

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF EARLY-CAREER SPECIAL EDUCATION FACULTY  
PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATION AND INDUCTION

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Preparation and Induction

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## Abstract

Much time and attention is given to questions about what effective teachers need to know; however, proportionately little effort is spent on answering related questions of what effective teacher educators need to do to ensure all new teachers are well prepared for their roles and responsibilities. Recruitment and preparation of doctoral students who become teacher education researchers and teacher educators is a neglected part of this process. This investigation explored the formal and informal learning experiences of early-career special education faculty in institutions of higher education (IHE). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with seven pre-tenure assistant professors in special education. Interviews focused on three areas: doctoral learning experiences, including coursework, college teaching, field supervision, and advisor mentorship; professional and personal considerations that led to current IHE positions; and other facilitating or inhibiting factors in the transition from doctoral student to university faculty.

*Skype* web-conferencing software was used to conduct seven face-to-face interviews with participants living in various parts of the country. *Call Recorder for Mac* software captured both the interview audio and video. *HyperResearch* qualitative software was used for coding, unitizing, and categorizing of transcribed data. Emerging themes suggest that factors motivating students to pursue doctoral education strongly influence career trajectory. Consistent themes of support coupled with balance, both between work and life, and teaching, research, and service, emerged as critical for successful induction into faculty roles. Findings will contribute to the literature about best practices in effective special education doctoral preparation and provide a deeper understanding of doctoral student education in preparation for future faculty roles in special education.

## Acknowledgments

My mentor and advisor, Dr. Earle Knowlton, introduced me to the concept of Imposter Syndrome in my first semester as a doctoral student at the University of Kansas. It is with that in mind, that I acknowledge those whose commitment to and belief in me have resulted in the privilege of completing this dissertation. Earle, you saw potential in me that I never would have believed was there; possibility in me I would have allowed to wither. Thank you. Without that and without you, I am, quite literally, not doing the work I do today. Dr. Chriss Walther-Thomas, who taught me everything I ever wanted to know and more about academic life, about work/life balance, and about how to be the best mom I can be while still nurturing my professional goals, I am grateful for you. Dr. Winnie, Dunn, who taught me how to think, how to question, and how to BE a scholar, if not for you, I would lack the insight required to do meaningful work. Thank you for nurturing me when I needed it and for the tough love when I needed that. Dr. Eva Horn, who taught me to be an early childhood special educator, thank you for setting me on this path so many years ago and for letting me be on your team. Finally, Dr. Deborah Griswold, I am grateful for your guidance, your teaching, and your time.

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To my JMU family, thank you for your support, your celebration, and your willingness to give me a chance. I will not let you down. Dani, thank you. Megan, you are irreplaceable and I am forever grateful for your patience with me.

Bob and Pat, thank you for playing with and enjoying my girls while I worked all those weekends away. It brought me great peace of mind to know they were in good hands.

Finally, for Bill, who never lost faith, who reminded me why, who picked up all of my slack at home, and who always sees my strength, I love you and I am forever grateful for you.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to Isley, Brek, and Maelle, without whom none of this would be worthwhile.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

While significant time and public attention is given to questions of what effective teachers need to know, little effort is spent on trying to answer questions of what teacher educators need to do to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills they need (Cochran-Smith, 2003). As a result, we know very little about the characteristics of effective doctoral-level education for future teacher educators and teacher education researchers (Golde, 2007).

This area needs critical attention for multiple reasons, including widespread teacher shortages, few university programs preparing doctoral students for roles as teacher educators, and the anticipated high number of university faculty retirements over the next decade (Sindelar & Rosenberg, 2003; Smith, Young, Montrosse, Robb, & Tyler, 2011; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Relationships between teacher educators and teachers are interdependent and complex. Teacher educators prepare teachers with the essential foundations and theories of education, evidence-based teaching practices, and skill development through supported and supervised field experience. While many public school teachers return to institutions of higher education (IHE) for master's degrees, few pursue doctoral degrees to become university faculty responsible for preparation of teachers and research to contribute knowledge and understanding of effective interventions, pedagogy, and student learning. As a result, special education, as a field, understands very little about the transition from effective teacher to effective teacher educator (Zeichner, 2005).

However, this transition is critical. The long-term success of the cycle relies on the balance within each role; that is, enough highly effective teachers to teach students in classrooms and enough highly effective teacher educators to prepare the next generation of teachers (Smith, Robb, West, & Tyler, 2010). Over the past two decades, special education has experienced more shortages of teachers and teacher educators than many other areas in teacher education (Smith et al., 2011; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Researchers have sounded numerous warnings to the field and to state and national policy makers regarding serious threats to the preparation of effective special education personnel.

Demands for special education teachers and for special education faculty greatly outweigh the available supply of interested and qualified candidates for these roles (Smith et al., 2010). As a result, students receiving special education services are often served by undercertified or uncertified teachers (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Sundeen & Wienke, 2009). For example, during the 2004-2005 academic year, 49% of first-year special educators were not certified to teach students with disabilities (Boe & Cook, 2006; Futernick, 2007). That, coupled with USDOL (2011) projections that the number of special education teachers will increase by 17% from 2008 to 2018, faster than the average for all occupations, draws attention to the capacity of the field to meet the demand.

In general, as calls for greater accountability of birth-grade12 public educators continue to intensify, so do calls for closer scrutiny of IHE teacher preparation programs to ensure new teachers are well prepared for the complexities of today's high-expectation educational climate (Smith et al., 2010; Zeichner, 2006). Zeichner, in response to criticism of IHE teacher education programs, called on teacher educators to "take teacher education

seriously or not do it” (p. 330), referencing Tom’s (1997) assertion that teacher education in many research-focused IHE is merely viewed as a means for supporting doctoral students rather than as valuable scholarship, teaching, and service. Elevating both the importance of teacher education and the value of teacher quality research is critical to ensuring better preparation of school of education (SOE) students at all levels (Brownell, Ross, Colón, & McCallum, 2005).

Preparing doctoral students for future roles and responsibilities as IHE faculty (i.e., teacher educators, field researchers, and professional service providers) is as challenging and controversial as teacher preparation (Hess, 2009; McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008). A recent example of this controversy may be found in a study co-sponsored by the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a conservative education think-tank, and *U.S. News and World Report (USN&WR)* (Morse, 2011). Researchers from that are evaluating most teacher preparation programs in the country using methods challenged by many SOE deans and professional organizations (Furman et al., 2011). While potential participants have expressed concerns about methodologies, going so far as refusing to participate, the NCTQ and *USN&WR* plan to grade and rank SOEs on various characteristics such as curriculum, field experience, and use of evidence-based practices (Feistritzer, 2011). This is just one example of the widely diverse views of stakeholders working to better understand, with hopes to ultimately improve, teacher education.

In light of scrutiny and widespread criticism, many SOE are working hard to reaffirm public trust and continue to prepare effective school personnel. As part of these efforts, many teacher education researchers are trying to define “signature pedagogies” (Shulman, 2005, p. 52) for effective and efficient preparation of knowledgeable and

capable teachers (McLeskey & Ross, 2004). Thus, reaching a better understanding of how subject-area content knowledge, pedagogy, and clinical experiences interact in the preparation of effective teachers is a priority for educational researchers (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010; Rice, 2003; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001).

In addition to this challenge, approximately only 8% of the 1,200 special education teacher preparation programs across the country, or fewer than 100, prepare doctoral students for IHE faculty roles in SOE (Evans, Eliot, Hood, Driggs, Mori, & Johnson, 2005; Smith et al., 2010; Smith, Pion, Tyler, & Gilmore, 2003). This finding is disturbing, given that preparing new IHE faculty with the professional knowledge and skills they need to be effective teacher educators and teacher education researchers is critical to effective doctoral preparation and the long-term well-being of public education programs for students with disabilities (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore, through interviews with early-career faculty, two areas in which additional information is needed about effective special education doctoral preparation: (a) formal and informal doctoral student learning opportunities that early-career faculty experienced in their preparation for IHE faculty positions; and (b) the supporting and inhibiting factors of the transition from doctoral student to faculty member. Finally, I analyzed incidents in participants' doctoral preparation that they viewed as the most important, in hindsight, in preparation for a faculty role.

First-person accounts can offer important insights into how to best prepare candidates for IHE faculty roles. That is, qualitative analysis facilitates exploration of an

individual's unique story by reducing the narrative into a set of common elements such as characters, settings, and plot lines (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Analyzing these elements ultimately illuminates critical points of individual stories that result in the “power of generalizability” (Mishler, 1986, p. 241). Therefore, this inquiry of early-career IHE faculty in special education promotes understanding of individual and group experiences, both in preparation and in induction to faculty roles that contribute to success.

Part of the contribution of an academic scholar is participating in and contributing to ongoing discussions guiding future research and practice (Wilson, 2006). Findings from this research will enhance the field's knowledge and understanding of effective doctoral preparation by examining formal and informal learning and development experiences of doctoral students and early-career IHE faculty. Better understanding of effective doctoral education will benefit IHE stakeholders: potential and current doctoral students; early-career IHE faculty; experienced faculty who serve as teachers, advisors, and mentors for others; and federal policymakers who provide funds to support effective doctoral preparation (Gaff, 2002).

The following research questions guided this investigation:

1. What are the formal and informal learning opportunities that prepare doctoral students for roles as university-based IHE faculty?
2. What are the facilitating and inhibiting factors (e.g., doctoral program experiences, IHE expectations and supports, administrative structures) that affect the transition of doctoral program graduates into IHE faculty roles and responsibilities?

Posing these two questions to early career faculty, whose doctoral preparation are still fresh in their minds and who are considering their career trajectories, provided rich and extensive data on the preparation and induction of special education teacher educators. Their experiences are varied and personal, yet relatable to all who have taken steps toward an academic career, and, therefore, can provide insight into the perceived strengths and weaknesses of doctoral preparation and transition into a faculty role from the perspective of those who have charted the path.

The following chapters demonstrate a need to know more about doctoral preparation and induction into a faculty role in special education, the methodology utilized to answer the questions posed, and, ultimately, the results of this qualitative analysis. The perceptions of the former doctoral students/early-career faculty serve to inform the field about the experiences and needs of future faculty.



## CHAPTER II

### **Review of the Literature**

A review of the literature revealed more questions than answers related to doctoral preparation of IHE faculties in special education. Indeed, as a result of the dearth of literature on doctoral preparation in general, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (2001) commissioned the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate to study doctoral preparation in five specific areas, including education. While the Carnegie Foundation's work provides a broad understanding of doctoral preparation in education as a field of study, doctoral preparation specific to special education has yet to be investigated comprehensively.

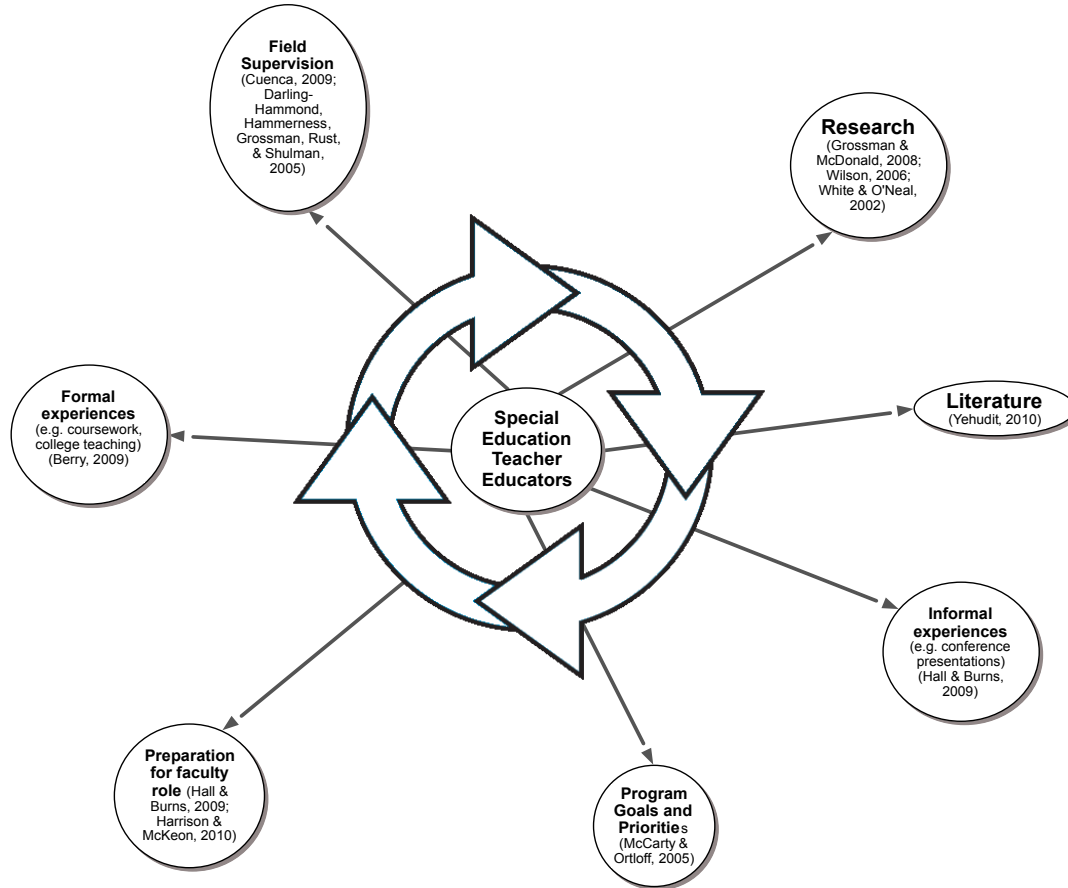
Due to an absence of other relevant sources, the present study builds on the findings of an unpublished mixed-methods dissertation (Israel, 2009). The two primary themes emerging from the qualitative investigation of teacher educators in that study guided this study's literature review:

The first theme, knowledge and skills of effective teacher educators, was subdivided into four interwoven subthemes that included (a) possessing teacher educator knowledge (e.g., academic content, instructional pedagogy, adult learning knowledge), (b) understanding of how special education fits within the greater context of P-12 instruction, (c) understanding the importance of general education and special education collaboration both within P-12 settings and in teacher education programs, and (d) maintaining a professional disposition that includes a strong service orientation. The second theme, scaffolded work of teacher educators, included two subthemes related to opportunities to participate in: (a) ongoing work

related to P-12 practices and school structures (e.g., program evaluation and mentoring and induction of novice teachers) and (b) faculty work experiences (e.g., college teaching and practicum supervision). (Israel, p. 74)

The present review focused on research studies and position papers specific to special education published after the release of the first federally funded research analysis of the state of faculty preparation in special education (Smith, Pion, Tyler, Sindelar, & Rosenberg, 2001). This study serves as the starting point because it summarized and built on the existing literature published prior to the initiation of this OSEP-funded project in 1999 and it was the first large-scale, comprehensive analysis of faculty needs in special education. Sixteen studies and position papers were identified in peer-reviewed research journals meeting the following criteria: (a) publication post-2001 and (b) include key terms of doctoral preparation and special education, teacher education and special education. Studies and position papers included in the review are presented in Appendix A. The research shows what the field of special education currently understands about doctoral preparation while the position papers illustrate the direction of federal policy interventions to ensure future faculty.

