Want to be a country teacher? No, I am too metrocentric.

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Citation: Campbell, A. M., & Yates, G. C. R. (2011). "Want to be a country teacher? No, I am too metrocentric." *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, *26*(4), 1-12. Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/26-4.pdf

Within the city-state of South Australia, the problem of attracting teachers to teach in rural schools is of long standing. We propose that "metrocentricity" can be viewed as a personal trait inhibiting teachers from considering country positions. In this project, 148 preservice teachers responded to an online survey concerning their desire to teach in the country after graduation. Twenty three per cent indicated this was their intention, and an additional 37% were undecided. Desire to teach in the country was predicted by being schooled in the country as a child, but path modelling revealed this relationship was fully mediated by the participants' self-ratings on a scale of personal metrocentricity, described as personal identification with the city. Metrocentricity predicted desire to teach in the country even within the subgroup of individuals not schooled in the country. Metrocentricity also predicted the disposition to endorse more negative aspects of country teaching experience, and fewer positive aspects, as indexed on checklists, and these measures were found to stand as significant mediators within the descriptive partial least squares path models.

Within the Australian context, the problem of staffing country schools has had a long history, stemming back over the past century. It remains an issue that shows no sign of going away (Preston, 2000; Roberts, 2005; White & Reid, 2008). Specifically, South Australian government country schools experience ongoing shortfalls in their staffing, most notably at the secondary level (see Preston, 2000, p. 6). South Australia is a natural example of the city-state phenomenon. Indeed, 74% of the state's population of 1.63 million people reside in Adelaide, a city that is the social, cultural, economic, and political hub of a land area larger than that of France, Germany, and Scotland combined. The greater majority of employable graduating teacher education students traditionally have sought metropolitan (i.e. Adelaide environs) rather than non-metropolitan placements (Cusack, 1974; Preston, 2000).

In this study, we sought to investigate factors implicated in education student teachers' desire to teach in the country. What would entice or deter a suitably qualified person to decide to apply to become a teacher in a rural or country school? Conceivably, some preservice teacher education students may be specially aiming to become a country teacher as a career destination. But others could be ambivalent, and yet others may be antagonistic toward any such notion. External inducements notwithstanding, just what factors might induce an individual undergoing teacher education to consider him or herself as a future country teacher? Traditionally, one answer was that a proportion of the graduating pool will go to the country largely by virtue of personal family background. But this proportion may not be sufficient.

The first author, as the Country Recruitment Officer with the South Australian Education Department, placed 114 teacher education graduates in country schools across South Australia in 2004 under two dedicated open programs: (a) Country Teaching Scholarship Scheme, targeting graduates from a country background, and (b) Graduate Recruitment Program (GRP), targeting graduates from the metropolitan Adelaide area. Of the total 114 placed, 36 stemmed from a country background. However, the remaining 78 were from Adelaide city as recruited under the GRP. In effect, more than twice the numbers of graduates placed in the country were, as far as the available information indicated (e.g., personal interviews), originally city-based individuals. Although formal records are unavailable, it is widely recognized

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that a high percentage of the individuals accepting such rural appointments had minimal prior contact with country education and environments, and were effectively city "born and bred." But such a context does not appear to be a recent phenomenon.

Historical Context: Staffing South Australian Country Schools

By the early years of the last century, South Australia had developed a successful economy based upon mining and the export of its agricultural products. The existence of many small towns at substantial distances apart posed unique problems. In 1928, the number of small one-teacher rural schools exceeded 800 and accounted for 80% of all schools in the state (Thiele, 1975, p. 157). These numbers reflect the heightened post-World War 1 activity in agriculture and its related industries, especially in the Eyre Peninsula, Mallee and Riverland areas, during these times. By the 1960s, however, the number of rural one-teacher schools had diminished to almost zero. Hence, staffing the country school required innovative actions.

Notably, during 1921-22, eleven new country high schools were established, at Clare, Riverton, Kapunda, Port Lincoln, Maitland, Willunga, Renmark, Bordertown, Quorn, Kadina, and Jamestown. In addition, sixteen primary schools were established under a deliberate government policy to discourage centralization within Adelaide city. As noted by historian, Colin Thiele (1975),

> To cap it all, sixteen Higher Primary Schools were established in country towns from the beginning of 1922. It was a move, the Minister said, to try to prevent further centralisation in Adelaide, which already held fifty-four percent of the population; better educational opportunities were being made available 'with the hope of inducing parents and children to refrain from drifting to the town'. (p. 150)

To serve such expansion, in 1923, the South Australian Directorate of Education, under William McCoy, initiated a formal policy to recruit qualified teachers and university graduates from England. This policy, highly consistent with the state's cultural identity and heritage, continued in effect for five decades. The early recruits, colloquially referred to as McCoy boys, are reputed to have made enormous contributions in developing the state's education system, and particularly the country high school system, from the 1920s into the 1960s (Thiele, 1975). Although it is difficult to quantify the matter, what became apparent is that South Australia's country schools, and notably the country high school sector, depended strongly upon graduates recruited from Britain who were likely to be city-centred prior to appointment. Similarly, those emerging from South Australian, and other Australian teacher training institutes, were largely city-centred recruits.

