Students' Relatedness Needs in a Teacher Education Course

The Role of Identities as Learners & Capital

Jung-In Kim, Miri K. Chung, & Barbara J. Dray

Introduction

Researchers have investigated various methods of supporting students' positive motivational and learning experiences in the classroom. *Self-determination theory* (Deci & Ryan, 2002) is one of the major theories of motivation and posits that a student's intrinsic or self-determined motivations are facilitated through the fulfillment of his or her basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Studies have often focused on promoting students' basic psychological needs to support their learning in K–12 education and even in college education, although less work has been performed to determine the ways in which the needs are fulfilled in graduate school education. In particular, teacher professional development represents a critical environment in graduate school education, and the motivational or learning experiences of the students, who are teachers from diverse backgrounds, could be examined to better promote their learning and growth as teachers, which is the focus of our study.

The current study examined reports by 11 graduate students who were preservice and in-service teachers with different backgrounds and experiences to determine

Jung-In Kim is an associate professor in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. Miri K. Chung is a professor in the Department of Secondary, K-12, and Educational Technology at Metropolitan State University, Denver, Colorado. Barbara J. Dray is lead consultant with Transforming Practices in Education, LCC in Arvada, Colorado.

whether their relatedness needs were satisfied in a teacher education class. Remarkably, the need for relatedness (i.e., the "psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity" [Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 7]) has received less attention in the literature relative to the needs for competence and autonomy as noted by Hutman, Konieczna, Kerner, Armstrong, and Fitzpatrick (2012).

A number of studies have reported on the positive effects of teachers' pedagogical caring on students' fulfillment of relatedness needs (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Huff, 2009; Wentzel, 1997), although few studies have been performed to determine the ways in which the relatedness needs are fulfilled. Our study explored how the students report different fulfillment of relatedness needs intertwined with their identities as participating learners based on the frameworks of identities-in-practice and identities-in-discourse (e.g., Norton & Toohey, 2011; Varghese et al., 2005).

We argue that the students' "psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 7) could be accounted for by exploring the students' identities in social and cultural contexts based on the preceding frameworks. In what follows, we begin by discussing (a) the importance of students' fulfillment of relatedness needs to support their optimal motivational experiences and (b) the significance of investigating the interface of the students' identities and their fulfillment of relatedness needs within the classroom context.

Importance of Satisfaction of Relatedness Needs

According to self-determination theory, students' intrinsic or self-determined motivations and the associated deeper cognitive engagement, persistence, and well-being are generated via the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy (need to initiate one's own actions), competence (need to experience mastery and control outcomes), and relatedness (need to connect to others [Deci & Ryan, 2002; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009]). Depending on the degree to which these three basic psychological needs are supported through interactions with the people around them, students would experience a greater self-determined motivation for learning by identifying the underlying value of an activity (vs. experiencing a less self-determined motivation because of internal or external pressures).

A great deal of research has examined how the needs for autonomy and competence are supported (e.g., by providing rationales or choices [Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002] and optimally challenging activities and opportunities to expand their academic capabilities [Niemiec & Ryan, 2009]). However, relatively few investigations have examined the sources involved in fulfilling the need for relatedness within classroom contexts.

The need for relatedness has been defined as the "fulfillment of relatedness needs" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 7). Richer and Vallerand (1998) further conceptualized the need for relatedness to include *acceptance* and *intimacy*. Students feel *accepted*, or belong, when they are socially supported, respected, and included in a given context (e.g., In my relationships with my classmates, I feel supported). Furthermore, they experience a sense of *intimacy* when they feel close to or included by others (e.g., I feel close to them).

According to Niemiec and Ryan (2009), the fulfillment of the relatedness needs facilitates the process of internalizing external values because "people tend to

internalize and accept as their own the values and practices of those to whom they feel, or want to feel, connected, and from contexts in which they experience a sense of belonging" (p. 139). Huff (2009) reported that first-year students' feelings of relatedness in classrooms significantly predicted their institutional persistence. Additionally, Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, and Adkison (2011) reported that learning communities, such as cohort programs, improved learning outcomes in higher education via mediation by students' feelings of relatedness.