Areas identified in the literature as critical components of doctoral preparation, from which the interview protocol for this study was developed, are demonstrated in Figure 1, which provides a conceptual framework for the development of this study. First, I will provide a brief overview of the process of locating articles to be included in this review of the literature. Then I will describe the role of federal policy in doctoral preparation followed by a thorough review of the limited information we have about doctoral preparation in special education.



**Figure 1. Guiding conceptual framework.**

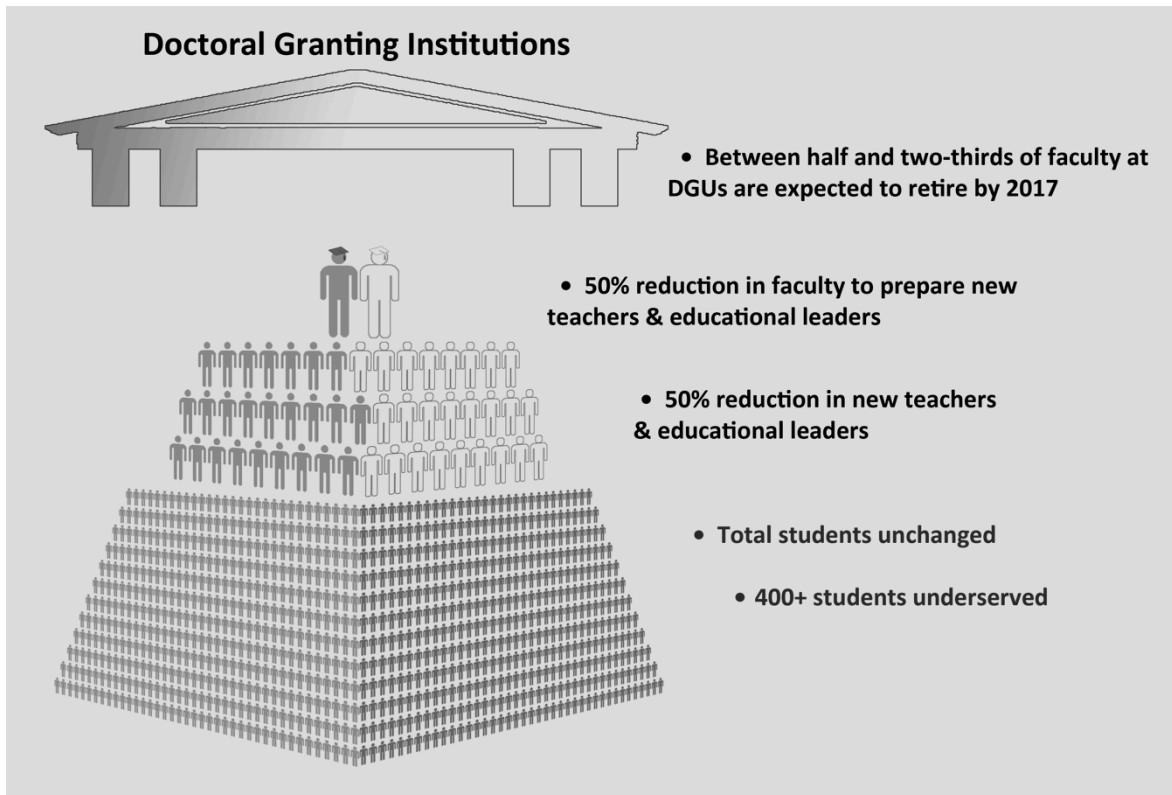
### **Literature Retrieval**

The process of locating articles for inclusion in this review of the literature took place in three steps. To begin, a systematic online database search was performed (i.e., *Google Scholar*, *Wilson Web*, *Academic Premier*, *PsycInfo*, and *ProQuest Dissertation Abstracts*). Search terms included combinations of the words *special education teacher educators*, *doctoral preparation*, *special education teacher preparation*, *doctoral studies*, *faculty shortage*, and *faculty preparation*. Reference lists of articles identified through the database search were analyzed for articles, books, or papers not initially uncovered. Finally, a hand search of prominent special education teacher educator journals (e.g.,

*Teacher Education and Special Education* and *Journal of Special Education*) dating back to 2000 was performed. Literature included in this review was limited to articles focused on special education teacher preparation. Sixteen studies and position papers appearing in peer-reviewed journals within the last decade met this criterion. Those studies and papers are presented now.

### **Special Education Teacher Education Faculty**

Special education researchers alerted the field in the late 1980s of an impending and significant shortage of qualified doctoral-level professionals in IHE teacher preparation programs (Sindelar & Taylor, 1988; Smith & Lovett, 1987). These warnings focused on the effect that continued shortages would have on the quality of special education services students with disabilities would receive. Smith and colleagues (2011) estimated that an annual shortfall of highly qualified special educators compounded by the number of special education teacher positions that are filled by unqualified teachers could result in approximately 560,000 students with disabilities going under- or unserved annually. They illustrate this critical point in current context in this figure from the SEFNA Sustainability Handout (Smith et al., 2011, p. 6).



*Figure 2.* Implications of a supply-and-demand imbalance.

As the number of students receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has increased (Hardman & West, 2003), focus has intensified on the evidence supporting preparation experiences for the teachers charged with promoting the students' academic goals (McLeskey & Ross, 2004). In order to prepare enough teachers to meet the growing demand, stakeholders acknowledged the imperative nature of preparing doctoral candidates to pursue careers in teacher preparation, to promote the knowledge base through teacher education research, and to partner with states and districts to ensure teachers are supported in their roles (Pion et al., 2003). However, simply increasing the quantity of teacher educators is not enough; the quality of preparation is critically important to sustainability in the field (Schirmer, 2008). The federal involvement

in doctoral preparation of teacher educators and educational researchers seeks to address both as outlined below.

### **The Role of Federal Policy**

Historically, policy has driven progress in the field of special education (Smith & Salzberg, 1994). Currently, Part D of IDEA supports scholarship in teacher preparation through personnel preparation programs with a focus on special education (Kleinhammer-Tramill et al., 2009). In order to better understand the multitude of reasons for the consistent shortage of special education faculty, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) commissioned a study of doctoral students and programs in 2001, commonly known as the Vanderbilt study.

**The Vanderbilt study.** The Vanderbilt study, the 1999 U. S. Department of Education (DOE) OSEP-funded research project, collected comprehensive data on special education faculty preparation (Smith et al., 2001). Researchers investigated the factors influencing the supply, the characteristics, and the career goals of doctoral students in special education. Authors of the study identified specific factors affecting new doctorates' post-graduation career decisions as follows: (a) inadequate funding for doctoral study, (b) low faculty salaries, (c) lack of mobility due to family or other responsibilities, and (d) increasing demands placed on junior faculty (e.g., heavy teaching and supervisory responsibilities, pressures to obtain external funding, and publish in top peer-reviewed journals).

This large-scale study focused on four broad areas of interest: (a) the experiences of special education departments in hiring new faculty, (b) the available supply of new doctorates on the job market for faculty positions, (c) the level of interest of doctoral

students in careers as faculty members, and (d) the capacity of doctoral programs to prepare a sufficient supply of special education doctorates for faculty roles (Smith et al., 2001). In response to the first research question, the researchers found that 30% of the faculty searches for the 1997-98 academic year failed to result in the hire of a candidate. This is significant because it has the potential to influence the number of special educators in classrooms. Departments risk losing positions when faculty searches are unsuccessful (Hardman & West, 2003). Lost funding for a faculty hire, in turn, reduces IHE capacity to prepare teachers (Ryndak, Webb, & Clark, 1999).

With regard to the second question, the Vanderbilt study reported that doctoral programs in the United States did not admit or graduate enough doctoral recipients to fill faculty openings, and of those graduating, only approximately 45% went on to accept tenure-line faculty positions in institutions of higher education (Smith, Pion, Tyler, & Gilmore, 2001). The researchers attributed this to the reasons listed above (e.g., higher salaries outside academia, inability to relocate).

As a result of these findings, the federal government intervened (Hardman & West, 2003) with a grant program in 2003. Awarded in an effort to mitigate projected shortages of qualified higher education faculty in special education, these grants focused on preparing leaders in special education through doctoral education (Wasburn- Moses & Therrien, 2008). In an effort to understand the effect of these monies invested in leadership preparation, a follow up study was funded.

**Special education faculty needs assessment (SEFNA).** An Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)-funded project, SEFNA extended the Vanderbilt study findings (Smith et al., 2001) to assess the field of special education's capacity to prepare an

adequate supply of special education teachers who meet the highly qualified standard (Smith, et. al, 2010). The researchers investigated six areas: (a) status and capacity of special education doctoral programs; (b) demographics, career goals, and characteristics of current special education doctoral students; (c) career paths, demographics, and other characteristics of two cohorts of special education doctoral graduates (i.e., five years of graduates who participated in the 2001 Special Education Faculty Shortage Study and five years of recent graduates); (d) basic characteristics of university-based special education teacher education programs; (e) graduation rates of OSEP-funded doctoral students through a followup study; and (f) funding levels for doctoral students across federal agencies (SEFNA).

SEFNA findings suggested faculty retirements at a rate of 21% annually in all IHE departments of special education over the next decade with doctoral granting institutions experiencing turnover of one third to one half of their faculty (Smith et al., 2011). SEFNA reports that progress has been made in addressing the faculty shortage and key indicators are in place for predicting successful careers in higher education.

The most recent SEFNA brief reports a 16% increase in the number of doctoral programs, 28% more program graduates, and an increase of 20% in program capacity (Smith et al., 2010). The average age of students decreased from 42 in the Vanderbilt study to 36.5 in the SEFNA findings. The decrease in mean age coupled with an increase in program capacity results in an increase in faculty positions available for new graduates.

Additionally, Smith and colleagues (2011) identified four key predictors of an academic career. First, when a student enters a doctoral program with the intention of pursuing a faculty position, 9 times out of 10, he or she does so. Second, for every one year



older a student is when beginning a doctoral program, the odds of becoming a faculty member decrease 2.6 times. Third, for every one year longer it takes to complete the doctorate, the odds of becoming a faculty member decrease by 2.3 times. Students whose doctoral education is funded by personnel preparation grants, like those established by OSEP in response to the Vanderbilt study recommendations, consistently graduate in fewer years than those who are self-funded. Lastly, candidates who are willing to relocate for a faculty position increase the odds of becoming a faculty member by 90%.

Predictors from the SEFNA data of an academic career for graduates of doctoral programs in special education provide partial understanding of the shortage of qualified teacher preparation faculty. The remainder of the literature in special education doctoral preparation covers two broad topics: the federal investment in preparing the future special education faculty (Hardman & West, 2003; Kleinhammer-Tramill, Tramill, & Brace, 2010; Kleinhammer-Trammill et al., 2009; Wasburn-Moses & Therrien, 2008) and the students who pursue special education doctoral degrees (Tyler, Smith, & Pion, 2003; Wasburn-Moses, 2008). Each of these areas will be reviewed below.

### **Preparing Future Special Education Faculty**

The Vanderbilt study called for an ongoing federal investment to “build the special education personnel infrastructure” (Smith et al., 2001, p. 46). As a result, OSEP increased the number of special education leadership personnel grants available. Attached to these leadership grants are stipulations for programs and for student recipients. For example, faculty who apply for the grants must demonstrate that the funds will prepare doctoral candidates who intend to graduate from the program in a timely fashion, and who are prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students with differing abilities.

The funds are also granted under the condition that other funded research positions and work will be limited to experiences required for degree completion (Wasburn-Moses & Therrien, 2008).

Preliminary evidence indicates the increase in leadership grants may be accomplishing what they were intended to accomplish, to increase the number of people prepared for faculty roles (Kleinhammer-Tramill et al., 2009). However, two of the primary concerns for the field of special education (i.e., the number of students entering doctoral programs and the cultural and linguistic diversity of doctoral students) remain unchanged (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010; Wasburn-Moses & Therrien, 2008).

### **Special Education Doctoral Students**

The characteristics and demographics of doctoral students in special education remain relatively unchanged despite efforts to recruit culturally and linguistically diverse faculty in IHE. In order to understand the multitude of factors influencing doctoral students to pursue doctoral studies and ultimately, a faculty position, the demographics and satisfaction will be presented next.

**Demographics.** In 2001, half of doctoral students were 42 years of age or older, the vast majority were women; only 18% were ethnic minorities (Smith, et al.). Expediting the process between master's and doctoral degrees in order to prepare doctoral level professionals earlier in their careers has been a consistent recommendation for alleviating the faculty shortage (Evans, Andrews, Miller, & Smith, 2003; Hardman & West, 2003; Smith et al.). Wasburn-Moses (2008) surveyed 619 doctoral students from 78 IHE and found that the average doctoral student age was 35. While her response rate was only

38%, these findings are a significant contrast to earlier findings and may indicate that age is not a meaningful indicator of intent to pursue a faculty role.

**Satisfaction.** Doctoral student satisfaction has also been studied as a potential factor in choosing a faculty role. Thus, the authors of the Vanderbilt study contended that “any successful efforts to recruit more students . . . will be diluted if these individuals change their goals as a result of their doctoral training experience, or even worse become so disillusioned that they fail to complete the degree” (Smith et al., 2001, p. 47). The authors reported that, of surveyed doctoral students, 26% were completely satisfied and 48% were mostly satisfied (Smith et al.) with their doctoral experience.

Wasburn-Moses (2008) conducted a mixed-methods study in an effort to better understand the level of satisfaction doctoral students reported with their doctoral experience. Her findings replicated those of the Vanderbilt study, in that 73% of doctoral students surveyed reported they were completely or mostly satisfied with their doctoral experience. Additionally, students chose programs based on (a) the opportunity to work with specific faculty, (b) the financial support offered, and (c) a location that would not require relocation. This study provides support for the assertion that federal investment in doctoral students promotes degree completion.

In 2003, the Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Council for Exceptional Children’s (CEC) academic journal *Teacher Education and Special Education* devoted a special edition to the supply and demand of special education faculty. In that issue, relocation and mobility were identified as barriers in both recruitment of doctoral students and in career trajectory toward a faculty position (Tyler et al., 2003). In fact, Tyler and her

colleagues found that approximately 75% of “location-bound students based their program decisions on not having to relocate” (p. 202).

Finally, in a longitudinal regression study, Pion and colleagues (2003) identified six predictors of faculty employment for doctoral students. The researchers found that students who enter doctoral programs with the goal of becoming faculty, with appropriate funding, and with the ability to relocate after graduation were most likely to pursue a career in academia.

### **Alternative Models for Doctoral Preparation**

Faced with a devastating shortage of university-level personnel, faculty at one northern California IHE offered an alternative model for doctoral preparation targeting early and mid-career teaching professionals interested in doctoral study (Evans et al., 2003). The program was designed to provide content to both special education and general education doctoral students with classes offered at times that accommodated working students. The program focused on ethnic and racial diversity both in the recruitment of students and in the research agenda offered. Finally, the program was developed and executed with the specific purpose of preparing doctoral level faculty for tenure-track lines in IHE.

Evans and her colleagues (2003) retained 100% of participants through graduation. At the time the article illustrating this program was published, 83% of the graduates had accepted positions as faculty in IHE, a much higher rate than the national average of 45%. Unfortunately, while this model yielded positive results, it is no longer operational due to Evans' retirement and lack of OSEP funding at the institution needed to recruit doctoral students.

