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Authoring Dis/ability Identities
Mapping the Role of Ableism in Teacher Candidate Identity Construction

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Abstract

Ableism, or the belief that abled ways of being and knowing are superior, perpetuates deficit views of ability differences, and constructs dis/ability as a problem in need of remediation so that individuals achieve "normalcy." Ableism's entrenched pervasiveness in education systems can be a significant barrier in teacher education when preparing critical educators who can work towards radical forms of dis/ability justice. In this paper, we argue that dis/abled teacher candidates can afford particular insight into the ways in which ableism operates in educational institutions and that dis/ability should be considered an asset to inclusive and socially just teacher preparation. Using Critical Conversation Journey Mapping as a methodology, we use sociocultural theory and a critical dis/ability studies framework to explore ways in which dis/abled teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs both experienced ableism throughout their educational trajectories and how these experiences served as cultural resources in their teacher preparation.

Ableism, or the belief that abled ways of being and knowing are superior (Campbell, 2009; Hehir, 2002), perpetuates deficit views of dis/ability[1] as an internalized failure or sickness in need of remediation so that individuals achieve "normalcy" (Ferri & Bacon, 2011). This model is so pervasive that it often operates as tacit fact by educators and gets (re)produced without critical examination (Artiles, 2013; Lalvani, 2013). Ableism can be a significant barrier in teacher education when preparing critical educators who can work towards radical forms of dis/ability justice. In this paper, we argue that dis/abled teacher candidates can afford particular insight into the ways in which ableism operates in educational institutions and that dis/ability should be considered an asset to inclusive and socially just teacher preparation. Indeed, scholars have argued that dis/abled teachers can offer a plethora of benefits for students with and without dis/abilities alike (Anderson, 2006; Pritchard, 2010). In this paper we use sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978) and a Critical Disability Studies framework (Baglieri, Bejoian, Broderick, Connor, & Valle, 2011; Goodley, 2014) to explore ways in which dis/abled teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs both experienced ableism throughout their educational trajectories and drew on those experiences as cultural resources in their teacher preparation.

Literature Review

Critical Inclusive Teacher Preparation

Scholars and educators have proposed critical approaches to inclusive education as a means to address systemic ableism in school systems (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Naraian, 2017; Slee, 2013). Rather than locating dis/ability as a problem within the individual or with particular groups of students, critical inclusion takes a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) perspective, locating the barriers to inclusive practice within the sociocultural context of the schools (Baglieri, et al., 2011; Thorius, 2016). Critical inclusion seeks to disrupt what Broderick and Lalvani (2017) called 'dysconscious ableism.' Building on the concept of 'dysconscious racism' (King, 1991), 'dysconscious ableism' refers to a limited or distorted way of understanding ability that reproduces the social construction of normalcy and the binary of abled and dis/abled identities (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017). Critical inclusion seeks to dislodge processes of 'dysconscious ableism' with teacher candidates so that they can engage in the ongoing work of recognizing and dismantling the intersecting dominant ideologies of oppression that work to construct a normative center of schools (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011) and marginalize those who do not fit into a dominant norm.

For critical inclusion to thrive, teacher preparation programs need to prepare teacher candidates who can advance critical pedagogy in their school communities, challenging ableism and its intersecting systems of oppression (Siuty, 2019). However, there has been limited attention to dis/ability in critical education (Anderson, 2006). Anderson argued that "teachers with disabilities offer 'bodies of possibility' that interrogate and transform the spaces of academe" (2006, p. 378). Indeed, dis/abled teachers offer unique insight into insidious processes in schools, challenge dominant cultural beliefs about normalcy, and offer a model of resistance for the students they teach (Pritchard, 2010). Thus, dis/abled teachers can potentially play a powerful role in critical inclusive efforts. It is imperative that teacher preparation programs not only recruit and retain more

[1] Like Annamma (2017), we use the slash in dis/ability (and in other forms such as in dis/ability, dis/abled) to highlight ways in which this identity marker is socially constructed through everyday processes (including through the use of language) to re-inscribe "ability" as a normative, desired standard.

teachers with dis/abilities into the profession but also sustain and highlight the cultural resources they bring to critical pedagogical approaches that explicitly address systemic ableism.

Dis/abled Teachers and Teacher Preparation

Existing research on teacher candidates with dis/abilities remains limited. Several studies explored the implementation of accommodations and modifications throughout preparation programs. For instance, researchers surveyed faculty perspectives about their training to support dis/abled teacher candidates (Leyser & Greenberger, 2008; Leyser, Greenberger, Sharoni, & Vogel, 2011). The questions primarily focused on the delivery of accommodations and modifications in the higher education coursework. A majority of faculty members self-reported having essentially no training in the area of accessibility but felt confident that they could provide the necessary supports for dis/abled teacher candidates. In another study, researchers surveyed directors of student teaching to understand the implementation of accommodations (Sokal, Woloshyn, & Wilson, 2017). The directors reported a willingness to provide accommodations but asserted that dis/abled teacher candidates still needed to demonstrate the standards of proficiency laid out by their programs. In doing so, they revealed their belief that accommodations for dis/ability can compromise the rigor of their program rather than enhance the process of learning to teach.

Despite these responses from faculty members that suggested sufficient support for dis/abled teacher candidates, many dis/abled teacher candidates reported structural barriers that they faced during their program. Dis/abled teacher candidates' accounts of teacher preparation programs focused particularly on the *lack* of accessible accommodations (Csoli & Gallagher, 2012; Knight & Wadsworth, 1996; Otis-Wilborn, Cates, Proctor, & Kinnison, 1991). In a case study of Zachary, a teacher candidate with traumatic brain injury, the supports offered by the teacher preparation program demonstrated inconsistency with the program's stated policy towards diversity in the student body and the practice (Bargerhuff, Cole, & Teeters, 2012). The teacher preparation program implemented a form of support called 'concern conferences' supposedly as a form of support for dis/abled teacher candidates. These meetings involved multiple stakeholders such as the student, his supervisors, and cooperating teachers. While anyone could raise a 'concern' to be addressed at these meetings, they were exclusively convened by the supervisors and cooperating teachers to address concerns with Zachary's performance at his school placement. Bargerhuff and colleagues argued that instead of offering much needed support, the conferences actually reinforced the location of the concern to be within the dis/abled student. The findings demonstrated the meeting between faculty members and the student actually maintained the status quo by pathologizing dis/ability rather than addressing the ways in which systemic ableism served as a barrier to the dis/abled candidate. Moreover, the interactions during the conferences themselves revealed ableist tropes such as benevolence, pity, or even skepticism.

Similarly, Parker and Draves (2017) found that teacher candidates with visual impairments noted that their teacher preparation program operated under the assumption of sight being a necessary element of teaching. For instance, accommodations were not made for video analysis the candidates needed to conduct, they faced difficulty finding curricular materials in Braille, and had to rely on sighted aides in their field placements. In this study, dis/abled teacher candidates contrasted their field experiences in schools to their work with community organizations such as community theatre where they took on many of the same responsibilities— primarily teaching children and youth— but found community environments to be much more flexible and accepting.