Examining practices that shape or promote the fulfillment of relatedness needs, Niemiec and Ryan (2009) reported that a student's relatedness is supported when the teacher "genuinely likes, respects, and values" (pp. 139–140) the student. When teachers spend time with students, develop interesting lessons, or listen to students (i.e., *pedagogical caring*, or teachers communicating a sense of caring about students' learning [Wentzel, 1997]), students' relatedness needs, or belongingness, have been reported to be fostered (Freeman et al., 2007; Huff, 2009).

Although these studies reported possible pedagogical practices that can predict the fulfillment of students' relatedness needs, few studies have investigated students' own reports of how their relatedness needs are supported or fulfilled within the classroom context. We argue that by focusing on students' own reports regarding their fulfillment of relatedness needs in their social and cultural contexts, we can better understand and promote the motivational experiences of students from diverse backgrounds.

Identities in the Community of Practices

To account for the reports of students on their fulfillment of relatedness needs, we explored the students' identities in social and cultural contexts, which extend beyond teachers' pedagogical practices (e.g., pedagogical caring; Freeman et al., 2007; Huff, 2009; Wentzel, 1997). Of note, our approach is aligned with the increasing number of studies that have proposed and investigated the importance of relating identity to motivation from sociocultural and situated perspectives (Hickey, 2003; Kaplan & Flum, 2009; McCaslin, 2009; Nolen et al., 2014).

In examining students' identities in social and cultural contexts, the current study followed the methods of Varghese,

Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) and Norton and Toohey (2011), who combined both situational and poststructural views of identity and proposed the frameworks *identities-in-practice* and *identities-in-discourse*, which have been argued to complement each other.

According to the situational views of identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), one's identities are produced via one's participation in *immediate* communities of practice, which are composed of individuals with different levels of participation in the practices (e.g., newcomers, old-timers). During their participation, which is considered learning, the learners perform as a meaning-making entity, and the social world performs as a resource that constitutes their identities as learners (Wenger, 2010).

Through ease of access to expertise or opportunities for practice, the newcomers' identities would gradually move from *legitimate peripheral participants* to *fuller participants*. These learners aim to acquire various types of capital, such as *cultural capital* (i.e., shared accumulated knowledge [Bourdieu, 1991]) or *social capital* (i.e., durable networks of acquaintance and recognition) via participation in a community of practice (e.g., Lamb, 2009; Norton, 2000).

However, learners with different earlier experiences or different backgrounds (e.g., different types of social and cultural capital that has less symbolic value in the classroom or school context) could have less equal access to community resources and experience classroom participation as less pleasant than other learners (Bourdieu, 1991). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learners must experience a mature practice to learn.

If the newcomers are sequestered away from participation and learning in community activities, then they will experience *marginalized participation*, or marginalized identities, in their community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Additionally, Wenger (1998) also argued that a sense of belonging to *imagined* communities of shared practice (e.g., nation, ethnic group) beyond immediate contact via "seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experiences" (p. 173) would constitute one's identities.

On the other hand, poststructural views of identity suggest that identity is understood "in-discourse," or discursively constituted via languages (Varghese et al., 2005), and in relational terms, such as "subjectivities" (Rogers, 2004, p. 276), which emphasize the multiple and unsta-

ble relationships that constitute a person in certain contexts. From this perspective, identities are not only ascribed, imposed, or attributed by others during social relationships but also claimed or negotiated by a person themselves.

In turn, identities might be considered a site of struggle in certain historical and social contexts. Davies and Harré (1990) similarly argued for the identities, or positions, as the central concept used to organize and analyze a person's sense of self (as cited by Norton & Toohey, 2011). According to Davies and Harré (1990), "discursive practices constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time are a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions" (p. 7).

Current Study: Understanding Relatedness Needs via Identities

The current study examined the reports of graduate students who are preservice and in-service teachers from diverse backgrounds to determine how their relatedness needs were fulfilled in a teacher education class. We believe that the frameworks of identities in-practice and in-discourse (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Varghese et al., 2005) would allow us to focus on identities or the multiple and unstable relationships that constitute a person (i.e., subjectivities [Rogers, 2004]), particularly his or her relationships with other people and society in social and cultural contexts of participation.

We argue that, by exploring the identities in-discourse and in-practice, a better understanding can be obtained on the sources that constitute the students' fulfillment of relatedness needs, or a feeling of acceptance and intimacy (Richer & Vallerand, 1998), which goes beyond the instructor's pedagogical caring that has been reported as the major predictor for students' fulfillment of relatedness needs.