In summary, the literature in this area suggests the need for additional research specific to special education doctoral students' preparation experiences, skills, and opportunities that build capacity for success in a faculty role. The review demonstrated a need to know more about doctoral preparation and induction into a faculty role in special education. IHE faculty, as members of the academy, must balance three areas of responsibility: (a) teaching, (b) research, and (c) service. Doctoral students preparing for faculty roles must develop and refine their skills in these areas for success in faculty roles. While researchers have established characteristics of doctoral students in special education as well as predictors of an academic career, the specific experiences in doctoral work that prepare candidates for the various expectations of a faculty role remain unclear. This study investigated specific experiences of doctoral preparation and professional induction as told by those who have lived it. These first-hand accounts provide insight into the continuum of professional development from doctoral work through induction into tenured faculty. Therefore, based on the literature examined in this review, the following research questions are addressed in this study:

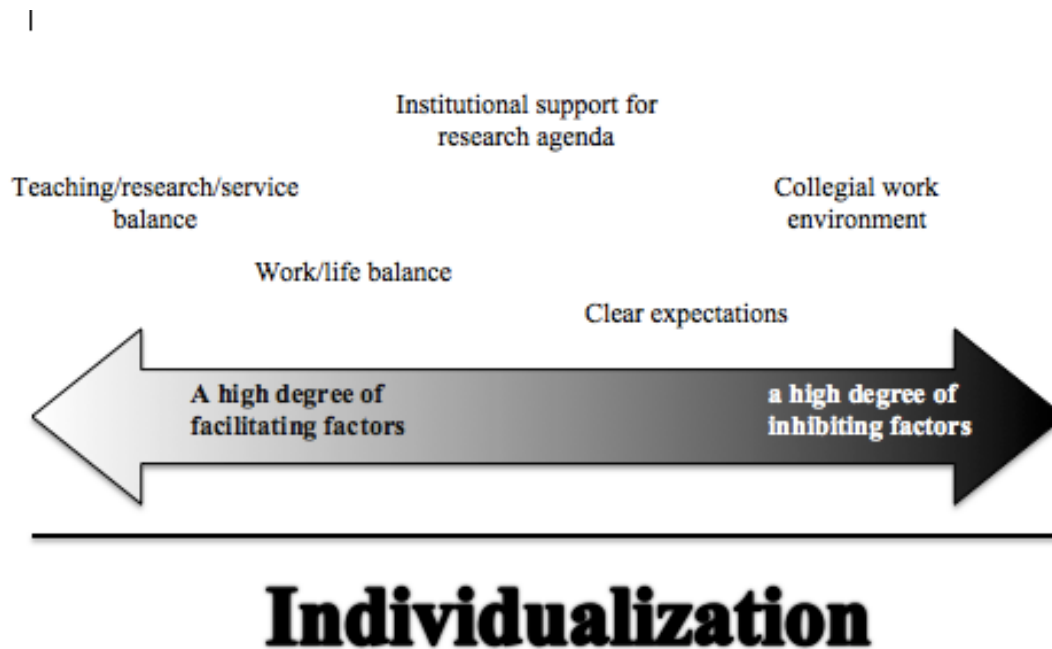
1. What are the formal and informal learning opportunities that best prepare doctoral students for roles as university-based IHE faculty?
2. What are the facilitating and inhibiting factors (e.g., doctoral program experiences, IHE expectations and supports, administrative structures) that affect the transition of doctoral program graduates into IHE faculty roles and responsibilities?

Answering these questions has the potential to benefit five groups central to balancing the supply and demand of special education faculty. First, prospective doctoral students may benefit from participants' insights, therefore, gaining a more thorough

understanding of the meaning of doctoral education, IHE career opportunities, and expectations of university faculty. Second, early-career faculty will have the opportunity to compare and contrast their own experiences with those related here, opening up collegial dialogues about preparation, induction, and retention of future faculty. Third, the faculty responsible for recruiting, admitting, and mentoring doctoral students may gain perspective about the work of doctoral preparation from the vantage point of recent participants in the process. Fourth, faculty may benefit from the perspectives of early-career faculty related to induction, mentoring, and transition into their faculty roles. Finally, this study has the potential to help stakeholders shape public policy for doctoral preparation.

By highlighting the most influential and meaningful doctoral experiences preparing graduates for a faculty role, I make the argument that focusing on providing those opportunities with depth and breadth is invaluable in preparing future faculty. As such, this study provides a critical next step in the research regarding doctoral preparation of higher education faculty in special education. Exploring the facilitating and inhibiting factors experienced by early-career faculty continues the investigation a step further to illuminate the connections between preparation and practice.

With respect to the second research question, participant responses were clear and are represented graphically in Figure 3. Participants spoke candidly about their experiences in their current positions, what surprised them, what they were prepared to do, and what they were not prepared to do. The themes that emerged from this research have implications for doctoral preparation as well as early-career induction and mentoring.



*Figure 3.* Continuum of retention.

### Summary

This review of the literature clearly illustrated a need for a thorough qualitative analysis of the experiences of doctoral students that most affected transition into a faculty role. The study presented here attempts to fill that gap by offering first-hand experiences of early-career faculty who provide perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of doctoral preparation as it relates to the position they currently hold as teacher education and research faculty at institutions of higher education.

In order to understand the challenges of preparing a sufficient supply of high-quality doctoral students to take on the challenging role of teacher educator, the federal government funds educational researchers to investigate doctoral education in special education (Smith et al., 2010). SEFNA findings are critical to understanding the pipeline

of future faculty; however, the individual and unique experiences of students who have successfully navigated the process from student to teacher educator remain a mystery.

Through this qualitative inquiry, I sought to unpack these experiences.

Specifically, the findings here will contribute to a better understanding of how to maximize the doctoral preparation period, how to provide meaningful support in the induction years, and how to provide doctoral students with the tools for a successful academic career.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodology**

An understanding derived quantitatively of doctoral preparation in special education is valuable but it cannot provide a full picture of the experiences that influence doctoral students in their career trajectories. This study will fill the gap in the quantitative data. In this chapter, I will describe the interview protocol, the participant selection, and data collection methods in detail. Steps of data analysis will also be presented, leading to the organization and presentation of findings.

#### **Interview Protocol**

Narrative inquiry allows participants to tell their professional story in their own words (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In an effort to provide them an opportunity to tell their story, participants received an interview protocol (see Appendix B) prior to scheduled interviews. This protocol primed participants for the interview and facilitated focus on the parts of their doctoral preparation and induction that were most critical to their personal experience. The interview consisted of broad, open-ended questions developed from the findings of Israel's (2009) unpublished dissertation as well as the review of the literature (see Appendix E). This semi-structured protocol allowed participants to talk freely.

#### **Participants**

Of the more than 1,200 SOE in America, only 8%, or just under 100 universities, prepare doctoral students for faculty roles (Smith et al., 2010). As a result, doctoral students will most likely be employed at an institution that is very different, in terms of size and resources, from the one in which they were prepared. Taking this into account, I selected participants for this study purposefully. They each met three criteria. Specifically,

they (a) hold a tenure-line position as assistant professors in special education teacher preparation programs, (b) are employed at IHE classified as other than very high research-intensive universities by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and (c) have earned doctorates resulting from OSEP leadership grants or other funding sources (e.g., Centers for Disease Control; CDC). The assistant professors interviewed in this investigation represent various areas of special education expertise and specialization (e.g., high-incidence disabilities or early childhood special education) at institutions of varying sizes and research intensity.

**Participant selection.** Seven participants were recruited in three different ways. First, I performed a search of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching database to identify all public universities not classified as very high research intensive. I then searched each identified university's website for Assistant Professors in Special Education.

Following this exercise, I emailed a total of 86 people, explained participation criteria, and invited participation. In return, I received six replies. Two of them did not meet the eligibility requirements and two did not follow through when the study commenced. I then recruited participants via University of Kansas Department of Special Education faculty contacts, requesting a connection to any assistant professors who meet the criteria. I also utilized a third means of recruiting participants—the Early-Career Special Interest Group of the Council for Exceptional Children's Teacher Education Division (TED). Through these three avenues of recruitment, I identified seven participants who fully meet the criteria for inclusion.

Participant demographics are presented in Table 1. The seven participants ranged in age from 30 to 45 years old at the time of data collection. They had been employed as assistant professors from 1 to 4 years. Participants are described below. Each participant has been given a using pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. During data collection, participants were interviewed for an average of 35 minutes. The shortest interview was 17 minutes; the longest was 54 minutes.

**Justin.** The first participant, coded in the data logs as N1, had attended a very highly intensive research institution in the North Pacific region of the United States for his doctoral studies. Beginning in 2004, he was funded consistently as a graduate research assistant (GRA) and a graduate teacher assistant (GTA) throughout the four years of his full time program. He is currently beginning his third year of employment in a highly intensive research institution in the South Pacific region of the United States. He was hired by this institution in 2008 but negotiated a deferred start date for a year in order to continue his work on a longitudinal grant at his doctoral university.

**Scott.** Coded in the data log as W2, Scott earned his doctoral degree at a very highly intensive research university in the West South Central region. He was funded full time on an OSEP leadership grant beginning in 2004. Scott began his work at the master's level institution at which he is employed, in the Mountain region of the United States, in 2007, prior to completion of his dissertation (ABD).

**Josie.** The third participant, Josie, or C3 in the data log, earned a PhD in special education at a doctoral-granting institution in the East North Central region of the country. She began her doctoral program as a part-time student in 2006. When her advisors offered her OSEP leadership grant funding, she committed to pursuing her doctorate full time.

Josie began her employment at the South Atlantic highly intensive research institution at which she is employed without completing her dissertation. She defended her dissertation in November 2010, her first year as an assistant professor.

**Jessica.** Jessica, the participant coded as H4, sought a doctorate with a specific institution in mind. A district-based colleague helped connect her with a faculty member with OSEP funding at the West South Central very highly intensive research university she ultimately attended. Due to unexpected personal developments, it took Jessica five years to complete her PhD, the longest of the seven participants. She is currently employed at a master's-level institution in the South Atlantic.

**Abe.** The fifth participant, coded as D5 in the data log, began his doctoral studies in 2002 at a highly intensive research institution in the East North Central region of the country. He was fully funded on an OSEP grant all four years of his program and worked an additional three years after graduation as a research associate for his doctoral granting institution. In 2009, Abe took a tenure-line position at a neighboring university.

**Abby.** While earning a master's degree and teaching in the public schools, Abby, K6, applied for the doctoral program at the same South Atlantic doctoral-granting institution she was attending. OSEP leadership funds supported her for the three years of her doctoral work. Upon graduation, she accepted a tenure-line position at a master's-level institution one state away. Abby is in her third year as an assistant professor.

**Charlie.** The final participant in this study was coded as R7 in the data log. Charlie attended a very highly intensive research institution in the Midwest on both OSEP and CDC funding. Charlie worked 67% time as a doctoral student; by comparison, 50%

was typical for the other study participants. He began work as an assistant professor at a doctoral-granting institution in the South Central region in 2010.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Participant Code	Pseudonym	Number of Years to PhD	Age at Entrance to Doctoral Program	Age at Time of Interview	Ethnicity	Marital Status in Doctoral Program	Marital Status at Time of Interview	Children?	Ages
N1	Justin	4	27	33	Latino/White	Married	Married	No	N/A
W2	Scott	4	38	45	Caucasian	Separated	Divorced	Yes	16
C3	Josie	5	28	33	Latina	Divorced	Single	No	N/A
H4	Jessica	5	38	44	White	Married	Separated	Yes	5.5
D5	Abe				White				
K6	Abby	3	25	30	Caucasian	Married	Married	No	N/A
R7	Charlie	4	27	31	Caucasian	Married	Married	Yes	8 mo

Participants were accepted into the study on a rolling basis so interviews began while I continued to recruit additional participants. As a result, one interview informed the next interview by honing in on specific experiences, motivations, and incidents that emerged from the earlier conversations. When the narrative data became saturated, in that themes were somewhat repetitive and consistent, I discontinued the interviews.

## **Procedures**

### **Informed Consent**

I obtained the appropriate human-subject permissions from the University of Kansas Human Subjects Panel to conduct research. Use of human subjects for research requires a clear statement of purpose for the research, a listing of the risks and benefits for the participants, and a plan to ensure confidentiality of all data collected as well participant identity. Accordingly, all data collected from participants were completely confidential. Findings were shared with participants through a member check at the completion of the data analysis. Participant names will never be associated with any of the research findings and only the researcher knows the identities of participants. There are no known risks associated with this study.

All participants signed a letter of informed consent, meaning "...the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation" (Berg, 2001, p. 56).

See Appendix C for a copy of the letter of consent.

### **Interview Process**

Data in a qualitative study typically consist of interviews and document analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). This study utilized in-depth narratives in place

of the more traditional question-and-answer format of the interview. The protocol that participants received prior to the interview and the broad questions asked during the interview were consistent for all participants. This standardized, open-ended interview methodology was intended to elicit stories from the participants allowing for a wide range of responses while simultaneously minimizing bias by taking each participants through the same sequence of questions (Patton, 2002). Data were collected in three phases, as reviewed below.

**Phase I: Survey.** When potential participants were identified, they were asked to complete an initial screening tool to assess fit for the study. This tool, which may be found in Appendix D, serves to provide basic demographic information for participant selection and inclusion purposes as well as for the final narrative analysis. I developed this tool through analysis of this study's purpose and goals as well as with the collaboration of my advisory committee.

As a means of piloting the instrument, I distributed the survey to early-career colleagues in faculty roles. Their feedback informed the final survey instrument. Data gathered with this tool provides necessary preliminary information for purposeful sampling of willing participants. The survey data are represented in Table 1.

After the initial survey data collection, an additional demographic survey was added to better understand the personal factors and relationships influencing each participant's decision-making and trajectory. This instrument is found in Appendix G.

**Phase II: Interviews.** Interview protocols were developed in three steps. First, I compiled a list of questions that remain unanswered based on a comprehensive review of the existing literature. Next, the transcripts of interviews conducted for a colleague's



dissertation study (Israel, 2009) on a similar topic were reviewed and analyzed for study participants' perceptions of critical components of doctoral preparation. Making note of the expressed priorities and concerns of faculty in the field provided support and utility for the unanswered questions identified in the literature. Finally, the questions were presented to a group of IHE faculty and doctoral students at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Teacher Education Division (TED) annual conference. Participants in the presentation provided feedback and suggestions on the interview protocol.

The initial interview protocol was not an exhaustive list of potential topics to explore in this investigation. However, it did represent the critical components of doctoral preparation that I hoped to learn more about in the course of this study. By providing this protocol to participants prior to the interview, they had the opportunity to focus on the most important experiences in their personal story and to minimize or ignore less important experiences.

**Phase III: Critical incidents.** In order to capture the single most critical experience, opportunity, or influence of doctoral preparation, I asked participants to answer two specific questions: (a) what was the single most critical incident? The critical incidents were self-identified and self-reported by the participants as the single most critical experience and/or opportunity of doctoral preparation.