Teacher candidates also struggled with the decision to 'come out' as dis/abled in their teacher preparation programs (Csolis & Gallagher, 2012; Gabel, 2001; Riddick, 2003). Trepidation stemmed from fear of backlash from faculty members, who would have to provide additional accommodations in their coursework and field placements. As a result, some teacher candidates chose to keep their dis/abilities secret as they pursued their teaching degrees.

Other research explored the relationship between dis/abled teacher candidates' personal histories and their development as educators. Gabel (2001) found that dis/abled teacher candidates' pedagogical knowledge was tied to their specific experiences with dis/abilities. Dvir (2015) similarly found that teacher candidates who experienced exclusion themselves demonstrated unique abilities to promote inclusion in their classrooms. In another study, dyslexic teacher candidates drew on coping strategies they had developed to navigate higher education institutions as they participated in their teacher preparation program (Riddick, 2003). In addition, they reported that their experience of being dyslexic particularly informed the way they interacted with students with similar dis/abilities in the area of reading.

In sum, the limited literature revealed disconnections between faculty and teacher candidate perceptions of sufficient accommodations and supports in teacher education to support teacher candidates with dis/abilities. Stigma and bias persisted and discouraged students from disclosing dis/abilities to faculty members. Studies that frame teacher candidates' experiences with dis/abilities as significant demonstrated that teacher candidates drew on these experiences as cultural resources that inform their developing educator identities and practices.

Anderson (2006) wrote that, "insights for pedagogy emerge when we consider disability as a valuable source of lived experiences, rather than see disabled bodies as 'something to be accommodated" (p. 369). The present study built on literature positioning dis/abled teacher candidates as possessing multiple cultural assets (Pritchard, 2010) that can enhance teacher preparation programs. We used Critical Conversation Journey Mapping (CCJM) (Beneke, 2020), an adaptation of Education Journey Mapping (Annamma, 2016; 2018) as a methodology to analyze the ways in which dis/abled teacher candidates' experiences of systemic ableism in educational institutions mediated their dis/ability identities over time. The significance of this work is two-fold. First, centering the experiences of dis/abled students illuminated the multifaceted ways dis/abled teacher candidates experienced and resisted ableism through interactions with educational institutions. Secondly, findings exposed the ways in which interactions with sociocultural context of schools mediated dis/ability identity construction for future teachers. In doing so, we sought to demonstrate how dis/abled teacher candidates are essential partners in the project of critical inclusive education.

Conceptual Framework

This study is conceptually framed by two complementary perspectives: Goodley's (2014) notion of "desiring dis/ability" and Rogoff, Topping, Baker-Sennett, and Lacasa's (2002) three planes of sociocultural activity.

Desiring dis/ability

Dan Goodley (2014) proposed desiring dis/ability as a necessary theme for advancing critical dis/ability studies. In capitalist societies designed to fuel consumer aspirations, desire is defined as wanting something you lack. Goodley (2014) argued that dis/ability can be used to

reject normative understandings of desire and, "recast [desire] as a force through which we connect with one another. We are asked to think of our desires for new forms of kinship, relationality and interdependence" (p. 165). He described desiring dis/ability as a process of 'becoming' that requires building connections with others. In inclusive teacher education, desiring dis/ability opens up new opportunities to value dis/abled teacher candidates as essential co-conspirators in the disruption of normative centers of schools. It honors their experiences in navigating ableist institutions as essential insight not only for themselves but their abled colleagues and students as well. Desiring dis/ability is a radical act in inclusive teacher education because it transforms deficit understandings of dis/ability from something that impedes the process of becoming an inclusive teacher to an asset that can sustain and bolster the teacher preparation journey. In this paper, we present an analysis of the CCJMs of dis/abled teacher candidates through a desiring dis/ability lens, highlighting how the unique understandings of dis/abled teacher candidates enrich rather than detract from their development as inclusive educators.

Sociocultural Theory

We drew on sociocultural theory in order to reject the notion that individuals act or make meaning in spite of or in the absence of their sociocultural contexts. Instead, we posit that teacher candidates author meaning around dis/ability through interacting with the social and cultural tools and resources available to them throughout their educational journeys (Rogoff et al., 2002). For the purposes of our analysis, we focused on what Rogoff and colleagues (2002) described as three interrelated planes of sociocultural activity: the *personal* plane; the *interpersonal* plane; and the *institutional* plane. The personal plane represented individual actions and meaning making with regard to dis/ability; the interpersonal plane highlighted how interactions and communication between individuals dynamically shaped meaning of dis/ability and sociocultural activity; and the institutional plane focused on the contributions of institutional traditions, ideologies, and tools related to dis/ability on sociocultural activity. Taking a sociocultural perspective allowed us to foreground certain aspects of context while also recognizing that all three planes continuously interacted in multifaceted and complex ways. In inclusive teacher education, it is important to understand how dis/abled teacher candidates authored *personal* dis/ability identities drawing on tools embedded in *interpersonal* interactions and *institutional* ideological contexts. This allowed us to highlight the knowledge and perspectives that dis/abled teacher candidates bring as a result of interacting within educational institutions as individuals with impairments and/or dis/abilities.

Methods

Anderson (2006) wrote that, "insights for pedagogy emerge when we consider disability as a valuable source of lived experiences, rather than see disabled bodies as 'something to be accommodated" (p. 369). The present study built on literature positioning dis/abled teacher candidates as possessing multiple cultural assets (Pritchard, 2010) that can enhance teacher preparation programs. We used Critical Conversation Journey Mapping (CCJM) (Beneke, 2020), an adaptation of Education Journey Mapping (Annamma, 2016; 2018) as a methodology to analyze the ways in which dis/abled teacher candidates' experiences of systemic ableism in educational institutions mediated their dis/ability identities over time. The significance of this work is two-fold. First, centering the experiences of dis/abled students illuminated the multifaceted ways dis/abled teacher candidates experienced and resisted ableism through interactions with educational institutions. Secondly, we aimed to expose the ways in which interactions with

sociocultural context of schools mediated dis/ability identity construction for future teachers. In doing so, we sought to demonstrate how dis/abled teacher candidates are essential partners in the project of critical inclusive education.

Participants

Researchers drew participants from three larger studies of teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs at three different institutions of higher education. Inclusion criteria for participation required that participants be enrolled in a teacher preparation program and self-reported experiencing a dis/ability or impairment related to physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental/emotional functioning at some point in their life history (see Table 1). Like Gabel (2001), we kept the definition of dis/ability open for participants to define through the research process. Many participants experienced a dis/ability or impairment for a temporary period of time and no longer identified as dis/abled. Some participants never identified as being dis/abled until asked to reflect on their ability identity and education journey. We as researchers use the term 'dis/abled teacher candidates' to describe the group of participants. This is meant to recognize both the social construction of dis/ability as an identity that is often placed on individuals by educational institutions and to signal that the participants reported experiencing ableism as a system of oppression. In total, we identified 25 participants as meeting the inclusion criteria for the present study.