According to Thiele (1975), increases in South Australian state school enrolments between the years 1945 and 1973 were 220% compared to 156% for all of Australia, 39% for the USA, and 33% in the UK. More specifically, when comparing primary and secondary enrolments, during the period 1960 to 1965, primary numbers increased by 45% and secondary numbers by 120%. Expanding on the nature of these increases and the impacts on teacher numbers, Thiele writes,

> In 1965 total school numbers passed 200,000 for the first time in the State's history, of which Secondary enrolments contributed 56,907- a rise of 20,000 in five years. In 1966 the number passed 60,000, by 1970 it was 74,000 and by 1974 over 80,000. While this was happening to student numbers the supply of teachers was stretched to the limit. From little more than 3,000 in the late 1940's the number of teachers employed by the Education Department increased to almost 6,000 by 1960 and 11,000 by 1970. (Thiele, 1975, p. 216)

In response, during the period 1957 to 1968 the number of teacher education students increased from 500 to 5,000. In a report commissioned by the South Australian Council for Educational Planning and Research, Giles (1979) concluded that throughout the 1970s the shortage of secondary teachers applying to teach in country areas continued, with primary trained teachers routinely appointed to fill positions within the states' country secondary schools.

By 1981, virtually 100% percent of new Education Department appointments were in country areas (Edwards, 1981). Annual teacher supply and demand studies of Australia, including South Australia, undertaken by Preston from the 1990s through to 2005 indicate a repeated experience for South Australia of modest shortfalls at primary level and severe, extended shortfalls at secondary levels (Preston, 2000, 2005).

From such analyses it is possible to surmise that, to a large extent, South Australian country schools, including remarkably remote locations, have continued to be staffed by individuals who themselves were recruited from an urban background. So what might induce city-centered individuals to consider themselves as future country teachers?

Metrocentricity

Orientation towards a city-based existence can be referred to as metrocentricity. Notably, within existing literatures the notion of metrocentricity does not appear to have a single agreed-upon meaning. At times, it has been used to refer to aspects such as funding inequities in relation to city-centred government grants and access to public services. Within geographical studies the term has been used to refer to an emphasis on mainly Western urban studies (Bunnell & Maringanti, 2010). A further notion is that of "countrymindedness," as used within political studies effectively articulated by Aitkin (1985). In Aitkin's analysis countrymindedness naturally represents the counterposition of metrocentricity in that countryminded people share views and attitudes that demarcate them from people that live in cities. For instance, Aitkin notes that within this mindset "rural pursuits, generally, are virtuous, ennobling and co-operative; they bring out the best in people…. In contrast, city life is competitive and nasty, as well as parasitical" (1985, p. 35).

This city versus country divide has been a distinctive feature of the human social experience. Indeed, the rural/urban divide has continued to evolve thus creating, in the opinions of many commentators, an often increasing cultural gap (Archer, 2000; Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2001; Falk, 2002; Heldke, 2006; Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002; Sher & Sher, 1994; Williams, 1973). Williams (1973) notes that the city constitutes "the hub of modernity" (p. 36), and advances the idea city-centeredness can be related to individuals' personal preferences, experiences and traits. Many writers have noted how metrocentric attitudes often embody implicit biases or value judgements. For example, writing from a strong perspective, Heldke (2006) noted that metrocentricity brings with it the "inability to countenance the possibility that living in a small town or in the country requires any *desirable* forms of knowledge" (p. 152).

Other literature, relating specifically to educational matters, emphasizes the difficulties and complexities of the provision of rural, regional and remote education together with the inadequate preparation of teachers for non-metropolitan placements (Cusack, 1974; Gibson, 1994; Halsey, 2005; Lake 1985; McSwan & Duck, 1988; Page, 2006; Thiele, 1975; Yarrow, Ballantyne, Hansford, Herschell & Millwater, 1999). Indeed, the notion that traditional teacher education is unlikely to produce individuals attuned to the needs of rural and country education is a thesis often articulated (Green & Reid, 2004; Sharplin, 2002; White & Reid, 2008).[1]

Lemke (1994) describes the ideal rural teacher as someone who is comfortable with the rural life and capable of wearing many hats. Such an individual is "certified to teach more than one subject or grade level, can teach students with a wide range of abilities in the same classroom, is prepared to supervise extracurricular activities, and can adjust to the community" (p. 1).Within the Australian context, Boylan and McSwan (1998) found that many long-serving country teachers report a characteristic pattern of experiencing rich professional lives. Yet many such teachers, in devoting their professional lives to such rewarding pursuits, apparently began their careers as recruits from an urban background. In the Boylan and McSwan survey, 27% of their sample of 427 indicated they did not have a country background.

One suggestion is that country teachers are likely to be recruited from the ranks of individuals who are not strongly metrocentric in their personal make-up. This suggestion stems from the assumption that metrocentricity can constitute an individual difference factor akin to a personality trait or a self-schema. A self-schema refers to how a person thinks of his or her own attributes and values (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The possibility is that metrocentricity can be seen as a characteristic aligned with one's self image. Some individuals may identify with the city, and this may prove an obstacle to their considering themselves as a potential country teacher. Other individuals, however, may be less metrocentric, and thus more open to the ideal of professional country service.