**Instrumentation.** The study utilized technology for the purposes of conducting interviews (*Skype*), recording (*Call Recorder*), transcribing (<http://www.thelai.com>), and analyzing (*HyperResearch*) the data. These tools facilitated the collection and analysis of the data. However, I served as the sole means of instrumentation. An inquiry about the experiences of doctoral students and early-career faculty required that I, as the human

instrument, possess and acknowledge certain knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences about the topic as well as the research methodology utilized (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The experiences I have had as a doctoral student myself must be acknowledged as an important factor influencing the process in which I collected, organized, analyzed, and interpreted the data. I have gained knowledge about qualitative research broadly and naturalistic inquiry specifically from both formal and informal contexts. Formally, I took a graduate level course on naturalistic inquiry (see Lincoln & Guba). Informally, Dr. Earle Knowlton, as this study's methodologist, advised and coached me in my data analysis and organization of raw data.

**Technology.** Interviews took place through web-conferencing software (i.e., *Skype*), providing the closest approximation to face-to-face as possible considering the barrier of distance. All interviews were recorded in their entirety using a *Skype* add-on software called *Call Recorder for Mac*. I uploaded the audio/video (.mov) files to the Landmark Associates Inc. (LAI; <http://www.thelai.com>) transcription service. Here files were transcribed, saved as Microsoft Word documents, and uploaded on to the transcriber's website.

I made the necessary edits for professional jargon, names, and other transcription error, then resaved those .docx files as .txt files. Source files for analysis in *HyperResearch* (<http://www.researchware.com>) must be uploaded as .txt files and edits, corrections, and changes are impossible once the source file is added to the qualitative analysis software. Once the files were correct and converted, I imported them as source files into the *HyperResearch* software. The Critical Incidence Technique (CIT) (Flanagan,

1954) guided the development of codes and categories as a way of organizing the raw data (Cherry, 2000; Creswell, 1998). Two questions aimed at identifying critical events were:

1. What was the single most important or influential experience of your doctoral program that prepared you for a faculty position?
2. What one thing would you identify as missing or lacking from your doctoral program when reflecting in hindsight on your preparation?

The answers to these two questions provided by the participants were coded as CIT.

### **Methodological Notes**

Throughout each interview as well as in peer debriefing with colleagues, I took extensive notes and journals. I used a smart pen (*Livescribe*; <http://www.livescribe.com>) in the instances where linking audio to my notes promoted my understanding of the story. The *Livescribe* pen provides audio recording that is synced with written words. As a result, I have both electronic and handwritten notes and journal notes of my thoughts and understanding of this project as it evolved.

### **Data Analysis**

The narratives collected were analyzed using semi-structured interview protocol (Merriam, 2002) and CIT (Flanagan, 1954). Since narratives were the primary source of data collection, the interview transcripts provided the primary source of data analysis. I provided transcripts to participants immediately following the interview and gave them the option to follow up, expand on, or clarify anything from their transcripts prior to data analysis. All participants' edits were incorporated into the source file document used for coding. Appropriate methods of unitizing, coding, and categorizing were used to establish emerging themes of doctoral preparation, transition experiences, and induction

opportunities supported by the review of relevant documentation. Figure 4 illustrates the process of data analysis I conducted to make sense of the raw data.

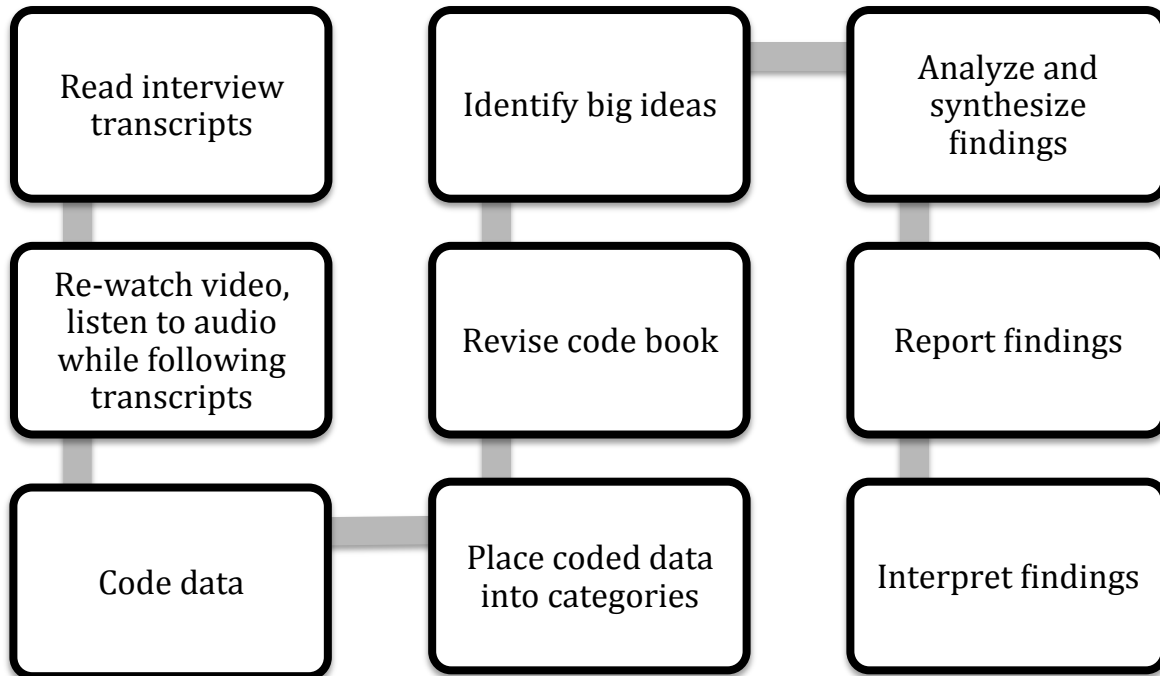


Figure 4. Data analysis procedures.

When the raw transcripts were returned from LAI, Inc., I read through them, thoroughly marking any errors or misunderstandings in the transcription. I then re-watched the audio/video file of the interview while following along with the transcript to fill in any blanks left by the transcriptionists. After making all corrections to the raw transcript file, I attached it to an email sent to the participant requesting his or her review. Each participant emailed me back in a timely fashion with either approval or clarifications. All clarifications were added to the file prior to converting it into a source file for analysis.

After importing the source file into *HyperResearch*, the qualitative analysis software, I began to develop the code book for the study through the process of coding data. The code book began as a word or phrase to categorize a unit of data. As more cases

were added to the software, I refined the code book to differentiate and represent the individual experiences of the participants as well as the collective whole. When all seven transcriptions had been coded individually, I began to develop categories by distinguishing commonalities and unique experiences across the cases.

Reflecting on the research questions, I organized the units and categories to include the data informing the study's purpose. The codes, categories, and subcategories that emerged from this analysis may be found in Appendix F. I then physically cut and pasted the individual data units onto storyboards representing the formal and informal experiences of doctoral preparation. These storyboards provided an organization for presenting and interpreting the findings of this study.

Through this process, I identified six categories: (a) content knowledge, (b) context of the field, (c) individual motivating factors and experiences, (d) institutional opportunities, faculty, and location, (e) pre-PhD factors contributing to the pursuit of a doctorate in special education, and (f) post-PhD influences guiding career trajectory.

### **Document Review**

In addition to the narratives provided by the study participants, accompanying documents served to fill in some of the specific expectations, accomplishments, and opportunities of participants. For example, I analyzed the curriculum vitae of each participant. The documents and records utilized were publicly available on the department's website or provided directly from participants.

Such documentation analysis provides a more thorough understanding on which to ground the narratives provided by study participants. Reviewing the documents also promoted triangulation of data by providing documentation that supported the stories told

in the interviews. This is one of the four constructs in place to ensure both external and internal validity of the findings. The four constructs, trustworthiness of data, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, are described in detail next.

### **Trustworthiness of Data**

Guba (1981) and Skrtic (1985) advanced what are termed “counterpart criteria” for judging issues of, in quantitative terms, reliability, internal validity, and external validity. Qualitative methodologies such as naturalist inquiry rely on four constructs of (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. Each of these constructs will be described further here (Guba).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Skrtic (1985) promoted the process of member checking as the primary means by which a study’s overall credibility can be judged. As explained next, credibility is the equivalent to internal validity in naturalistic inquiry. Thus, some systematic procedure for establishing credibility is a necessary component of naturalistic inquiry.

All participants were given access to the coded data and approval of the findings and interpretations of the data. Although the procedures described previously detailing the process of “checking back” with the seven participants with regard to their transcripts and interpretative feedback, the process I used to enable judgments about the credibility of this study was not meant to be a member check in the strict sense offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

### **Credibility**

Similar to internal validity in quantitative research, credibility develops in three ways. First, the primary researcher maintains a prolonged engagement consisting of

“persistent observations” (Skrtic, 1985, p. 201) of the phenomenon under investigation. In this research, I made and sustained ongoing connections with the people representing the programs of interest over the duration of the study. Next, I triangulated the data by comparing it, contrasting it, and cross-checking it across the various data sources, researchers, and working theories grounding it to enhance validity. Triangulation lends credibility because dependability of the findings is established through multiple sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, the member check is an ongoing process wherein all participants are given access to and approval of the initial transcripts, final findings, and interpretations of the data throughout the duration of the study. Participants had a voice through the member check in the analysis and interpretations of the findings (Merriam, 2002). These three components come together to promote the credibility of findings within a qualitative inquiry framework.

### **Transferability**

Transferability, similar to external validity in quantitative research, speaks to the generalizability of the findings to other similar people, settings, phenomena, or in this case, programs of interest. According to Skrtic (1985), transferability can be evaluated in two ways. One way is by analysis of the sampling plan and for the grounding theory guiding the study. Another way is through the detailed context provided in the case report. By providing dense descriptions of the process, the data, and the findings, the researchers provide “a substantial basis for similarity judgments” (Skrtic, p. 201).

### **Dependability**

Dependability, the third measure of trustworthiness, maintains similarities with the validity construct in quantitative research (Skrtic, 1985). Determined by an external and independent auditor, dependability is evaluated by a thorough examination of the research processes utilized in the study to ensure that the data were acquired, processed, and stored in compliance with acceptable research practices. Since the precedent in place in the KU Department of Special Education does not require an external auditor for dissertations, the dissertation committee guiding this project determined this measure.

### **Confirmability**

The fourth measure of data trustworthiness is referred to as “confirmability.” Confirmability engages an external auditor to examine the case study. The external auditor is charged with tracing facts, assertions, and conclusions in the case report back to the data collected, unitized, and categorized in raw form (Skrtic, 1985). Confirmability of findings demonstrates that the case report is reflective of data collected. As with dependability, this measure of validity was determined by dissertation committee guiding this project.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided a detailed description of the methodology utilized in this study to make sense of the voluminous raw data to answer the research questions. Qualitative methodology (i.e., case study, narrative inquiry, and naturalistic inquiry) allowed for investigating the specific doctoral experiences that prepared early-career faculty for an academic career. Seven early-career faculty members, varying from one to four years of experience in a faculty role, participated in the study. Data collected through one-on-one interviews, supplemental surveys, and critical incident technique were reviewed against the available literature. Emerging themes have been organized for presentation in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER IV

### Results

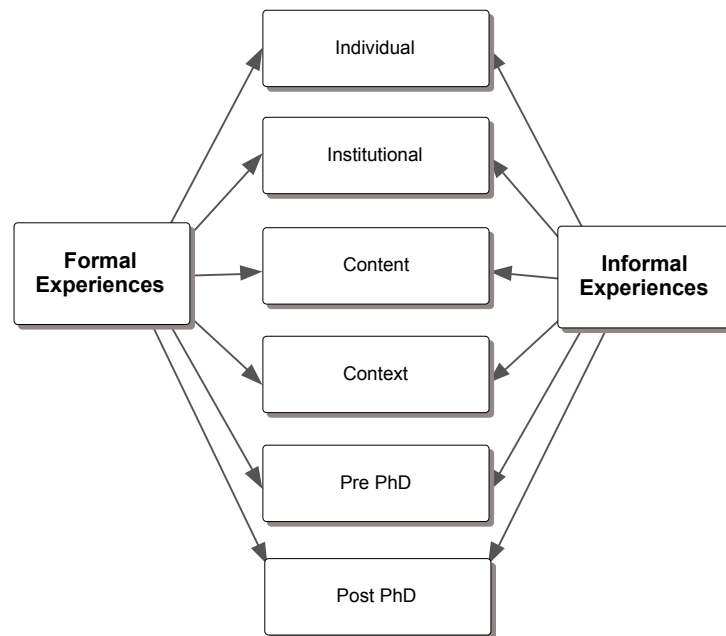
Early-career faculty juggle multiple responsibilities simultaneously all while adapting to a new professional role in a new academic culture. A central finding of this study was that all of the participants reported seeking, achieving, and maintaining that balance, in one way or another, as something for which they were unprepared. This supports the findings of the 2001 large-scale special education leadership personnel study that found the multiple demands of the job contributed to only 42% of faculty reporting job satisfaction (Smith, et al., 2001, p. 20).

The increasing demands on early-career faculty present a challenge in recruiting and retaining recent graduates into academic careers. That said, none of the participants interviewed in this study stated or insinuated regret about the decision to pursue a career in higher education. On the contrary, the seven participants interviewed expressed satisfaction with their doctoral program, their doctoral advisor, and their decision to pursue an academic career.

Findings from this study were shaped by the two guiding research questions:

1. What are the formal and informal learning opportunities that best prepare doctoral students for roles as university-based teacher educators?
2. What are the facilitating and inhibiting factors that affect assistant professors' transition from doctoral student to IHE faculty member?

While much was discovered in the course of this inquiry about doctoral preparation and the transition in to a faculty role, the findings presented here will concentrate on answering these two questions. The data emerging from the study were organized in the following manner.



*Figure 5.* Data analysis.

### **Formal Experiences**

Doctoral programs vary widely in degree requirements (Walker et al., 2008). Participants in this study illustrated this variance by detailing coursework, fieldwork supervision, college teaching experiences, research opportunities, and funding sources. Formal experiences described in the following section are required components for completion of a doctoral degree at the institution the participant attended for graduate studies as reported by the participants. For the purpose of analysis, formal experiences were divided into six topical areas.

**Individual factors.** Individual formal experiences are those that motivated participants to seek a doctorate in special education. Participants reported frustration with their roles of change agents in their school settings. Since these experiences were in a professional capacity, I coded them as formal individual motivating factors in order to answer Research Question 1. For example, Abe relayed a sentiment that his work had moved away from the classroom into a more administrative (Q1D51.1). That shift in

responsibilities drove him to question school structure, teacher education, and best practices. Abby and Charlie told similar stories of frustration in their teacher roles and a desire to “impact change in a bigger way” (Q1K61.1). Thus, each of these three participants pursued doctoral programs as a result of their dissatisfaction with the administrative practices in their respective schools.

The other four participants were motivated to pursue a doctorate by institutional factors at the university. While each of these four was working in an educational capacity at the time of admission to a doctoral program, none had seriously considered doctoral studies prior to institutional factors that influenced them. Those formal institutional factors, such as funding and admission criteria, will be presented next.