Teacher preparation program context. Participants were drawn from three teacher preparation programs at three different institutions (see Table 1). Pacific University prepared general education teacher candidates in a variety of secondary content areas. Pacific University (PU) was located in a public institution in the Pacific Northwest. The program at PU included a single course on inclusive education that explicitly focused on disability justice and inclusive education – this class was an outlier in the context of the program in its entirety. Central University (CU) prepared teacher candidates seeking dual licensure (early childhood and early childhood special education) at a public institution in the Midwest. The program at CU focused on building teacher candidates' competencies to work in both special and general education settings with an emphasis on supporting young children's access to and participation in fully inclusive learning environments. Western State University prepared special education teacher candidates to work with individuals with dis/abilities from birth through adulthood. Western State University (WSU) was a public institution located in the Pacific Northwest. The program at WSU emphasized teacher candidates' use of approaches and practices that promote positive student outcomes and build inclusive communities.

Table 1
Study Participants

Name	Program	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Self-Reported Dis/ability or Impairment
Abby	PU	Female	White	Speech and language impairment, metachondromatosis, anxiety, depression
Alice	PU	Female	Asian/Pacific Islander	Speech and language impairment
Allie	PU	Female	White	Borderline Personality Disorder
Amy	WSU	Female	White	Depression

Name	Program	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Self-Reported Dis/ability or Impairment
Ann	WSU	Female	White	Astigmatism, Speech and language impairment, Autism spectrum disorder
Avery	PU	Female	White	Anxiety, panic disorder
Beth		Female	White	Crohn's disease
Betsy	PU	Female	White	Cancer
Cara	WSU	Female	White	Chronic pain, chronic fatigue
Cate	PU	Female	White	Attention deficit disorder, dyslexia, bulging discs
Dan	WSU	Male	White	Depression, learning disability
Grace	CU	Female	White	Cancer, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
Isaac	PU	Male	White	Learning disability
Jennifer	WSU	Female	White	Anxiety
Jillian	PU	Female	White	Rheumatic Fever
Juan	PU	Male	Hispanic	Depression
Mandy	WSU	Female	White	Learning disability
Nicolas	PU	Male	White	Depression
Nolan	PU	Male	White	Depression
Rebecca	PU	Female	White	Anxiety, depression, eating disorder
Scott	PU	Male	White	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, anxiety
Tara	PU	Female	White	Dyslexia, Nephrotic Syndrome
Tessa	PU	Female	White	Learning disability
Tom	PU	Male	White	Depression
Violet	PU	Female	White	Depression
Xander	PU	Male	White	Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Critical Conversation Journey Mapping

Education journey mapping (Annamma, 2016; 2018) is a critical qualitative method where participants construct a visual representation of the relationship between their identities with school. Annamma's (2016) original use of educational journey mapping centered the experiences of dis/abled girls of color in incarcerated settings to better understand their experiences with intersectional forms of oppression. We chose to adapt this methodology for our research with teacher candidates who were dis/abled but also representative of the majority white teaching force. Therefore, in our analysis and discussion, we sought to recognize that while our participants all experienced macro systems of ableism within their individual contexts, many also benefited from their whiteness in these interactions. We explore the implications of their racial identities in more detail in the discussion section to make explicit the ways in which whiteness and ability often worked in tandem to hoard benefits and opportunities differently based on racial identities (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011).

Due to our adaptation of education journey mapping, we called our methodology Critical Conversations Journey Mapping (CCJM) Beneke, 2020). We chose CCJM because mapping as a method is a way to stimulate participants' reflections about their identities across space and time (Futch & Fine, 2014). Specifically, we wanted teacher candidates to think critically about the ways in which their ability identities were constructed through interactions with educational institutions.

Researchers provided participants with art supplies such as paper, markers and colored pencils as well as the prompt below:

> Map any interactions, conversations, or experiences about or related to ability and/or race that you have experienced in your education journey from when you started school as a young child to now. Include people, places, classroom materials, obstacles, and opportunities on the way. Using the materials provided, draw the relationship between these conversations and your own social, academic, and professional identities. You can include what felt comfortable and/or what didn't. You can use different colors to show different feelings, use symbols like lines and arrows, or label with words. These are just suggestions. Be as creative as you like and, if you don't want to draw, you can make more of a flow-chart or other visual representation. Afterwards, you will get a chance to explain what you drew.

After sharing the prompt visually with participants, we also read the prompt out loud and gave opportunities for participants to ask clarifying questions. We then shared our own CCJMs because we understood that identity exploration can be a vulnerable process and we wanted to honor that vulnerability by opening up about our own process of identity formation in a process of mutual sense-making. After participants created their maps, they generated narratives through one-on-one interviews or written reflections such as essay or PowerPoint presentations. The purpose of these narratives was for participants to clarify aspects of their maps and provide additional details not captured in the visual representations.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the data using our conceptual framework as a guide (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). Our coding structure integrated sociocultural theory (Rogoff, 2002) and desiring dis/ability (Goodley, 2014) to interpret how dis/ability identity is mutually constituted through social interaction. We conducted a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the narratives and maps in *NVivo* using both inductive and deductive reasoning. During the first round of coding, we established three a priori codes that coincided with Rogoff's (2002) three planes of sociocultural activity: personal, interpersonal, and institutional. Under each parent code we created more specific child nodes that acted as descriptors for the parent codes. For instance, under the personal plane, we included child codes such as individual cognition, personal emotion, and personal values/beliefs. Prior to coding, we defined each child node together and recorded the definition in *NVivo* as it related to the desiring dis/ability (Goodley, 2014). This process served multiple purposes. First, it attuned our analysis to (re)frame dis/ability as a cultural resource in teacher education. Secondly, explicitly defining the terms through co-constructed dialog as a research team encouraged consistency across our analysis. At the same time, we did not limit ourselves to these established codes but also created new inductive codes for phenomenon not captured in the codes from our conceptual framework itself. During the second round of coding, we refined our coding structure further by shifting codes and generating new understandings from the data itself. During the third phase of coding, we combined our inductive codes to generate three overarching themes that described the most salient conclusions from our data.

Researcher Positionality

The researchers in this study are both abled, white, female teacher educators. As former teachers in early childhood (Maggie), elementary, and middle school settings (Molly), we recognized that we engaged in ableist practices that perpetuated ability hierarchies within our classrooms. As faculty members in two colleges of education and scholars of teacher education, we are committed to developing anti-ableist approaches in teacher education that challenge dominant notions of normalcy. However, through our own educational experiences and socialization we have internalized ableist ideas, biases, and understandings of the world. We believe it is imperative that our teaching and research must actively resist these oppressive structures. In this study we embedded checks on our own understandings as not to be complicit in perpetuating ableism. First, we centered the voices of dis/abled teacher candidates by drawing on their CCJMs and narratives as our data sources. By focusing on the ways in which our participants authored their identities themselves, we aimed to foreground the knowledge and abilities of a group historically silenced in educational research. Secondly, we used desiring dis/ability (Goodley, 2013) as a theoretical frame to analyze the data. In this way, we consistently focused on identifying counter narratives that positioned dis/abled teacher candidates' as valuable to the process of becoming a critical inclusive educator.

