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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the connection of dis/ability and dispositions in teacher education. Although dispositions have been part of contemporary teacher education discourse for over thirty years, their continued ambiguity is a source of debate and contestation (e.g., Diez, 2007; Katz & Rath, 1985; Osguthorpe, 2013; Warren, 2018). Existing literature examining dispositions and dis/ability focuses on the dispositions and attitudes teachers have and/or need to teach students with disabilities (e.g., Campbell et. al., 2003; Castello & Boyle, 2013; De Boer et. al., 2011; Killoran et. al., 2014; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Mueller & Hindin, 2011; Taylor & Ringlaben, 2012; Woodcock, 2013; Woolfson & Brady, 2009). This study focuses on how teacher educators employ dispositions in their interactions with disabled teacher candidates.

This study used a Comparative Case Study (CCS) framework for the research design that included eight semi-structured interviews with teacher education faculty, document analysis of dispositions artifacts, and autoethnography (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). It traces the layers of influence that dispositions assessments have in teacher education. Findings from this study suggest that dis/ability is not considered as an aspect of diversity in teacher education. Teacher educators have varied views on the definition, use, and purpose of dispositions in their programs; however, dispositions illuminate the qualities of the normative teacher, which then is employed to determine who should become a teacher. When teacher candidates' body-minds do not fit the norm as imagined by their instructors, dispositions are operationalized to cast doubt upon these teacher candidates' abilities.

DISPOSITIONS AND DIS/ABILITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION:
TEACHER EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES

by

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Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Foundations of Education

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Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

Throughout my teacher education program, I had moments when I doubted someone like me, someone who was becoming disabled, was supposed to teach. When I started college, I began using a scooter chair as a mobility aid for the first time. I still walked most of the time, and I used the scooter for long distances. By my senior year, I had undergone two major surgeries and used a wheelchair all the time. None of my professors or cooperating teachers during internships ever vocalized concerns or doubts about my abilities, but my peers did. The semester before student teaching, one of my English Education classmates asked, as if it was impossible, “How do you teach in a wheelchair?” At the time I responded with something like, “I don’t know; I just teach,” and saved my anger and resentment. I knew the question made me feel bad, but I did not have the language to express why. Now I understand the root of the question is ableism. Disabled people are not teachers.

Years later, I learned that Judy Heumann, who went on to become Assistant Secretary of Education during the second Clinton administration, was denied her teaching license because she failed a physical examination. She describes it as “a routine exam to determine whether I had any medical issues that made me a danger to children. Should be simple. It was standard for all prospective teachers, and I was in good health” (Heumann, 2020, p. 45). However, the doctor began asking questions far beyond the scope of the standard exam. When the doctor insisted to see how Heumann used the bathroom, she responded, “‘Well,’ I told the doctor, my voice cracking, ‘if other teachers have to show their students how to go to the bathroom, then of course I’ll do it, but otherwise you can be assured that I can take care of it myself’” (Heumann, 2020, p. 48). Heumann’s self-advocacy did not convince the doctor – “Because I couldn’t walk, I wasn’t considered qualified to teach second graders” (Heumann, 2020, p. 51). She was called a fire-

hazard, and the Board of Education doubted her ability to evacuate in an emergency. On May 26, 1970, she filed a lawsuit in Federal District Court; the twenty-two-year-old disability rights activist wanted to be New York City's first teacher who used a wheelchair (Malcom, 1970). Heumann's lawsuit was eventually settled out of court, and she became a teacher. But the rationale behind denying her teacher's license is familiar to me and what I experienced nearly forty years later. There remain unspoken assumptions about the physical characteristics of teachers. Disabled people are not teachers.

While Heumann's experiences as a student and teacher occurred before legislation like the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, her story illustrates the ableism entrenched in our educational institutions. Disabled people are not teachers. I want to foreground her story for that reason. Heumann's story asks us to consider what qualities we value in teachers – who do we believe should teach? This question moves beyond the knowledge and skills we require of teachers to their dispositions. Dispositions have become an all-encompassing term for the characteristics, qualities, and behaviors teacher educators believe are necessary for teaching. We need to learn more about how dispositions and disability interact in teacher education programs. We need to ask, can disabled people be teachers?

The Problem

Teacher education programs are responsible for curricula, assessments, and field experiences, among myriad additional tasks to prepare pre-service teachers for licensure and their careers. Underlying this knowledge and skills are discourses of dispositions. I developed a personal definition of dispositions after reviewing academic literature on dispositions to prepare this dissertation. I define dispositions as one's beliefs, values, and attitudes enacted in

interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and community members that are adaptable and strengthened through deliberate reflection. Dispositions are considered a murky topic in teacher education scholarship, but they are arguably one of the most important aspects of teacher education because they capture how educators enact beliefs and attitudes. Dispositions have been a scholarly endeavor for over thirty years (Katz & Raths, 1985) and part of professional teaching standards discourse since at least 1992, with the creation of the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, yet dispositions are a debated topic in teacher education scholarship. Despite continued questions and critiques of dispositions, teacher educator programs continue to cultivate and assess dispositions (Diez, 2007). It is in this tension, between the scholarly murkiness and the practitioner use, that I situate this inquiry. The potential that dispositions are taken-for-granted by teacher education programs requires further inquiry. How teacher educators are conceptualizing and assessing dispositions has implications for future teachers. The crux of this problem is how dispositions could be biased against disability and perpetuate ableism. Have dispositions become the new medical exam that screen out disabled teacher candidates?

Research Questions

To learn more about how dispositions are conceptualized, cultivated, and assessed by teacher education programs and their impact, I investigated the following research questions:

- (1) How do professional teaching dispositions reflect assumptions and ideologies of dis/ability?
- (2) How do teacher educators engage with disability through the cultivation and assessment of pre-service teachers' dispositions?
- (3) How are dispositions employed by teacher education faculty in their interactions with disabled teacher candidates?

Given these guiding questions, I used document analysis, qualitative interviews, and autoethnography as methods for data collection. I analyzed dispositions artifacts including rubrics from participants' programs. I conducted qualitative interviews with eight teacher education faculty about their experiences. Finally, I included autoethnography to capture and analyze my own experiences as a disabled teacher candidate and cooperating teacher. More detailed research protocols and methodology are discussed in Chapter Three.

Positionality

My positionality is an important aspect of this research inquiry because I was a disabled pre-service teacher and later a disabled teacher who hosted interns and student teachers. My experiences led me to believe that dis/ability is not being adequately examined in teacher education programs – be it through a lack of disabled pre-service teachers, little inclusion of dis/ability as a social justice topic for educators, or the assumptions made about what types of dis/ability work is included in teacher education curricula. I would not have come to this dissertation topic without my experiences.

A researcher's positionality is more than a list of identity markers. It should be an exploration of the researcher's intersecting oppressions and how those differ from participants' oppressions (Annamma, 2018). It is not enough to acknowledge that I am a white, middle-class, mono-lingual, heteronormative, woman whose identities, but for my disability, carry much privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). Teachers are predominantly white women and have remained so for decades (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Sleeter, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Many of my participants, as teacher education faculty, carry those same privileges, but I must acknowledge and attempt to account for our differences. I did not attempt to conceal my disability, personal experiences, or interest in this research topic during participant interviews. My experiences and

points of oppression differ from my participants, so this must be a part of my data collection and analysis – a primary reason I included autoethnography in this study.

A Note on Language

This dissertation focuses on the overlap of dispositions and dis/ability in teacher education. I am including some of the terms I use most often in Chapters Four, Five, and Six to be as clear as possible. I also use a variety of language when discussing disability in my work. This is intentional. Below are terms that I will use frequently along with why I choose these terms and not others.

Abled – I use the term abled to refer to people without disabilities instead of more common terms like non-disabled, able-bodied, or “normal.” I reject the term non-disabled because I think it is redundant. Additionally, able-bodied centers the body in a way that excludes the mind and mental and emotional disabilities. Able-bodied privileges physical or apparent disability and disregards the connection between the body and mind.

Body-mind – I use the term body-mind as described by Eli Clare to remind myself and others that our bodies and minds are connected and cannot be separated. So, while I am someone with an apparent disability (a disability of the body), to be disabled in this way affects my mind. Clare (2017) puts it this way: “I settled on body-mind in order to recognize both the inextricable relationships between our bodies and our minds and the ways in which the ideology of cure operates as if the two are distinct—the mind superior to the body, the mind defining personhood, the mind separating humans from nonhumans” (p. xvi).

*Dis/ability*¹ – At times I may use disability and ability, but often I will use dis/ability when referring to the label or concept of disability. The slash between dis and ability disrupts the

¹ Some disability activists object to the use of dis/ability.

word disability. Connor, Ferri, and Annamma (2016) explain that we can use dis/ability to “disrupt notions of the fixity and permanency of the concept of disability, seeking rather to analyze the entire context in which a person functions” (p. 1). I also use dis/ability to remind us that ability often goes unnamed and unanalyzed in research about disability. Or, as Broderick and Lalvani (2017) note:

We use the term ‘dis/ability’ purposefully as a visual disruption of the more common ‘disability’ and to invoke the mutually constitutive and symbiotic nature of the concepts of ‘ability’ and ‘disability’. Disability does not exist outside of the conceptual notion of ability, and therefore cannot exist outside of ableism itself. Thus, when we refer to unequal relations of dis/ability, we wish to highlight both the commonly exploited or marginalized designation of ‘disabled’ simultaneously with its necessary, though less visible, corollary of ‘abled’ expectations, assumptions, experiences and identities, the latter of which are generally (though dysconsciously) constituted as normative. (p. 904-5)

My use of dis/ability is intended to both disrupt deficit understandings of disability and remind us of normative assumptions about ability. I do not use dis/ability when referring to individuals or groups with disability identities. I use it in instances where I want to highlight the connectedness of ability and disability and to disrupt deficit understandings of disability.

Disabled – I use this term throughout my writing instead of people with disabilities or person with a disability because of the pride it denotes in disability as an identity. Identity first language is a personal choice and preference, but it is also an ideological and political one as well. When I employ it in my writing, I do so intentionally. I claim disability as an identity that I am proud to have. I have seen it explained in this way before: I am disabled, not a person with a

disability, much like people are gay, not people with gayness. However, there are times that I may use person first language, such as when I discuss students with disabilities in general.

Dispositions – When I refer to dispositions throughout, most often, I am referring to the concept of dispositions in teacher education rather than a specific disposition like the belief all students can learn. Even in academic literature, the term dispositions is used conceptually, meaning it refers to the qualities, characteristics, and beliefs required of teacher candidates without specifying those attributes. My participants used the term in two ways: 1) as the ambiguous thing teacher candidates either have or do not have, and 2) to refer to the rubric used in assessment. I developed a personal definition of dispositions after reviewing academic literature on dispositions to prepare this dissertation. I first encountered the idea of dispositions as an undergraduate in a teacher education program. I knew the list of attributes on the rubric, but I did not know what dispositions were beyond that. Now, I define dispositions as one's beliefs, values, and attitudes enacted in interactions with students, parents/guardians, colleagues, and community members that are adaptable and strengthened through deliberate reflection to address social justice and equity in education. However, throughout this dissertation I am using the term dispositions in the abstract unless otherwise referencing a specific disposition from a participant rubric.

Normative teacher – This is the imagined ideal teacher. It is the teacher for whom education programs have been designed. The normative teacher embodies the qualities and characteristics of white, middle-class, mono-lingual, heterosexual, abled womanhood. While the specific characteristics of the normative teacher can vary from context to context, I use this term when referring to the teacher candidate faculty expect to have in their classes. The normative teacher is influenced by the history of the teaching profession – which has always defined the

qualities and characteristics required for employment. Despite calls to increase teacher diversity, teachers are still majority white, middle-class, mono-lingual, heterosexual, abled women.

Traditional special education – I found that a pervasive rhetoric of disability in teacher education was that of deficit-based traditional special education. In traditional special education models, individual students are targeted for their deficits. Interventions are made with the aim to cure or rehabilitate the student’s deficits. Teacher education faculty reify “ideologies expressed in ‘regular’ education and the construction of the ‘normal’” student without ever having to clearly define the capabilities of the normal student except through dispositions (Baglieri et. al., 2011, p. 2142).

Theoretical Frameworks

At the base of my theoretical framing of this inquiry is disability studies. Disability studies is a broad field that emerged alongside the Disability Rights Movement, and it explores disability with several key assumptions about ability. Some include: challenging the view of disability as an individual deficit that can be fixed through medical intervention or rehabilitation; exploring models and theories that examine economic, political, cultural, and social factors that define disability; working to destigmatize disease, illness, and impairment; and interrogating the connections between medical practices of disability and stigma (Shakespeare, 2018). Disability studies has numerous philosophical foundations that relate to the various political, social, and economic aspects of disability and society (Shakespeare, 2018). Within Disability Studies, I draw upon critical and justice-oriented theories, like Critical Disability Theory (CDT), to better understand and analyze teacher education, teaching dispositions, and faculty understanding of dis/ability and disabled teacher candidates. I also include Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as both theory and method in this dissertation study. As theory, CDA insists that discourse cannot be neutral, and I employ this lens when analyzing how pre-service teachers’ dispositions are

assessed, particularly through document analysis and faculty positioning in interviews (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Each of these theories uses the word critical, either in name or description of the work. Critical can have varied meanings which may lead to confusion as to what is meant in these frameworks. Some scholars assume work is critical because they are trained to think critically of the status quo. Others use critical to mean critical of society from a standpoint, like Marxist or neo-Marxist. I understand critical to mean research and theory that exposes inequality, dominance, and injustice as a political act. These theories all recognize the ableism entrenched in our society and how ableism interacts with, impacts, and is impacted by other systems of domination, like white supremacy and patriarchy.