**Institutional factors.** Formal institutional factors, for the purpose of answering RQ1, were coded as the unique and official opportunities offered by a doctoral program to doctoral students. Faculty and funding were the two primary institutional factors influencing participants’ decision to pursue doctoral studies. Three participants contemplated the decision to pursue doctoral degrees over a relatively long period of time, were in contact with a faculty member in excess of one year regarding the prospect of a doctoral program, and worked full time when they began (N1; W2; D5). Two were in master’s programs in special education when they began asking institutional questions about doctoral work (C3; K6). The remaining two sought admission into a doctoral program at a specific institution due to the institution’s location (R7) and the program’s reputation (H4). Therefore, the reasons for seeking admission to a doctoral program were threefold for the participants: faculty guidance, expanding on master’s degree studies, and location of the doctoral program.

The opportunity to work with specific faculty was the strongest institutional factor for Justin, Scott, and Abe, according to the Special Education Early-Career Faculty Survey (Appendix D). However, only Justin spoke about the significant role his doctoral advisor played in his success in pursuit of a faculty role, citing his advisor as a friend and as a “father figure” (Q1N13.4.1/6.0). Scott said this about his advisor, “He was this guy who really gave people opportunities” (Q1W23.4.1/2.1 [9315, 9449]).

As required for inclusion in this study, participants were funded in their doctoral programs on leadership grant funding from OSEP in addition to any other work or funding opportunities they may have taken advantage of as students. As such, OSEP grants were formal institutional factors influencing the participants’ decision to pursue a doctorate in special education.

Participants learned of funding opportunities in one of two ways. The three who pursued doctoral programs independently learned of funding as part of the admissions process. The other four participants were recruited into doctoral programs through a previous relationship with a faculty member in the department. Those four students told unique and individual experiences of how the formal institutional factors came together to support their admission into a doctoral program (Q1C32.1; Q1D57.3.3; Q1H47.3.3; Q1K67.3.3).

For example, Justin, who had been in contact with a faculty member as a result of his master’s degree program, answered a call one day from the professor who eventually became his doctoral advisor. Justin said the professor told him, “Look, there is this position coming available in the college for a graduate research fellow and it’s to help doing longitudinal and circuit research, and it aligns well with your interests. Why don’t

you apply for the position in the fall?” (Q1N12.1). Justin’s decision to pursue this opportunity hinged on the institutional capacity to support him financially for the four years of full-time doctoral preparation. Scott told a similar story: [After nine years as a classroom teacher,] It was about that time my advisor called and said, “You know, maybe it’s time to take it to the next level,” and that’s what I did” (Q1W22.1). Securing funding to support themselves during their program was an important component, but it was not identified by any participant as a critical component in their decision to pursue doctoral studies.

Formal institutional experiences relayed by participants also served to answer RQ2 in some instances. Academic structures such as tenure and promotion were coded as formal institutional experiences. While participants were asked about their trajectory toward tenure and promotion, only Scott expressed concern with the process as well as his productivity aligning with departmental and university expectations (Q2W24.2.1.1). Like Scott, Jessica reported being unclear about specific expectations but not concerned about her status (Q2H44.2.1). She did not feel well mentored to understand her role in preparing material and presenting for mid-tenure review, “I don’t have anybody telling me what I should be doing at all. It’s kind of scary because you don’t know what you don’t know sometimes. You don’t even know what questions to ask what you should be doing” (Q2H44.2.1). The other five participants felt well positioned for tenure (Q2C35.1; Q2D55.2; Q2K64.2.1) although not all were committed to pursuing tenure at their current university (Q2N14.2.1; Q2H44.2.1; Q2R74.2.1).

As a criterion for participation in this research, all participants were employed in their first tenure-line faculty position; none was in very highly intensive research

universities. Therefore, three reported ongoing efforts to position themselves for mid-tenure moves. Since all three intended to relocate professionally and geographically, they were focused on tenure and promotion requirements of their goal universities rather than adhering tightly to the expectations of their current universities. In all cases, faculty members aspired to work at more research-intensive institutions.

**Content.** Items were categorized as formal content when a participant indicated the experience was a doctoral requirement. Required doctoral courses and experiences intended to familiarize students with literature and research in the field at large as well as in particular areas of interest combined with the specific content knowledge required for teaching coursework were coded in this category.

**College teaching.** Two participants took required courses on college teaching (Q1K63.4.4; Q1D53.4.2). Abe took a core course entitled College Teaching that served as both a college classroom teaching experience and a college teaching preparation course with a focus on developing online courses, using technology with efficacy, and organizing and presenting content (Q1D53.4.2). Three participants participated in formal co-teaching courses with other doctoral colleagues and/or faculty members (Q1K63.4.2; Q1R77.3.3; Q1D51.0). The other participants did not have a formal college teaching experience.

**Coursework.** Participants provided little insight into the experience of attending doctoral courses or useful knowledge gained from coursework. Doctoral coursework did not emerge, as proposed in the guiding conceptual framework (Figure 1), as a critical component of doctoral preparation. For example, Scott reported, “I thought I grew professionally quite a bit just as far as the opportunities to do research, not just the classes. The classes were—the courses were interesting and informative, but most of what I got

out of it was the research end of it that I was able to do with the graduate research assistantship and then eventually the project coordinator on the grant” (Q1W23.4.4). Jessica said, “Classes were good” (Q1H43.4.4) but indicated that her most valuable learning opportunities came outside of class through collaboration with doctoral colleagues and faculty members. Those reflections provided here were coded and categorized as context and are presented next.

**Context.** The formal opportunities providing context for the learned content were coded as conferences and advisor role. Presenting original research or consuming the research of others at professional conferences were coded and categorized within context. Finally, the role of the advisor is a critical component of situating learned content into the context of the field, the university, the school/college, and the department.

**Advisor role.** The choice or assignment of an academic doctoral advisor is traditionally a critical component of doctoral preparation (Zhao, Golde, & McCormick, 2005). Not surprisingly, therefore, each participant identified his academic advisor in a unique way. Justin was advised by a faculty member in his masters’ program to meet with another professor to discuss doctoral study because the two shared similar professional interests. When Justin requested the meeting, the professor scheduled a 15-minute meeting with him. That meeting ended up lasting for two hours and, ultimately, over the course of nearly two years, resulted in a mentor relationship (Q1N13.4.1CI). Justin identified his advisor as the single most critical factor in his success in a faculty role. Josie, much like Justin, developed a relationship with her doctoral advisors as a masters’ student, and the relationship evolved into an opportunity for her to pursue full-time doctoral studies on an OSEP grant.

Scott credited his advisor for the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies (Q1W23.4.1) but provided little information about the nature of the advisor-advisee relationship. Similarly, Abby felt that her advisor provided her “with a lot of additional opportunities outside of...” departmental requirements (Q1K63.4.1). However, she did not offer further information about how she selected her advisor or how the relationship worked to support or inhibit her growth.

Both Jessica and Charlie connected with advisors based on recommendations from colleagues in the field. Those recommendations, coupled with the availability of OSEP funding, resulted in advisor-advisee relationships. Jessica spoke broadly about the positive experience of working with her advisor but offered no specifics about what the relationship had provided. Charlie credited his advisor with helping him translate his work into palatable pieces digestible for teachers (W2R73.1.1).

**Pre-PhD influencing factors.** All participants had formative experiences prior to admission into the doctoral program that influenced the decisions they made during and after the program. For instance, when presented with the opportunity to pursue a doctorate, Justin said, “A PhD in education was not something I had seriously considered” (Q1N11.1;1.4). At the time, he was moving into an administrative role, writing school-based grants, and providing professional development in the district. He wanted to learn more about school reform and about how to affect change for learners who struggle (Q1N11.2) but had not considered a doctorate as a means to that end. Those school-based experiences provided a strong foundation, though, for his transition into a doctoral program (Q1N12.1). Likewise, when Josie graduated from her masters’ program, a



professor asked her to consider applying for the PhD program. She told me she had never thought about a PhD before but decided, “Well, why not?” (Q1C32.1).

A personal friend in a special education faculty position approached Scott about pursuing a master’s degree in special education. Scott told me that, although he “didn’t have any experience or burning questions about special education, it was just something I kind of looked into. Once I did, it was like, ‘okay, this is what I need to do’” (Q1W21.1).

Charlie’s tenure as a classroom teacher supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders drove his desire to “make an impact in the field of special education” (Q1R72.2). Specifically, he sought a PhD in special education in an effort to explore his interest in positive behavior supports and teacher beliefs about students (Q1R71.4).

Conversely, Abe was doing transition planning in schools that he had been prepared to do in his master’s degree program when his advisor approached him about doctoral preparation. He joked that he went in “kicking and screaming” and that the experience of college teaching was the ultimate shift for him toward teacher education (Q1D51.1).

**Post-PhD influencing factors.** A variety of factors influenced the post-graduation choices and opportunities of the participants. The job search, contract negotiations, relocation, personal relationships, and ultimate career goals combined to bring each participant to his or her current position. While the participants are diverse in terms of these factors, they each identified strengths and weaknesses in their approach and in their subsequent satisfaction with the results.

**Job search.** The experience of applying for the first faculty position in higher education is unique. The participants told stories of developing curriculum vita and cover letters with the guidance of advisors, mentors, and colleagues. Only one participant, Abby,

went on more than one on-site interview. After three interviews, two at very high-intensive research universities, Abby chose a comprehensive university because of the collegiality (Q2K64.2.6).

Two participants, Justin and Charlie, did more than one telephone interview. Justin knew what he was looking for in an institution. He said, "I was looking for an upper-, mid-level institution that was going to provide me a solid platform that either in the future I could move laterally . . . or go to a Research One" (Q1N14.2). Charlie had two on-site interviews scheduled but after receiving a position offer from the first, he canceled the second because he was unable to negotiate time to consider the first offer (Q2R74.1.2).

Abe and Jessica were outliers in the job search process. Abe worked as a research associate full time on a grant at his doctoral granting institution until a tenure-line position opened at the institution where he taught as an adjunct instructor (Q2D54.1). Jessica held off on applying for positions for personal reasons.

***Contract negotiations.*** Once the participants had secured a position, the contract negotiations commenced. Justin negotiated a year delay to start his contract due to longitudinal research obligations at his doctoral-granting institution (Q2N14.1.2). He also negotiated 9 hours of release time from a 12-hour teaching load. The deciding factor for him, however, was the willingness of the institution to meet his salary requirements.

Charlie reported frustration at the negotiation table. He felt unprepared for this part of the formal post-graduation experience and was unsure of whom to ask for negotiation advice (Q2R14.1.2). He cited not asking the right questions during the interview and not negotiating his contract effectively as the critical incidents inhibiting his transition to a faculty role (Q2R16.0).

***Relocation.*** Consistently identified in the literature (Smith, et al., 2001; Wasburn-Moses, 2008) as a predictor of a faculty career, relocation emerged as a critical component in this study as well. Justin, Scott, Josie, Abby, and Charlie relocated for their tenure-line faculty positions. Two of them did not receive any moving expenses by the hiring institution; each cited this as a challenge, both personally and financially, in making the transition (Q2K64.0; Q2R74.0). For example, Justin reported that he was not content with the quality of life in his current location but felt that this move was the right one for his career at the time. Charlie mentioned the financial burden of making the move to his current institution (Q2R74.0). Scott and Josie, both relocated for faculty positions, were satisfied with the geographical locations of their positions as well as the career the university provided.

***Personal relationships.*** Spouses and children were influencing factors for most participants. Jessica, the only one who did not apply for a tenure-line position, got married and had her first child during her doctoral program. She relocated to the Southeast after graduation with her husband and then looked for a position in higher education. This relationship was the single most influential factor in her post-PhD job-seeking decision (Q2H47.0). Scott applied for a faculty position prior to completing his dissertation (ABD) because a position became available geographically closer to his daughter from a marriage that had ended before his doctoral program began (Q2W27.0). Abby reported that her husband was “portable” in terms of his career so they cast a wide net in the job search (Q2K67.0).

### **Informal Experiences**

Informal doctoral experiences are defined as those additional, “value-added” experiences students engage in, work on, and attend as supplemental doctoral preparation opportunities. These are not requirements of the program but are critical components of preparation for a faculty role. The informal experiences, like the formal experiences earlier, are divided into the six broad categories presented here.

**Individual experiences.** The informal individual experiences were coded as personal factors and personal finances. The average age of participants at the entrance into their doctoral programs was 32. Each had full personal lives coming into the program and underwent various personal experiences during the four years, on average, of the doctoral program. Personal finances, on the other hand, were only coded five times across all cases. Therefore, although personal finances were coded, they were not a major factor in participants’ decision making.

**Personal factors.** Marriages, separations, divorces, and babies were all personal factors that came up in the interviews. Justin was married; Scott was separated when he started the program and then divorced while working on his PhD. Josie was divorced; Jennifer got married in her second year of the program and had a baby. She told me, “There were so many things to do that it was like I personally had to just say, ‘No, I can’t do it’ [i.e., look for a job] and I know you kind of get that and why. [Laughter] So many opportunities to work on research projects, so many opportunities to collaborate with wonderful people and write and do things, which I think, in hindsight, I sometimes feel sad about because I feel like I had so many—with my family, things going on that I didn’t maybe do as much as I had dreamed I was going to do while I was there” (Q1H47.0).

Abe, Abby, and Charlie were married before, during, and still after their programs. Charlie's first child arrived about the time he graduated. Participants offered little more in the way of details about how their doctoral work affected their personal relationships or vice versa. I only know these relationships were concurrent with doctoral preparation.

### **Institutional Factors**

Findings suggest that informal institutional factors, including academic culture, professional service, and collaboration all influence early transition and assistant professor satisfaction. In essence, academic culture encompasses ongoing faculty work, the work environment, and the administrative structures that facilitate or inhibit faculty efforts. Professional service can be defined as faculty contributions to the department, college of education, university, state, and country. Finally, collaboration is the collegial relationship of working together to achieve a professional goal.

**Academic culture.** The transition from doctoral student to college professor requires indoctrination into the academic culture of higher education (Golde, 2007). Serving on departmental and university committees provided participants with insights into the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, collaborative efforts, and decision-making structures. Abby served as a member on a departmental curriculum committee and on a faculty search committee. Those experiences prepared her for the intensity of committee commitments in her faculty position (Q1K63.4.1; Q2K63.4.1). Justin served on a dean's position search committee; ultimately, his advisor was hired (Q1N13.4.1). That experience taught him about the administrative structure of the college and provided insight into the decision-making processes that later benefited him in his contract negotiations (Q2N13.4.1).

Opportunities to serve on department committees provided participants with both positive and negative acumen. When asked what committee experiences contributed to his transition into a faculty role, Abe replied, “It was just a matter of when you’re on grants and dealing with faculty and departmental procedures, it’s so crazy—the politics at any college” (Q2D53.1.1). Abe became familiar with academic culture as a doctoral student and reported that his faculty experience is very similar (Q1D53.1.1). Scott supported Abe’s findings by saying, “I think the political climates you find yourself in are going to be challenging. I don’t know how you prepare for that ...” (Q2W23.1.1).

Jessica reported a lack of preparation for the intensity of the culture of higher education. She said, “They never talked about committee work and service work and everything in my doctoral program” (Q1H43.1.1). She, Charlie, and Abby identified academic culture as one of the more difficult experiences in transitioning into a faculty role (Q2H43.1.1CI; Q2R73.1.1CI; Q2K67.3.1CI).