Furthermore, by focusing on the students' structural position or the different social or cultural resources acquired by or available to them (Bourdieu, 1991), we aimed to account for how the students report different levels of participation and identification (e.g., full participation or marginalized participation) and different fulfillment of relatedness needs (e.g., more or less related to the others).

Few studies have examined motivational experiences from the perspective of preservice and in-service teachers as learners

in their teacher education program, an important context to be explored to better promote learning and growth of teachers from different backgrounds. The following research questions guided the current investigation: (a) How do graduate students who are preservice or in-service teachers from various backgrounds portray the fulfillment of their relatedness needs (e.g., acceptance and intimacy) in the context of a graduate-level classroom? (b) How do the identities and various types of capital of students in the classroom from different backgrounds account for the fulfillment of their relatedness needs?

Method

Participants and Setting

We collected data from a graduate-level course in a special education program at a midsized university in an urban U.S. city. The course was an introductory course that was required for the special education concentration in the master's program, and it was designed to provide an overview of instructional planning for culturally and linguistically diverse learners with and without disabilities.

The course discussed issues related to educating culturally and linguistically diverse learners and provided a basic understanding of language and early literacy development for English-language learners with diverse abilities. The course was taught as a weekly 3-hour evening class for one semester and combined lectures, small-group discussions, and large in-class discussions.

The course instructor (female, late 30s), who is the third author of this article, was in her third year of teaching at this institution and helped her students learn by building a classroom community. Through the individual teacher-student meetings after every class, the course instructor aimed to build connections with students and learn and address their questions or concerns. The instructor also scheduled students and herself to bring and share snacks every week as a method of building a community.

The first author introduced the study to the students in the class and positioned herself as an "observer" who aimed to learn about the students' current motivational and learning experiences in the class. Most students enrolled in the course were preservice teachers from the initial teacher licensure program and had completed several semesters of the program. Several students were in-service teachers enrolled in the added endorsement and master's program, and one of the students was an international student with a Chinese ethnic background. Of the 22 students in the class, 11 graduate students voluntarily agreed to participate. Although we analyzed the reports of the 11 graduate students, here we focus on six representative students, Mei, Elizabeth, Anna, Cynthia, Katie, and Taylor (pseudonyms), who reported rich and diverse relatedness needs and identities. Five of the students were female, and one student was male, and their ages ranged from early 20s to late 30s. Table 1 presents the students' demographic characteristics.

Data Collection, Sources, and Analysis

To learn the patterns of classroom interaction among the instructor and students, the first author sat at the back of the classroom and wrote field notes as a nonparticipant observer. The first author focused on the students' interactions with the other students and the teacher regarding aspects related to task structure, grouping, authority, and previous guideline use (e.g., the Observing Patterns of Adaptive Learning [OPAL] guidelines; Patrick et al., 1997).

Immediately following a classroom observation, semistructured interviews were conducted with each of the 11 students on an individual basis (30 to 45 minutes) in the middle of the semester to learn the students' motivation and their reported identities as learners during their participation in the classroom context via open-ended questions (e.g., What have been your experiences in the course? Tell me about your learning experiences in this course so far?).

Furthermore, context-specific questions generated after the classroom observations were asked during the interviews (e.g., What were you thinking and feeling when you discussed the topic of —— today? [e.g., Calderhead, 1981]). Lastly, rather direct questions regarding their motivational

Table 1
Participating Students

	Age	Ethnic Background	Teaching Experience	Current Program Track
Mei	early 20s	Chinese	International student, taught English in her home country (China) but not in a U.S. school	Master's in special education (in first semester)
Elizabeth	early 30s	European American	Taught sixth grade for 1 year and first grade for 2.5 years (2 years as a substitute teacher)	Added endorsement + masters in special education (in first semester of program)
Anna	mid 30s	European American	10 years of teaching experience; secondary social studies license from another college	Added endorsement + masters in special education (in second semester of program)
Cynthia	early 20s	European American	Preservice teacher in final internship	Initial license: special education generalist + masters in special education (completing licensure program, starting MA program)
Katie	early 20s	European American	Preservice teacher; informal internship with the dual program	Initial license: dual (special education and elementary education) (in last semester of program)
Taylor	late 20s	European American	Preservice teacher; 12 years working with children in various infoirmal educational settings	Initial license: dual (special education and elementary education) (in last semester of program)

experiences specific to their fulfillment of relatedness needs were asked (e.g., Do you feel a sense of relatedness in this class?).