If such notions possess any worth, it is necessary to be able to tap into the trait of metrocentricity quickly and meaningfully. The first author of this paper had noted that, when interviewing graduating teachers for country positions, many individuals voluntarily would identify themselves as "country people." This observation was investigated in an informal manner by asking students in a preservice teacher education class if they would be willing to indicate if they felt they were a "country person," a "city person," or both, or neither. The second author made this request of 151 individuals. Of this group, 51% stated they were city people, 17% stated they were country people, and 32% felt they were both city and country at the same time. It was seen that these students were able to respond to the question within a few seconds. Apparently, they readily accepted the categories "city" and "country" without question. Indeed, these students appeared fully ready to make a fast blink response to the question, and all experienced no apparent difficulty in coming to a personal decision. In essence, if we want to find out if people consider themselves as city people, or country people, it appears viable to ask them directly.

[1] It can be noted that remarkably similar and parallel observations are advanced also in connection with nursing education and practice in rural Australia (Kenny & Duckett, 2003).

Present Study

In the present study we surveyed preservice teachers at one of the teacher education institutions in South Australia, asking for their expressed desire or intention to teach in a country school. We anticipated that individuals who expressed metrocentricity, as a personal trait, would be unlikely to express willingness or desire to teach in the country upon graduation. Further, it was expected that desire to teach in the country would be predicted from a combination of four measureable variables: (a) having a country background, (b) being able to identify positive aspects of country teaching, (c) being relatively unlikely to cite negative aspects of country teaching, and (d) being low on the metrocentricity trait.

Although encouraged by the experience of asking individuals to respond to direct questions, at the outset we were quite unsure of how to assay metrocentricity. Since a sizable number of our test respondents indicated they could consider themselves both "city" and "country" at the same time, it was important to allow this aspect into the possible measure, and then to assess construct integrity along standard psychometric lines. Hence, the decision was made to adopt an exploratory approach to data analysis and depiction using the partial least squares regression method in path analysis.

Method

Participants. The 148 participants (26 male and 122 female) were enrolled in the preservice teacher education programmes at University of South Australia and responded to an online survey. Appeals were made in lecture classes to approximately 350 such students. In-class appeals were followed up with emails to those classes, with the URL, and appropriate ethics information. The majority of participants stemmed from the Primary and Junior Primary programmes, and approximately 20% of the participants stemmed from the Secondary programme. Initial means testing and frequency analyses indicated no significant differences in students' responses linked with gender, programme placement, or year of study.

Instrument. A survey was developed to measure the following: (a) desire to teach in the country, (b) respondents' personal country schooling experience, (c) disposition to indicate positive features of country teaching, (d) disposition to indicate negative features of country teaching, and (e) individual level of metrocentricity trait. Desire to teach in the country (DTC) was indexed by three items, while metrocentricity was indexed by two items (as shown in Table 1).

Respondents were asked if they experienced a country education as a student in each four levels of schooling: early childhood, junior primary, primary, and secondary. We refer to this as country schooling (CS). In addition, respondents were asked to respond to two checklists: (a) to select positive features about country teaching from a list of 14 such possible features, and (b) select negative features about country teaching from a list of 16 such possible features (See Appendix 1). By way of examples, one positive feature listed was "supportive school community," and one negative feature listed was "isolation." These two checklists were constructed by the first author following on from experience as a recruitment officer, and also from survey findings as reported by Sharplin (2002) and Roberts (2005).

Table 1
Items Used to Measure "Desire to Teach in the Country" and "Metrocentricity"

Item	Response options and scoring
Desire to Teach in the Country	
Once you graduate, are you specifically aiming to teach in a country school?	No, uncertain, yes (1 to 3)
Would you be willing, in order to gain teacher employment, to move to country South Australia?	Strongly disagree to strongly agree (1 to 5)
What percentage of your teaching career do you want to spend teaching in country South Australia?	0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100 (0 to 10)
Metrocentricity	
To what extent do you consider yourself a "city person"?	Not at all, a little, a great deal, absolutely (1 to 4)
To what extent do you consider yourself a "country person"?	Not at all, a little, a great deal, absolutely (4 to 1)

Results

Construct Development and Descriptive Statistics

Desire to teach in the country. With regard to the first item in Table 1, of the 148 respondents, 34 (23%) indicated that they specifically aimed to teach in the country after graduation, 59 (40%) indicated they did not aim to teach in the country, and 55 (37%) were undecided. This variable was thus able to be scored out of 3 (i.e., either 1, 2, or 3) in the positive direction.

With regard to the second item in Table 1, of the 148 respondents, 85 (57%) indicated that they would be willing to move to teach within a country school in SA. This was expressed along a 5-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, the percentage of respondents per point being 8, 15, 20, 38 and 19, along the scale.