Critical Disability Theories

My work is informed by Critical Disability Theory, DisCrit, and Disability Justice theories. Critical Disability Theory (CDT) explores the tensions between the social construction of disability (the social model of disability) and the corporeal realities of impairment (Siebers, 2008). CDT does not situate disability as a question of medicine or health. It is a question of politics and power (Devlin & Pothier, 2006) which also allows for the complexities of living as a disabled person—how dis/ability is embodied and experienced—while also drawing on legal studies and transformative politics (Hosking, 2008). DisCrit combines Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory to examine intersectional inequities in education (Annamma et. al., 2013). DisCrit recognizes how racism and ableism operate “in neutralized and invisible ways to uphold notions of normalcy” (Annamma et. al., 2013, p. 13). Disability Justice, as described by members of the group Sins Invalid, must “work to understand it [ableism], combat it, and create

alternative practices rooted in justice” (Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 12). Together, these theories critique normalcy, value intersectionality, and move theory to practice.

Disability studies scholars work to expose the ways normalcy’s hegemony operates in our society. In this study, one aspect of normalcy is the taken-for-granted assumptions about who is and becomes a teacher. The construction of the norm in relation to disability is an important consideration. We cannot understand dis/ability without a “return to the concept of the norm” (Davis, 2006, p. 3). The first tenet of DisCrit asserts the power of ableism and racism in upholding the norm (Annamma et. al., 2013). Garland-Thomson (1997) expands the construction of the norm to an embodied normate. The normate “is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them” (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 8). Body-minds with the most power are those that appear to be or embody the normate.

CDT attends to this power in part by asking who and what gets valued in a society and who and what gets marginalized (Devlin & Pothier, 2006; Hosking 2008). It also moves beyond the individual and environments to include analysis of systemic oppressions of groups of people (Rioux & Valentine, 2006). To accomplish this CDT “is a form of embodied theory” that draws on the lived experiences of disabled people and their stories (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 9; Hosking, 2008). Part of the work of this embodied theory is to explore the tension between medical and social approaches to disability by questioning:

concepts of personal independence and interdependence, the social construction of ‘nondisability’ as well as disability, the concept of normalcy, fundamental values of individual dignity and respect in democratic societies, and issues at the intersection of

disability with class, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity and other socially constructed categories. (Hosking, 2008, p. 8)

Siebers (2008) argues that disability identities, narratives, and experiences represent locations and forms of embodiment that allow the dominant and oppressive ideologies to be exposed and therefore critiqued. My own experiences, the autoethnographic data in this study, as well as the experiences of faculty working with disabled teacher candidates, provide this type of narrative to critique and expose the dominant and oppressive ideologies present in teacher education.

The dominant ideologies of teacher education are embedded within the social and educational organization. Social and educational organization “according to able-bodied norms is just taken as natural, normal, inevitable, necessary, even progress. ... The resulting exclusion of those who do not fit able-bodied norms may not be noticeable or even intelligible” (Delvin & Pothier, 2006, p. 7). Critical disability theories attempt to expose this exclusion through the critique of normalcy. In teacher education, the ideology of normalcy is pervasive and is “assumed to be an omnipresent understanding without the need for iteration” (Baglieri et. al., 2011, p. 2130). Campbell (2009) refers to the construction of the normate and the divide between the abled and disabled as “two core elements of ableism’s regime” (p. 6). Social and educational organization according to these norms and ableism’s regime is a consequence of an ideology of ability.

An ideology of ability is the preference for abledness, and it defines the characteristics one must have to be considered human (Siebers, 2008). A compulsion for abledness is driven by the desire and preference for normalcy (McRuer, 2013; Scott, 2018). Being abled “means being capable of the normal physical exertions,” as well as the mental and emotional capacity, “required in a particular system of labor” (McRuer, 2013, p. 91). An ideology of ability revolves

around disability without naming it explicitly. Making the ideology of ability legible allows us to see how prominent it is in our thinking and practices (Siebers, 2008). The preference or compulsion for abledness is important to this study because of the ways teacher education programs perpetuate this in practice.

Critical disability theories include intersectionality as a tenet or principle in their frameworks. Hosking (2008) incorporates multidimensionality theory as part of CDT to “reflect the reality that disabled people are a diverse and variable population within any particular social structure (country, ethnic group, class, etc.) who are also members of all other social classifications” (p. 9). Similarly, DisCrit and Sins Invalid’s Disability Justice also include intersectionality as a tenet and principle. DisCrit’s second tenet states, “DisCrit values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race *or* dis/ability *or* class *or* gender *or* sexuality, and so on” (Annamma et. al., 2013, p. 11). Sins Invalid adds: “The mechanical workings of oppression and how its outputs shift depending upon the characteristics of any given institutional or interpersonal interaction” (Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 16). Sins Invalid’s focus on the institutional and interpersonal “outputs” of oppression are important. Disabled pre-service teachers encounter institutional oppression that is mediated through interpersonal relationships with faculty and staff.

Sins Invalid includes Wholeness as a Disability Justice principle to counter institutional and interpersonal oppression. Disability is often conceptualized by what body-minds cannot do or lack compared to the “norm.” Asserting that disabled body-minds, including all intersecting identities, “have inherent worth outside of capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience” (Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 17). The history of racism and ableism within institutions requires scholars to consider “legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and

race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens” (Annamma et. al., 2013, p. 11). Recognizing wholeness helps to resist the ways disability can discredit and devalue prospective teachers. Despite a compulsion for abledness, disabled people have inherent value. Critical disability theories help expose the ways educational systems devalue disabled body-minds.

Devlin and Pothier (2006) argue that there is no essential nature of disability, to essentialize would mean flattening the disability experience to a single identity. Instead, we must consider that at different socio-political points individual characteristics are valued more or less. For example, if we consider teaching, or teacher education, a socio-political point, then we can analyze how disabled pre-service teachers’ individual characteristics are valued or devalued because of their disabilities. There are social and scientific ways that disability is often conceptualized according to individual pathology and social pathology (Rioux & Valentine, 2006). Individual pathology includes biomedical and functional approaches to disability which place social responsibility “to eliminate or cure” disability when possible and “to ameliorate and provide comfort” to disabled individuals when cure is not possible (Rioux & Valentine, 2006, p. 49). Social pathology includes environmental and human rights approaches which focus on “eliminating systemic barriers” and “providing political and social entitlements” for disabled people (Rioux & Valentine, 2006, p. 49). Rioux and Valentine suggest that moving toward a human rights approach increases equity and opportunity for disabled people.

In a human rights approach, disability is a product of “social organization and the relationship of an individual to society” (Rioux & Valentine, 2006, p. 49). Equity is gained when economic, social, and political policy are reformulated, which requires recognition that disability is inherent to our humanity, and it becomes a social responsibility to provide entitlements to

disabled people (Rioux & Valentine, 2006). CDT moves toward a human rights approach because “it is theorization in the pursuit of empowerment and substantive, not just formal, equality” (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 8). A CDT approach identifies all variations in intellectual, physical, and mental ability as part of human condition (Rioux & Valentine, 2006). This expands the notion of humanity from its current form which still relies on antiquated eighteenth-century ideals of rational cognition, physical health, and other ability (Siebers, 2008) and recognizes wholeness (Sins Invalid, 2016). In teacher education preparation, this might mean analyzing the policies that intentionally exclude and screen out teacher candidates to look for potential biases. Disability discrimination in teacher education programs may not be explicit, and a reformulation of policy is one step to address potential discriminatory practices.

Policy founded on a human rights approach analyzes how society marginalizes people and how it can be adjusted to better respond to the needs of those who are systematically oppressed (Rioux & Valentine, 2006). However, rights-based approaches to equity often fail to include those most impacted because they still allow exclusions. DisCrit critiques how “gains for people labeled with dis/abilities have largely been made as the result of interest convergence of White, middle-class citizens” (Annamma et. al., 2013, p. 11). A Disability Justice framework recognizes how a “single-issue civil rights framework is not enough to comprehend the full extent of ableism and how it operates in society” (Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 14). Addressing inequitable policy is one step of many toward justice for disabled people. However, just addressing politics and power through policy changes will not transform teacher education practice. This is because rights-based strategies only address the “symptoms of inequity but not the root” (Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 11). Disability oppression is caused by ableism, and the

Disability Rights Movement did not address ableism. Exposing inequitable and ableist practices and policies within teacher education is one important goal.

A disability rights approach is just one strategy to work against ableism. Sins Invalid (2016) take issue with this approach because in general:

It is single issue identity based; its leadership has historically centered white experiences; its framework leaves out other forms of oppression and the ways in which privilege is leveraged at differing times and for various purposes; it centers people with mobility impairments, marginalizing other forms of impairment. (p. 11)

Disability Justice must “work to understand it [ableism], combat it, and create alternative practices rooted in justice” (Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 12). Moving from theory to practice is necessary. I believe this dissertation inquiry is a form of activism. DisCrit recognizes this importance by requiring “activism and support[ing] all forms of resistance (Annamma et. al., 2013, p. 11). Critical disability theories recognize the persistence of disabled individuals as a form of resistance. Sins Invalid’s final principle of disability justice is Collective Liberation. It asks us, “How do we move together as people with mixed abilities, multi- racial, multi-gendered, mixed class, across the orientation spectrum – where no body/mind is left behind?” (Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 19).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged as a theoretical and methodological field from linguistics. CDA is a heuristic, both theory and method, for researchers to explore the use of language in social contexts. James Gee, Norman Fairclough, and Gunther Kress are among the most cited and influential scholars using critical approaches to discourse in education (Collins, 2011). Although my theoretical framework draws on Fairclough’s and his collaborators’ body of work more than others, I refer to critical approaches to discourse analysis as CDA in an inclusive

sense. Fairclough, along with students and collaborators, developed Critical Discourse Analysis—using the capitalized form (Collins, 2011). For Fairclough, there are three basic tenets of discourse analysis: 1) discourse is social action, 2) social action constructs social reality, and 3) discourse is the use of language (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

At its core, CDA is a problem-oriented theory and method that insists critical approaches must pay attention to discourse—“language use, sign media, and the social worlds they both presuppose and bring into being”—all grounded in social theory (Collins, 2011, p. x). Across critical approaches to discourse, there are two main elements: “A ... political concern with the workings of ideology and power in society; and a specific interest in the way language contributes to, perpetuates and reveals these workings” (Breeze, 2011, p. 495). For my inquiry, the relationship between language and power in teacher education is what draws me to CDA. This study will be working within the existing teaching standards and definitions of dispositions which I cannot accept as neutral, so CDA will reveal which ideologies of power are operating in them.

CDA frameworks are critical because they hold that discourse cannot be neutral (Rogers, 2011). Critiques that CDA does not have an objective standpoint for research are correct, but they are also misguided. Systems of meaning are tied to culture, politics, economics, religion, and more and are linked to socially defined practices that imbue more or less value in society, so they are not neutral (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Questioning who gets to be a teacher, along with what qualities “good” teachers possess, is one way of illuminating how ability maintains more value and power in our society. Used in this way, CDA becomes a way to transform ableist practices in teacher education.

CDA is an exploration of power with a commitment to social justice which provides tools for addressing inequalities in education sites, practices, and systems (Rogers, 2011). Researchers who use CDA are “concerned with a critical theory of the social world, the relationship of discourse in the construction and representation of this social world, and a methodology that allows them to describe, interpret, and explain such relationships” (Rogers, 2011, p. 3). Some researchers critique CDA’s insistence that there is an obvious and unquestioned need for critical approaches. However, approaches to discourse analysis that only seek to interpret and explain relationships between discourse and the social world fail to be transformative. In Fairclough’s (1992) words, “critical implies showing connections and causes that are hidden” (p. 9), and by decoding “the discursive patterns of ideology” we better see the power struggles of the social world (Breeze, 2011, p. 497). Critical approaches assume that power and oppression exist – making these critical approaches necessary for change.

Like the theories I use from disability studies, theoretical foundations of CDA are also critical. Although various theories are employed by scholars, broadly, Critical Social Theories (CST) provides a theoretical foundation for critical approaches (Rogers, 2011). CST draws on philosophy, literature, legal studies, cultural studies, critical race scholarship, political economy studies, ethnic studies, and feminist studies; while each of these traditions locates domination in a different place, they share principles and assumptions about power and oppression (Rogers, 2011). A grounding in CST also means that CDA has a generative end “goal of creating a society free of oppression and domination”—that once we understand the structures, conditions, and manifestations of domination, researchers must work toward creating alternate realities (Rogers, 2011, p. 5). Another critique of CDA is the negative nature of the body of work produced with the approach (Breeze, 2011), but it would be impossible to create alternate realities for teacher

education without recognizing the ways in which it currently oppresses. For teacher education, I believe this starts with critiquing how we conceptualize ability and who gets to be a teacher. Therefore, my inquiry grounds CDA and critical disability theories.

If I want to understand how dis/ability is constructed through dispositions in teacher education, I cannot do that without trying to understand the larger discursive context of teacher education. CDA pays attention to how the interests of dominant groups are furthered through discourse (Breeze, 2011). In teacher education, the dominant group is white, mono-lingual, abled women – which includes professors of education, cooperating teachers who host student teachers, field supervisors during internships and student teaching, and pre-service teachers. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) also note that studying discourse is important because it often remains unrecognized by those who use it and benefit most from it. If we want to change the status quo of ability in teacher education, we must understand how discourse is working to maintain the power of the dominant group in teacher education.