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Semistructured interviews with the course instructor (regarding her teaching and classroom perceptions; five interviews of 60 to 70 minutes each) and 10 classroom observations focusing on student-teacher and student-student interactions served as secondary data sources and were included for triangulation. Finally, the students' mid-semester evaluations and exit card feedback were also used for triangulation.

The data were analyzed using a constant comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2006) and case study analysis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014) to highlight the similarities and differences across students regarding how their fulfillment of relatedness needs was intertwined with their identities in the classroom. We aimed to develop the underlying intertwined relationships between an individual's fulfillment of relatedness needs and identity in the classroom.

First, open coding was conducted with a focus on the language that the students used to describe their fulfillment of relatedness needs, with a particular focus on the conceptualization of the sense of acceptance (i.e., feeling belonged, supported, respected) and intimacy (i.e., feeling close or as a friend) according to Richer and Vallerand (1998). Similarly, open coding was conducted for the students' identities with respect to Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). Here we focused on the students' participation and their identities in their immediate or imagined communities of practice as connected to their possession and sources of various types of social and cultural capital (e.g., "I am an observer"). We also paid attention to the discourse indicators that are not only ascribed, imposed, or attributed by others but also claimed or negotiated by a person (Davies & Harré, 1990). Coding was an iterative process (Charmaz, 2006).

The developed codes and categories of fulfillment of relatedness needs and identities were compared across the students' cases, and, with respect to each student, initial relationships among the categories were explored. Then, the related categories were compared and combined across the students to develop a comprehensive understanding of their fulfillment of relatedness needs and identities. The trustworthiness of the data analysis was supported by triangulation using several data sources (e.g., classroom observations, student interviews,

and course instructor interviews) and peer debriefing during our analysis. The course instructor, who is the third author of this article, provided important feedback as a participant and an author.

Results

We analyzed the reports of 11 students who all reported strong goals and values associated with being a teacher in the field of special education (e.g., "a lot of students I come across have learning disabilities, and I wanted to be highly qualified" [Anna]). Although they all seemed to connect with the teacher, certain students did not appear to connect with peers and reported that their relatedness needs (i.e., their sense of *acceptance* and *intimacy* [Richer & Vallerand, 1998]) were not fully satisfied in the classroom.

Notably, their reports of the fulfillment of their relatedness needs appeared to be associated with a range of negotiated identities as learners embedded in the social and cultural classroom context. Learners with different earlier experiences or different backgrounds had different types of social and cultural capital that has more or less symbolic value in the classroom context and had more or less equal access to social network within their communities of practice, which was important for differentiating their fulfillment of relatedness needs.

Herein we report on three students groups: with the first group, including Mei, who reported feeling "a little bit not related to the people in the class"; the second group, including Elizabeth and Anna, who reported feeling a moderate sense of relatedness as well as some tension; and the third group, containing the rest of the students (including Cynthia, Katie, and Taylor), who reported feeling a strong sense of relatedness in the class.

Mei

Of the 11 students who participated in this study, Mei was the only international student in the classroom. She was from China and was enrolled in the first semester of the master's-only special education program. In the class, Mei identified herself as follows:

MEI: I'm just like a new baby in the class . . . because my experience is just Chinese based. I have no idea of American culture, [or the] American education system. . . . I am different . . . because I start from zero and they start from like 10 or 15 . . . because I am different—I am trying to get involved as quickly as possible.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about your role in class?

MEI: [I am] a kind of observer because I'm also [a] foreigner. . . . I am an observer to see how they react to the normal phenomenon [of the American education system] because they are familiar with this but I'm strange with [a stranger to] those phenomen[a].

In the preceding report, Mei expressed herself as "a new baby" based on her limited cultural capital which was valued in this specific classroom context (Bourdieu, 1991), such as American culture or the American education system. Although she had considerable accumulated knowledge and experiences based on Chinese cultural or educational systems that were commonly shared during her interview, her immediate community of practice required belonging based on American culture or the American education system, in which English- and Spanish-language skills represented symbolic capital. In turn, as "a new baby" who is a stranger to the normal phenomena, she interacted as a peripheral participant in the community of practice (e.g., as "an observer," "still on the way to get involved") instead of as an active participant in the classroom community practice (Wenger, 1998).

