007) differentiated between praise and encouragement stating, “Encouragement signifies a genuine investment and veracity in other people and groups. Praise does not possess this same level of commitment or authenticity” (p. 20). On the surface, encouragement might appear to be an easy

element to operationalize, but to be effective, especially in working with diverse populations; the encourager should be specific in offering an effective statement.

Meaningful encouragement in the workshop context emerged in this candidate’s reflection:

As we went through the [Multiple Intelligences] quiz results we talked about which ones she agreed with...One of her strong intelligences being bodily/kinesthetic and she said that she really enjoys basketball but doesn’t play because she gets embarrassed whenever she misses a shot. This struck me as a very interesting reason not to play a sport...I couldn’t stop thinking about how damaging that outlook could be on her life...I assured her that missing shots is a part of the game...I couldn’t help but feel that I needed to leave one last mark on the subject... in the card, I wrote, “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take” as it seemed very fitting for her.

This candidate’s reflection illustrates several important points about encouragement. First, by listening carefully and sensitively, the candidate identified a specific area of weakness that could be debilitating for the student. The candidate recognized the significance of the student’s lack of confidence and how that might play out in the student’s life. Then the candidate thoughtfully considered how to encourage the student in ways that were optimistic, respectful and showed trust.

Sensitivity, careful listening, and authenticity are hallmarks of encouragement, based on the philosophy of “being with versus doing to” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 20). Implicit in this description are also the qualities of emotional empathy as defined by Goleman (2009), referring to “someone who feels within herself the emotions of the person she’s with. This creates a sense of rapport” (Empathy--Who’s Got It, Who Does Not section, para.3). Finally, the teacher candidate acted in a meaningful way by leaving a positive, encouraging message; through this intentionally inviting act, the candidate demonstrated empathy.

Discussion and Implications for Teacher Preparation

Reviewing teacher candidate reflections through the lens of the Six E’s of diversity (Schmidt, 2007) offered instructors a way to assess the candidates’ perceptions of their interactions with diverse students within the workshop context and, in an indirect way, to consider our preparation of the candidates. However, the findings from this assessment are limited for the following reasons. In spite of being assured that their reflections were anonymous and would be awarded points for completion, rather than for content, some candidates might have written with the course instructor as an evaluator in

mind. This tendency might have limited honesty and openness in the reflections. In addition, these reflections by design were based on perceptions, which again might limit the accuracy of the response. It is also possible that the workshop facilitators were influenced in their interpretation of candidate comments by their own perceptions of how relationships were developing in the workshop, which is the nature of qualitative research. A final limitation is that the workshop and supper experience had a scope of three hours, and this time factor impacted the ability of the candidates to develop substantive relationships.

Using the Six E's schema (Schmidt, 2007) to assess teacher candidates' perceptions regarding invitational practices in their interactions with diverse students revealed ways in which the workshop as a diversity experience could be strengthened. The following areas for improvement in developing candidates to be inviting and effective workshop hosts were identified as most significant:

1. A more thorough orientation about the workshop components is needed to help candidates become more comfortable with expectations for their service as hosts; this might build candidate confidence and self-efficacy and increase their enjoyment of the workshop. It might add to candidates' sense of empowerment.
2. Candidates might also be given opportunities to role play situations that could arise within the workshop as another way to increase empowerment.
3. Role play could help candidates identify appropriate ways to encourage students and avoid shallow praise.
4. The reflections revealed a need for more sensitivity to issues of equity and why individual and cultural needs should be recognized.
5. Candidates might write prelections as a way to become more mindful of their preconceptions and prejudices; this could also create heightened awareness of candidates' expectations for student success.

The Six E's (Schmidt, 2007) clearly played an important role in assessing ITP within the workshop. Using this schema as a lens to read the reflections elucidated what the candidates perceived about their interactions within the diversity experience. With this new understanding, instructors identified candidates' strengths and weaknesses and considered specific ways to prepare candidates more thoroughly.

Evidence of Empathy

While the quality of empathy is not included in descriptions of the Six E's (Schmidt, 2007), evidence of candidates using empathy in their interactions with students emerged in the analysis of many reflections. The researchers discussed how empathy might interact with the Six E's. Is there a role for the concept of empathy in ITP?

For example, this candidate revealed a genuine effort to be sensitive to student needs and experience what the student felt:

I could tell the girls were really nervous coming into our room because there were so many of us and only two of them. I found myself being drawn to them because I often feel uncomfortable in large groups and I wanted to do everything I could to make them feel welcome and most of all, not judged.

The candidate's perception of this student as shy determined how the candidate responded with equity to meet that student's needs. Thus, the reflection reveals the elements of expectation, equity, and empowerment. Further, this candidate was then able to offer appropriate encouragement that demonstrated qualities of empathy and sincerity.

The reflections, however, did not indicate much evidence of racial awareness. Is it possible for these candidates to understand what it would be like for a Native American student to enter university buildings on a predominately white campus? How does the addition of different racial backgrounds (and thus experiences) complicate the capacity of the candidates to empathize with their students in a diverse setting? These issues should be considered when planning a diversity workshop to engage teacher candidates as they facilitate ITP. Analysis of the candidates' reflections through this scheme illustrates the complex nature of the diversity elements (Schmidt, 2007).

Conclusion

This study utilized the Six E's (Schmidt, 2007) as an assessment tool to provide insight into teacher candidates' perceptions of their interactions with Native American high school students within a diversity workshop. Candidates recognized the importance of their role as hosts in engaging the Native American students and frequently mentioned this in their reflections as being successful. This element of enlistment was identified more frequently than any other element (71%) in the reflections. This is evidence that teacher candidates took seriously their role of keeping students engaged. The element that was least frequently identified was encouragement, which emerged in only 34% of the reflections. Apparently, candidates did not perceive that authentic encouragement was an important part of their

interactions during the workshop. This finding could point to curriculum gaps and weaknesses in the preparation of the candidates. A course focus on distinguishing between shallow praise and genuine encouragement might benefit candidates as they attempt to create inviting stances to experience success in their interactions with Native American students.

In addition, some candidates' reflections revealed evidence of empathy. Empathy appeared to interact with and undergird the Six E's as described by Schmidt (2007). Exploring how

empathy could be defined in this context, how this quality works with the elements of diversity, and how it could be operationalized in support of ITP are suggested as topics for further study. Studies similar to this one should be replicated at teacher preparation institutions for the increasingly important task of engaging diverse student populations. ITP offers promising methods and language for the critical goal of exploring the "relatively boundless potential for future human development" (Schmidt, 2006, p. 188)

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