Findings

We organized the findings into three themes that aligned with our conceptual framework. Each theme will explore dis/ability as desirable (Goodley, 2014) within the three planes of sociocultural activity: personal, interpersonal, and institutional.

Personal Plane: The Labor of Normalcy

In this section, we foregrounded participant contributions in composing their dis/ability identity Throughout their educational journeys, participants recalled masking their dis/ability in an effort to appear 'normal.' The concept of normalcy is used to assign value to people who "look, think, communicate, and act as similarly to one another as possible" (Baglieri, et al., 2011, p. 2130). Like a reflection of society at large, school systems uphold the concept of normalcy as superior. Difference is then defined as not conforming to dominant expectations and inferior to 'normal' ways of being. Consequently, students considered different from the norm are socially constructed as a problem that needs to be fixed. Participants named multiple personal costs or sacrifices made throughout their educational journeys in an effort to conform to such standards. Dis/abled teacher candidates recognized the daily toll of the individual work that students must perform in order to reach proximity to hegemonic conceptions of normalcy.

For instance, Violet, described the challenge of moving through educational systems with an invisible dis/ability:

> I have suffered from severe depression throughout my life. I know what it feels like to have an invisible disability. To keep a secret. To underperform and have people assume you're lazy. I know the courage it takes to own who you are, especially at a young age. After years of slowly building a tool box I can function extremely well, but I've made a lot of sacrifices to do that. (Violet, narrative)

Here Violet described having to engage in additional labor herself as a dis/abled person through

the construction of "a tool box" so that she could perform at the normative standards. Yet, this process came with additional labor of masking her dis/ability as a "secret," enduring stigmatizing labels such as "lazy," and other personal "sacrifices." In this way, Violet recognized the ways ableist systems recruit and reward dis/abled students who can perform close to normative expectations and that this personal performance has material consequences.

Similarly, Cate, discussed her complex relationship with medication:

> Since my diagnosis I have experimented with ADHD drugs to help me focus in class and create critical thought. So far my opinion of them is this: a miracle drug that allows me to perform at this society's expected level, but at a cost. The drugs make me so sick it's hard to eat. They give me anxiety and panic attacks. Worst of all they make me irritable and angry towards the people who I love and who try to help me. (Cate, narrative)

Like Violet, Cate wanted to be seen as competent by demonstrating attentiveness to academic tasks according to dominant expectations. In order to do so, she relied on medication so she could perform according to her teacher's standards. While the medication allowed her to meet the educational organization's expectations, she also experienced instability in her emotions which impacted her personal relationships and quality of life. This example is not to stigmatize the use of medication. Instead, Cate's narrative implicated the ableist assumptions that undergirded normative expectations that compelled her to use medication, even though it resulted in significant sacrifice to her emotional wellbeing.

Rebecca described also paying the burden having to (re)educate others about ableism:

> Being positioned as 'other' by being called crazy so frequently influenced a strong feeling of shame within myself. I've learned to combat this epidemic by taking the stance that the term is empty and to inquire the user to be more specific. It takes patience but has been an effective strategy...These experiences combined caused me to constantly fight to prove myself as worthy. (Rebecca, narrative)

Rebecca not only had to contend with the personal implications of ableism, such as feelings of shame and unworthiness, but she also performed additional labor in the form of facilitated learning experiences for others to trouble their own understandings of normalcy. Again, this also came at a cost of having to engage in discursive battles that challenged— or at times even erased— her humanity.

Participants identified that on the individual plane, they endured significant amounts of invisible labor, made multiple sacrifices and paid many personal costs in order to approximate dominant conceptions of normalcy. The concept of invisible labor comes from Feminist Theory to highlight the disproportionate amount of unpaid, unrecognized, and devalued domestic work that society expects of women rather than their male counterparts (Daniels, 1987). Scully (2010) draws on this research to make connections to the hidden labor that dis/abled individuals perform to avoid the social stigma of dis/ability. She names the strategy of 'normalization' or downplaying the difference between oneself and what is considered 'normal.' Cate and Violet both demonstrated the strategy of normalization by working to downplay aspects of themselves in order to approximate an abled identity. Rebecca's narrative revealed another strategy called 'management,' where the dis/abled person takes on the responsibility of managing others' cognitive or emotional responses to their dis/abled identity (Scully, 2010). Rebecca chose to use these interactions to

assert her humanity by challenging deficit understandings of mental illness but uneven power dynamics places a lopsided amount of the management work on the dis/abled person.

When we foregrounded personal actions, we learned the strategies and invisible labor that individual participants drew on and performed to navigate these institutions and survive. In addition, dis/abled teacher candidates named the specific trade-offs that they were forced to make in order to do so. In sum, they characterized their dis/abled identities as ones that adeptly navigated ableist systems. At the same time, they also critiqued the expectations of invisible labor and personal trade-offs that dis/abled individuals must make in order to do so. Thus, dis/abled teacher candidates brought critical insight into the additional burdens that dis/abled individuals are forced to pay in order to perform in accordance with the normative expectations inscribed into ableist institutions.

Interpersonal Plane: Critically Interrogating Power Dynamics with Educators

The interpersonal plane highlights interactions between actors within sociocultural contexts. When we foregrounded this plane, we saw that participants' interactions with their past teachers emerged as significant in the trajectories of their education and how they authored their dis/ability identities. Overall, participants reported negative interactions with teachers. Yet, their critical analysis of these interactions within their maps and narratives revealed resilience and resistance to pathologizing identities and systemic ableism.

These interactions reflected the uneven power dynamic between professionals, students and families (Lalvani, 2014). For instance, Tessa drew a picture of her Kindergarten teacher in her map (see Figure 1) pointing an authoritative finger with a speech bubble that says "Behind" with an arrow underneath. She also drew a self-portrait sitting in a desk labeled "Kinder" with her eyes downcast and her mouth open in distress.