Chapter Organization

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter One outlines how I arrived at my dissertation topic, how and why I understand it to be worth studying, and which theories guide my inquiry. Chapter Two is an overview of the scholarly literature on professional teaching dispositions and situates it within the current teacher education landscape. Chapter Three describes the research methodology for this project using a Comparative Case Study framework – including why autoethnography, interviews of teacher educators, and document analysis are included. Chapters Four, Five, and Six present and explore the findings from the study. Chapter Four outlines how participants define dispositions, how institutions employ dispositions conceptually, and how these understandings reflect ideologies of dis/ability. Chapter

Five explores how dispositions function within a larger traditional special education discourse. Chapter Six explains the ways that dispositions are used to discredit and remove disabled teacher candidates from programs by positioning disability as incompatible with normative teaching expectations. Chapter Seven summarizes my findings and their significance, addresses gaps in current understandings by proposing further inquiry, and discusses my limitations.

Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I examine research in teacher education related to two main aspects of this study – disabled teacher candidates and dispositions. This study is guided by the overarching research questions: (1) How do professional teaching dispositions reflect assumptions and ideologies of dis/ability? (2) How do teacher educators engage with disability through the cultivation and assessment of pre-service teachers' dispositions? (3) How are dispositions employed by teacher education faculty in their interactions with disabled teacher candidates? I root this inquiry in critical theories of disability and discourse and explore my questions and teacher education from that perspective.

Given my questions and theoretical framework, I review literature in teacher education that asks us to consider who should teach? Teacher preparation is a complex endeavor and dispositions play a small role in this work. In the sections that follow, I situate my study among existing work. First, I look at research in teacher education related to teacher candidates and disability. Second, I look at dispositions scholarship by providing a summary of definitions, a brief history of dispositions, and the ways that dispositions and dis/ability intersect (or fail to) in teacher education practice.

Teacher Education and Who Should Teach

I situate this dissertation research among broader questions in teacher education. Dispositions are a small part of the teacher education landscape, but they impact all facets of teacher education. Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, and Demers (2008) edited a comprehensive collection on teacher education research. Among many important questions, they ask us to consider: who teaches and who should teach? Although a decade old, these questions remain relevant today. They consider the changing demographics of the United States, the

diversity of teachers, and the emphasis on highly qualified educators. Rarely is dis/ability considered in these questions unless in the context of special education.

Teachers in the United States are predominantly female, white, and monolingual (Cochran-Smith et. al., 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2017) for the 2015-16 school year, 80.1% of public-school teachers identified as white. Only 6.7% as black, 8.8% as Hispanic, and 2.3% as Asian (U.S. Department of Education). This is despite student enrollment that is much more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse. Projections from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2018) indicate that between 2014 and 2026 student enrollment for Black, Hispanic, Asian, and students of two or more races will continue to increase while the enrollment of white students will decrease (Hussar & Bailey). Most of our current teachers attended traditional baccalaureate education programs at public colleges and universities; however, there are a growing number of graduate, alternative, and extended programs for certification (Cochran-Smith et. al., 2008). Calls to increase the diversity in teacher education programs are intended to address the racial differences between teachers and their students.

Aside from increasing the diversity of educators, much of the debate around who should be teaching has to do with teacher quality. Goodwin (2008) explains, "[b]ecause teachers occupy a central position in the educational enterprise and interact directly with developing citizens (i.e. children and youth) as they implement, deliver, direct, and often even create, the curriculum, they become, in essence, guardians of the country's collective socio-cultural legacy" (p. 399). Teacher quality is tied to the economic and social health of the nation. The question then of who should teach is political. It is tied to our understandings of diversity, democracy, and equality and

raises questions of teacher demographics, preparation for diverse school populations, and the distribution of quality teachers across communities (Goodwin, 2008).

One way that teacher quality has been understood is through the academic achievement of teachers. Teacher education programs evaluate and admit, reject, and release potential teachers through a variety of assessments. Institutions have raised minimum SAT/ACT scores and/or GPA required for admission to programs and have established or raised cut-off scores for licensure tests (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). There is no empirical evidence suggesting that minimum GPA, SAT/ACT score, or scores on teacher tests are connected to teacher performance and student learning (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). Goodwin and Oyler (2008) connect academic achievement and learning disabilities to complicate the idea that quality educators have high academic achievement. They write that there is “little research or documentation of how programs think about fitness and readiness to teach of teacher candidates with disabilities” (Goodwin & Oyler, 2008, p. 474). Furthermore, with no evidence to connect teacher quality and student learning to these requirements, they act only as gatekeepers to the profession.

In the next sections, I provide a more detailed overview of teacher education research and teacher candidates with disabilities. In an extensive literature review, Neca, Borges, and Pinto (2020) found that between 1990 and 2018 only fifty-three articles were published regarding teachers with disabilities, including those about pre-service teachers with disabilities. In their literature review, Neca, Borges, and Pinto (2020) identified four themes in the literature: teachers’ life trajectories, challenges, and educational practices; teacher training; perspectives about teachers with disabilities; and the under-representation of teachers with disabilities in teaching staff. Most of the articles in the literature review are qualitative studies and have small sample sizes (Neca et. al., 2020). Although there is limited research about pre-service teachers

with disabilities, existing literature raises the issues of institutional responsibility, experiences of disabled teacher candidates, and the connection between diversity and dis/ability.

Institutional Responsibility to Disabled Teacher Candidates

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, marked an important point in teacher education programs because faculty and personnel in charge of teacher preparation programs had to make changes to accommodate disabled pre-service teachers in the spirit of the new law. After this mandated shift, there were studies and guidelines published by and for teacher education faculty to follow. This literature focuses on the institutional responsibility that teacher education programs have toward disabled teacher candidates.

Accommodation of pre-service teachers with disabilities and compliance to disability laws are written about as a source of tension and challenge for teacher educators. Brulle (2006) points to legal precedents that impact teacher educators' responsibilities. Due to teacher education's clinical component, "it is the institution's right to require that certain, well-specified essential qualifications be met before admitting candidates to the program" (Brulle, 2006, p. 4). However, Brulle does not provide specific examples, leaving "essential qualifications" an ambiguous idea. In addition to academic requirements as pre-requisites, essential qualifications include the candidate's ability to create a safe learning environment (Knight & Wadsworth, 1996; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). Knight and Wadsworth (1996) suggest that student teachers with hearing, visual, and physical disabilities have paraprofessionals/interpreters in the classroom because they "act as the 'eyes,' 'ears,' 'legs,' and 'arms' for the preservice teacher" (para. 14). This has not become standard practice in teacher preparation programs. While teacher education programs, like any academic program, teacher education must be accessible to students with

disabilities, problems arise when students begin field or clinical experiences (Brulle, 2006; Pope et. al., 2001).

Brulle (2006) suggests that institutions clearly identify the “essential functions of teaching” so to avoid the “vexing issue” that disabled teacher candidates can become for faculty (pp. 6, 3). Brulle (2006) further explains the issue as a tension between protecting the right of the individual to reasonable accommodation and the right of the public to quality educators. In a report commissioned by the National Council of Teachers of English, faculty explore how to “meet the spirit of the law and maintain the necessary standards for quality educators” by interviewing disabled pre-service teachers across the country about their experiences (Pope et. al., 2001, p. 253). In addition to challenges with student teaching, disabled pre-service teachers reported difficulties finding jobs after graduating (Pope et. al., 2001).

To address some of these difficulties, teacher education scholars focus on suggestions for the student teaching aspects of programs. Knight and Wadsworth (1996) focus on the supervising professor and cooperating teacher. They suggest the supervising professor play a more active role by initiating conversation and meetings with the student teacher and cooperating teacher, advising the cooperating teacher on matters related to accommodation and modification, and choosing site placements that meet access needs for the student teacher (Knight & Wadsworth, 1996). Pope, Bowman, and Barr (2001) created a similar list of suggestions for English educators including: “English educators should help cooperating teachers and administrators develop awareness and understand their responsibility towards qualified teachers with disabilities” (p. 256). They believe teachers with disabilities have the “potential to provide positive models for colleagues and students and to inform and address issues of disability” (Pope et. al., 2001, p. 255). However, it is unclear if teacher education faculty know enough about disability and the

rights of disabled students and/or employees to fully support disabled teacher candidates or take on the task of educating cooperating teachers and administrators.

The focus on compliance with the law and the rights of the individual versus the institution continues to be relevant. Teacher education faculty need to address the ambiguity of “essential functions of teaching,” like the ambiguity of dispositions, to make certain they are not creating unnecessary barriers. There needs to be more research addressing how teacher educators cannot just accommodate disabled pre-service teachers, but also question the assumed essential functions of teachers. In the next section, I look more closely at research that addresses the experiences of disabled pre-service teachers.

Experiences of Disabled Pre-service Teachers

The experiences of disabled pre-service teachers in teacher preparation programs is an under-researched topic. There are limited studies about teachers with disabilities, and even fewer about pre-service teachers with disabilities. Neca, Borges, and Pinto (2020) found just twelve articles focused on teacher training out of fifty-three in total. Many of these focus on disabled students interested in special education or are international in context. The limited amount of existing material points to a gap in our research and understanding. It may also suggest that there are not large numbers of disabled students entering the teaching profession.

Leyser and Greenberger (2008) focus on teacher education programs and the attitudes that education professors have towards disabled teacher candidates. They investigated attitudes at seven teacher education colleges in Israel by surveying 188 faculty members (Leyser & Greenberger, 2008). Overall, they found that most faculty had positive attitudes towards disabled students seeking teaching certification, but they did find some distinctions based on gender, time teaching, and exposure to disability work (Leyser & Greenberger, 2008). Female identifying

faculty were more willing to make accommodations and modifications for disabled students; lower ranked faculty were also more willing to do this (Leyser & Greenberger, 2008). Some of the strongest indicators of positive attitudes among faculty was past exposure to disability either through knowing disabled people or training on disability topics (Leyser & Greenberger, 2008). Leyser and Greenberger (2008) recommend additional training for faculty that “should be tailored as much as possible to their needs and preferences” (p. 248). If most faculty have positive attitudes toward disabled teacher candidates, what barriers are keeping disabled students from becoming teachers?

In Scotland, Macleod and Cebula (2009) surveyed 115 students in education programs who self-identified as disabled. Part of their survey asked students who disclosed their disability during their field placement to rate how that disclosure was received. Responses ranged from “Supportive/helpful/understanding” and “Disability viewed as positive” to “Panic” and “Not entirely positive” (Macleod & Cebula, 2009, p. 464-5). The majority of cooperating teachers responded positively to disclosure, but for those who did not, students responded that the classroom teacher was “concerned about how this should affect her marking of me as she had received no guidance if such a situation were to occur” (Macleod & Cebula, 2009, p. 465). Other comments from students were that classroom teachers “found it difficult to understand my career choice” despite the students being very understanding, and one student responded that they, “Always feel I am reassuring people I am a fit and healthy human being” (Macleod & Cebula, 2009, p. 465). The negative responses to disclosure illustrate why communication between professors, classroom teachers, and students is important. Classroom teachers with negative disability attitudes may be poor matches for field placements. It also demonstrates potential

difficulties that disabled teacher candidates might have finding jobs, particularly if they must disclose their disability to potential employers.

Duquette (2000) explores the early life experiences of disabled second-career teachers in their decisions to become teachers in Canada. She theorizes that adults who attended schools before there were well-developed policies and resources for disabled students would have different reasons and experiences for wanting to become a teacher than younger teachers (Duquette, 2000). The research participants in Duquette's study all recalled feeling different and stigmatized because of their disabilities, and so they "worked to develop a supportive, friendly classroom atmosphere, and were respectful of the pupils at all times" (Duquette, 2000, p. 224). Duquette (2000) found that disabled student teachers drew on their memories of being disabled students to hold high expectations of students regardless of their abilities, create respectful and warm classrooms, practice empathy, and demonstrate different ways of doing and being as typical. A disabled teacher demonstrates a different way of being for students that can help create classroom cultures more open to difference.

However, it should not be assumed that student teachers who attended school after the passing of the ADA and IDEA did not have negative experiences. Ferri, Keefe, and Gregg (2001) interviewed current special education teachers who had received special education services as students with labels of learning disability. The findings highlighted three tensions experienced by the teachers. First, all the participants experienced a pull-out model of services where they had to leave their peers to receive support, and this contrasts with their beliefs now as teachers about inclusion (Ferri et. al., 2001). Second, as teachers they want to "counteract low expectations" of students with learning disabilities they remember from their own school days and still encounter (Ferri et. al., 2001, p. 24). And third, the participants' understandings of their

disabilities changed from being one of deficit to one of empowerment—by disclosing to their students that they also have learning disabilities, they turn their disability into a teaching tool (Ferri et. al., 2001). This study’s focus on tensions between student and teacher illustrate how important the role of teacher education coursework can potentially be in helping students reframe low expectations of students with disabilities.

Teacher disclosure is also taken up by Valle, Solis, Volpitta, and Connor (2004). They ask what role teacher education programs have in both teaching about learning disabilities and supporting pre-service teachers with learning disabilities. Their participants struggled to reconcile what they were learning about learning disability in their education courses with their own experiences (Valle et. al., 2004). One suggestion for teacher education programs is to include “emic perspectives ... in addition to more traditional sources of information about LD” (Valle et. al., 2004, p. 16). This encourages all pre-service teachers to evaluate their deficit understandings of disability. They conclude: “When teachers with LD remain undisclosed for fear of dismissal, misunderstanding, or ridicule, students with LD are deprived of important role models and, consequently, denied an opportunity to equate themselves with success” (Valle et. al., 2004, p. 16). Studies like this one indicate the importance of students having teachers whom with they identify as possible role models.