With regard to the third item in Table 1, students were asked what percentage of their teaching careers they would want to teach in country South Australia, in units of 10% on a drop down menu. The median score was 20%. It was noted that 42 (28%) of the sample indicated a willingness to spend a half of more of their professional career (≥50%) in country teaching. Interestingly, a remarkable 79% of the sample indicated that they would want to teach in country SA for at least 10% of their career.

Hence, desire to teach in the country (DTC) was able to be indexed by these 3 items standardized within the following path analyses. Initial analyses revealed significant correlations between these three items (see Table 1). Initial analyses revealed that responses on these items were not predicted by gender of the respondents.

Metrocentricity. The two relevant items (see Table 1) were found to correlate at .75, $p < .01$. The high correlation enables a single aggregate score to be meaningfully generated. The construct was scored in the direction of metrocentricity, that is, identification toward the city and away from the country. Scored out of 8, the median was 6, and the mean 5.5, with a standard deviation of 1.6. It can also be noted that skewness and kurtosis were less than 1, hence, the distribution of scores was remarkably normal (as can be seen in Figure 4).

Positive and negative features about country teaching. These constructs were indexed by the number of the endorsed items on the two respective checklists. In the case of the positive tally the mean was 7.9 with a deviation of 2.9. In the case of the negative tally the mean was 7.8 with the deviation of 3.7. In both cases the distribution displayed acceptable normal properties.

Path Modelling: Determinants of Desire to Teach in the Country

Relationships between dispositional traits and DTC were investigated using the partial least squares approach (PLS) to path modeling. The software used was SmartPLS (Ringle, Wende & Will, 2005). A PLS model develops in two stages: (a) the measurement model is tested by performing reliability and discriminative validity analyses on each of the measures to ensure that reliable measures of the constructs are inherent, as indexed by variance extraction indices (AVE), and (b) the inner structural model is then tested by estimating the paths between the constructs, determining their significance.

To evaluate the model against observed data, an iterative procedure fits observed measures to corresponding latent variables, then estimates relationships amongst the latent variables. A least squares fit between observed and modeled parameters is computed, where a best fit solution is regarded once least squares functions stabilize between iterations. The approach is variance-based, as distinct from covariance-based, and hence PLS is noted to be most useful in investigating descriptive and predictive relationships (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004; Sellin & Keeves, 1997). SmartPLS also has features such as being able to handle binary factors, and has mediation and moderation statistics in-built, although we used the SPSS AMOS statistical package to also articulate the significance level of mediation statistics.

The basic model used as a starting point is shown in Figure 1. This figure depicts the expected pathway valences on the basis of logic and expectations. This pattern is supported by an inspection of Table 3, i.e., correlations which stem from the SmartPLS output, after computation

Table 2
Correlations Concerning Three Indicators of Desire to Teach in Country South Australia

Measured variable	2	3
1. Aim to teach	.68	.77
2. Willing to move		.59
3. Desired duration		

Notes. (a) The figures represent Pearson correlations, based on148 participants, and all coefficients are highly significant ($p < .01$), (b) aim to teach was scored out of 3, (c) willing to move was scored out of 5, and (d) desired duration was expressed in percentage terms.

of latent variables. The desire to teach in the country (DTC) was predicted positively by having been taught in country schools as a student, and also with the number of positive features about country teaching that were nominated. Further, desire to teach in the country was predicted negatively by the number of negative features about country teaching identified, as well as by the students' low ratings on their metrocentricity identifications.

Figure 2 represents the final depiction of significant pathways concerning these relationships. All variables were entered into analyses, consistent with Figure 1, and non-significant pathways progressively trimmed to produce a parsimonious descriptive model. The model is impressive in that 61% of the variance in DTC was predicted by the other variables (R^2 of .61). This factor is considered an outcome factor. A feature of the final path model is that the relationship between this outcome and the presage factor of country schooling emerges as a non-significant direct pathway. This is surprising since the raw bivariate correlation between these two constructs was 0.5 (see Table 3). Hence, what was apparent in these data were remarkable mediational effects. This was further confirmed using the Shrout and Bolger (2002) bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure, using the SPSS AMOS statistical package for this test, standardized indirect effect p <.001. Since, the standardized direct effect was non-significant, it was apparent that the pathway from CS to DTC was fully mediated through the factor of metrocentricity.

The model depicts both Cronbach Alpha coefficients and Average Variance Extraction (AVE) indices as measures on reliability and discriminative validity within the computations. Importantly, these data are positive and provide assurance that the model constitutes a coherent representation. (Note: AVE figures need to be higher than 0.49 for construct integrity purposes). It can be noted that gender did not emerge as a significant factor in any of the analyses performed. Attempts were also made to allow student gender into the model by treating it as a potential moderating factor. This is made possible through the use of an option within SmartPLS. A moderating factor is one that affects the magnitude of the statistical relationships. However, in all analyses performed, no evidence was found to the effect that student gender would serve as a moderator influencing the reported magnitude of any of the manifest relationships.