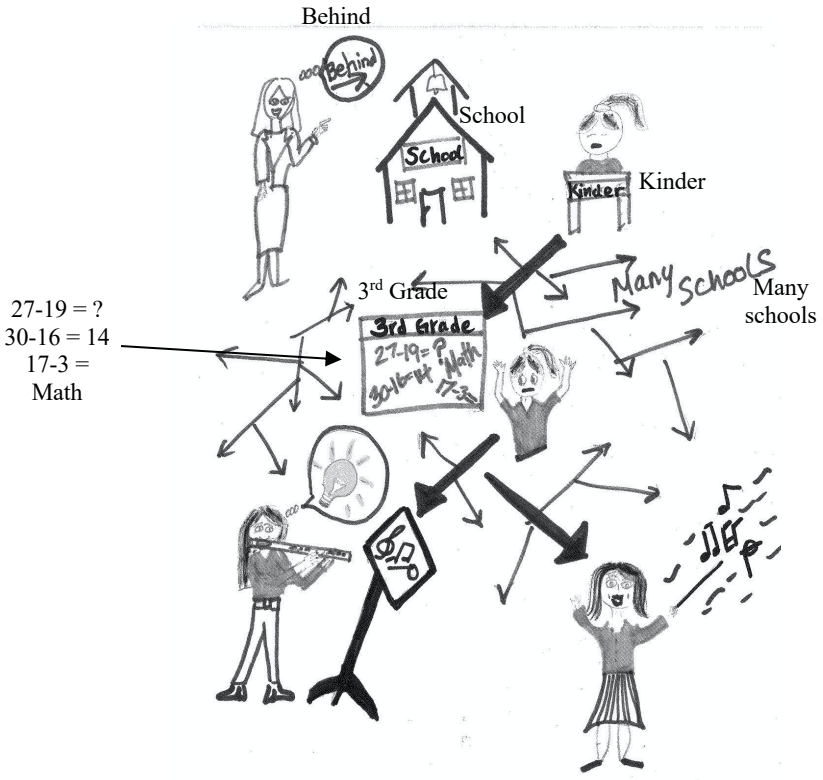

Figure 1. Tessa's Critical Conversation Journey Map.

[Figure description. Tessa's Critical Conversation Journey Map is a black and white series of hand-drawn images and arrows. In the upper left-hand corner is a drawing of a female teacher pointing at a young girl with a ponytail sitting at a desk with the word "Kinder" written on it. Between them is a drawing of an old-fashioned schoolhouse with a bell tower. The teacher is drawn with a speech bubble above her head that says, "Behind." To the left of the teacher is a series of arrows going in multiple directions with the words "Many schools." In the center of the map is a blackboard with "3rd Grade" written on top with a series of math problems and another drawing of a girl with a ponytail throwing her hands up and with her mouth shaped in an open frown. In the bottom of the map is a drawing of a girl standing and playing a flute while reading music on a music stand. The girl is drawn with a thought bubble above her head and inside the thought bubble is a lit light bulb. To the right of the girl playing the flute is a drawing of a woman with shoulder-length hair singing musical notes with a smile on her face.]

Tessa's narrative explained the implications of this interaction for her and her family:

> In Kindergarten, my teacher was concerned about my progress and by the end of the school year she recommended that I stay back one year. Without offering support or guidance to my parents about which areas she felt that I was behind in, she advised a quick fix. My parents did not understand her intentions and felt stigmatized. (Tessa, narrative)

The kindergarten teacher's declaration of Tessa being 'behind' conveyed the school's and the teacher's reliance on normative academic standards. Moreover, this interaction indicated that Tessa's abilities were inferior to other classmates. The clear message communicated by the teacher was that there existed a hierarchy of abilities and she viewed Tessa as on the bottom rung. This interaction caused Tessa and her family to feel confusion and shame. The interaction also enabled Tessa to understand the inequitable power dynamic between her teacher and her parents given that her teacher had the authority to pass students or hold them behind without input from the students or their families. The teacher used her institutional power to name Tessa's abilities as inferior. Yet,

in reflection Tessa realized that it was not her own dis/ability identity that was inferior. Instead, Tessa noted the teacher did not act in a supportive and equitable manner toward her and her parents. This insight fostered Tessa's critical awareness of the teacher's use of her power in upholding ableism.

Dan's map conveyed a similar dehumanizing process, where he documented the stigmatizing processes of acquiring a special education label.

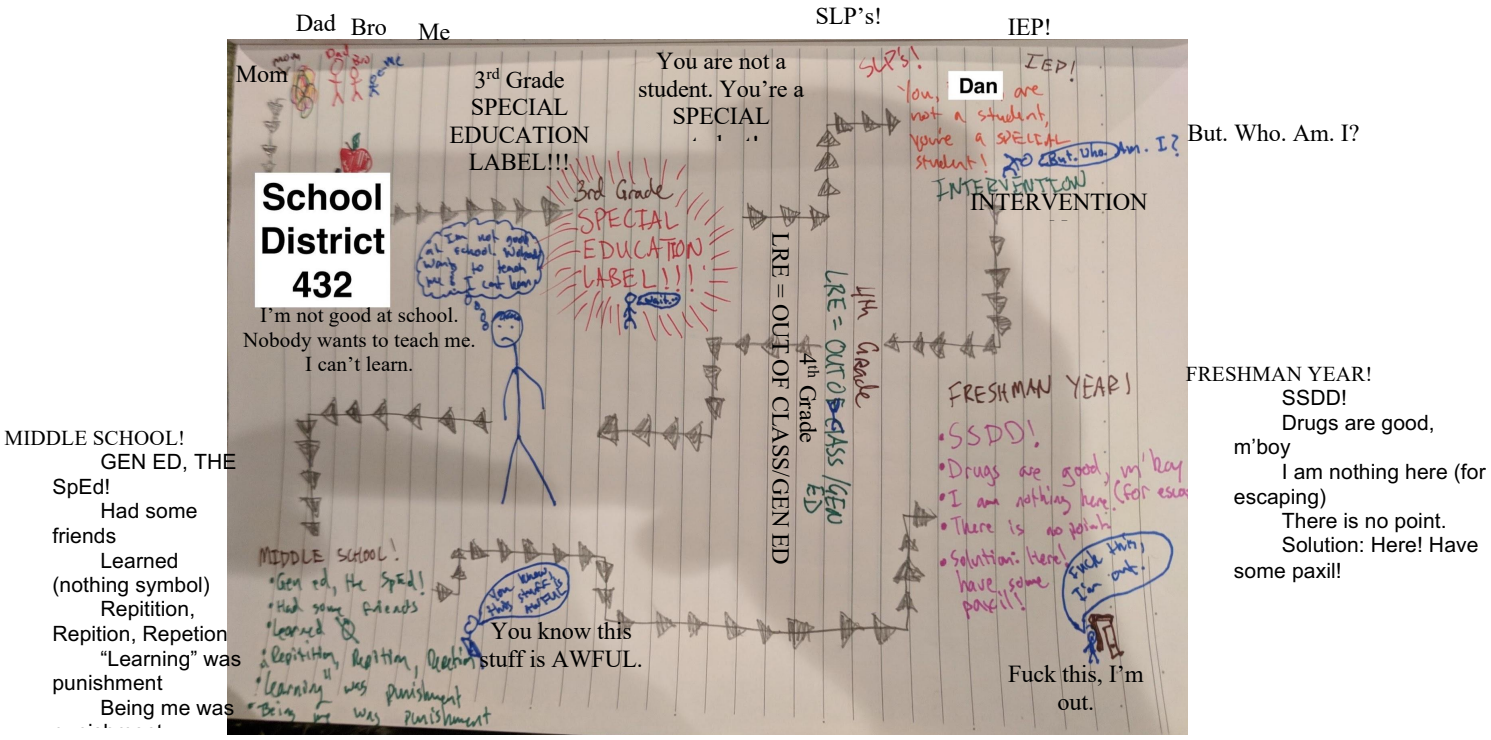

Figure 2. Dan's Critical Conversation Journey Map.