When asked whether she felt a fulfillment of relatedness needs in the class, Mei indicated that "actually, that is a good one [question] because I can feel I am a little bit not related to the people in the class." When asked why, she gave the following reply:

I don't know, I just feel that because I don't have the same background, we don't share the same culture, so I don't think we are that related with each other. . . . Maybe they'd like to share their interests with me, but I think they sometimes treat me like a guest and not like a friend.

This quote illustrated that Mei's limited cultural capital, which was not commonly possessed and shared by the other students, seemed to position her as a member of an outgroup (i.e., a guest, not a friend) by the others. She continued:

We did a presentation today, five of us, but three of them are just like a group because they are always, I mean, they chat together, they sit together, they do homework together. . . . I am the only international student in the class. . . . They can easily share information, but for me, it's kind of, "OK, I don't know," so maybe I will ask, "OK, what's that?" and they could explain it to me, but they don't. We don't discuss it like they would with other classmates.

This quote further illustrated how this

limited possession of the valued cultural capital and positioning as an outgroup member further contributed to her limited access to the social network in this specific classroom context, with Mei feeling "a little bit isolated" and marginalized. Mei expressed her frustration with her inability to connect and be part of the social network:

If some people know about my culture, maybe about my interest, we can—I can feel we are related. If not, I can just tell we are only classmates.

In these quotes, Mei argued that appreciating, knowing, and sharing each other's interests and backgrounds are important for relating to others through being friends (vs. "only classmates"). Mei's lack of fulfillment of relatedness needs stemmed from both her lack of feeling accepted and her lack of belongingness during group work (which was indicated by the contrasting "they" vs. "I") as well as from the limited intimacy perceived by the limited sharing (e.g., friends vs. only classmates [Richer & Vallerand, 1998]).

Interestingly, however, although her relatedness needs did not seem to be fully supported in the context of the class, Mei reported that her peers in the class were nicer and friendlier during interpersonal interactions than her peers from another class. She reported,

Sometimes I feel awkward because my English is not really fluent and I am an [English as a second language] student, but I think they can kind of understand me, and sometimes they care about my feelings, maybe ask, "How are you doing today? Are you doing well in the class?"

Furthermore, Mei reported that she perceived her instructor as caring, understanding, and resourceful during their individual meetings:

When we have one-on-one meetings, I can tell that because she [the instructor] knows I am an international student, she knows what I need, and she can also ask about it because she has the 5 minutes after class, the conferences. It's very good for me because I can express my feelings to her.

Mei felt that she could express her feelings during interactions with her instructor, which indicated her perception of her instructor's pedagogical caring (Huff, 2009; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Wentzel, 1997).

Overall, Mei's report informed us that in a classroom with students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, the perception that others are interpersonally nice, friendly, and caring might not suffice to fulfill the relatedness needs (i.e., to feel a sense of belongingness and intimacy) of students with different cultural backgrounds. Despite her personality as "easygoing" and a "talker . . . regardless of [her] grammar mistakes, [her] speaking errors," and her statements that she engaged in nice, friendly, and caring social interactions with her peers and instructor, the lack of fulfillment of relatedness needs appeared to be intertwined with a lack of shared cultural capital and associated with limited access to the social network among the majority of the classmates.

It is worthwhile to note that, although Mei reported that she was meeting the expectations of the instructor only 70% of the time, she indicated that she was no longer "an observer" when she occasionally spoke out with different ideas:

INTERVIEWER: I see, but sometimes you still speak out [during class discussion].

MEI: Yeah, I do speak out, yes . . . because sometimes I hold different ideas. . . . Maybe because I am a foreigner . . . I kind of have different aspects of the same phenomenon. I can bring some new insights, some new ideas . . . so what they see about this one and what I see about this one and try to compare them together. . . . [At that time] I am no more [an] observer, I am somewhat actively involved.

Mei reported that she performed as an active participant during the moment of sharing her own view, which was connected to her own Chinese cultural capital, and views being voiced and appreciated in the community of practice.

Elizabeth and Anna

Of the 11 participating students, both Elizabeth and Anna had come from an added endorsement and master's in special education program and had recently entered the current program. These students were professional teachers with rich teaching experiences (i.e., 5 years for Elizabeth and 10 years for Anna), and they were also older than most of the other students (i.e., mid-30s).