The data picture thus emerges to define the central role being played by metrocentric identification. This is reinforced by additional analyses indicating partial mediation effects in the following manner. Linkages from metrocentricity to positive tally were significant, as was the link from positive

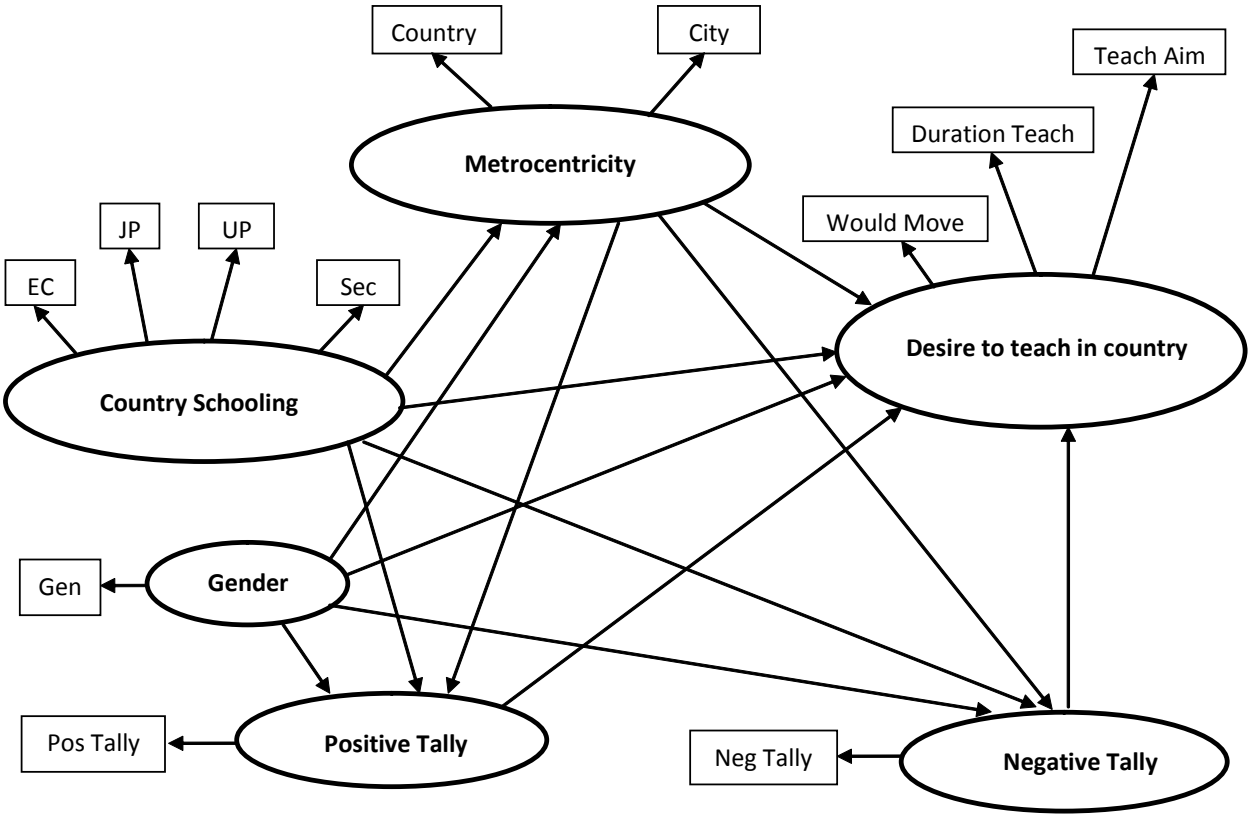

Figure 1. Initial model of determinants of desire to teach in country.

Table 3

Correlations Concerning Factors Associated with Desire to Teach in Country South Australia

Latent variable	2	3	4	5
1. Country schooling (CS)	-.7	.26	-.31	.50
2. Metrocentricity		-.32	.46	-.71
3. Positive tally			.00	.42
4. Negative tally				-.31
5. Desire teach in country (DTC)				

tally to DTC. Thus, some of the impact of metrocentricity appears to exist through its impact on another perception, that of making country teaching appear as possessing fewer positive attributes. Expressed in quantitative terms, the direct effect from metrocentricity to DTC was -.47, and the indirect effect, as mediated through positive tally was an additional -.09.

To express this in another way: Metrocentricity, structured as an individual trait factor, was the essential link. Being schooled in the country was associated with lower levels of metrocentricity, and this in turn led to an enhanced DTC. It is also notable that with metrocentricity in the equation, the linkages from CS to the positive and negative features tallies also became non-significant, even though they did appear significant on the basis of bivariate correlations, as was shown within Table 3.

A similar picture emerges in terms of partial mediation when the negative tally is brought into the model. Metrocentricity was associated with apparent increases in the level of negative features identified about country teaching. The link from metrocentricity to negative was significant as was the link from negative tally to DTC. The indirect effect of metrocentricity upon DTC, as mediated through the negative tally was -.14. Hence, in adding together the two indirect effects, as mediated through both positive and negative tallies, the total indirect effect summed to a remarkable -.23. This represents virtually one half of the magnitude of the direct effect of -.47.