[Figure description. Dan's map is a series of small, grey arrows drawn in succession on a connecting line to represent his educational journey with images and words to highlight specific memories. In the upper left-hand corner are drawn stick figure images of Dan's family labeled "mom," "dad," and "bro." Next the arrows point toward a box with the words "School District 432" with an apple drawn next to it. "3rd Grade SPECIAL EDUCATION LABEL!!!" is written in all caps with red lines radiating around the words to provide emphasis. The series of arrows then point to the statement "You are not a student, you are a SPECIAL student!" This statement is written with special education acronyms "IEP" and "SLP" around it as well as the word "INTERVENTION" in all caps. The arrows then point to the question, "But. Who. Am. I?" The series of arrows then point to the statement "LRE = Out of class/gen ed." Next is another drawn stick figure with a sad face and a thought bubble that says, "I'm not good at school. Nobody wants to teach me. I can't learn." Next is a bulleted list titled "MIDDLE SCHOOL" which includes the phrase, "Learning was punishment." Next to the list is another hand-drawn figure with a speech bubble that says, "You know this stuff is awful, right?" specifically referring to the bullet point "Repitition. Repition. Repetion."[original spelling]. The series of arrows points to another bulleted list entitled, "FRESHMAN YEAR" that includes the written phrase, "There is no point." Next to the freshman year list, is a drawn stick figure with a speech bubble that includes the words, "Fuck this. I'm out!"]

Dan received a special education label in 3rd grade and, subsequently, experienced special education and related services. Dan's map (see Figure 2), showed that the message he received from educators was, "You Dan are not a student, you're a SPECIAL student!" Dan's map

conveyed the 'othering' he experienced in his schooling. In being defined as abnormal, Dan reported feeling dehumanized and not entitled to a legitimate student identity that other students enjoyed. Like Tessa, Dan's interpersonal interactions with educators messaged to him that student worth and value was directly tied to his or her proximity to normalcy. Even still, Dan's map reflected a critical consciousness of the ways in which ableism is at play. Rather than internalizing these dehumanizing messages as part of his dis/ability identity, he used his map to critique these social processes. His map asks, "But. Who. Am. I?" In this way, he rejected the belittling label of "special student" and demanded more complexity in defining the wholeness of his identity. By actively resisting educators' devaluation of his identity, he implicated the educators' role in perpetuating ableism and rejects normalcy as the prerequisite for belonging.

Tara's narrative described how being diagnosed with dyslexia largely shaped how teachers viewed her and identities they tried to ascribe to her:

> I left middle school feeling like every single teacher would rather I fail than help me... I entered high school feeling discouraged, ill-equipped, and categorized as a "troubled youth" because of my experiences with disbelieving staff. (Tara, narrative)

Teachers wrote Tara off much of the time due to her dis/ability label. Rather than dis/ability being viewed as a means to increased support and services, it worked in the opposite direction in that her abilities went undervalued and her needs went unmet. Furthermore, the school faculty imposed a stigmatizing label of "troubled youth" to explain her 'difference.' Tara's reflection implicated school personnel in ableist processes of pathologizing difference (Ware, 2005). Like Tessa and Dan, Tara's reflection demonstrated a critical analysis of interpersonal interactions with educators instead of tacit acceptance. She inculpated educators for their role in socially constructing these stigmatizing identities that had a direct negative impact on her educational experiences.

When we foregrounded interpersonal interactions with teachers, participants shared a similar experience of dehumanization and stigma as a result of being identified as outside of the normative center of schools. Specifically, these processes occurred through interpersonal interactions with educators who uncritically accepted dominant conceptions of normalcy. Yet, through their maps and narratives, the participants conveyed a critical analysis of these interpersonal interactions that held educators responsible for their part in perpetuating in ableist systems. They also revealed a rejection of stigmatizing and pathologizing identities associated with dis/ability. As developing teachers themselves, participants' critical consciousness around interpersonal interactions, constituted invaluable insight into the specific role that educators play in upholding ableism.

Institutional Plane: Cultural Tools and the Social Construction of Dis/ability

Special education is rooted in a medical model of dis/ability, which views dis/ability as an innate attribute divorced from it sociocultural context (Artiles, 2013). As such, scholars have argued that the cultural tools of special education such as dis/ability labels, IQ tests, and segregated classrooms primarily work to sort and categorize individual students based on a hierarchical categories of abilities rooted in dominant cultural norms (Artiles, 2011; Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Blanchett, 2009; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Harry & Klingner, 2014; Losen, Hodson, Ee, & Martinez, 2014). These tools operated as a way to actively justify the segregation and oppression of students outside the dominant norm, particularly students of color. When we

foregrounded the institutional plane in our analysis, participants reported how throughout their educational journeys, many of the cultural tools available in education institutions reinforced and buttressed systemic ableism.

For instance, Rebecca identified standardized testing as a way to reinforce dominant conceptions of normalcy and smartness:

> I experienced the effect of the medical model paradigm in my education. Fifth grade was when I noticed my reading and writing not being good enough by not passing standardized tests. I was judged by a mythical normate... (Rebecca, narrative)

Rebecca drew on her personal experiences to connect with course content around the medical model of dis/ability. In doing so, she critiqued the use of standardized testing to reinforce ability hierarchies. This provided powerful insight for her into the ways that seemingly objective institutional tools, such as standardized assessments, actually acted as cultural tools that perpetuated inequity.

Teacher candidates also identified segregated classrooms as a cultural tool that institutions use to define normalcy. Tara described attending a segregated classroom during her educational journey:

> 3rd grade is the first time I heard the word "dyslexia." I was a slow reader because I couldn't process the words like everybody else is what they told me. I was placed in a separate class for Language Arts, where all we did was work on our reading skills. That was probably the first time I was disabled by the school system, because after that class I hated reading for a long time and told people my brain was broken. (Tara, narrative)

In this example, the separate Language Arts classroom acted as a cultural tool infused with historical legacies of ableism. In other words, the segregated classroom upheld ableism in that it sought to remediate or fix children who did not meet dominant standards of normalcy. Tara's narrative demonstrated that at the time she internalized the social and cultural meaning of the segregated classroom by viewing herself as 'broken' and deficient.

Dis/ability labeling also emerged as an institutional cultural tool that participants identified. Isaac experienced a dramatic shift in labels where he went from having a dis/ability label to being moved into a Talented and Gifted class. His map (see Figure 3) highlighted the ways in which the label attached to him directly impacted his own perceptions of his abilities.