Therefore, compared with Mei, who indicated a lack of full access to the social network developed in the classroom context, Elizabeth and Anna apparently had considerable experience in American cultural and educational contexts. Interestingly, for both Elizabeth and Anna, their possession of the symbolic American cultural capital was not sufficient to support their full participation. Regarding their identities as learners in the classroom, they occasionally felt marginalized and reported partial fulfillment of their relatedness needs, as indicated in this statement by Elizabeth:

I feel like it's taken a while for me to get to that point [of feeling related]. The other people in the class have already had classes together. . . . I think in this class, the one part about the program that's hard is that all of these students that have been in this program are [a] cohort together, and I'm new, and I don't like that. . . . I just feel like a lot of them have had relationships in the past from different classes, and they've gotten to know each other. . . . I just think sometimes that's a disadvantage in this class.. . . This is the first time for me. . . . I haven't had the other classes. It's new knowledge to me, whereas they [the other students who took classes together as a cohort] feel like "oh, we've taken a class."

Elizabeth's excerpt showed that despite her enriched American educational and cultural experiences as a professional teacher, she perceived that the other students who had taken classes together as a cohort to complete their teacher licensure program as preservice teachers (e.g., Cynthia or Katie, to be mentioned later) had built a social network to which she could not belong.

Furthermore, because she was new to the program, her limited content knowledge from few previous classes (i.e., specific forms of cultural capital valued in the classroom community of practice that extend beyond the general American educational and cultural experiences) as well as her limited prior relationships with the cohort (i.e., social capital) made her feel like a marginalized participant in the classroom community (Wenger, 1998) and contributed to her limited fulfillment of relatedness needs. Elizabeth reported,

They have already worked with these people before, so they group up easier, and they know whom they like to work with . . . [whereas] I didn't have any relationship with any of them at first, you know, so it's just hard.

Anna was similar in identifying herself as "SPED [special education] and master's" (vs. "elementary with the dual licensure") based on the program to which she belonged:

[In] an informal evaluation, people said that they had already read a lot of the stuff [in their previous classes], and I think it's a lot of the people who are "elementary with the dual licensure." I'm just "SPED and master's," so I haven't had any of the classes they've had, so . . .I think there's

a sense of entitlement sometimes with people who come and do a program where they say they've done this. . . . I've had a lot of experience, but I don't get on a high horse or act like I am above other people or like my experience is above what I am learning.

Through her limited specific forms of cultural capital and limited access to the social network, which were instead shared by the other members of the cohort majoring in "elementary with the dual licensure," which represented the majority of the class, Anna did not feel that she belonged to the network. In the following, she further reported that during her recent group work, she felt relatively disconnected and marginalized from a network of the group members, whom she described as "entitled":

> I feel like I can relate to most everybody in there, but I don't want to relate to my group right now. . . . [My group members say,] "Well, I already read that I already kind of feel like I know this." . . . They may have a better base knowledge when it comes to the literacy portion . . . but for me, I feel like I need to talk it out a little bit? And it's not really happening. . . . It might just be the program experiences, like, where they're at in the program maybe.

As briefly noted earlier, Anna had 10 years of experience teaching children who were incarcerated and who had disabilities ranging from learning disabilities to very severe disabilities. Similarly, Elizabeth compared herself with the students in the class (i.e., new teachers completing their licensure programs) in terms of different life experiences (several years of experience teaching children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds and more than 10 years of marriage experience). These forms of cultural capital, however, were less useful in helping either Anna or Elizabeth to directly connect with the other students or experience fuller participation in the class.

Similar to Mei, Elizabeth and Anna could connect with their instructor, with Anna indicating, "I think she's got an amazing amount of experience. . . . I feel like she is personable," and Elizabeth stating, "She's invested in her surrounding [classroom] community." Of note, Elizabeth reported that she began to connect with another student whom she met at a school district training session and who seemed to share some commonalities with her (e.g., "I just feel like I'm a little bit older [than the rest of the peers in this class], and I know she's a little bit older too").

However, Elizabeth's and Anna's re-

ports indicated that in the context of the classroom as a community of practice, the students' perceptions of the teacher's caring (Huff, 2009; Wentzel, 1997) was insufficient for fulfilling relatedness needs, and the students' identities as fuller or marginalized participants in their constructed classroom communities of practice, associated with more or less symbolic cultural and social capital, appeared to matter.