**Professional service.** As part of the inclusion criteria for this study, none of the participants worked at a very high-intensive research university. They were employed by various classifications ranging from comprehensive universities to high intensive research universities. All seven commented on the level of service expected of them in their faculty role. Jessica said, “I cannot believe the number of committees. We’re kind of a small department, okay, so they look to us” (Q2H44.2.3). Service, however, was only coded seven times in the data and, therefore, cannot be considered a significant informal factor for success in a faculty role.

**Content.** Submitting, revising and resubmitting, and publishing original scholarship was coded as informal content in this study. This is because none of the

doctoral programs that participants attended required publications as part of the completion of their program plans. In their current positions, publishing consisted of submitting research-based articles and practitioner-focused manuscripts for publication to scholarly journals as well as serving as journal reviewers.

**Publishing.** Writing, submitting, revising, and publishing original research in academic and scholarly publications is a primary responsibility of faculty in higher education. Each participant talked extensively about learning to write for publication and the ongoing quest for publications. Scott said, “One thing the program did extremely well was to provide these sorts of opportunities and I came out of the doc program with a pretty strong publication record and that certainly helped me get the job” (Q1W23.3.1). He was the only participant to report this type of guidance and mentorship.

Josie found strong writing support at her employing institution but did not feel she received the support she needed to become a strong, independent academic writer in her doctoral program (Q1C33.3.1). She said, “One of the things that I wish I had more is more opportunities to write and be coached” (Q1C33.3.1/6.0). Jessica relayed similar experiences from her doctoral preparation (Q1H43.3.1). She continued to struggle to find time to participate in research and write (Q2H43.3.1). While not presenting writing as a challenge, Charlie worked after hours, late into the night, on writing because his days were full with teaching, advising, and departmental responsibilities (Q2R75.2).

**Context.** Informal writing contexts were unitized under the code of mentors, influential committee members, administrators, or colleagues who guided and coached participants along the way. These relationships were different from advisor-advisee relationships because they are informal and are mutually chosen by both mentor and

mentee. Participants gave their pre- and post-PhD mentors credit for a wide variety of focused learning experiences. Justin credited his mentor with opportunities to meet and work with leaders in his professional interest area (Q1N13.1.3). Charlie said his mentor taught him how to become a faculty member (Q1R73.1.3) and a researcher (Q1R73.2) by surrounding him with people who could “influence his decision-making” (Q1R73.1.3.1) in the direction of his goals. Abby learned about teaching and advising from her mentors (Q1K63.1.3). In short, mentors, for those who felt strongly about them, were very influential in guiding the professional trajectories of the participants.

**Pre-PhD.** In my analysis, I found difficulty in making clear distinctions between informal Pre-PhD experiences and formal Pre-PhD experiences. Factors motivating each participant to pursue full-time doctoral studies were widely diverse and both what I would consider formal and informal in nature. The professional dissatisfaction that motivated some to learn more about doctoral programs in special education was presented in the formal Pre-PhD section. Informal experiences did not specifically emerge from this inquiry.

**Post-PhD.** Informal experiences influencing post-doctorate decisions were coded as priorities for a faculty role. Participants clearly articulated factors driving them into their current faculty positions, their geographic locations, and their professional capacities. Justin, Josie, Abby, and Jessica indicated that balancing work with personal life was a major priority in finding a faculty position that would be a good fit for themselves and for their significant others. Justin said of his doctoral work and his career ambitions, “I saw a lot of people around me, some of the doc students also getting caught up in it, working 12-15 hours a day, six-seven days a week. I’m a hard worker, but I didn’t want that level of



stress and commitment” (Q1N14.2). That sentiment was echoed by Josie when she said, “I admire [redacted advisor’s names], I didn’t want their life” (Q1C34.2).

The majority of participants ultimately sought faculty positions that would provide balance, both in work and personal life as well as in research, teaching, and service. Charlie was the exception in this area. He had prepared eight new courses and taught nine courses since joining the faculty. Although he reported teaching 40%, writing and researching 40%, and providing local, state, and national service the remaining 20%, he said “writing and doing all my publications happens at night at the expense of my family” (W2R75.2). Charlie approached his work at the doctoral-granting institution where he was employed as if it were at a very high-intensive research university since he was preparing for the opportunity to move to a more research-focused department elsewhere.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented research findings organized by formal and informal experiences participants reported of their doctoral preparation and transitions into faculty roles. Interviews, curriculum vitae, and survey responses were used to analyze participants’ perceptions of their programs, both pre- and post-degree. The chapter provided direct quotes from participant interviews to “build the confidence of readers by accurately representing the reality of the persons and situations studied” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 119). Both SEFNA data and the Vanderbilt study provided demographic information about the challenges facing new PhDs in special education. Results presented in this chapter provide insight into the lived experiences of early-career faculty in special education during their doctoral programs and in their transitions into faculty roles.

Participants provided extensive details about their experiences as special education practitioners, doctoral students, and early-career faculty.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore early-career special education faculty perceptions of doctoral experiences that prepared them for faculty roles. Specifically, I intended to develop a better understanding of the pedagogy of doctoral preparation, critical experiences shaping future faculty, and factors influencing career trajectories in higher education. Findings contribute to the growing research base about special education doctoral preparation and provide useful information for prospective doctoral students, current students, and faculty mentors.

This research used a naturalistic inquiry approach to collect qualitative data by conducting in-depth interviews using *Skype* web-conferencing software (<http://www.skype.com>). Individual interview data, curriculum vitae review, survey responses, and answers to critical incident questions were used as data sources. In addition, I interviewed seven early-career special education faculty participants. Data was transcribed by Landmark Associates, Inc. and coded using *HyperResearch* qualitative software (<http://www.researchware.com>). Data were coded, analyzed, and organized first by units and then into categories guided by the two underlying research questions:

1. What are the formal and informal learning opportunities that prepare doctoral students for roles as university-based teacher educators?
2. What are the facilitating and inhibiting factors that affect assistant professors' transition from doctoral student to IHE faculty member?

In an effort to answer these two questions, I organized the categories as illustrated in Figure 3. Categories are directly aligned with these research questions. In this chapter, I

will discuss the implications of the findings organized around each of the research questions. Further, the implications of the findings will be related to the overall purpose, significance, and existing literature review. Limitations will also be discussed within the context of the findings. Recommendations will reflect useful applications of the findings and present possible areas of future research. Finally, concluding remarks will summarize all key points from the chapter.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

**Research question 1.** What are the formal and informal learning opportunities that prepare doctoral students for roles as university-based teacher educators?

Participants identified numerous formal and informal learning opportunities in their doctoral programs that prepared them for their faculty roles. The strongest formal doctoral experiences can be categorized in three areas. First, the research opportunities in which participants contributed, either as a result of the OSEP leadership grants or advisors' work and mentorship, influenced their interests and their educational research skills development. Josie identified her participation in the leadership grant and full-time enrollment as a doctoral student as the single most influential experience of her preparation for a faculty role (Q1C36.0). For participants who were motivated to earn doctorates in special education by dissatisfaction with school culture, the doctoral research opportunities taught them methods of meaningfully answering educational research questions.

Second, teaching at the college level, both undergraduate and graduate courses, honed their curriculum and pedagogical knowledge, challenged their beliefs, and provided a foundation for their commitment to teacher education. However, the majority of participants stated that they had received little to no preparation or support in college

teaching. Josie said, “I was thrown in” (Q1C33.4.2). Jessica confirmed Josie’s experience by saying, “We were basically in charge of everything in the class. Of course, technically we had a university mentor, but she was like, “You know your reading, you know your stuff, and we trust you together, go for it” (Q1H43.4.2).

Third, the role of the doctoral advisor is a key factor in the quality of and satisfaction with doctoral preparation from the perspective of the doctoral student. To illustrate this point, Justin said, “I always likened him [his advisor] to someone who’d say, ‘this is the curtain, look what’s going on behind the curtain’” (Q1N16.0). Charlie credited his advisor for teaching him all he needed to know about becoming a faculty member (Q2R73.4.1) while Abby reported her advisor gave her much needed value-added opportunities to learn about faculty life such as shadowing at committee meetings as well as additional college teaching and masters’ student advising (Q1K63.4.1).

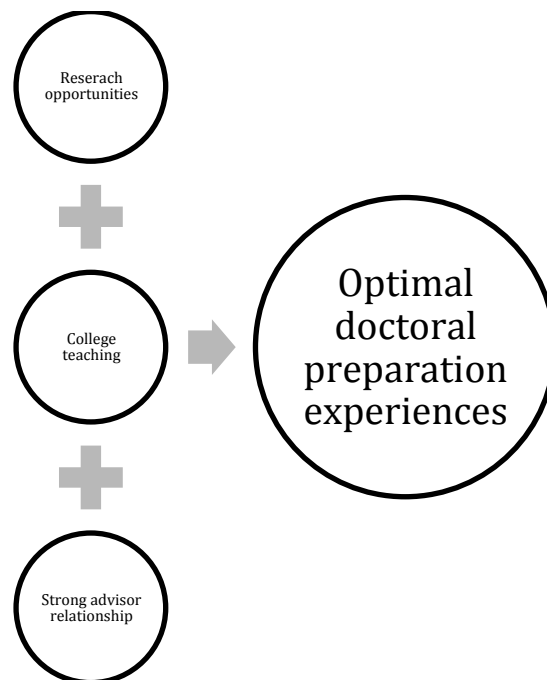


Figure 6. Research question 1.

Tyler et al. (2003) reported that 75% of doctoral students based the decision of what doctoral program to attend on not having to relocate. The findings of this study support that finding as four out of seven participants chose the doctoral program most conveniently available to them geographically. However, the fact that three of the participants relocated for faculty positions disputes previous findings that relocation inhibits pursuit of a career in IHE.

Participants were wholly satisfied, positive, and even enthusiastic about their experiences as doctoral students, as was reported by Wasburn-Moses (2008). Each spoke with a high regard for his or her advisor, program of study, and peers when reflecting on time as a doctoral student. When I asked about components missing from doctoral preparation, most were unable to identify any one area. Justin noted that publishing was difficult as a doctoral student (Q1N13.3.1) and that teaching was not an area of emphasis in his preparation (Q1N13.4.2). However, he did not identify either of those as inhibiting factors in his transition to a faculty role.

Each participant represented a separate doctoral program. Therefore, each program conceptualized the critical components of doctoral preparation differently, and the participants reported widely varying program foci. Regardless of these vast differences, the participants were in agreement about the components illustrated in Figure 6.

**Research question 2.** Participants identified a variety of facilitating and inhibiting factors that affected both their professional and their personal lives after graduation as they transitioned into their current faculty roles. When critical supports were lacking (e.g., unclear expectations, lack of a suitable mentor) or balance (i.e., work/life or

teaching/research/service is unsatisfactory), participants reported frustration in their positions.

For three participants planning to make a mid-tenure move, the work-home balance and the institutional supports were not in place. Charlie and Jessica were dissatisfied with their teaching/research/service balance (Q2R75.1/5.2; Q2H45.1/5.2). Each felt overburdened by a heavy teaching load and service expectations (Q2R73.4.2; Q2H44.2.3), coupled with a lack of support in pursuing their research interests. The continuum of retention is presented in Figure 3. When early-career faculty expressed satisfaction in work culture, a supportive and collegial work environment, and balance in work/life as well as in work responsibilities, they intended to pursue tenure and promotion at the institution that initially hired them. When participants indicated a lack of satisfaction in any of the areas mentioned above, they were actively positioning themselves for a lateral or upward move to another institution prior to tenure.

While these factors were consistent among participants, the degree to which any one factor was weighted depended on the individual. Each participant described his or her ideal faculty position differently. While understanding these factors is important, recognizing the individual needs and goals of early-career faculty is perhaps more important. Individual dispositions of early-career faculty seem to have a great influence on their satisfaction in an academic role.

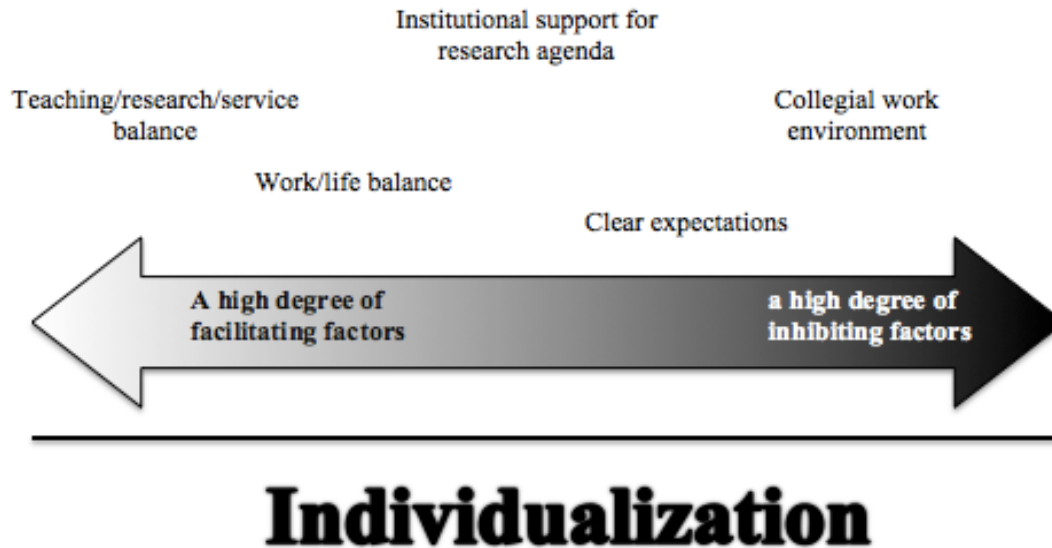


Figure 7. Research question 2.

All participants carried full teaching loads, with varying opportunities for release time, in addition to heavy advising responsibilities. Three supervised student teachers in the field as well. The demands on their time were great (Tyler et al., 2003; Wasburn-Moses, 2008), but, in support of the existing literature (DeAngelo, Hurtado, Pryor, Kelly, & Santos, 2009), those who were satisfied with their positions, expressed that they were managing to achieve a certain balance.

### Conclusions

Data collected and analyzed in this study provided a rich exploration of the experiences of early-career faculty during their doctoral programs and in their transitions to their current faculty roles. Several conclusions can be drawn from this work by comparing findings here with those found in the literature on doctoral preparation in special education. Conclusions presented below focus on six areas that emerged from the analysis: (a) content knowledge, (b) context within the field, (c) individual motivating



factors, (d) institutional factors, (e) pre-PhD experiences, and (f) post-PhD goals and opportunities.

**Content knowledge.** Doctoral coursework and program requirements appear to be less influential in preparing doctoral students for faculty roles than hands-on field research and teaching experiences. None of the participants mentioned the development of professional knowledge as a key component in doctoral preparation. This could be interpreted to mean that either participants were already consumers of academic literature prior to doctoral program admission or learned the literature through coursework and research. Knowledge gained through coursework and program requirements did not emerge as a critical component of doctoral preparation in this study. Abby reported a disconnect between content knowledge gained in her master's program and her observations and experiences teaching in the field (Q1K61.1; 1.3), which motivated her to doctoral studies. However, the focus on academic literature and scholarship as an intrinsic part of doctoral preparation did not emerge as a critical component in this study.