It can be seen from Table 3 the bivariate correlation between metrocentricity and DTC was a remarkable -.71. Hence, the path analysis effectively showed that in considering this strong relationship, 67% of the effect stems

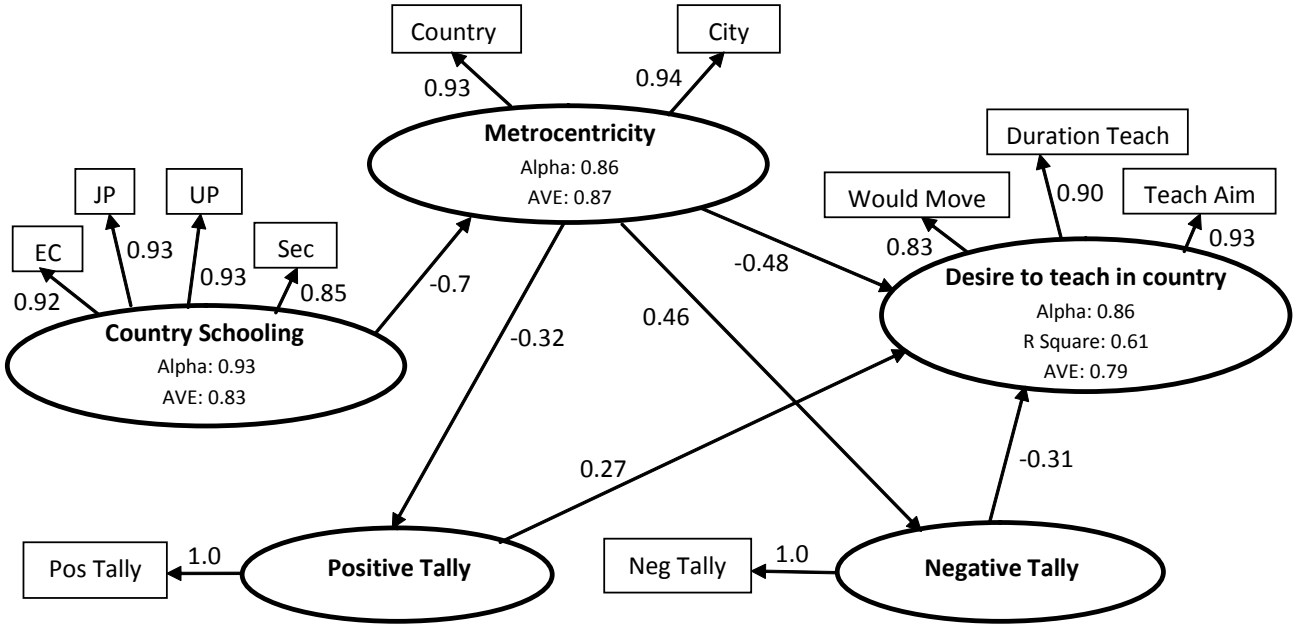

Figure 2. Final path model of determinants of desire to teach in the country.

from a direct influence, and 33% of this effect stems from impacts mediated through positive and negative perceptions. The statistical significance of these indirect partial mediation effects was established with the Shrout Bolger procedure using AMOS (p <. 001 in both instances).

Moderation analyses. The relationship between metrocentricity and DTC was tested for possible moderation. It is conceivable that country schooling experience as a child could serve to moderate such a relationship. It could be the case that schooling experience determines metrocentricity (or lack of it), which in turn determines DTC. In short, it would be important to establish that variance in metrocentricity still impacts upon DTC, irrespective of status on the country schooling factor. SmartPLS allows the researcher to test for such hidden effects. It was possible to re-run the model, using country schooling designated as a moderator, with metrocentricity as predictor, and DTC as outcome. This asks if the relationship depends on the level of schooling as a background factor. The moderation effect was not significant (t =.8). Hence, in terms of the level of explained variance, the relationship between metrocentricity and DTC did not hinge upon participants' experience of country schooling as a child.

Further, by way of additional testing, it was decided to rerun the model with only the 99 students who did not possess an apparent country schooling background. This was to check if the picture, as portrayed in the main model, might be seen to represent the city-based individuals as a coherent group. That is, this secondary model was intended to remove from the picture variance specifically linked with personal country schooling experience. This is shown in Figure 3. The fundamental relationships remain very similar to the full model. The main effect of removing the 49 country based people from the analysis was to reduce the size of the R-square associated with DTC from .61 to .45. This reduction is readily explained by the fact that country schooling experience is a significant predictor of DTC; hence removing it from the equation will reduce overall explanatory power. However, the R-square remained high demonstrating substantial variance associated with the metrocentricity measures, as predictive of desire to teach within the country, even within the subgroup of individuals who appeared to possess no known personal link with the country experience.

Metrocentricity and being educated in the country. It can be noted that gender was not related to metrocentricity. However, inspection of Figure 2 indicates that metrocentricity and country schooling background were strongly associated, with a correlation of -0.7. We explored this relationship further by comparing responses of the 99 city-based students with the 49 students who had had some experience of country teaching as a child. This analysis thus treats country schooling as a binary. The distribution of scores of the two groups is shown as a pyramid style graph in Figure 4. The city-educated students were more metrocentric than the remaining students, with means of 6.2 and 4.1, F (1,146) = 97, p < .01, d = 1.7. Since metrocentricity was scored between 2 and 8, it is notable that 10 of the 49 country educated students gave the lowest possible scores. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the level of overlap between these two target groups.