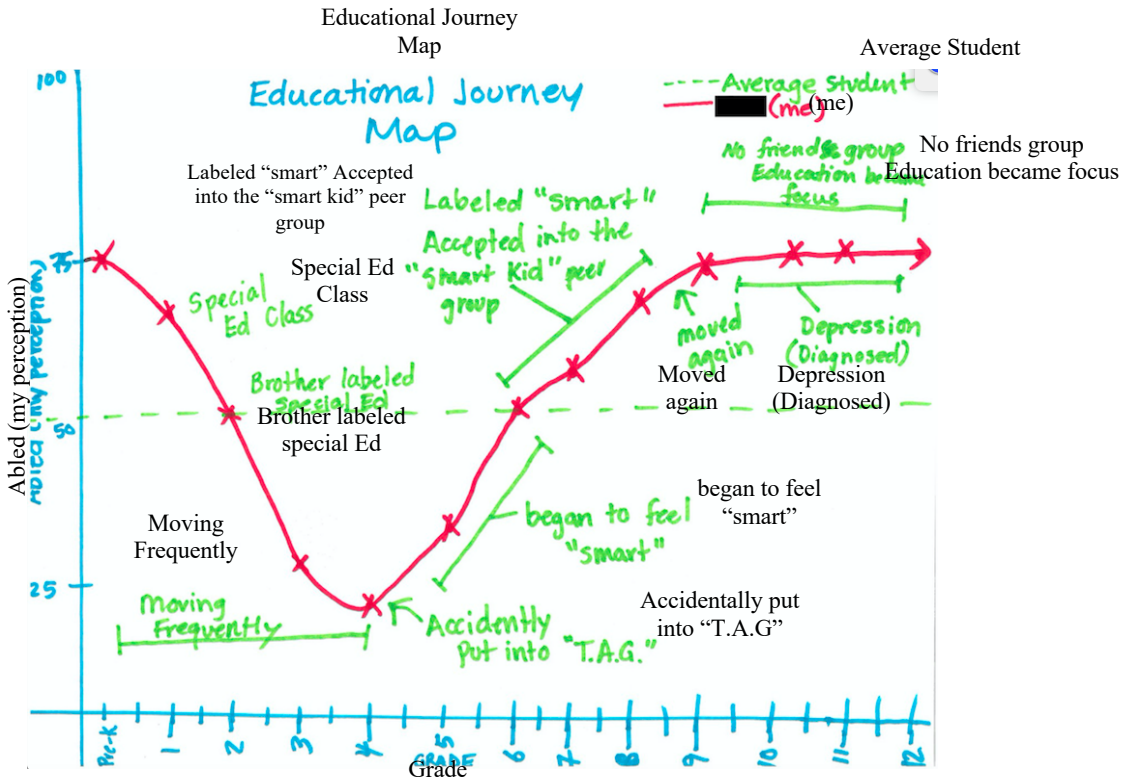

Figure 3. Isaac's Critical Conversation Journey Map.

[Figure description. Issac's map is a scatterplot. The y-axis ranges from 25-100 and is labeled as "Abled (my perception)." The x-axis is labeled "Grade" and includes grade levels pre-K to 12th. There are two lines on the scatter plot and a key in the upper right-hand corner to define them. In the center of the scatterplot (at point 50 on the y-axis) is a dotted green line that represents the "average student." A red solid line represents "me," meaning "Isaac." The line begins on the left side of the page relatively high at 75 but quickly slopes downwards reaching the lowest point in 4th grade at a 25. Points along the downward trend are labeled with words, including "Special Education Class" and "Brother labeled Special Ed." There is also a bar a period of time between pre-K and 4th grade with the words "moving frequently." At the lowest point on the scatterplot, there is an arrow with the words, "Accidently put into 'T.A.G.' The trajectory of the line begins to move upwards with the words "Began to feel smart" written alongside the ascending line. During this upward trend there are also the words, "Labeled 'smart.' Accepted into the 'smart kid' peer group." The line plateaus in the upper right-hand corner of the paper. An arrow indicates that at this point Isaac "Moved again." Above the scatter plot line is a bar that indicates time between 9th and 12th grade. Next to the timeline are the words "No friends group Education became a focus." Beneath the scatter plot line is a bar for the same time period with the words, "Depression (diagnosed)."]

Isaac chose to create his map like a scatter plot with the x-axis representing his year in school and the y-axis showing degrees of his perception of his own abled identity. He also included a green dashed line in the middle of the map that he denoted as the "average student" in his key. He drew his trajectory in red to show himself in relation to this mythical student. His self-perception of being 'abled' reached its lowest point after receiving a special education label and attending a separate special education class. However, his perception immediately bounced back after being placed in a Talented and Gifted program. Isaac explained this dramatic shift when he wrote:

> It's amazing how a simple label changed my entire life. In enabled me to shed the disability that was bestowed upon me by the educational system. I wonder how many other students weren't able to break free. (Isaac, narrative)

Isaac described his dis/ability label as a burden he needed to bear and when transitioned to a Talented and Gifted program, it allowed him to "shed" this imposed weight. He described the experience of shifting to a label of "smart" as "break[ing] free." Certainly, the perception of having dis/ability as a burden is in and of itself ableist and represents a manifestation of Isaac's internalized ableism. What is important is to recognize that Isaac only started to view his abilities as a burden once the institution labeled them as such. In this way, Isaac demonstrated a profound understanding of the social implications of labels and also how they themselves represent subjective and contextualized understandings of ability. The inconsistent use of labeling across institutions in his case illustrated how dis/ability operated as a social construction rather than an innate attribute associated with an individual person.

Teacher candidates identified the cultural tools that educational institutions used to uphold normalcy and perpetuate ableism. They also described how social meanings of these tools impacted the ways they viewed themselves and their worth. Rather than seeing tools like dis/ability labels or segregated classrooms from a rational, positivist lens, dis/abled teacher candidates critically analyzed the ways these tools not only perpetuate ableism but can also negatively impact dis/abled students' perceptions of self.

Discussion

Desiring Dis/ability in Critical Inclusive Teacher Education

Critical inclusive teacher education seeks to build coalitions of educators who can actively resist and deconstruct systemic ableism in schools (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Naraian, 2017). Using CCJMs (Beneke, 2020) as a methodology allowed us to excavate dis/abled teacher candidates' educational experiences in order to understand the particular historical experiences and unique understandings that they bring to the project of critical inclusion. In this section, we describe how these experiences can be utilized in the process of critical inclusive teacher preparation.

In the personal plane, dis/abled teacher candidates held particular understandings of how dominant constructions of normalcy perpetuated systems of oppression. Their personal experiences conveyed great cost and sacrifice in attempting to assimilate to such standards. Since dominant constructions of normalcy remain deeply pervasive in educational institutions, including teacher education, it can be difficult for non-dis/abled teacher candidates to perceive its insidious effects (Siuty, 2019). Dis/abled teacher candidates drew on their experiences to critique the centering of normalcy and potentially challenge it in their own teaching. Teacher educators can work with dis/abled teacher candidates to excavate meaning from their experiences as a way to disrupt dominant perceptions of normalcy and apply these critical understandings to their work as inclusive educators.