**Context within the field.** The contexts in which both academic life and the development of research and technical writing skills are situated were critical components of doctoral preparation identified in this study. Thus, the knowledge and experience gained through doctoral program involvement with research projects were essential to participants' professional confidence in their faculty roles. Ongoing and active engagement of doctoral students in the real work of a faculty member (i.e., teaching, research, and service) seemed to be a critical component of effective doctoral preparation. As stated by Jessica when asked about the critical incident in her doctoral preparation:

My experience, you know what, I have to go back. I could just say it like, oh, my teaching the course or something like that, but I have to take a more well-rounded approach to it in a sense and just say that I feel like at [my doctoral granting institution] I got such great training. I worked with people that really knew their stuff, so to speak, and knew the latest research and I was working on the latest research. I was around people with these wonderful conversations, wonderful ideas that I feel like I know research design, I know what's going on in education; I got it all (Q1H46.0CI).

The combination of content knowledge, research, teaching, service, conferences, and work in P-12 environments provided context for the scholarship students were engaging in and made it meaningful to them.

**Individual motivating factors.** The primary motivating factor that led participants to pursue a PhD was dissatisfaction with the special education system. They all expressed frustration with current practices in schools, their inability to influence change, and/or the trajectory of their careers. These factors converged to drive participants to look for other ways to help students with disabilities and promote use of evidence-based practices in classrooms. While participants expressed varying levels of involvement with P-12 students as graduate students and as early-career faculty, all were motivated by the desire to promote positive outcomes for students with and without disabilities. Therefore, developing research and professional development opportunities for doctoral students to continue involvement in P-12 contexts is important for retaining doctorates in higher education positions (Pion et al., 2003).

**Institutional factors.** The authors of the Vanderbilt study (Smith et al., 2001) contended that “any successful efforts to recruit more students . . . will be diluted if these individuals change their goals as a result of their doctoral training experience, or even worse become so disillusioned that they fail to complete the degree” (p. 47). Findings here do not support mind-changing or disillusionment as factors for pursuit of an academic career. All seven participants interviewed were committed to higher education as a profession and accepted the challenges of higher education with eyes wide open. They were clear about the expectations, the parameters of their current department/schools/programs, and the limitations of their workload. While most were not all satisfied with their current professional positions, they were confident in their futures as teacher educators and educational researchers.

Beginning with recruitment into doctoral programs in special education, the goal of preparing future faculty must be at the core of every discussion between advisors and students (Walker et al., 2008). According to participants in this study, if graduates feel unprepared for any one aspect of faculty life (i.e., teaching, research, or service), then the doctoral program did not adequately prepare them faculty roles and responsibilities. The first core implication of this study, then, is that doctoral students rely heavily on their advisors and other mentors to guide them in learning, skill development, and understanding the nuances and politics of academic culture (Zhao et al., 2005). As such, faculty recruiting doctoral students must understand the various dimensions of their work and plan formal and informal learning experiences that facilitate students’ growth and development.

**Pre-PhD experiences.** Three of the seven participants sought a doctorate because they were motivated by a desire to reform schools and/or improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. The other four became doctoral students because of serendipity (i.e., friends' recommendations, recruitment prompted by OSEP funding). Therefore, recruiting efforts could be re-evaluated to target school-based motivated educators who see themselves as change agents. Understanding the factors motivating practitioners to pursue doctorates could aid in advising and mentoring prospective and admitted doctoral students toward a more thorough understanding of what a PhD means and how they can use their knowledge and skills to continue they change agency after graduation.

**Post-PhD goals and trajectories.** Post-graduation satisfaction appears dependent on two key factors: (a) the IHE expectations for assistant professors and (b) the mechanisms in place to support the new faculty members during early-career development. These factors, in turn, determine whether the new assistant professor is able to maintain an effective balance between his or her home life and university life (i.e., teaching load, research support, and service responsibilities). The participants who indicated an unbalance in either area were seeking employment at another university. To facilitate new faculty development, retain productive faculty, and build long-term institutional commitment, therefore, university administrators and senior faculty must recognize the potential challenges new faculty face and develop support mechanisms that enhance faculty satisfaction and success (Walker et al., 2008).

## **Limitations**

This qualitative study explored the preparation and transition of seven early-career faculty members in special education. While all participants met the criteria for inclusion in the study, qualitative methods and a convenience sample were used. Future research might include quantitative or mixed methods, larger numbers of participants, and participants prepared at or working at similar institutions. In addition, research might explore early-career faculty at the same stage in their pre-tenure progression and/or those working in comparable institutions.

Although a member check was conducted, in qualitative research it is possible that the human instrument, the researcher, misinterprets responses and/or presents findings as influenced by his or her own experiences and perspectives. Future research with more participants could speak to the overall generalizability of the findings presented here. For example, an analysis of program plans and transcripts could provide more information about the requirements in the various doctoral programs participants attended and the areas of emphasis in each program. Understanding expectations of doctoral programs along with the admission process may provide insight into the dispositions of students who pursue faculty positions. Finally, expanding this initial study into a longitudinal analysis of the same seven participants across their careers could shed light on the factors influencing career trajectories. Interviews every three to five years would contribute to the bigger picture of the impact OSEP leadership grants had on influencing the broader field.

## **Recommendations for Future Research, Practice, and Policy**

One of the participants, Justin, stressed the importance of advocating for oneself with senior faculty to ensure that assistant professors begin their careers as capable and

knowledgeable colleagues rather than as post-doc students (N18.0). This advice could be meaningful to other doctoral students as they prepare to search for jobs and make the transition into a faculty role. Generally, participants in this study attributed success as doctoral students and commitment to a faculty role to the advising and mentoring received from key faculty and committee members guiding them through their programs of study. Maximizing opportunities to advise and mentor doctoral students builds capacity, develops writing skills, and promotes scholarship; therefore, is a recommendation for special education faculty

The latest findings from SEFNA (Smith, et al., 2011) demonstrate the positive effect that federal personnel preparation funds have had on building the capacity of special education leadership. However, issues remain related to recruiting, preparing, and retaining effective teachers and doctoral students willing to assume leadership roles. This study illuminates some of the motivating factors of prospective doctoral students. Findings suggest that policy makers could provide opportunities for teachers to advance their professional knowledge and skills to support positive school-wide change and teacher leadership. By providing funding for sustainable partnerships between schools and IHE all partners will benefit.

This study did not identify many aspects of effective doctoral course content with the exception of college teaching, field research, and statistics. This may be due the methods used, the time lapse between course completion and interviews with early-career faculty members, or their current priorities related to tenure, promotion, home-work balance, and other topics they raised that overshadowed any lingering concerns of doctoral preparation coursework. To address this possibility, future researchers might interview

doctoral candidates following the comprehensive examination phase of their program to discuss coursework, new insights, changes in beliefs, and content recommendations.

While no research into doctoral admissions criteria has addressed expressed intent upon admission, this area may provide a basis for further research on the topic. That is, gathering data on the purpose behind an application for doctoral studies may provide insight into those factors motivating enrollment in a doctoral program. An analysis of curricula vitae and doctoral program requirements would provide an important picture of the rigor required by doctoral preparation programs in special education.

The participants in this study finished programs in an average of four years, with one participant completing in three and one in five years. A comprehensive review of program plans, syllabi, and curricula vitae may shed light on the experiences of doctoral preparation. Finally, an analysis of the faculty who apply for OSEP personnel preparation leadership grants may improve our understanding of the experiences provided in doctoral preparation. Exploring the admissions criteria, requirements, and value-added experiences of doctoral preparation may give more information about the dispositions of doctoral students that lend themselves to success in a faculty role.

### **Summary**

Israel (2009) suggested, “Given the large number of doctoral students supported by U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) leadership grants, examining how OSEP-funded programs address issues of preparation for teacher education might yield useful information for the field and for OSEP” (p. 140). In this study, I sought to do just that by conducting interviews with seven early-career faculty members. I asked them how they were prepared by their doctoral programs, of various

size and research intensity, for careers as teacher educators and educational researchers. Data collected through those interviews and presented here demonstrate a continuing need for the field as a whole to communicate about preparation of special education leaders and induction of new faculty into academic careers. The themes that emerged from this study provide a different perspective to Israel's findings. This could be attributed to the populations studied. Israel interviewed teacher educators, those who prepare doctoral students in special education; whereas, this study explored early-career faculty about their doctoral preparation experiences. That divergence is important in that it illustrates a disconnect between faculty and doctoral students. While doctoral students may not fully understand what they are preparing for, faculty also may not have a clear vision of the work for which they are preparing doctoral students.

Fewer than 100 universities prepare future faculty for the nearly 1,200 schools of education. Doctoral preparation programs and faculty may lack a comprehensive understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by new faculty at institutions where the focus is teacher preparation at the practitioner level. Participants who experienced a wide range of opportunities during their preparation (i.e., teaching, student teacher supervision, committee work, research, writing) reported higher levels of satisfaction in their first faculty position. Those whose doctoral programs focused intensively on one area (e. g., research) expressed greater difficulty in transitioning to an institution with broader expectations, intensive teacher preparation responsibilities, and fewer resources. Nevertheless, relationships, whether with advisors, peers, or colleagues, ultimately emerged as the strongest dynamic in doctoral preparation and seemed to help facilitate a smoother transition for graduates as they moved into faculty roles. Those who



felt supported as doctoral students were more confident as they approached their new faculty roles and responsibilities. Those who felt supported before and after graduation, who received appropriate mentoring, and perceived themselves as valued colleagues indicated greater intent to stay at the institution of initial hire.

While many questions remain about specific experiences doctoral students need in order to become effective teacher educators, this study illuminated several new critical components of doctoral preparation. First, five participants identified financial support allowing for full-time pursuit of doctoral studies as a critical incident. Second, advising at the doctoral level and mentoring at the early-career faculty level were critical components of satisfaction and retention. Finally, balance, both in doctoral preparation and in transition to a faculty role, emerged as an essential and often difficult component for consideration. By keeping these three things in mind, IHE faculty preparing doctoral students for faculty roles and hiring new doctoral program graduates can better anticipate some of the common pitfalls assistant professors encounter. By doing so, the field can help ensure the next generation of special education leaders navigate academic waters successfully.

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## Appendix A

### Review of the Literature

Citation	Purpose	Methods	Findings
Evans, S., Andrews, L., Miller, N., & Smith, S. (2003). An alternative model for preparing special education teacher educators. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education, 26</i> (2), 150-153.	To describe the unique features of an alternative route to doctoral preparation in special education offered at the University of San Francisco and present early outcomes.	Descriptive statistics	USF utilizes a unified approach to doctoral preparation driven by an apprenticeship model to prepare doctoral students with teaching, research, and service opportunities. The program focuses on coordinated professional development, careers in higher education, minority group research, flexible class schedule, and diversity. As of 2003, the program had a 100% graduation rate, with 83% of graduates accepting positions in higher education.
Evans, S., Eliot, M., Hood, J., Driggs, M., Mori, A., & Johnson, T. (2005). Assessing the special education faculty shortage: The crisis in California – a statewide study of the professoriate. <i>Teacher Education Quarterly, 32</i> , 7-21.	To identify the personal and professional characteristics of current special education faculty preparing special education teachers and doctoral candidates, the anticipated needs for special education faculty, and what solutions could be implemented to increase the number and diversity of special education faculty.	Descriptive study of 42 colleges and universities in California offering special education credentials. Structured 30-minute interviews were conducted of department chairpersons.	Identified need to increase the number of doctoral programs in California and across the country, increase support for new professors (e.g., increase salaries, decrease workload, offer forgivable loans for new faculty, establish collaborative work environments), and recruit adjunct faculty into doctoral programs.

<p>Hardman, M. L., &amp; West, J. (2003). Increasing the number of special education faculty: Policy implications and future directions. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i>, 26(3), 206-214.</p>	<p>To provide a brief history of national policy for personnel preparation under Part D of IDEA, offer recommendations for policy, and present a perspective for higher education to rethink current recruitment and retention approaches.</p>	<p>Position paper</p>	<p>Establishing a connection between highly qualified special education teacher educators and the national policy to provide a free and appropriate education for all students.</p>
<p>Kleinhammer-Tramill, J., Tramill, J., &amp; Brace, H. (2010). Contexts, funding history, and implications for evaluating the office of special education program's investment in personnel preparation. <i>The Journal of Special Education</i>, 43(4), 195-205.</p>	<p>To explore the issues and contexts that must be considered in evaluating the federal program for personnel preparation in special education.</p>	<p>Position paper</p>	<p>Provides a historical and contextual synthesis of federal funding priorities.</p>
<p>Kleinhammer-Tramill, J., Tramill, J. L., &amp; Westbrook, A. (2009). Evaluating the federal investment for personnel preparation in special education. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i>, 32(2), 150-165.</p>	<p>To review previous evaluation studies and offer recommendations for the future.</p>	<p>Position paper</p>	<p>The number of funded grants and levels of funding are shrinking annually when adjusted for inflation. Personnel preparation grants are effective in increasing the number of people prepared for roles in special education.</p>
<p>McLeskey, J., &amp;</p>	<p>To describe the</p>	<p>Position paper</p>	<p>“Special educators do</p>

- Ross, D. D. (2004). The politics of teacher education in the new millennium: Implications for special education teacher educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 27*(4), 342-349.
- Pion, G. M., Smith, D. D., & Tyler, N. C. (2003). Career choices of recent doctorates in special education: Their implications for addressing faculty shortages. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 26*(3), 182-193.
- Schirmer, B. R. (2008). How effectively are we preparing teacher educators in special education? The case of deaf education. *American Annals of the Deaf, 153*(4), 411-419.
- positions of those who propose that teacher education be deregulated and those who support the professionalization of teaching and teacher education.
- To report results of a survey examining the early-career choices of new doctorates.
- Survey of 872 doctorates graduating between 1994-1998
- Descriptive design of 127 faculty preparing students with hearing impairments
- not have a long history of research in teacher education” (p. 348). Intervention studies, while valuable, do little to inform policy about what special educators need to be effective.
- Less than half of doctorates accept tenure-track faculty positions upon graduation. In order to address shortages in special education faculty, production of doctoral graduates must increase. Admitting students who commit to academic careers, supporting students financially throughout their program, and mentoring students for a faculty role are essential components of addressing the faculty shortage in special education.
- Most had published relatively little over the previous six years; therefore, teacher educators in deaf education are contributing only modestly to the research literature.