Disabled teachers and pre-service teachers remarked how confidence in their teaching abilities was important to their success (Burns & Bell, 2010, 2011; Duquette, 2000; Grenier et. al., 2014; Riddick, 2003; Vogel & Sharoni, 2011). This confidence despite the attitudes and other barriers that disabled teacher candidates must overcome (Valle et. al., 2004). The experiences of disabled teacher candidates also highlight the need for increased support and disability awareness among faculty, cooperating teachers, and institutional staff members (Burns & Bell, 2010;

Damiani & Harbour, 2015; Grenier et. al., 2014; Lee et. al., 2011; Parker & Draves, 2018; Riddick, 2003; Smith, 2000). When disabled teacher candidates successfully complete programs it is often credited to their individual resilience rather than a supportive program (Burns et. al., 2013; Duquette, 2000; Griffiths, 2012; Solis, 2006; Vogel & Sharoni, 2011).

It is clear from this review of existing research, disabled pre-service teachers are rarely viewed as assets to education programs, even when they view themselves as competent educators. In fact, disability is often constructed as being in opposition to our ideas of “qualified” and “competent.” These attitudes alone may be keeping disabled students from pursuing education. For those that do, teacher educators may not be prepared to meet the needs of these students as they prepare for field placements and student teaching. More importantly, disability is not constructed as an identity or aspect of diversity in this literature. With continued emphasis on the diversity of educators, it is important that disability is included.

Identity and Diversity

In the past decade there has been a push for teacher education programs to attend to the diversity of their students. Diversity in much of the literature means racial, ethnic, language, or gender and sexual orientation diversity, and only rarely is disability identified as diversity. Identity and diversity are entwined. When researchers write about increasing the diversity in teacher education programs, they want to increase the number of teacher candidates who identify as minorities—be it racial, ethnic, or linguistic, most commonly. Ball and Tyson (2011) write that “while changes in student demographics have been dramatic, changes in the demographics of the teaching force have been slow,” (p. 2) and it is imperative that teacher education programs take measures to diversify the teaching population. Current research suggests that disability is

only experienced by students that teachers may encounter, so it is not an identity a teacher may have, and it is not part of the push to diversify.

When disability is included in teacher education diversity scholarship, it is most often about preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities, exemplified by the King-Sears, Carran, Dammann, and Arter (2012) article entitled “Multi-Site Analyses of Special Education and General Education Student Teachers’ Skill Ratings for Working with Students with Disabilities.” This article also suggests a dichotomy between general and special education teachers. In 2012, there was a special issue of the *Journal of Teacher Education* that focused on diversity frameworks in teacher education (Pugach et. al., 2012). Notably, several of the articles featured discussed disability as integral to these frameworks but failed to conceive of disability as part of a diverse identity. None of the articles presented disabled teachers as part of these frameworks, only students with disabilities.

For example, in the text *Studying Diversity in Teacher Education*, there is one chapter that centers disability entitled “Preparing Teacher Education Candidates to Work with Students with Disabilities and Gifts and Talents” (Scott & Ford, 2011). The assumption is that teacher candidates will not be disabled themselves, and the focus of the chapter is the over-representation of students of color in Special Education and their subsequent under-representation in gifted and Advanced Placement courses. This is an issue that should be central to teacher education because the intersection of race and ability (plus other identities) has consequences for students of color. Current teacher education research frames the problem of low-expectations and over-representation as a race issue while disregarding other sites of oppression.

However, if we look intersectionally, we could see how the use of a disability label allows those in positions of power to act in biased ways (targeting students for their racial identities or ethnicities), but all under the guise of helping—via correcting/rehabilitating a disability (Annamma et. al. 2013; Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Connor et. al., 2016). Disabled teachers could have experience with this dynamic (Ferri et. al., 2001). They may understand how disability labeling pathologizes and individualizes disability, but how it also acts as a cover for reinforcing racism. Diversifying teacher candidates will only get us so far; we must also rethink how we understand disability.

Storey (2007) critiques how it is now common practice to hire staff from diverse backgrounds, but “the hiring of teachers with disabilities is at best an afterthought or only a solution to working with students with disabilities” (p. 57-8). While it is important that disabled teachers interact with disabled students, to only conceive of disabled teachers as special education teachers is limiting. Other scholars echo Storey’s idea that more effort should be taken to hire disabled teachers as a matter of diversity—recognizing the need for students to see themselves in their teachers (Anderson, 2006; Gabel, 2001; Pritchard, 2010). These scholars, all who also identify as disabled, recognize the transformative power of including teachers with disabilities. Gail Pritchard (2010), in her essay “Disabled People as Culturally Relevant People,” sums up this transformative power by saying:

The central argument here is a simple one: disabled people as teachers offer a unique knowledge standpoint; challenge the animosity of dominant cultural beliefs around disability as analogous with passivity; and provide a source of resistance, solace and resolution for students they teach. Disabled people as educators enact exemplary pedagogic justice within the current culturally valued landscape of socially inclusive practice. (p. 43)

The impact of disabled teachers on their students, colleagues, and communities cannot be overlooked. Because disabled teachers “live out a highly personal and embodied politics of

resistance while serving as a guide to students in the classroom” we must work toward policy that understands disability justice as part of social justice (Anderson, 2006, p. 375).

Teacher education has always been concerned with the question of who gets to teach. Teacher education faculty will have different experiences with and attitudes about disability. However, if disability is considered an important element of diversity, an identity that one can proudly claim, it becomes harder to not see its value. We must question what it means to diversify the teaching population. Does it mean hiring more men? More teachers of color? More teachers who speak multiple languages? Separating identity markers in this way disregards any potential for intersectional analysis. This disregards the importance of “locating LGBTQ lives and struggles for justice within an intersectional analysis, *always linking* LGBTQ to race, ability, gender, and more” (Quinn & Meiners, 2011). We cannot ignore this call for justice. Research on teacher preparation must include issues of dis/ability. In the next sections, I provide an overview of research on dispositions in teacher education. I begin with how dispositions are defined and a brief history of dispositions in the field of teacher education. Then, I detail how dispositions are currently understood and employed in teacher education programs. Finally, I summarize current scholarship on dispositions from Disability Studies in Education and Teacher Education fields.

Defining Dispositions

Professional dispositions are a murky category in teacher education. Depending on who you ask, you are likely to get varying explanations of what is meant by dispositions. Katz and Rath (1985) are among the first to use dispositions in its contemporary understanding within teacher education. They use the term “dispositions to designate actions and characterize their frequency, for example, asking higher level questions, rewarding approximations, guiding classroom discussions, encouraging students’ creativity, and planning worthwhile experiences in

the classroom” (Katz & Raths, 1985, p. 303). Diez (2007) and others define dispositions as the professional values and beliefs of teachers that are reflected in their actions within and beyond their classrooms (Johnston et. a., 2011; Ros-Voseles & Moss, 2007). Warren (2018) writes that dispositions are integral to culturally responsive pedagogy. For him, dispositions “represent (a) visible patterns in behavior demonstrated by teachers as they are interacting with individual students, (b) their priorities with (certain groups of) youth, and (c) the habits of mind that drive other aspects of their professional decision-making” (Warren, 2018, p. 172). Finally, Bialka (2015), terms dispositions as the “union of one’s beliefs and actions, which are inherently adaptable and bolstered through deliberate reflection” (p. 140). Each of these definitions, makes teacher action central to the understanding of dispositions. Beyond beliefs, values, or attitudes, dispositions are reflected in teachers’ *actions*.

How teacher education programs define dispositions is varied by how the program uses dispositions in practice. The use of dispositions is often tied to accreditation, and so assessment rubrics are the most common presentation of dispositions. However, these rubrics do not often include a rationale or definition of dispositions. The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC), a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) defines critical dispositions as “the habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie an educator’s performance” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 6). This is the definition that is used by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), a prominent accrediting body that influences hundreds of teacher education programs in the United States. In the next section, I will describe the history of dispositions in teacher education, including how they became integral to accreditation.

History of Dispositions

Katz and Rath (1985) are among the first to use dispositions in its contemporary understanding for teacher education. They focus on dispositions as the teacher's readiness to act on the skills they have acquired – where actions and their frequency are considered indicators of specific dispositions. Katz and Rath (1985) established a clear connection between dispositions and the goals of the teacher education program; they called upon teacher educators to take up dispositional development as part of their programs. At the core of this understanding of dispositions is that knowledge and skills a pre-service teacher possess are useless if they are not used for good in the classroom (Diez, 2007).

Mary Diez (2007) wrote a historical presentation of the incorporation of dispositions into teacher preparation programs. Shortly after Katz and Rath published their work on dispositions in 1985, Diez and teacher educators at Alverno College were working on making one of the first cases for why dispositions should be explicitly developed in teacher education programs. They defined dispositions as how pre-service teachers develop “in their sensitivity to learners as individuals, their use of moral reasoning, and their sense of responsibility for meeting learning needs” (Diez, 2007, p. 389). This idea of dispositions was part of a larger framework that also included disciplinary knowledge and psychosocial, social, and philosophical foundations of education that the faculty called collectively “advanced abilities.” This framework of “advanced abilities” was implemented in 1990 by teaching programs at Alverno College, and it was one of the guiding documents for the first InTASC Standards writing group in 1992.

The InTASC Standards writing group consisted of state education department leaders, teachers union representatives, and teacher educators tasked with creating national teaching standards that teacher education programs and state licensure bodies could adopt into practice. The group was challenged by Lovely Billups, representing the American Federation of Teachers,

with the question, “When are you going to stop recommending candidates for licensure who are mean to kids?” (Diez, 2007, p. 389). This question highlights a disconnect between knowledge or skills and dispositions. The InTASC writing group decided to separate knowledge, skills, and dispositions because it was clear teaching candidates could have the required skills and knowledge to teach without teaching education programs addressing the dispositions needed for equitable teaching. In the years following the release of the first InTASC Standards, more than thirty states incorporated them into state education codes and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), now CAEP, use the InTASC Standards as a point of reference (Diez, 2007). For CAEP accreditation, programs must show how “[c]andidates demonstrate an understanding of the 10 InTASC standards at the appropriate progression level(s) in the following categories: the learner and learning; content; instructional practice; and professional responsibility” (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2019). Teacher educators were now responsible for incorporating and assessing dispositions in their programs.

The mandate to attend to dispositions, which were also understood as moral and ethical development, of future teachers was controversial because it was tied to accreditation. The debate over dispositions was at first, “do dispositions have a place in the professional standards for teachers or programs to prepare teacher candidates?” (Borko et. al., 2007, p. 360). While this may remain a scholarly debate, it no longer is one of practice since every professional organization and accreditor has dispositions associated with their standards. In the next section, I will discuss some of the nuances in the continued critique over the purpose of dispositions.

Dispositions in Discussion

Teacher educators continue to critique the use, development, and assessment of dispositions in teacher education despite the inclusion of dispositions as taken for granted. As recently as 2017, the Editorial Advisory Board for *The Teacher Educator* came together in a feature article to answer the following questions:

1. What issues do you feel most important when considering desired dispositions for teacher educators; for preservice teachers; for curriculum design?
2. What dispositions are needed for university teacher-educators?
3. What dispositions are needed for preservice teachers? (Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 173)

These questions are indicative of the continued critique and on-going evaluation of dispositions at their most basic level in teacher education; simply, what dispositions do we want teachers to have?

Responses to these questions in the feature article were varied. The scholars agreed great progress has been made establishing the importance of dispositions to teaching, so the focus of respondents was the challenge of facilitating the dispositional development of students who they only teach for a limited time (Houser in Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017). Most agree that dispositions are the beliefs that all students can learn paired with actions that support those beliefs, but there were some differences in how to cultivate this in future teachers. These featured teacher educators touched on the importance of teaching context, growing diversity in the United States, pre-service teachers' frames of reference, and the challenge for teacher educators to assess dispositions equitably.

One objective of cultivating and assessing dispositions is to be sure that future teachers are responsive to the communities in which they teach (Zeichner in Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017).

Whether teacher educators frame this as culturally responsive pedagogy, or some variation, it requires teacher educators connect with diverse communities and establish partnerships and opportunities for their students (Jacobson in Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017). Helping pre-service teachers understand the larger context of teaching is fundamental to their future success. However, context extends beyond the physical location of schools to the communities and individual experiences of their students. Dispositions require that future teachers become cognizant of how their knowledge and skills are enacted in varied contexts.

Another responsibility of teacher educators is providing pre-service teachers opportunities “to observe and analyze dispositions in action and get coaching and guidance in acting on their commitments in different contexts” (Feiman-Nemser in Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 173). Pre-service teachers need to understand and analyze any assumptions they have that are contrary to desired teaching dispositions. Teacher educators can name and justify “the underlying beliefs and actions” of good teaching and connect them to a “range of specific actions” (Feiman-Nemser in Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 173). This is connected to dispositions such as pre-service teachers “deepening their understanding of how their own frames of reference may bias and impact their expectations for relationships with learners, being willing to take the initiative to grow and develop professionally, and being able to accurately self-assess” (Houser in Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 174). Pre-service teachers will have beliefs and dispositions they developed over their entire lives, and they may not be able to accurately judge their own strengths and weaknesses. Teacher educators need to give constructive feedback on dispositions in ways that impact pre-service teachers’ personal growth.

