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Clearly, teacher educators in special education programs have a responsibility to best prepare their teacher candidates to meet the needs of all of their students. A state's department of education provides the competencies teacher educators must cover. Special education teacher educators are relegated to best practices and guidelines from non-profit professional organizations that also monitor and/or support their programs (e.g., Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, Council for Exceptional Children, or National Association for the Education of Young Children). It has been well-documented that special education teacher candidates still do not reflect the socio-cultural and linguistic diversity of the students that they will teach (Banks, 2008; Sleeter, 2008; Utley, Obiakor, & Bakken, 2011) in spite of the increasing enrollment of English language learners (Kena et al., 2015), Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, and African-American students (Hussar & Bailey, 2014). Considering the demographic changes within public schools, this editorial calls into question paradigms for practice, or the special education teacher educator's basic belief system, and how these belief systems shape definitions of disability and guide the preparation of special education teacher candidates.

As a key policy for special education students, teachers, and teacher educators, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) addresses opportunity, access, and the rights of children with disabilities (Santamaría Graff & Kozleski, 2014). The guidelines, laws, and the implications for practice outlined by IDEA and other legislation remain front and center among the professional responsibilities bestowed upon special education teacher educators. With these responsibilities, however, special education teacher educators ought to – first and foremost – be aware of the epistemological lens through which they view and act upon their work with individuals with disabilities. For example, special education teacher educators should be asking the question: “What *type(s)* of teachers do we hope to prepare?” Addressing this question goes well beyond the state standards, relating to the paradigms which the teacher educators employ to conduct their work. Guba and Lincoln (1994) remind us that a paradigm “represents a world view that defines, for its holder, the nature of the ‘world,’ the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts” (p. 107). Guba and Lincoln's (1994) explication of paradigms are based on ontological (the form and nature of reality), epistemological (the nature of the knower and what can be known) and methodological (the process of finding out what can be known) questions—all of which inform the special education teacher educator's approach to practice. It follows that special education educators ought to be aware of and clear about their paradigms and how they influence their priorities in practice. For example, are the special education teacher educators seeking to prepare service-oriented special educators who “help” their students and their families and communities? Or, are they rather seeking to prepare social justice-oriented special educators who support students to empower themselves through educational attainment or self-determination?

In answering these questions, educators position themselves differently vis-à-vis their teaching, research, scholarship, and service. Service-oriented and social justice-oriented special educators represent two of the many different types of teachers. It is therefore important for

teacher educators to not only introduce and share different paradigms and models that may influence the teaching practice of teacher candidates, they should also prepare future teachers for the diversity of paradigms and models they will encounter in their professions (Labaree, 2003; Pallas, 2001). Too often, teacher educators' paradigms are left implicit and under the surface, while they ought to be illuminated for the benefit of teacher candidates and their future practice (Pallas, 2001).

Indeed, there are multiple models or approaches to disability available to special education teacher educators for preparing teacher candidates, each with their own corresponding paradigms. Williams (2001) reminds us that, “‘theorizing disability’ is no longer a dry intellectual or technical task” (p. 123). Each model and paradigm has a significant impact on practice and decision-making (Bricout, Porterfield, Tracey, & Howard, 2004), remaining quite useful in clinical settings (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000). Goodley (2009) and Marks (1997) suggests that many special education teacher educators operate within the medical model of defining disability, which conceptualizes disability as a deficiency residing within the individual, requiring treatment, rehabilitation, or “cure”. Other scholars also posit that some special education teacher educators are trained and thus, practice with a social model of disability where disability emerges via interactions between individuals and society and is conceptualized as a difference among other differences (Marks, 1997; Thomas, 2007). Another framework for practice is the moral model – one of the oldest and still most prevalent worldwide (Olkin, 2002) – which determines disability with reference to a family’s relationship with religion (Goodley, 2009; Snyder & Mitchell, 2001). These contrasting models raise several questions about the relationship between special education educators and students with disabilities: What if the lens of the model through which the educators view their work and teaching is in conflict with that of the students? What if the model is incongruent with the beliefs of students’ families and communities? Examples of these socio-cultural conflicts within the special education profession are well documented, available, and highly informative for future practice (e.g., Fadiman, 2012; Harry, 2008). The responses to these questions highlight how important it is that special education teacher educators clarify the paradigms which inform the models they employ in preparing teacher candidates. In turn, teacher candidates will be better equipped to appreciate the diversity of paradigms and be more cognizant of how their own paradigm influences their approach as special educators.

Scrutiny of the paradigms and models of disability is important because the work to which teacher educators commit is not neutral. Considerations about what to teach, what readings to feature, who published the readings – not to mention the assignments and expectations for student interactions in class – are value-laden, reflect paradigmatic preferences, and operate within a nexus of who the educator is (Bricout, Porterfield, Tracey, & Howard, 2004). Special education teacher educators must be upfront with their positioning(s) regarding the work and teaching they do in order to model a well-developed awareness of the fact that there are *multiple ways* to conceptualize the work (Labaree, 2003). In their position as special education teacher educators, it is beneficial to articulate their own narrative pertaining to how they have arrived at their professional standing and how their narrative has intersected with their work within the special education service system. By telling these stories and naming these positions, models, and paradigms, special education teacher educators expose and model the various frameworks of disability to teacher candidates. Sharing the narratives that have influenced educator’s belief system(s) vis-à-vis special education services can help model the type of reflective practice capable of enriching the teacher candidates’ teaching, as well as the

importance of listening to the stories of their future students (McCray & García, 2002). It can also serve the teacher candidates when misunderstandings inevitably occur after they enter the profession.

Telling the stories about educators' epistemologies, models of disability, and paradigms at the beginning of their practice – indeed, throughout their practice – will help clarify the subjective nature of their work. Yes, teacher educators are married to the competencies that must be addressed from the state departments of education, accreditation agencies, and professional organizations. They must teach their teacher candidates the most innovative research-based practices to serve their students with, or at risk for, disabilities. By illuminating “behind the scenes” practices, educators can help elucidate common assumptions about special education for their teacher candidates. It is crucial to first consider how it is that the teacher educators themselves view the very nature of the work that they do. Are they ultimately falling along the lines of the medical model (Goodley, 2009; Marks, 1997) wherein teacher candidates are trained to be the agent of change for an individual with a disability? Or, are teacher educators seeking to chip away at and make changes to more traditionally inaccessible aspects of the classroom, teaching, and resources that are available to all of their students, keeping the disability a difference, much like one's sex or ethnicity? Perhaps they are seeking a flexible, fluid model that can shift to address the most pressing needs of all stakeholders—teacher candidates, students with disabilities, and parents and communities. Regardless of the special education teacher educator's responses to these questions and speculations, it is important that they are considered and clarified for the benefit of their teacher candidates as they prepare for the diversity they will face in the classroom (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000).

Each model (e.g., medical, social, or moral) has a place in practice that is uniquely shaped by the special education teacher educator's epistemological viewpoint. As such, this editorial is not written to assign value to a particular epistemology by debasing or supporting a particular model of disability or its accompanying paradigm. Instead, it is important to analyze how special education teachers are acting upon their obligation to best prepare their teacher candidates in light of the changing landscape of education and the students who ultimately will be served by the teacher candidates in the 21st century. They ought to be preparing future teachers to be aware of their own model and paradigm, and for the diversity of viewpoints on their students' disability status and engagement with special education services. These considerations need to be factored – and certainly wrestled with at times – throughout the work that teacher educators do. The teacher candidates, and their future students, deserve no less.

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