Remaining Majority of Students (Including Cynthia, Katie, and Taylor)

Of the 11 students who participated in this study, 8 were preservice teachers enrolled in the initial teacher licensure program, including Cynthia, Katie, and Taylor. These students had been enrolled in the licensure program for multiple semesters and had taken several courses with each other and with other students in the class. These students reported that they felt a fulfillment of relatedness needs in the class, and their relatedness needs appeared to have been met through the social network, which developed before entering the classroom context in the program and promoted their fuller participation in the current classroom community of practice.

For example, Cynthia reported that her need for relatedness had been fulfilled because "within this program [elementary teacher licensure program], I already know a lot of people in this course, so I feel like that kind of helps." Cynthia further stated that:

> [there are] definitely naturally form[ing] groups here . . . based on what cohort people were in. So, for our pedagogy classes, we were with certain groups. I know that the people I sat with [in this course] were from my pedagogy classes. And there was one girl I sat with a lot—she is also student teaching at the same school I student teach at—so I'd give her a ride down here, and we'd just kind of sit by each other. Yeah, those friendships people have made in other courses.

Cynthia's report indicated that her social network (Bourdieu, 1991), which was developed before and throughout the class, contributed to her current fulfillment of relatedness needs through within-group experiences or belongingness and friendships (i.e., acceptance and intimacy [Richer & Vallerand, 1998]). The following quote also illustrated that Cynthia's cohort network appeared to affect her subsequent learning identity and fuller participation in the current class, thereby supporting her feelings of relatedness as well as her confidence:

> I already come here feeling confident because I know those people. So, in another course you might go and not know anybody, so you'd just sit there quietly. You might not engage as much. The teacher's like, "Talk," and you're like, "Hmm, who am I going to talk to?" So, in this class, yeah, it might help that I already know people in here pretty well. . . . I felt like a lot of it built off of stuff we've already done in our other courses, so I felt like it was stuff we had already addressed, so I definitely felt competent in that way.

Similarly, Katie and Taylor reported the following:

> I felt pretty related to people in the class today because I sat with some people from my cohort and the group we've been working with for the past few weeks. . . . When I was in my cohort classes, I was more apt to speak out loud. . . . When I'm more comfortable with the people and I know them better, then I'm like, "OK, I feel more comfortable sharing my ideas in front of them" compared to "I don't know 75% of you." (Katie)

> I know half of the class already from previous classes, but I'm getting to know the other half and I feel good about that. I'm still more comfortable with talking with people who I know—we've established our own rapport, and we have shared experiences that we can relate to, but yeah, I feel like it's a community. (Taylor)

Katie and Taylor were similar to Cynthia, who attributed her fulfillment of relatedness needs to the ability to sit and talk with people in the cohort (i.e., social capital [Bourdieu, 1991]), resulting in her fuller participation in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Of note, similar to the other students reported earlier, Katie, Taylor, and Cynthia indicated that the instructor displayed pedagogical caring. Katie perceived their instructor as "very friendly" when talking to her on a one-on-one basis, and Taylor stated that "she could see that I am a person, and I can share some personal stories that may relate to the content."

Discussion and Implications

The current study examined students' fulfillment of relatedness needs intertwined with their identities as participants in their teacher education classroom as a constructed community of practice. All students reported that their instructor displayed pedagogical caring through warm social interactions and caring, and studies have reported that pedagogical caring is a major contributor

toward the fulfillment of relatedness needs (e.g., Huff, 2009). However, within the classroom as a community of practice, the students reported different levels of fulfillment of relatedness needs, which were associated with their identity as participants and based on the social and cultural capital that they brought to and developed during the class (Bourdieu, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Several students from the initial licensure cohort, including Cynthia, Katie, and Taylor, had a rich social network (e.g., a cohort network) and dominant and symbolic cultural capital that was relevant to the current class (e.g., academic knowledge from their previous classes). These students did not experience difficulty in finding partners during activities, and they felt a sense of relatedness, belongingness, and intimacy (Richer & Vallerand, 1998) and were fuller participants in the classroom as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). These findings align with those of a previous study that reported associations among students' participation in a cohort program, the fulfillment of relatedness needs, and improved learning outcomes (Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, & Adkison, 2011).