Only two of the featured teacher educators wrote specifically about intersectionality and social inequities. Jacobson wrote that teachers “must have an understanding regarding the

intersectionality of ethnicity, culture, language, exceptionality, gender, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, regional/geographic background, and religion” (Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 176). At Jacobson’s institution, most of the pre-service teachers are white women who are not from diverse communities. He highlights how these pre-service teachers arrive with the belief they must “fix” whatever they think is wrong in their first field experiences. Teacher educators must challenge this type of pathologization so that pre-service teachers become effective teachers that know and value their students.

Howard frames the importance of dispositions in how teachers assist in the academic, socioemotional, and cultural development of students. He writes that these three key issues are: “(a) the ever increasing presence of racial dynamics in schools, (b) the growing complexity and diversity of student culture and its connection to learning, and (c) the salience of untreated trauma for many students” (Howard in Marvin & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 175). Howard and Jacobson highlight the need for teachers to embrace the racial, ethnic, and cultural transformation in schools that are occurring because of rapidly changing demographics. They believe teacher educators must challenge deficit thinking and pathologizing behaviors in pre-service teachers so that schools become affirming and nurturing spaces for all students. Jacobson’s and Howard’s perspectives on dispositions raise questions about the ability and commitment of all teacher educators to do this type of critical work when assessment of dispositions becomes the end goal.

Approaches to Dispositions

Mary E. Diez, who helped write the dispositions at Alverno College and the *InTASC Standards*, has spent much of her career conceptualizing dispositions and contributing to the teacher education field’s understanding of dispositions in practice. Diez (2007, 2006) identifies

tensions existing in teacher education approaches to dispositions. Tensions exist in entity versus incremental approaches, viewing dispositions separately or holistically, using them to screen individuals or build community, and their assessment. These tensions are significant because they determine how and why dispositions are assessed in teacher education programs.

Entity and Incremental Approaches

An entity approach suggests that dispositions are stable traits that teacher educators can measure in candidates and use to screen them into or out of programs (e.g., Kyllonen et. al., 2005; Roberts, 2006; Wasicsko, 2007). Entity approaches must be scrutinized because of evidence that dispositions are used to prevent licensure of students who otherwise have successfully completed coursework for licensure (Edwards, 2007). This means that teacher educators' biases about disability and their beliefs about who should teach could potentially screen out disabled pre-service teachers in the name of negative dispositions. When dispositions are assessed early on in a student's progress through a program, as with an entity approach, "programs often redirect attention away from increasing candidates' awareness of and development of dispositions over time" (Stooksberry et. al, 2009, p. 731). Entity approaches to dispositions disregard potential self-reflection and growth in teacher candidates. Incremental approaches view dispositions as "developing over time, influenced by context, experience, and interaction" (Diez, 2007, p. 390). Teacher education programs that use an incremental approach often view dispositions as part of social-cognition, constructivist-developmental, or moral development approaches (e.g., Breese & Nawrocki-Chabin, 2007; Oja & Reiman, 2007; Sockett, 2006). These approaches are founded in the understanding that change and growth is possible, and they focus on candidate self-reflection and self-assessment as part of disposition development.

Separate and Holistic Understandings

The debate between separate and holistic understandings of dispositions hinges upon how they are assessed. Programs that separate the knowledge, performances, and dispositions required of teacher candidates, may do so for clarity (as seen in the *InTASC Standards*) (Diez, 2007). However, dispositions are what help teachers enact standards of learning, so separating knowledge, performances, and dispositions may be counter to teacher development. Many scholars prefer a holistic approach to dispositions, knowledge, and performances, but struggle to create holistic assessments that meet accreditation requirements. As a result, many teacher education programs assess dispositions separately, but as Diez (2007) points out, the goal is “to make candidates more conscious of their decision-making and to use assessment as a support for them to do so” (p. 393). Separating dispositions from knowledge and performances could be useful in helping pre-service teachers focus and reflect on their actions, but only if teacher educators are choosing to use them in this way and not punitively.

Screening Individuals or Building Community

Teacher education programs also differ in their use of dispositions to screen candidates or to build a learning community. When dispositions are used as a screening tool, dispositions are conceptualized as static, discreet behaviors that are often tied to ethics and codes of conduct. Diez (2007) and Milam (2006) suggest that there are other mechanisms to screen out individuals who do not act professionally or ethically, so dispositions should be used to help pre-service teachers grow as a community of learners that includes pre-service teachers, faculty, and school personnel. Some scholars believe teacher educators must move dispositions beyond screening lists of professional expectations or codes of ethics the moral domain of teaching (Osguthorpe, 2013; Schussler & Knarr, 2013). Dottin (2006; 2009) connects this conceptualization of

dispositions to a commitment to moral education where the goal of teacher education is to develop moral agency in pre-service teachers that both hones their abilities to make moral judgments and builds their sense of community as a force for good. This type of conceptualization moves beyond the mandates of accreditation or state requirements on teacher education programs, but it is underdeveloped in the literature. As Osguthorpe (2013) summarizes: “despite the inclusion of dispositions in accreditation standards and performance assessment systems, the field of teacher education does not have a consistent approach to developing and assessing dispositions” (p. 18).

Assessing Dispositions

Another area of critique lies in the rationale for assessing dispositions. Teacher education programs may assess dispositions, but how or for what purposes can vary drastically from program to program. Marchant (2017) summarized how he views this challenge: “Trying to objectify, quantify, assess, and evaluate dispositions requires defining behaviors. My effort to develop a rubric for teacher candidates’ dispositions identified fairly objective behaviors, but also seemed a bit superficial and incomplete” (in Marvin & Mulvihill, p. 176). At times this leads to dispositions being used as a screening tool, but there are other impacts the mandated assessment has on dispositions. Diez (2006) situates this discussion of dispositions within larger discussions of educational assessment. There remain two competing approaches to assessing dispositions. One attempts to standardize dispositions into discrete and quantifiable measures; the other approach rejects standardization in favor of analyzing individual performance in context (Diez, 2006). Diez (2006) identifies some problems with practices in assessing dispositions: “reductionism, superficiality in the design and implementation of assessments, and

a culture of compliance. These problems underly a larger issue – what is the purpose of assessing dispositions?

Reductionism occurs when the evaluation system goes for what is easiest to measure, often reducing the number of dispositional elements included to save money and time. Evaluation systems in this case may disregard elements that teacher educators deem critical because they “may be hard or expensive to measure” (Diez, 2006, p. 61). However, it is exactly the dispositions that may be hardest to measure – like a pre-service teacher’s deepening understanding of frames of reference and bias (disposition 9m in the *InTASC Standards*) – that are necessary for equitable teaching.

Diez (2006) characterizes the problem of superficiality as one driven by teacher educators. Teacher educators may be less prepared to use qualitative assessments than quantitative ones depending on their prior knowledge of assessment (Diez, 2006). It is not simply that standardized assessments cost less or take less time – teacher educators may not be confident in their abilities to use qualitative assessments. For example, when the *InTASC Standards* were written, the intention was that programs would move toward portfolio assessment. As more programs adopted this format, superficiality emerged in what was assessed on rubrics. Diez (2006) suggests that teacher educators spend more time “making distinctions between format (put two sample lesson plans in your portfolio) and substance (provide evidence of planning to meet learners where they are and move them to the next stage of growth)” (p. 63). This type of reductionism and superficiality are also indicative of the final problem – a culture of compliance. If education programs focus only on meeting accreditation mandates to assess dispositions, they miss the opportunity to see “how meaningful dispositions might be integrated into and developed

through a program” (Diez, 2006, p. 63). These problems with the assessment of dispositions help to contextualize my research.

These questions, critiques, and discussions of dispositions illustrate how varied dispositions are in practice. Teacher education programs need to clearly articulate what dispositions they believe teachers need and integrate learning experiences into the curriculum that develop those dispositions. Discussions of diversity and dispositions are an important area of research. There remains a gap between dispositions and dis/ability in teacher education scholarship and practice.

Dispositions in Disability Studies in Education Scholarship

Over sixty percent of students with disabilities spend at least 80% of their instructional time in general education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), so teacher educators must do more to prepare teachers to work with disabled students. There is a variety of literature that explores teacher’s attitudes toward disability and students with disabilities, inclusion, and special education (e.g., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Castello & Boyle, 2013; Cook et. al., 2000; De Boer et. al., 2011; Killoran et. al., 2014; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Schumm et. al., 1994; Taylor & Ringlaben, 2012; Woodcock, 2013). This literature assumes that teachers will have little disability knowledge and will be abled themselves. The focus on attitudes of individual teachers also does not connect the way these attitudes are indicative of institutionalized ableism. Moreover, this literature does not connect attitudes to dispositions, and there is much less literature on the connection of dis/ability and dispositions (e.g., Campbell et. al., 2003; Cook, 2002; McNaughton et. al., 2001; Mueller & Hindin, 2011; Woolfson & Brady, 2009). While these authors connect attitudes to enacted dispositions, these studies still make an intervention at the individual level without connecting dispositions to institutional structures.

Broderick and Lalvani (2017) critique this focus on attitudes and call it “conceptually inadequate to meaningfully explore or to explain (let alone disrupt) the persistence of systematically inequitable relations of power between disabled and nondisabled people in education” (p. 894). They propose building on King’s (1991) “Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers.” King (1991) defines dysconscious racism as the “limited and distorted understandings” that future teachers hold about social oppressions grounded in race and racialized identities (p. 134). Dysconsciousness is created by and supports normative ideologies and is characterized by “an uncritical habit of mind” that is learned through typical educational experiences (King, 1991, p. 135). King’s publication exposed how teacher education practices perpetuated racism and was a call to intervene. While the work addressing dysconscious racism is not complete, there has yet to be a significant shift in teacher education to similarly confront ableist practices or consider how racism and ableism are connected.

Dysconscious ableism “is a form of ableism that tacitly accepts and reproduces what Campbell (2009) refers to as the two core elements of ableism’s regime: ‘the notion of the normative (and normate individual) and the enforcement of a constitutional divide’ between abled and disabled identities” (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017, p. 895). In teacher education, dysconscious ableism makes it challenging for pre-service teachers to understand ableist oppression and enact socially just, equitable, and liberatory practices. Furthermore, Broderick and Lalvani (2017) believe discussions around dysconscious ableism lag behind similar discussions of dysconsciousness around race, gender, or class which makes it difficult for pre-service teachers to recognize this type of ableist thinking in “themselves or in institutional structures beyond individual personal prejudice or bias” (p. 902). Where teacher preparation courses may include exploration of systemic racism or sexism, disability is most often framed as

an individual issue as determined through special education. One explanation for this is “the tenacity of deficit special needs ideology that underpins many aspiring teachers’ well intentioned language and actions” (Rutherford, 2016, p. 128). Miseducation about dis/ability includes this helping narrative. Directly addressing dysconscious ableism in teacher education courses would mean pre-service teachers engage in critically self-reflective work and understand how institutionalized ableism shapes their own experiences and the experiences of students (e.g., Blevins & Talbert, 2016; Connor & Gabel, 2010; Connor & Valle, 2017; Lalvani & Broderick, 2015; Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019; Ware, 2018).

Broderick and Lalvani (2017) believe teacher education faculty themselves also need to be doing this type of self-reflective work. They conclude with this call to action:

Thus, we would argue that teacher preparation in general can often be faulted not only for failing to critically address dysconscious ableism through active anti-ableist pedagogy (as an integral part of anti-bias social justice pedagogies), but also that much of what teachers learn about disability in their teacher preparation involves ‘normative way[s] of thinking and naming experience’ that actively contributes to and reproduces their ongoing dysconsciousness around ableist inequities. ... Disrupting dysconscious ableism, along with other forms of dysconsciousness, is a necessary component of teacher preparation for all teachers. (Broderick and Lalvani, 2017, p. 903-4)

Because critical work around dis/ability in teacher education is lagging behind the work addressing other forms of dysconsciousness, teacher educators must commit to including dis/ability in this effort. If they do not, the process of miseducation and dysconsciousness will affect another generation of teachers (Rutherford, 2016).

However, teacher educators may not be prepared to do this work if we do not “recognize and engage with the possibility of dysconsciousness among ourselves regarding not only ableism, but all marginalized ‘isms’ (Rutherford, 2016, p. 132). Teacher educators need to understand their own ability privilege and interrogate the ways they situate themselves in the effort to dismantle ableist oppression. The dominant discourse in teacher education acknowledges dis/ability only within the realm of special education, failing to “conceptualize disability-related issues in education as having location, coherence, or relevance” in general education (Lalvani & Broderick, 2015, p. 172). Examining teachers’ attitudes towards dis/ability and disabled students is insufficient because “understanding teachers’ dispositions, rather than just attitudes, allows for a deeper and more nuanced discussion on inclusion” (Bialka, 2017, p. 618). This type of work is challenging, and resistance from teacher educators indicates the “problematic ‘niceness’ found in the field of teacher education” that is characterized by not wanting to make students (primarily those with privileged identities) feel uncomfortable (Bialka, 2015, p. 140). Teacher educators must create opportunities for themselves and students to consider their ability privilege because if they do not, they are all likely to maintain deficit-oriented beliefs of disability.

Scholarship that addresses dispositions and dis/ability in general education is not common. Bialka (2015) explicitly connects dispositions and ability saying, “Because teachers’ dispositions inform their understanding of student ability (Castro, 2010; Garmon, 2004; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Walker-Dalhousé & Dalhousé, 2006), this becomes especially problematic when considering the dispositions of White teachers who work with minority students” (p. 141). Challenging deficit-oriented beliefs in teacher education is essential dispositional work, but this work must be intersectional to capture the complexities and nuances of student experience. For

example, Bialka (2015) proposes Critical Ability Theory (CAT), which combines Critical Race Theory with disability theory. This framework moves analysis in a more intersectional direction, but it is not as intentionally intersectional as similar frameworks like DisCrit. Intersectional analysis recognizes that oppressions are mutually constituted. Focusing analysis on single identities, such as race or ability or gender, fails to illuminate how multi-dimensional identities make some populations more subject to deficit-oriented beliefs. However, Bialka does define dispositions in a way that is more suited to disrupting dysconscious ableism.