<p>Sindelar, P. T., &amp; Rosenberg, M. S. (2003). The demand for faculty in special education: A study of searches conducted in 1997-98. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i>, 26(3), 165-171.</p>	<p>To identify factors that differentiate successful and unsuccessful faculty searches.</p>	<p>Survey of 121 department chairs who had posted open searches in the previous year</p>	<p>Smaller program faculty experiences more failed searches. Many programs hired above the advertised rank, indicating concern may be warranted for diminishing capacity of smaller programs to retain faculty and sustain special education licensure programs. 1/3 of chairs indicated an inadequate applicant pool for positions but most searches failed because applicants turned down position offers.</p>
<p>Smith, D. D., Robb, S. M., West, J., &amp; Tyler, N. C. (2010). The changing education landscape: How special education leadership preparation can make a difference for teachers and their students with disabilities. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education</i>, 33(1), 25-43.</p>	<p>To present the current policy landscape, connections between the shortage of teachers and the shortage of special education teacher educators, and the role of the federal government in addressing the shortages.</p>	<p>Position paper</p>	<p>Recommends increasing the supply of special education faculty to meet the demand for expanded roles for special education faculty in the preparation of general educators, revising the curriculum of doctoral preparation programs to increase the knowledge and skills of the next generation of teacher educators, determining the gaps in the current knowledge base and developing a research agenda to support the creation of a national plan of action</p>
<p>Smith, D. D., Pion, G. M., &amp; Tyler, N. C. (2004). Leadership personnel in special education: Can</p>	<p>To identify factors contributing to the faculty shortage in special education.</p>	<p>Analysis of previous surveys of doctoral departments and new doctoral</p>	<p>“ . . . the problem is intrinsically linked to the supply of special education leadership personnel for academic positions. The primary</p>

persistent shortage be resolved? In H. J. Rieth, A. McCray, & P. Sindelar (Eds.), *Critical issues in special education: Access, diversity, and accountability* (pp. 258-276). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Smith, D. D., Pion, G. M., Tyler, N. C., & Gilmore, R. (2003). Doctoral programs in special education: The nation's supplier. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 26*(3), 172-181.

Smith, D. D., Pion, G. M., Tyler, N. C., Sindelar, P. T., & Rosenberg, M. S. (2001). *The study of special education leadership personnel with particular attention to the professoriate* (No. H920T970006-OOA). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of

graduates. Interviews of 120 search chairs for advertised faculty positions

To study the supply of professionals who may become faculty by identifying the leadership programs preparing them. To identify the number of doctoral programs in special education, the size of their enrollment, their graduation rates, their program content, and their recruitment efforts.

“To examine the extent and implications of the imbalance between faculty supply and demand” (p. 2)

A systemic search to identify departments of special educations offering doctorates and a survey of program administrators

Surveys of (a) search committee chairs, (b) doctoral programs in special education, (c) career experiences of recent doctorates, (d) doctoral students in special

reason is that the initial preparation of special educators typically is the responsibility of faculty working at institutions of higher education. A shortage of faculty results in a shortage of teachers and other direct service personnel who provide an appropriate education to students with disabilities” (p. 272).

Doctoral programs are not preparing enough graduates to meet the demand, not attracting enough leaders to pursue PhDs, and not enough are accepting positions as faculty. In order to provide students with disabilities highly qualified teachers, faculty in special education must consider how to recruit, prepare and retain doctorates.

Disincentives for new doctorates to pursue faculty roles include work conditions, salary, relocation, and time between bachelor's degree and doctoral work. Current capacity of doctoral programs is below that which is necessary to meet the need for qualified doctorates in faculty positions.

Education.		education	
Tyler, N. C., Smith, D. D., & Pion, G. M. (2003). Doctoral students in special education: Characteristics and career aspirations. <i>Teacher Education and Special Education, 26</i> (3), 194-205.	To determine characteristics and career plans of current doctoral students and what factors influenced their decision to pursue a doctorate as well as choose the institution.	Survey	Relocation for a faculty position is the predominant factor in pursuing a faculty role for the majority of students. Funding, coupled with relocation, is a predominant factor in pursuing doctoral studies for perspective students.
Wasburn-Moses, L. (2008). Satisfaction among current doctoral students in special education. <i>Remedial and Special Education, 29</i> (5), 259-268.	“ . . . to expand upon the Vanderbilt study to include both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of doctoral student satisfaction” (p. 260)	A sample of 619 students from 78 of the 94 doctoral programs in special education	“Doctoral students appeared to be most satisfied with mentoring and support. However, this relative strength may be masking problems with program structure, workload, and a lack of research-related activities. Balancing independent work with supported activities and providing a range of teaching and research opportunities also may present challenges. Doctoral program planners should consider for what they intend to prepare students and map program requirements and experiences to those outcomes” (p. 265).
Wasburn-Moses, L., & Therrien, W. J. (2008). The impact of leadership personnel preparation grants on the doctoral student population in special	“ . . . to determine doctoral student satisfaction and compare the demographics and program information of doctoral students with those measured by the Vanderbilt	Survey	The opportunity to work with certain faculty influenced the majority of students in applying to their doctoral institution, followed closely by the amount of financial support available and not having to relocate. Over

education. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 31(2), 65-76. study in 1999” (p. 66).

70% reported they were mostly or completely satisfied with their doctoral program.



## **Appendix B**

*Please consider these broad areas of your doctoral preparation and your transition into a faculty role prior to our scheduled conversation. Feel free to address any, all, or none of the experiences listed here when we talk. These are simply suggestions. You will guide our discussion.*

### **Teaching**

- What were your B-12 teaching experiences?
- What experiences did you have as a teacher that prompted you to consider a future as a teacher educator?
- How did you develop or promote university-school partnerships in your doctoral program?

### **College teaching experience**

- Tell me about the course(s) you taught and the experiences you gained in your college teaching experience.
- How did your experiences change as you progressed through the program?
- How were you mentored during your college teaching experience?
- What responsibilities did you assume for the course(s) you taught?
- How were you evaluated? Was the feedback you received meaningful?

### **Student Teacher Supervision**

- Tell me about your experiences in supervising student teachers or practicum students.
- How were you prepared for and mentored in your role as a supervisor?
- How often did you receive feedback on performance? Was it meaningful?

### **Literature**

- How did you become familiar with the research literature that focuses on teacher preparation? To what extent do you feel like you are an expert (or at least competent) in this field?
- What opportunities did you have to participate in professional conferences as a doctoral student?

### **Research**

- How much interest did you have in educational research before you entered your program?
- How did your interest in research develop, change, and grow as you progressed through the program?
- What opportunities did you have to publish as an author during your doctoral program?

### **Mentoring**

- In what ways were you formally and informally mentored by faculty during your doctoral preparation?
- In what ways were you formally and informally mentored by your peers during your doctoral preparation?
- What advice would you give to your mentors about the best and worst ways to mentor future doctoral students?

## **Appendix C**

### **INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT**

A Qualitative Study of Preparation and Induction of Early-Career Special Education Faculty

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Special Education at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this project is to learn more about how the formal and informal experiences of doctoral preparation prepared participants for the role of special education teacher educator.

#### **PROCEDURES**

You will be asked to participate in a phone interview lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. The interview will be recorded and transcribed; transcripts and audiotapes will be stored in a locked cabinet. Pseudonyms will be assigned and your name or the name of the institution you attended or you currently represent will never be used.

#### **RISKS**

There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. Pseudonyms will be assigned and your name as well as the name of your institution will be protected.

#### **BENEFITS**

Your participation in this study will contribute to the knowledge base of doctoral preparation in special education.

#### **PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS**

Participants will not be paid for participation in this study.

#### **PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, I will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or you give written permission. Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

### **REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION**

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

### **CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION**

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Jennifer Newton 521 Joseph R. Pearson Hall 1122 West Campus Rd, Lawrence, KS 66045

If you cancel permission to use your information, I will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION**

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researchers listed at the end of this consent form.

### **PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION**

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email [mdenning@ku.edu](mailto:mdenning@ku.edu).

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

---

Type/Print Participant's Name

---

Date

---

Participant's Signature

**Researcher Contact Information**

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Dear Dr. X

I am writing to request your participation in a qualitative dissertation study of recent doctoral graduates currently working as pre-tenure teacher education faculty in an institute of higher education. This study is part of an effort to learn more about how doctoral programs explicitly prepare future professors for roles as teacher educators.

Appropriate human subject permissions have been obtained from The University of Kansas human subjects committee to conduct research. Accordingly, all data collected from UNCG and participants will be completely confidential. I will share findings through a member check with you at the completion of the data collection. Names will never be associated with the research findings in any way and only the researchers will know your identity as a participant. There are no known risks associated with this study.

The findings from this study will contribute to our knowledge and understanding of doctoral preparation in teacher education. Thank you very much for your willingness to consider participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Jennifer R. Newton

Jennifer R. Newton  
University of Kansas doctoral student  
785.550.1644  
jnewton@ku.edu

## Appendix D

### *Special Education Teacher Education Assistant Professor Survey*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Current University/School or College/Department

\_\_\_\_\_

### I. Doctoral Preparation

Doctoral Granting University

\_\_\_\_\_

In what year did you graduate from your doctoral program?

\_\_\_\_\_

How were you supported financially in your doctoral program?

- OSEP funding
- Other IES grant funding
- GTA/GRA
- Other

\_\_\_\_\_

Did you relocate in order to attend your doctoral program? Yes No

What were the factors in your selection of the doctoral program you attended? (Please, rank)

\_\_\_\_\_ Funding/financial support

\_\_\_\_\_ Location

\_\_\_\_\_ The opportunity to work with specific faculty

\_\_\_\_\_ Program reputation

### II. Faculty Role

My university is on semesters / trimesters / quarters. (Circle one)

Current Position

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Year in which you were hired in this position?

\_\_\_\_\_

Is this a tenure-line position?

Yes

No

Have you completed your mid-tenure review?

Yes

No

What are your responsibilities? (Check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ Advising

\_\_\_\_\_ Committees

\_\_\_\_\_ State and national service

\_\_\_\_\_ Supervising field experience

Percentage of time do you allot to:

\_\_\_\_\_ Teaching

\_\_\_\_\_ Research

\_\_\_\_\_ Service

Do you teach in the summer?

Yes

No



## Appendix E

### *Interview questions for participants*

The purpose of this interview is to spend thirty minutes talking about your doctoral experiences, your transition into a faculty role, and your responsibilities in terms of teaching, research, and service.

- Based on your current role and responsibilities, what were the most important formal and informal experiences in your doctoral work that prepared you for teaching, research, and service?

As you moved into a faculty role, I would like to hear about the experiences, supports, and resources available to you.

- What have been the helpful and hindering experiences affecting your transition into a role as a successful faculty member?

I have one final question about your reflections on your doctoral preparation and professional induction prior to our conversation today.

- What one experience or opportunity would you identify as the single most important of your preparation
- What one experience or opportunity would you identify as most significantly lacking from your preparation?

Thank you so much for talking with me and sharing your story. I will send you a full transcript of our conversation today via email for your full review prior to data analysis. Please feel free to contact me to clarify, add, or amend any of your statements from today. I really appreciate your time.

## **Appendix F**

### Conceptual Framework, Code Glossary, and Subcategories

1.0 Entering capacity – The events that led participants to consider/seek a PhD in special education

1.1 K-12 teaching – Participants’ experience with classroom teaching in public education prior to and/or concurrent with doctoral preparation

1.2 Populations served – Participants’ experience in K-12 teaching with groups of students in various IDEA disability categories

1.3 Prior education – Bachelor and master degree work preceding application to a doctoral program

1.4 Related work experience – Roles in special education other than classroom teaching

2.0 Program Goals and Priorities

2.1 Doctoral recruitment – Interactions with department faculty regarding participants’ pursuit of a PhD

2.2 Program selection – Criteria the participant used to select the institution he attended

2.3 Program reputation – The collective opinion of the field about the faculty, research, and teacher preparation of any one particular special education department

3.0 Doctoral Experiences

3.1 Informal Experiences

- 3.1.1 Academic culture – The particular nuances of departmental, school, and university expectations, interpersonal relationships, and dynamics unique to higher education
- 3.1.2 Institutional structure – Unique departmental, school, and university configurations
- 3.1.3 Mentor – Participants’ relationships with faculty who guided, coached, and advised them through doctoral preparation and the job search
  - 3.1.3.1 Faculty Mentor
  - 3.1.3.2 Colleague Mentor
- 3.1.4 Conferences – Attendance and presentations at professional conferences
- 3.2 Research – Conducting studies that advance the knowledge and understanding of dynamics in special education
- 3.3 Literature
  - 3.3.1 Publishing – Developing unique manuscripts for publications in professional journals
- 3.4 Formal Experiences
  - 3.4.1 Advisor Role – The influence of the academic advisor in a participant’s doctoral experience
  - 3.4.2 Teaching – Developing and instructing coursework in higher education

3.4.3 Field supervision – Guiding and mentoring teacher candidates in their field experience

3.4.4 Doctoral coursework – The sequence of courses required for completion of a doctorate of philosophy in special education

#### 4.0 Preparation for the Faculty Role

4.1 Job search – Applying and interviewing for faculty positions

4.1.1 ABD – All but dissertation; entering into a tenure-line contract without completion of the dissertation requirement for a PhD

4.1.1.1 Relation to Promotion & Tenure (cross coded with 5.3)

4.1.1.2 Time to completion of dissertation

4.1.2 Contract negotiations – Salary, starting date, course load, service requirements, and start up packages offered with initial employment contract

4.1.2.1 Release time – Participants' exchange of teaching courses per semester in order to write grants, conduct research, or submit manuscripts

4.2 Priorities for faculty role – When applying for positions in higher education, participants' sought specific balances of teaching, research, and service

4.2.1 Promotion and tenure – Requirements in terms of teaching evaluations, publications, service to the field, and funded grants required for advancement at participants' universities

- 4.2.1.1 Career trajectory – Participants’ current positioning for advancement as well as intentions to apply for positions at other universities
  - 4.2.2 Expectations and Responsibilities – The accountability of the faculty position; includes number of publications, number of classes taught, summer work, advising, committee work, and any other responsibilities falling under the domain of the faculty role
  - 4.2.3 Service – Participants’ committee work, university, local, state, and national contributions to the field
  - 4.2.4 Grants and funding – Participants’ experience with writing and submitting grants as well as expectations of the department for participants to bring in external funds
  - 4.2.5 Teacher education – Providing coursework and learning opportunities for teacher candidates to approximate practices in teaching
  - 4.2.6 Collaboration – Collegiality and partnership in the professional environment
- 5.0 Transition to a faculty role – Participants’ adjustments from doctoral student to faculty member
- 5.1 Supports – The systems in place to help early-career faculty adjust to a career in academia
  - 5.2 Balance – Managing time in a way that allows for success in all the various roles of a faculty position as well as a personal life outside of work

6.0 Critical incident – The singular most influential experience as identified by the participants

7.0 Personal factors – Participants’ families and geographical preferences that influenced decision making

7.1 Finances – The value of funding opportunities in doctoral work as well as in contract negotiations for participants

7.2 Timeline – Participants’ experiences and opportunities from beginning doctoral preparation and ending with securing a faculty position

7.3 Unique doctoral experiences – Opportunities and experiences of doctoral preparation participants had that were not available to all in the doctoral preparation program

7.3.1 Area of Emphasis – The specific and concentrated area of special education research focused on throughout doctoral preparation

7.3.2 Cohort – the group of students who came in to the program simultaneously

7.3.3 Personnel preparation grants – Funding provided by the Office of Special Education Programs with the purpose of preparing future faculty in special education

**Appendix G****Newton Dissertation Demographics**

Name	
Age at Entrance to Doc Program	
Age Now	
# of Years to Complete PhD	
Ethnicity	
Marital Status Doc Program	
Marital Status Currently	
Children? Y/N	
Ages	