However, the students who were new to the community (e.g., Elizabeth, Anna) did not have the symbolic cultural or social capital (e.g., cohort experiences and prior academic knowledge from the program) and felt as though they were not fully participating in or that they fully belonged to the social network shared by the initial licensure group (e.g., Cynthia, Katie, and Taylor). These students identified themselves as different, their reports showed that they experienced greater difficulty when participating in group discussions/projects, and they reported that they required substantial time until their relatedness needs were fulfilled.

Furthermore, Mei, who had limited American-based cultural capital and English/Spanish-based linguistic capital, which have symbolic value in the American classroom context, frequently reported feeling a marginalized or isolated identity in the classroom context (Wenger, 1998). Her limited American cultural and linguistic capital, which extends beyond the limited prior academic knowledge from the program (which Elizabeth and Anna did not have either), was connected to her limited opportunity to build social networks with the inner-group members despite reporting that her classmates were friendly and caring during social interactions. In turn, Mei had different barriers to satisfying her relatedness needs in the classroom context. Elizabeth, Anna, and Mei reported that they did not participate as fully as the inner-group students in the classroom as a community of practice. Aligned with their marginalized experiences, their relatedness and competence needs were less supported.

Our findings highlight the importance of supporting the relatedness needs of students with diverse backgrounds through friendly social interactions or pedagogical caring (Huff, 2009; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Wentzel, 1997) as well as through understanding students' prior or current social and cultural capital, which might allow them to identify as fully or less fully participating learners in their communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

From cultural and program-wise structural issues, certain capital would have symbolic power valued by the majority of the people in certain contexts (e.g., American vs. Chinese cultural knowledge; professional-based versus prior course–based knowledge from the cohort), thereby limiting certain group members who are marginalized and feel a reduced sense of belongingness. Our study indicated that the fulfillment of relatedness needs is not only a psychological phenomenon but also a social and cultural process of identification.

The results of our study imply that the sensitivities of educators in teaching programs to cultural and program-wise structural issues, power dynamics around various types of capital, and student identities that manifest as different levels of participation (fuller vs. marginalized) could be important for promoting fuller participation and ultimately supporting the students' fulfillment of relatedness needs in class.

Mei reported that she felt a sense of active participation during moments when she shared her own views of a certain phenomenon utilizing her own Chinese cultural capital. Mei further indicated during her interview that she was planning to suggest to the instructor the inclusion of languages other than Spanish and English (the major focus in the class), although she perceived that the other students and the instructor might not be interested in other languages, such as Chinese or Vietnamese.

By constructing multicultural or multilingual (vs. monolingual) communities of practice (Pavlenko, 2003) and by acknowledging their underrepresented cultural capital and appreciating their voices (e.g., via the use of readings on teaching Chinese immigrant students), educators could help student teachers from less dominant cultural backgrounds feel more included and less marginalized and ultimately experience a greater fulfillment of their relatedness needs.

Lastly, as recently reported (e.g., Gehlbach et al., 2016), helping these students build social or cultural capital (e.g., Elizabeth's connection with another classmate, whom she met at school district training session and with whom she seemed to share some commonalities) could promote their sense of inclusion and help fulfill their relatedness needs. Mei also shared that her opportunities to acquire American cultural capital outside of the classroom context (e.g., observing an elementary school) allowed her to better understand and participate in the teacher education classroom.

Conclusions and Future Studies

This study contributes to the field by offering deeper insights into methods of fulfilling the relatedness needs of the participating graduate students in connection to their identities as participating learners and their various types of capital. In growing transnational spaces, educators of teachers or faculty in higher education programs need to address the social, cultural, and structural contexts of students and determine how the value of their capital is perceived by their student peer group. Educators could observe and be reflective of the classroom dynamics to ascertain how an individual student's fully participating or marginalized identity within the community is constructed to better support the needs of each student and empower *all* students.

Despite these contributions, this study presented certain limitations, including the inability to conduct prolonged interviews of the students. Continued interviews of the students would have allowed the researchers to examine changes in the students' identities and fulfillment of relatedness needs, which remain open for future investigation. Future studies could also examine students from different social, cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds with regard to their identities and fulfillment of relatedness needs. Lastly, future studies could investigate how developing a deeper understanding of their students (e.g., their identities and capital) could help teachers shape their practices to be more adaptive.

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