The ambiguity of the definition of dispositions affords schools of education a significant amount of latitude when deciding how to meet accreditation requirements (Sockett, 2009). Bialka (2015) defines dispositions as the “union of one’s belief and actions,” or the praxis between them, that is “inherently adaptable and bolstered through deliberate reflection” (p. 140). She believes that through deliberate reflection teacher educators can begin to help teacher candidates unlearn ableism. As teacher educators attend to dispositions, they need to create classroom discourse that examines issues of dis/ability in terms of its relation to power and privilege. It is here that teacher educators can look to the decades of scholarship of multicultural education for models of how to accomplish this task (Lalvani & Broderick, 2015). Self-reflection prompted through classroom discourse might work against the miseducation of our teachers, and it is supported through the cultivation of teachers’ moral sensibilities and commitment to social justice. The next section outlines how dispositions are conceptualized in teacher education scholarship as part of the moral work of teaching and social justice education.

Dispositions in Current Teacher Education Scholarship

There are two connected trends in research about cultivating dispositions in teacher candidates – the moral work of teaching and social justice education. Deepening understanding

of frames of reference and bias is a core disposition of these trends that is connected to the belief that all children can learn. These sections review literature conceptualizing dispositions as moral work for social justice in teaching. However, there remains a gap in the scholarship connecting dispositions and dis/ability as part of social justice work.

The Moral Work of Teaching

Scholars often trace calls for dispositions to reflect moral work of teaching to Deweyan philosophy. Dewey's definition of disposition remains influential today. He wrote: "A disposition means a tendency to act, a potential energy needing opportunity to become kinetic and overt. Apart from such a tendency, a 'virtuous' disposition is either hypocrisy or self-deceit" (Dewey, 1922, p. 44). Dewey, and scholars today, emphasize action when it comes to dispositions – they are not simply beliefs, but overt actions. Dewey (1922) also connects our dispositions to reflection, saying that "[o]ne of the chief problems of our dealings with others is to induce them to reflect upon affairs they usually perform from unreflective habit" (p. 279). For Dewey, the moral work was understanding that knowledge and one's actions based on that knowledge are part of the social world and impact others. This type of reflection to deepen understanding is the moral work of education.

Often teacher educators are wary of the word moral because it evokes "images of a type of morality associated with strict prescriptions for individual thought and behavior, trepidation about wandering into religious territory, or fear of lawsuits" (Burant et. al., 2007, p. 405). For example, in 2006, after limited controversy, NCATE removed the phrase "social justice" from its description of dispositions to remain ideologically neutral after the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education raised concerns that the progressive terminology would cause candidates to abandon their political or moral beliefs (Schussler & Knarr, 2013). However, teacher education

programs' attempts to be "ideologically neutral, has likely resulted in many programs relegating dispositions to nothing more than behaviors" like arrives on time or dresses professionally (Schussler & Knarr, 2013, p. 76). Teacher education is not neutral, who we believe teachers should be is always imbued with value. While teacher education programs can avoid any potential controversy by stripping dispositions of any moral meaning, in doing so, they risk reducing the assessment of dispositions to a prescribed list of technical actions (Osguthorpe, 2013). When this happens, teacher educators may not teach or develop dispositions, and pre-service teachers can no longer make connections between their knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Reclaiming the moral in education would include developing a moral sensibility in teacher educators that is "an orientation toward the student and the profession that serves as the foundation of teacher thought and action" (Burant et al., 2007, p. 405). Schussler and Knarr (2013) define "moral sensibilities as encompassing two broad areas: (1) the inclination to think through assumptions and ramifications behind one's values, considering desirable ends and processes to achieve those ends; and (2) the responsibility one has to care for others as the teacher" (p. 75). The goal of this type of dispositional development is not religious or political indoctrination, as critics say, because programs should define dispositions in a way that connects the outcomes to philosophical beliefs of education (Osguthorpe, 2013). If programs have given this thoughtful attention to dispositions, then the goal is to "facilitate beginning teachers' awareness that they possess beliefs, values, ways of thinking, culture, and prior experiences that influence how they teach" (Stooksberry et. al., 2009, p. 720). Through conceptualizing dispositions as part of the moral domain of teaching, teacher educators are more likely to incorporate the type of self-reflection on identity and bias needed to address ableism.

Conceptualizing dispositions as part of the moral work of teaching means that teacher educators “have conversations with teacher candidates about moral dispositions and [...] comment on practices that might not be informed by those ideals” (Osguthorpe, 2013, p. 24). Teacher educators and pre-service teachers need to articulate the “purposes one wants to achieve and [reflect] on whether the values inherent in those purposes are being enacted through one’s pedagogy” (Schussler & Knarr, 2013, p. 75). When there is a mismatch between the intent and the outcome, teacher educators must raise awareness. One way to accomplish this is by exploring teachers’ self-identity to understand the frames of reference used when receiving information and experiences “in order to understand how teacher candidates are inclined to think through and act when confronted with different teaching situations” (Stooksberry et. al., 2009, p. 723). Dispositional development is concerned with how future teachers will enact what they have learned in their teacher education programs.

Dispositions are always connected to action. Developing dispositions as part of the moral domain helps future teachers learn how to use their knowledge and skills in ways that align with their moral sensibilities. Because all teachers have dispositions, it is the job of teacher educators to make pre-service teachers aware of their dispositions and how their dispositions impact their teaching through dispositional development (Schussler & Knarr, 2013). One way is through pre-service teachers’ self-assessment of dispositions (Osguthorpe, 2013). But pre-service teachers also need explicit conversation and critique of moments when their intention does not connect to their perception or practice (Schussler & Knarr, 2013). If teacher educators embraced dispositions as the moral work of teaching, they could help pre-service teachers deepen their understanding of dis/ability and how that understanding is connected to their actions as teachers.

Dispositions for Social Justice Education

I see a commitment to social justice as a type of moral sensibility in education. Villegas (2007) defends assessing dispositions related to social justice saying that teachers:

have a moral and ethical responsibility to teach all their pupils fairly and equitably. They also must be vigilant about the fairness and equity of the educational enterprise as a whole. This moral and ethical dimension of teaching makes issues of social justice legitimate terrain for exploration in the preparation of prospective teachers. (p. 371)

The irreconcilable differences between those who believe in social justice education and developing dispositions in teachers and those who find no place for social justice or dispositions in teacher education are the subtext of the dispositions debate (Villegas, 2007). When framed in this manner, the debate becomes about whether teachers should uphold the status quo in schools.

In teacher education, the goal of social justice education is to prepare teachers who will teach all students well, especially those students who have historically been left behind or have not been well served by schools (Villegas, 2007). An underlying goal of social justice education is preparing all students to actively and fully participate in democracy. Teaching that aligns with social justice goes by many names, some of which are culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant teaching, teaching against the grain, teaching to change the world, teaching for diversity, and multicultural education (e.g., Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). This type of teaching traditionally focuses on students from low-income and racial/ethnic minority backgrounds and only includes a secondary analysis of dis/ability. However, if teachers are resolved to teach their students equitably (Villegas, 2007), they must expand these models to include an analysis of dis/ability.

Chubbuck (2010) proposes a framework for social justice teacher education that connects dispositions, reflection, and teacher behaviors to the goal social justice “using both an individual

and structural analytical lens” (p. 198). Chubbuck (2010) gives a comprehensive definition of social justice in this model by first asking readers to consider its opposite – injustice – a society where access to goods, opportunities, or rights are denied to some with no civil or legal recourse. She continues by breaking social justice teaching into three categories based on how controversial they are in teacher education. First, it “comprises those curricula, pedagogies, and teachers’ expectations and interactional styles that will improve the learning opportunities (and, by implication, life opportunities) of each individual student, including those who belong to groups typically underserved in the current educational context (Chubbuck, 2010, p. 198). Second, and at times controversial, socially just teaching aims to transform structures or policies that are barriers to student opportunity. Finally, the most controversial enactment is one where teachers’ look beyond the school context to transform unjust structures on a societal level (Chubbuck, 2010). Chubbuck’s framework supports transformative social justice teaching because educators attend to individual and structural barriers to access and opportunity.

Pre-service teachers’ beliefs can be barriers to social justice education because “prospective teachers generally dismiss teaching that challenges their beliefs on grounds that it is too theoretical, too impractical, or simply wrong” (Villegas, 2007, p. 374). Teacher educators must start by “challenging deficit perspectives and promoting affirming views of diverse students” (Villegas, 2007, p. 375) before they develop pre-service teachers’ dispositions for equitable teaching. One method to challenge pre-service teachers “would require that [they] observe and reflect on how they interact with underresourced students to break the cycle of judgment and lowered expectations” (Butler et. al., 2018, p. 7). Teacher educators also must engage pre-service teachers in “explicit discourse centered on the teaching orientations or dispositions that marginalize certain identities and simultaneously privilege other social

identities” according to social identity hierarchies (e.g., class, dis/ability, ethnicity, gender, language, race, religion, and sexual orientation) (Warren, 2018, p. 178)

Although I can make clear connections between the call to challenge deficit-oriented beliefs of student dis/ability, race, and other identities, most of the literature discussing social justice education and dispositions is single-identity focused (most often race or ethnicity). However, there are some recent publications that make more explicit intersectional forms of social justice. Warren (2018) warns that if teacher educators do not make intersectionality part of dispositional development “teachers are left to reproduce and center norms of whiteness and other hegemonic cultural ways of being reinforced during their teacher preparation” (p. 172). Pre-service teachers need to understand how hegemonic ways of being are interconnected and co-create each other. Teacher education faculty who value social justice education must also work to include dis/ability justice in that orientation.

Conclusion

This literature review considers how although dispositions have been part of contemporary teacher education for several decades, there is still little consensus among teacher education faculty as how to best use dispositions in practice. Furthermore, there is little research that considers the overlap of dis/ability and dispositions for teacher candidates. Dispositions have the potential to transform practice when they are conceptualized as part of social justice teaching, but the absence of dis/ability indicates that teacher education faculty have yet to consider the full identities of their students. This study considers how dispositions are employed by teacher education faculty in interactions with disabled teacher candidates – connecting a gap in the existing literature.

Chapter Three: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I provide an explanation and rationale for the research design and methods I used in this dissertation. As I discussed in Chapter Two, teacher education scholarship continues to debate the definition, purpose, and validity of dispositions in teacher education programs. Teacher education scholars focus on dispositions as they are connected to the moral domain of teaching and teaching for social justice. There are studies that connect teaching dispositions to disability, but this research focuses on the dispositions required to teach students with disabilities. I also discussed literature about pre-service teachers with disabilities. Some of this literature focuses on teacher education program compliance with disability law, while some examines the experiences of disabled teacher candidates in teacher education programs. This dissertation study is situated in the gap between these two bodies of literature – exploring how disability and dispositions interact in teacher education programs. My inquiry was guided by the following questions: (1) How do professional teaching dispositions reflect assumptions and ideologies of dis/ability? (2) How do teacher educators engage with disability through the cultivation and assessment of pre-service teachers' dispositions? (3) How are dispositions employed by teacher education faculty in their interactions with disabled teacher candidates?

In the discussion that follows, I introduce Comparative Case Study as the research design for this inquiry. Comparative Case Study (CCS), as described by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017), is “well-suited for social research about practice and policy,” and it reimagines traditional case study to compare experiences across and within distinct locations (p. 1). I explain how my data collection methods – qualitative interviews, document analysis of dispositions rubrics, and autoethnography – worked in this framework as I investigated my research questions. I also outline how I analyzed data collected and generated for this inquiry.

Comparative Case Study Design

Comparative Case Study (CCS) design calls for a shift from traditional case study method to focus research on “tracing of relevant factors, actors, and features” of a phenomenon (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 39). Therefore, while it is a type of case study, it deviates from traditional characteristics of case studies. Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) conceptualize CCS along three axes – the horizontal, vertical, and transversal – where the horizontal axis investigates a phenomenon across distinct locations, the vertical axis requires simultaneous attention to and across scales, and the transversal axis historically situates the phenomenon, although studies need not give equal attention to each axis or include all three. For this study, the phenomenon is faculty’s assessment of pre-service teachers’ dispositions.

A CCS approach traces a phenomenon across distinct locations so that comparisons can be made. This approach differs from traditional case study design and phenomenological research in important ways despite using the language of case and phenomenon. Traditional types of case study often define case by the setting, place, or institution of the study. This conflates case with location – a critique that CCS makes of traditional methods. Instead, CCS suggests what Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) call an “unbounding” of the case, focusing instead on the phenomenon across locations. Phenomenology is a research method to describe how people experience a specific phenomenon. This approach attempts to set aside pre-conceived notions of social or cultural norms, traditions, or ideas of the experience being studied. A CCS approach includes this information (social or cultural norms, traditions, etc.) as an important element of the phenomenon that cannot be ignored.

The CCS framework does not mandate specific data collection methods or analysis, although qualitative methods are often preferred because they allow for rich comparisons to be

made. Researchers can choose the methods and approaches best suited to the analysis of their topic. Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) highlight how approaches like actor network theory and discourse analysis are well-suited for CCS frameworks because these approaches incorporate ample opportunities for comparisons and allow researchers to ask how and why questions. They also warn against approaches that are interpretivist in nature, like some case study approaches, because “interpretivist scholars focus on local meaning and symbolic systems while downplaying the historical, material, and structural forces that allow some groups to have greater influence over dominant meanings and representations” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 39). While researchers may use varied combinations of methods, the end goal is to generate better understanding of the phenomenon through comparison. In the following sections I will explain my research design for this study based on a CCS framework.