Interactions with teachers emerged in participants' CCJMs as a significant aspect of the interpersonal plane. In these interactions, participants described feelings of shame and othering. Participants noted the immense power that educators had to try to impose a deviant identity upon them. Consequently, participants felt isolated within their school systems and doubted their self-worth. At the same time, participants resisted these identities in the ways they authored their maps and narratives. They explained how they learned to navigate ableist systems by refusing to accept identities of deficiency and authored their own by critiquing their interpersonal interactions with

teachers. In doing so, they insisted upon their unique competencies, right to belonging, and humanity. An essential aspect of critical inclusive teacher preparation seeks to interrogate how power dynamics influence interpersonal interactions between teachers, students, and families (Lalvani, 2017). The findings suggest that some dis/abled teacher candidates may have preliminary tools for understanding how teachers' institutional power and how that power is enacted through social interactions. This understanding is critical in teacher preparation because it can support teacher candidates to be more acutely aware of the power they hold, how they wield it, and how it pertains to ability. This understanding of inequitable power dynamics can be cultivated throughout teacher preparation to prepare critically reflexive educators.

In the institutional plane, dis/abled teacher candidates highlighted cultural tools such as standardized testing and special education practices such as labeling and separate classes as stigmatizing. They often described their dis/ability labels as identities forced upon them by educators rather than ones that they actively claimed or embraced. Drawing on DSE perspectives, critical inclusive teacher preparation seeks to critique traditional special education practices that promote the sorting and segregating of students and justify exclusionary practices (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). The dis/abled teacher candidates in this study were familiar with these stigmatizing effects and their implications for belonging. It suggests that dis/abled teacher candidates may be better situated than non-dis/abled peers to act as third-space practitioners (Naraian, 2017). In other words, dis/abled teacher candidates may bridge the ideal of critical inclusion with the special education tools available in school systems. Naraian (2017) describes how teachers build capacity for inclusion by creating a 'third space' where they (re)imagine special education accounting for the tensions between traditional special education programs and critical inclusive education. This creates possibilities for dis/abled educators to lead innovation toward increased inclusivity and equity.

Intersectional Dysconsciousness

In the introduction, we introduced the concept of 'dysconscious ableism' (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017), wherein teacher candidates' understandings of ability get distorted by virtue of living and being educated within ableist systems. We believe that in advancing the idea of desiring dis/ability we must also be cognizant of whose experiences we are valuing and which experiences have the potential to be marginalized. A majority of participants in this study identified as white. Though the CCJM prompt explicitly named race (in addition to ability), participants did not show robust engagement with race as a mediating factor within any of the three sociocultural planes. While participants reported the oppression they experienced as dis/abled people, they less readily addressed the ways in which their white identities afforded some access to normalcy and power that is systematically denied to students of color. These findings corroborate existing research on white teacher candidates in the field of Critical Whiteness Studies (e.g., Haviland, 2008; Jupp, J. C., Leckie, A., Cabrera, N., & Utt, J., 2019; Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014) where White teacher candidates practice 'race evasiveness' by rarely engaging with race beyond superficial acknowledgement (Haviland, 2008). The lack of emotional investment in racial justice by White teacher candidates and their unwillingness to implicate themselves within systems of oppression perpetuates White supremacy (Matias, et al., 2014).

This pattern of race evasiveness is specifically significant in dis/ability justice work because of the historical collusion between racism and ableism that produce unique outcomes in the ways that white people and people of color experience dis/ability (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri,

2013; Leonardo & Broderick 2011). For example, research shows that dis/abled students of color have less access to general education curriculum as well as a higher risk of being placed in a segregated setting (Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009). Furthermore, dis/abled students of color are more likely to be subjected to punitive disciplinary policies rather than restorative practices (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014). To critically unpack White, dis/abled teacher candidates' experiences without attention to racial identity can perpetuate a form of *intersectional dysconsciousness*. Said differently, a failure to attend to racial dimensions of dis/ability can distort the view of dis/abled experiences by tacitly privileging a White lens. White educators, dis/abled and non-dis/abled, will need to examine their own proximity to power based on their white racial identity. Thus, in critical inclusive teacher preparation it is important for dis/abled teacher candidates to understand power as situated within multiple, interlocking forms of oppression and their positionality within those structures.

Limitations

There are several limitations within this investigation. We the authors chose to foreground desiring dis/ability in our conceptual framework. We chose this theoretical orientation as a way to offer a counternarrative to deficit constructions of dis/ability within teacher education. We recognize that in doing so, we do not adequately complicate dis/abled teacher candidates' vast array of understandings around critical inclusion. As discussed in the previous section, this was evident in the area of the intersection between race and ability. Since CCJMs as a methodology center teacher candidates' own experiences, it is important that future work using CCJMs provide support for candidates to both critically examine their racial identity in relationship to their ability identity (Bialka, 2015). While we explicitly asked participants to do so in their maps, it was evident that white teacher candidates did not have the requisite tools to engage in this type of reflexive practice (Matias, et al., 2014). Critical inclusive educators will need to provide teacher candidates with the resources and research that demonstrates nuanced discrepancies between experiences for white dis/abled students and dis/abled students of color so they can critically reflect on their own positionality specifically related to race. In addition, we also believe that there is space to explore with dis/abled teacher candidates the ways in which they have internalized aspects of ableism particularly around the concept of smartness (Ferri, 2011; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). While many of the participants in this study experienced dis/ability throughout their educational journey, they all had achieved some level of success in school in that they were all enrolled in a teacher preparation program at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Although outside the scope of this paper, dis/abled teacher candidates often demonstrated internalized ableism by upholding as "smartness" or worthier and more valuable. While we believe it is important to highlight the unique features that dis/abled teacher candidates bring to the field of education, we also recognize the need for future research to support all teacher candidates to interrogate internalized systems of oppression and our own participation within them given their social identities and personal histories.

Conclusion

Prichard (2017) asserted that, "Disabled people as educators enact exemplary pedagogic justice within the current culturally valued landscape of socially inclusive practice" (p. 43). Our findings concur that dis/abled teacher candidates' have the potential to engage in critical pedagogies that support radical forms of critical inclusion and dis/ability justice. Indeed, in our

study dis/abled teacher candidates identified and critiqued cultural tools and practices that perpetuated hegemonic notions of normalcy in educational institutions. Beyond viewing dis/ability as something to accommodate in teacher education, we urge teacher educators to recognize dis/ability as a cultural asset and to organize their own pedagogy in such a way as to build and sustain dis/abled teacher candidates' knowledge and experience. At the same time, white, dis/abled teacher candidates will also need mediated support to understand the ways in which the effects of ableism are compounded for communities of color and offer an array of counternarratives to dominant discourses around normalcy. In conclusion, the process of building critical inclusive coalitions must and should include dis/abled educators as essential allies in contesting the normative center of schools and redesigning educational spaces that support increased equity and inclusion.

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