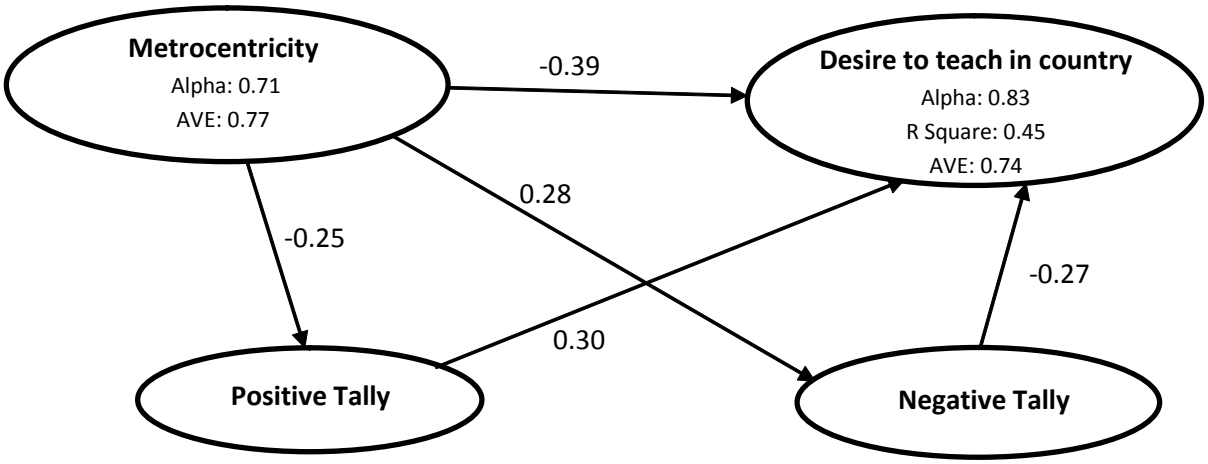

Figure 3. Path model depicted for 99 city-based individuals only.

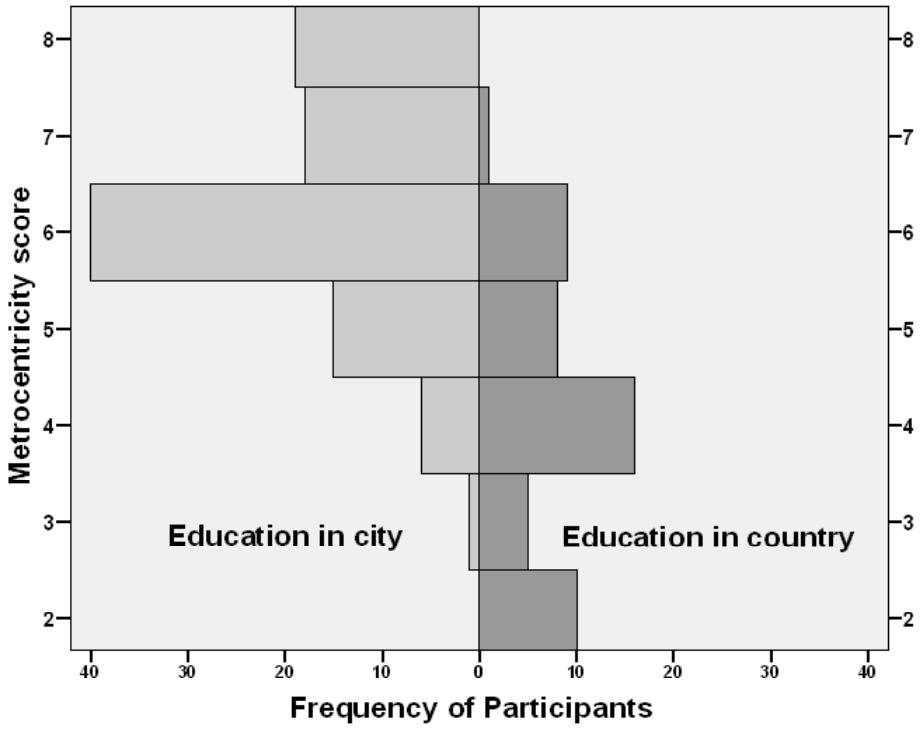

Figure 4. Pyramid graph showing overlap in metrocentricity scores.

Discussion

The findings of this project can be summarized:

- Twenty three per cent of the individuals training to become teachers declared that they aimed to become country teachers after their professional training. Of the respondents who had experienced some level of education themselves in the country, the level of such aspiration was 45%, as against 12% of the people who did not have such a background.

- Desire to teach in the country was predicted strongly by the characteristic of metrocentricity, defined as one's personal identification with the city habitat.

- There was a clear relationship between desire to teach in the country, and having experienced some level of education in the country. But path analysis revealed that this relationship was in turn fully mediated by the individual's level of metrocentricity.

- The relationship between metrocentricity and desire to teach in the country was still found to be highly significant when considering only those individuals who received their education in city-based schools.