CCS and Dispositions in Teacher Education

The “case” or phenomenon being investigated in this study is the way professional dispositions are employed by faculty in teacher education programs. This includes the conceptualization and evaluation of dispositions and faculty’s experiences with dispositions and dis/ability. CCS asks researchers to focus on the different actors, factors, and features in the case by defining the different axes at play in the phenomenon. Additionally, CCS conceptualizes culture, context, and comparison in unique and important ways that highlights “the cultural production of ‘common sense’ notions of social order” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 9). We can think of teacher education programs and preparation as having a culture because they are communities of practice. The assessment of dispositions includes varied “common sense” notions around who we imagine teachers should be which makes this phenomenon well-suited

for analysis through CCS framework. In the next sections, I will explain how culture, context, and comparison are conceptualized for this study.

Culture

Culture is not understood as bounded or static, but rather, as culture as “examining *processes* of sense-making as they develop over time, in distinct settings, in relation to systems of power and inequality, and in increasingly interconnected conversation with actors who do not sit physically within the circle drawn around the traditional case” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 10). In this study, participants are not determined by physical location or subject area. Opening the study to any teacher education faculty member who assesses dispositions allowed me to gain a broader understanding of the culture of dispositions. This way of understanding culture includes “language, discourse, texts, and institutions as important social and policy actors” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 11). Therefore, there is a culture of teacher education in the United States that connects, and is larger than, each institutional setting.

The culture of teacher education calls for the development and assessment of dispositions in pre-service teachers, but that process will be different for each participant because of the cultural and social norms at work. Despite teacher education faculty being members of communities of practice, not everyone in the group shares the same beliefs and norms (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). A CCS understanding of culture recognizes that “contests over meaning and practice are influenced by power relations, including direct imposition” of common-sense notions (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 9). Points of contestation and “moments of strategic essentialism” should be analyzed (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 9). Moments when dispositions are contested and moments when they are essentialized are important analysis points in this study.

Context

Context is not about the setting but asks that researchers identify the historical and contemporary network of actors, institutions, and policies that together produce” the phenomenon being studied (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 14). For my research, the context becomes faculty of teacher education, teacher education programs at institutions in the United States, and policies that mandate the assessment of dispositions. A CCS framework acknowledges that “any specific location is influenced by economic, political, and social processes well beyond its physical and temporal boundaries” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 11). This means that sites can never be autonomous; they are influenced by actors, institutions, and policies beyond the current moment and location and cannot be bounded like in traditional case study. Because assessing dispositions is a cultural expectation of teacher education programs, this study’s context is not bound by physical location. Additionally, I have not created boundaries by pre-determining in what types of programs my participants teach.

Comparison

In CCS, comparison is processual “in that it considers the cultural production of places and events ... rejecting staid notions of culture or context” and “constantly compares and contrasts phenomena and processes in one locale with what has happened in other places and historical moments” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 19). This type of comparison works well for this inquiry because it helps explore the differences and similarities in the ways that dispositions are employed by teacher education faculty. CCS highlights how “similar processes lead to different outcomes” and how “different influences lead to similar outcomes in others” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 14). This type of comparison also illuminates how the assumptions made in dispositions are not neutral because in addition to “comparison that considers similarities,

differences, and possible linkages across sites,” CCS also attends to “hierarchies of power/levels” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 16). This attention to power is an important distinction of CCS because it moves beyond the local sites of traditional case study to trace influence.

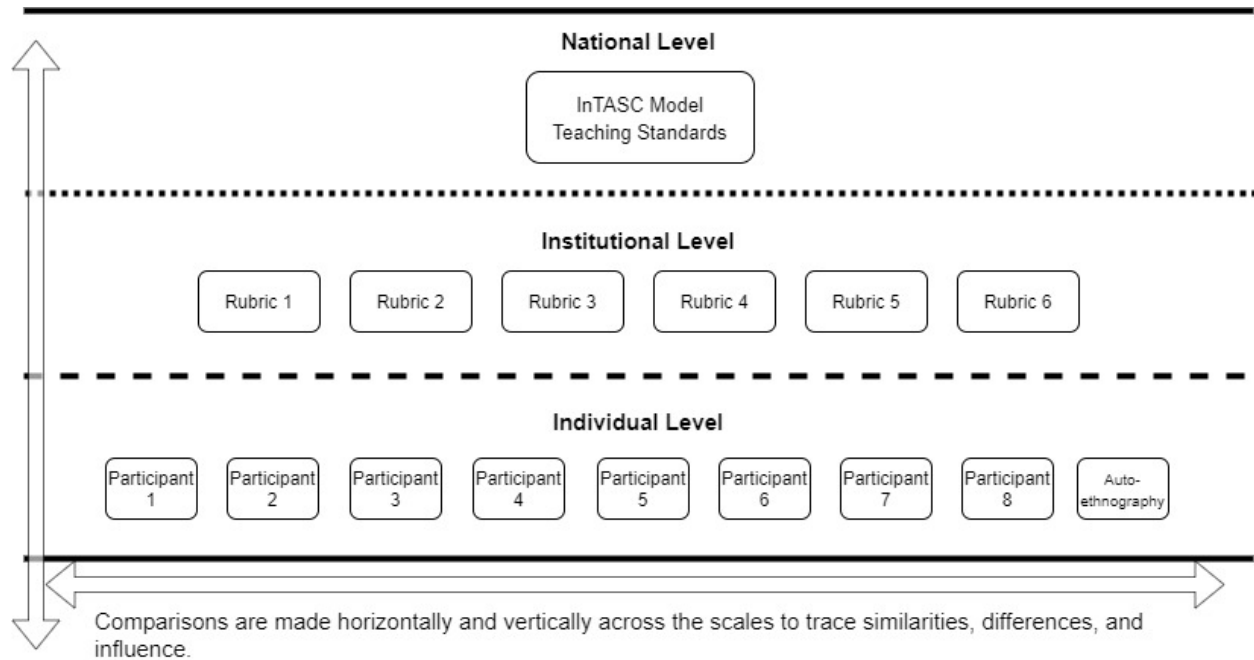
CCS Axes of Comparison

A CCS approach is informed by critical theory and aims to “critique inequality and change society” through the research design (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 39). For Bartlett and Vavrus (2017), this critical stance includes studying the “cultural production of structures, processes, and practices of power, exploitation, and agency” in the hope to reveal how “common-sense, hegemonic notions about the social world maintain disparities” (p. 39). This study seeks to understand how teacher education faculty employ dispositions assessments – which are often part of policies and procedures individual faculty have little or no influence – in their personal practice. The attention to scale in CCS helps to trace this influence. There are three axes that create a CCS framework that attends to culture, context, and comparison as they envision: vertical, horizontal, and transversal.

The comparisons in this framework are multi-sited and multi-scalar. Attention to the influence of different scales across different sites exposes how “social phenomena are ‘constituted through actions at different scales’” (Xiang, 2012, as cited in Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 44). This framework leaves it up to the researcher to decide what to pursue and why which requires “critical reflexivity about that process and its impact on the findings,” including my own scalar positionality (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 44). In CCS design, the researcher traces influence across and through sites and scales. In the sections that follow, I outline how this

study addresses the axes and various scales of the CCS framework. Figure 1 illustrates the horizontal and vertical axes of the study.

Figure 1



The Vertical Axis. This axis scales the inquiry. Through the iterative research process, I identified three scales for comparison. The study examines teacher educator’s understanding and assessment of professional teaching dispositions across the individual, institutional, and national levels. I began with the individual level which includes my participants’ experiences and my autoethnography. Participants also shared the rubrics, if they are used, from their institutions. These rubrics create the institutional level. The rubrics are the result of institutional policy and practice over which the participants had little control. The third level, the national scale, is the *InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progressions for Teachers*. I anticipated that the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards would be influential because they were created to be a guiding model for institutions and states. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, which accredits over 800 teacher education programs in the United States, uses the

InTASC Standards in their guidelines for programs. In making vertical comparisons, I traced the influence of the *InTASC Standards* at the institutional and individual scales through analysis of the similarities and differences in language used in dispositions assessments.

A limitation of this study, which I discuss in Chapter Seven, is the various scalar influences that I did not pursue. This includes the influence of Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) and state licensure requirements. State licensure requirements are not standardized across states and can conflict with institutions' visions and goals in teacher preparation. More research into the influence of SPA and state licensure requirements may prove useful in the future. As I completed interviews, I found these additional influencers were not the focus of participants' discussions. Individual interpretation of their institutions rubrics and the tensions brought up by accreditation became the most salient. The focus of my analysis then became how dispositions are employed by teacher education faculty, so the individual and institutional levels were dominant.

The Horizontal Axis. This axis asks researches to make comparisons across data at the same scales. In this study, the individual level is comprised of the interviews with teacher education faculty and my autoethnography. The individual level includes the physical locations of the colleges and universities that participants attend, but it also includes the "locations" of each participant. I interpret this to mean the different perspectives that each participant has including their identities and biases. Comparisons at the individual level focused on similarities and differences in how faculty interpret and take up the assessment of dispositions in their practice. I made comparisons horizontally at the institutional level by tracing similarities and differences in the rubrics that institutions use to assess teacher candidates' dispositions. As I noted with the vertical scale, a limitation in this study is the exclusion of SPA and state licensure

requirements. Because the teacher education programs in this study license teachers in seven states and represent at least four SPAs, I could not include these all as points of comparison given the scope of this dissertation.

The Transversal Axis. Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) identify a third axis for comparison they call the transversal. I gave the transversal axis, which historically situates the phenomenon, less emphasis in the study design in the end. As I completed interviews, the ways in which dispositions were employed by faculty as they interacted with pre-service teachers with disabilities became the focus. I did attempt to capture change over time at the individual scale by asking participants if their understandings of dispositions have changed since they became faculty members. As with most CCS designs, where not every axis has equal weight, the transversal axis is not the focus of this study. However, making comparisons across time at the individual level uncovered the increased use of mandatory, prescriptive dispositions assessments and continued debate around validity. I discuss more about this methodological decision as part of potential limitations in Chapter Seven.

Data Generation and Collection

In considering my overarching research questions, I chose three different data generation methods – qualitative interviews with faculty of teacher education programs, document analysis, and autoethnography of my experiences as a pre-service teacher and host teacher. Comparative Case Study is a framework for research that can be used with myriad data generation and collection methods. Qualitative methods are well suited for Comparative Case Study design because of the in-depth comparisons that can be made. In the sections that follow, I outline each data source in this study and more fully situate the data within the CCS framework.

Qualitative Interviews

I chose to use semi-structured qualitative interviews with current teacher education faculty members as the base of my data collection. Given my research questions, I wanted to explore faculty members' understandings and experiences with dispositions and disabled teacher candidates. I chose a semi-structured approach for interviews because they allow some flexibility with added confidence "of getting comparable data across subjects" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104). Constant comparison is needed in CCS design, and the interviews (along with my autoethnography) make up the individual level for horizontal comparisons. I conducted qualitative interviews with eight current faculty in teacher education programs. Inclusion criteria for the study was:

1. Must be a faculty member in a teacher education program in the United States
2. Must assess dispositions in this role
3. Must be at least 18 years old

In the following sections, I provide details of the recruitment and selection, participants and sites, and protocols for the interviews.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

I used convenience methods to recruit participants for this study. I initially sent out emails to eleven teacher education faculty. (See the full recruitment letter, sent in an email, and the informed consent form in Appendix A.) The recruitment emails were sent to faculty members I had existing relationships with, either through my past educational experiences or networking at academic conferences. I kept in mind the diversity of potential participants in my recruitment. Five of the eleven initially recruited are faculty members of color, and three of the eleven initially recruited are men. However, only six of the eleven initially recruited agreed to participate. Of those six, five are women and four are white. This meant that despite my attention

to diversity in recruitment, my participant base is mostly white women, which reflects current teacher education demographics. I recruited two additional participants through snowball recruitment from the first six. These two additional participants are also white women. The recruitment email explained that I was “interested in learning more about how dispositions are defined, cultivated, and assessed” in participants’ programs and personal practice. Participants agreed to a video or audio interview that would last between thirty minutes to an hour. All participants also agreed for the interview to be audio recorded as a condition for participation.

Participants and Sites

Participants teach in teacher education programs at colleges and universities across the United States. Table 1 details the participants’ institution types and regional locations, department and content areas, and years as faculty members at the time of our interviews. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant	Institution Type / US Region	Department / Content Area	Years as Faculty*
Devan	Public / Midwest	Special Education	3
Elisa	Public / Pacific	Special Education	15
Jasmin	Private / Northeast	Special Education	1
Leslie	Public / South	Teacher Education / English Education	12
Lorelai	Public / South	Elementary Education	16
Paige	Public / Midwest	Teacher Education / Generalist	1
Sandra	Public / South	Elementary Education / Literacy	6

Note. * = years as faculty at the time of our interview

Participants completed a demographic survey before our interview that captured their race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, and language. (See the full survey in Appendix B.) Participants could choose not to answer any of the demographic questions. In an effort to maintain participant confidentiality, I decided not to include this demographic information in Table 1, but I will discuss the overall demographics of participants in this study.