- The relationship between metrocentricity and desire to teach in the country was itself partially mediated by two additional perceptual attributes: firstly, belief that country teaching is associated with a relatively higher number of negative aspects, and secondly, that country teaching is associated with a relatively lower number of positive aspects.

It can be noted that within the confines of this approach, we define metrocentricity as a personal identification. This is akin to the personality construct of the possible self, i.e., belief in the type of individual one is, or otherwise aspires towards (Markus, 1999; Markus & Nurius, 1986). We hold that metrocentricity can be viewed as one type of self-schema. Markus notes that "Self-schemata are cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-related

information contained in the individual's social experiences" (1999, p.124). Findings from Markus, and others in the field of social and personality psychology, strongly suggest that self-schemata effectively predict how people describe themselves, how they recall and structure their experiences, how they react to information, how they assign values and make choices, and the nature of their intentions concerning the future (Fiske & Taylor, 2007).

To some extent, the present data are reassuring in that, although city-educated individuals clearly were more metrocentric than country-educated individuals, a level of overlap, as shown in Figure 4, was notable. In order to achieve a high score on our scale, the individual had to *both* endorse the city, and reject the country identifications. Initially, we were unsure if this tactic constituted a sensible measurement approach, so we ran additional statistical path models employing only one or other of these two indices (the city or country items, see Table 1). We found the pathways remained unaltered. That is, all that was lost within these supplementary analyses was a relatively minor reduction in overall predictive power. Such findings add to both the convergent and divergent validity of the measurement approach employed, and may be seen as consistent with Heldke's (2006) depiction of metrocentricity as the city-based person's appraisal of the knowledge and experience of rural-based individuals. In short, through asking two direct questions (see Table 1) we were able to derive a coherent index of a meaningful trait that appears strongly predictive of employment aspirations in preservice teachers.

The suggestion is that some apparently city-based preservice teachers may present as less metrocentric than others, this factor becoming a key attribute in predicting just who is likely to place the role of country teacher onto a personal agenda. However, another part of the story appears to lie within additional perceptions. Individuals who were able to list positive features about country teaching, and were less likely to endorse negative features, were more likely to desire to work and teach in the country. But these perceptions are in turn partly driven by one's metrocentric status. Thus, the present dataset suggest that metrocentricity plays a key role in having both a *direct* and an *indirect* influence upon willingness to teach in the country, with the indirect influence amounting to roughly one half of that of the direct influence.

Hence, one interpretation is that, although we may conceive of metrocentricity as a relatively fixed characteristic, it may be entirely feasible to encourage potential country teachers through attempting to change the way in which they perceive of the advantages of country teaching and country life. Whilst it might be relatively unlikely that placement agents can alter negative stereotypes, information as to the genuine advantages of country teaching may be well received and influential in helping individuals make professional choices, in a manner as suggested by Boylan and McSwan (1998). In their project it was found that 80% of long-serving country teachers reported moderate to high levels of satisfaction in working at their schools. Indeed, "There emerged a profile of a professionally satisfied, community integrated, family oriented teacher who enjoyed the rural lifestyle and environment" (Boylan & McSwan, 1998, p. 49). It is apparent that in the absence of this type of affirmative information, perceptions are likely to be linked into pre-existing attitudes that may allow negative aspects of country life to become salient characteristics in decision making. Such an interpretation is consistent with the meditational analyses in the present study.

Limitations of the Study

The sample consisted of preservice teachers predominantly training to become junior and upper primary teachers. Thus, postulants at the high school level were underrepresented. In initial tests we found no significant differences in the means in any of the measured variables associated with this aspect, but nevertheless, it would be desirable to extend the findings to a larger sample of potential secondary teachers. There was failure to find any effects associated with gender in the data. However, there were only 26 males, and thus problems arise in generalizing from such a sample.

Implications for Future Research

In future research, it would be highly desirable to investigate the determinants and stability of metrocentricity. To this point, we are regarding metrocentricity as a relatively fixed attribute, as a type of self-schemata, in accordance with the views of personality theorists such as Markus (1999). But this could be a misleading view. It may be the case, for instance, that metrocentricity represents a relatively uninformed position, borne more from relative ignorance than any other factor, but nevertheless a position readily modified. Whilst we conceive of metrocentricity as a specific type of personality attribute, central to the individual's self image, further study is needed to investigate such a notion more thoroughly.

One further aspect worthy of future study is that of tracking personal shifts in metrocentricity as a function of personal experiences in training, and also naturalistic life contexts. It may be anticipated that, through relevant experience, individuals become less metrocentric than their initial orientation. Whether or not this correlates with increases in positive attitude toward the country, as would be suggested from Boylan and McSwan's (1998) research, is worthy of future investigation. Similarly, within samples of country teachers, shifts away from metrocentric orientations

conceivably could be related to outcomes such as teacher identity and job satisfaction, or even resiliency. Conceivably, failure to move away from a metrocentric disposition may presage less favourable outcomes in teachers who accept country positions. Changes in metrocentricity, as one part of the individual's self-schemata, might usefully reflect an indicator of person-environmental fit.

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