My participants' demographics are like the current demographics of teachers in the United States. Seven of the eight participants identify as women, five identify as white, five identify as abled, and six identify as straight or heterosexual. Three participants speak languages other than English. In the interviews, I let participants lead any reflection or comments on how their personal identities impacted their understandings of bias or frames of reference. As I examined the idea of the normative teacher in teacher preparation, it is necessary to note how closely my participants match the normative characteristics of the teaching profession. The norm for teacher education faculty demographics is white, abled, women.

Protocol for Interviews with Teacher Education Faculty

After acquiring informed consent from participants but before the interview, I asked participants to send me any rubrics that are used to assess dispositions in their programs. In addition to the scripted interview questions, I prepared to ask questions specific to the participants' rubrics. The interviews were conducted on video or audio calls and were recorded so I could transcribe them accurately. Interviews lasted between 40 minutes to 90 minutes, depending on the how much participants had to share and their schedules. I used a semi-

structured approach to interviews; this allowed me to begin with scripted questions but also explore what was important to participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The interview script is included in Appendix C. The semi-structured approach allowed participants to share descriptive accounts of their practices related to dispositions and experiences with disabled teacher candidates. Data from the interviews allowed me to make comparison across the axes. Participants spoke about individual and institutional experiences and how these have changed over time.

Dispositions Rubrics for Document Analysis

Before our interviews, I asked that participants share any rubric they or their program uses to assess dispositions. One of the inclusion criteria for the study was that participants assess pre-service teachers' dispositions as part of their practice. Five of my participants – Devan, Leslie, Lorelai, Paige, and Tori – shared the school- or college-wide rubrics used to assess students. Sandra shared the content-area-specific rubric her program uses to assess students' dispositions, but she also discussed how dispositions for the undergraduate programs she teaches for are assessed informally. Elisa and Jasmin were not aware of rubrics used at their institutions but discussed how they personally assess dispositions through assignments in their courses. I looked at the websites of Elisa and Jasmin's institutions to see if there was any additional information about rubrics, but I did not find information about dispositions at all.

While each of the participants in this study assessed dispositions of teacher candidates, sometimes this assessment happened informally. Informal assessments are a part of institutional practice, but these informal assessments could not be included in the document analysis. However, I had six dispositions rubrics and the *InTASC Standards* with which to complete the analysis. This analysis allowed me to make vertical comparisons across the scales which

illuminate the influential actors and networks behind dispositions. I also made horizontal comparisons across the individual participants and sites which illuminate how dispositions are used in practice. In the following sections, I describe the rubrics used in document analysis.

InTASC Standards

A prevalent and influential standardization of dispositions is the *InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progressions for Teachers (InTASC Standards)* which were commissioned by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The *InTASC Standards* were published in 2013 and serve as a guide for programs and accrediting agencies in developing professional standards. While teacher education programs are not obligated to follow the InTASC model, their influence was evident in many of my participants' rubrics.

Critical dispositions are defined by InTASC as the “habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie the performances and play a key role in how teachers do, in fact, act in practice” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 6). InTASC groups all knowledge, skills, and dispositions into ten broad standards. These standards are:

Standard #1: Learner Development. “The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 8).

Standard #2: Learning Differences. “The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 8).

Standard #3: Learning Environments. “The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 8).

Standard #4: Content Knowledge. “The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning

experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 8).

Standard #5: Application of Content. “The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 8).

Standard #6: Assessment. “The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 9).

Standard #7: Planning for Instruction. “The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 9).

Standard #8: Instructional Strategies. “The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 9).

Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. “The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 9).

Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration. “The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 9).

Although InTASC intends the standards to be approached holistically, they detail forty-three separate dispositions that fall across the ten standards as example indicators. However, these indicators are “not intended to be a checklist, but rather helpful ways to picture what the standards mean” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 7). Some examples of indicators from each standard are as follows:

- 1(j) The teacher takes responsibility for promoting learners’ growth and development.

- 2(l) The teacher believes that all learners can achieve at high levels and persists in helping each learner reach his/her full potential.
- 3(q) The teacher seeks to foster respectful communication among all members of the learning community.
- 4(p) The teacher appreciates multiple perspectives within the discipline and facilitates learners' critical analysis of these perspectives.
- 5(s) The teacher values flexible learning environments that encourage learner exploration, discovery, and expression across content areas.
- 6(t) The teacher is committed to using multiple types of assessment processes to support, verify, and document learning.
- 7(q) The teacher believes that plans must always be open to adjustment and revision based on learner needs and changing circumstances.
- 8(p) The teacher is committed to deepening awareness and understanding the strengths and needs of diverse learners when planning and adjusting instruction.
- 9(n) The teacher sees him/herself as a learner, continuously seeking opportunities to draw upon current education policy and research as sources of analysis and reflection to improve practice.
- 10(p) The teacher actively shares responsibility for shaping and supporting the mission of his/her school as one of advocacy for learners and accountability for their success.

The indicators capture the important principles of the standard without specifically naming actions and behaviors. This leaves the dispositions well-suited to be guidelines that can be contextualized based on program's needs. In the next section, I describe the characteristics of participants' rubrics.

Participant Rubrics

Participants' rubrics are used to assess teacher candidate's dispositions at multiple points throughout their programs and several times during their final year and student teaching semester. Some of the rubrics participants provided connect to the *InTASC Standards* through intentional mapping, while some were not explicitly linked.

Leslie's Rubric. Leslie's institution maps its dispositions to the *InTASC Standards* as well as state professional standards. Leslie's institution assesses ten dispositions in the following categories: Ethical, Responsible, Reflective, Receptive to Feedback, Collaborative, Committed to

the Teaching Profession, Respectful, Equitable, and Advocacy. The rubric she uses was revised in 2018 and relies on descriptive indicators to explain each dispositional category much like the *InTASC Standards*. In Leslie's program, dispositions are assessed observationally by faculty when students begin and toward the middle of their program. In the third and fourth years of the program, dispositions are assessed more regularly during student internships and student teaching.

Tori's Rubric. Tori's institution also maps its dispositions to the *InTASC Standards* and state professional standards. Tori's institution assesses six dispositions in the following categories: Receives and Acts Upon Professional Feedback, Communicates Effectively and Professionally, Collaborates with Others in a Positive and Professional Manner, Demonstrates Cultural Competence in Interactions and Communications, Committed to Students and Their Learning, and Demonstrates Professional Practices and Demeanor. Tori's rubric includes both descriptive indicators and more targeted indicators that list behaviors and characteristics for each disposition.

Lorelai's Rubric. Lorelai's institution assesses nine dispositions across these categories: Ethical behavior, Responsible, Personal and Professional Conduct, Inclusive and affirming of diversity, Collaborative, Reflective practitioner and learner, Receptive to feedback, Self-efficacious, and Engaged and committed to teaching as a profession. These dispositions are mapped to the *InTASC Standards* and state professional standards. In the Elementary MAT program Lorelai oversees, teacher candidates' dispositions are assessed at four points: in January when they start, April of the same semester, the following December, and one last time in April before they graduate. Lorelai's rubric includes checklists of behaviors and characteristics for each disposition.

Devan's Rubric. Devan's institution assesses dispositions in the six areas of Collaboration, Honesty and Integrity, Respect, Commitment to Learning, Emotional Maturity, Leadership and Responsibility. His institution does not map connections to any standards on the rubric. The rubric includes checklists of behaviors and characteristics for each disposition as indicators. Devan does not teach courses that have a field placement, so he does not use this rubric to assess dispositions in practice. Instead, he is responsible for incorporating the assessment of these dispositions into his coursework.

Paige's Rubric. Paige's institution assesses dispositions across four domains that correspond to Danielson's Framework for Teaching: Planning and Preparation, The Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities (The Danielson Group, 2020). Like Devan, Paige does not assess students using this rubric because her courses do not have a practicum component. Paige describes the rubric as "a checklist version, and it's often those elements of professionalism from like a social-psychological perspective. Arrives on time. Dresses appropriately." Paige's institution only uses the rubric during the student teaching placement.

Sandra's Rubric. Sandra's institution uses a rubric for the master's program she coordinates, but it does not use a rubric for the undergraduate programs. While the five previous rubrics were used across programs, Sandra's rubric for the master's program is mapped to the Specialized Professional Association standards that accredits the program. A candidate in this program "demonstrates the belief that all students can learn, and deserve to be treated fairly; displays effective professional communication in a variety of educational settings; works collaboratively with peers, professional colleagues, parents, and the community; is committed to ongoing, professional growth, and life-long learning; models a strong work ethic and a mature,

professional manner.” Candidates in Sandra’s program are evaluated twice, once midway through the program and again toward the end.

Autoethnography

A CCS design requires researchers to be critically aware in that “researchers must be reflexive about their own scalar positionality and how it is influencing data collection and analysis” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 45). In addition to this reflexivity, including autoethnography as one data source keeps my position and understanding of dispositions and disability transparent. Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that describes and analyzes experiences of the self to understand cultural experiences (Ellis, 2004; Ellis et. al., 2011; Holman Jones, 2005). Autoethnography resists traditional research methods and ways of representing others because it treats research as a political, socially conscious, and socially just endeavor (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008; Ellis et. al., 2011). It challenges “empirical science’s hegemonic control over qualitative inquiry” by creating texts that privilege the personal over the institutional (Denzin, 2014, p. 82). It is value-centered, not value-free, and as such, autoethnography accommodates “subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 274). For research interests that stem from personal experience, autoethnography is a valuable research tool.

Denzin (2014) defines autoethnography as “reflexively writing the self into and through the ethnographic text; isolating that space where memory, history, performance, and meaning intersect” (p. 22). Autoethnography is a research method that is accessible to researchers and readers, seeks cultural or other understanding between the self and others, and has the potential to be coalition-building (Chang, 2008). The central feature of autoethnography is the researcher

as a visible social actor within the text, including the researcher's feelings and experiences as necessary data (Anderson, 2006).

When researchers do autoethnography, they choose epiphanies made possible through being part of a culture or possessing a cultural identity, and they choose these epiphanies retrospectively and selectively (Ellis et. al., 2011). Denzin (2014) explains it is the task of autoethnographers to enter the space of the epiphany and connect it to culture, history, and social structure. He also defines four types of epiphanies—the major epiphany, the cumulative epiphany, the illuminative or minor epiphany, and the relived epiphany (Denzin, 2014). More specifically, there are

four forms of the epiphany: (1) the major event, which touches every fabric of a person's life; (2) the cumulative or representative event, which signifies eruptions or reactions to experiences which have been going on for a long period of time; (3) the minor epiphany, which symbolically represents a major, problematic moment in a relationship or a person's life; and (4) those episodes whose meanings are given in the reliving of the experience. (Denzin, 2014, p. 51)

I used autoethnography as a method to incorporate the relevant epiphanies I identify from my experiences as a disabled pre-service teacher and then as a disabled teacher who hosted student teachers. I identified these epiphanies by documenting memories that arose through the document analysis of dispositions rubrics and during interviews with participants. I chose four memories to write about as autoethnographic pieces. These autoethnographies preface chapters four, five, six, and seven. I separated the autoethnographies from the chapters because they stand alone as brief vignettes, and the separation highlights my positionality throughout.

When I conceptualized this study, I started with my memories from my teacher education program – mostly a feeling that I did not belong. As I began this research, and themes emerged, I identified potential epiphanies, but I settled on the final four autoethnographies because they connect my experiences with the larger themes and findings. I chose to preface each chapter with

autoethnography and conclude each chapter by reflecting on the autoethnography as part of the findings for that chapter. In this way, the autoethnography is another data source while also highlighting my positionality. The autoethnographies are not in chronological order for that reason. The topics of the autoethnographies are having my first formal observation and dispositions assessment, working with a disabled intern in my own classroom, finding a cooperating teacher for my field placement senior year, and attending a required event my freshman year.

Because autoethnography is personal stories, and those stories are linked to stories of other people, the confidentiality of those included is important (Chang, 2008). Since the researcher's identity is known in autoethnography this method presents a unique challenge in protecting others intimately known to the researcher. Relational ethics are heightened in this method because autoethnographers' identities are known and those close to them are implicated in their work (Ellis et. al., 2011). Because I write about and analyze my experiences as a student in a teacher education program, the institution, program, and professors who work there are implicated in my work. The same is true for student teacher and intern that could be connected to me through my writing. I use pseudonyms in the autoethnography, and the focus of these pieces is self-reflection connected to larger power dynamics; however, I remained cognizant of the implications for those that are connected to these experiences.

I experienced the dilemma of relational ethics as I wrote, and I discussed my concerns with my dissertation chair, Dr. Foley. This work examines the ableism inherent in our systems, processes, and personal beliefs (my own included). I struggled with representing people other than myself in the autoethnographies. I was particularly concerned with how they would be perceived by readers. I did not want readers to come away with the message that my professors

or cooperating teacher were ableist; I did not want them to be understood as “bad people.” I remain close to one faculty member and my cooperating teacher. I value their continued support and friendship over the years. I believe everyone I write about, even myself, was operating from a place of best intentions. But this work is about more than intentions, and the autoethnography helps to expose institutionalized ableism. As an additional measure to check my relational ethics, I shared portions of the autoethnography with people who are characters. For example, when I shared the autoethnography about an event I attended freshman year with Rikki, she asked that I use her name instead of a pseudonym.

Data Analysis

The sources of data that made up my complete data set were six disposition documents supplied by participants and the *InTASC Standards*, document analysis memos, audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews with eight teacher education faculty members, autoethnographic narratives, and researcher memos. I included the following stages to data analysis: (1) document analysis of disposition artifacts; (2) coding of interviews, rubrics, and autoethnography; (3) memo writing; and (4) synthesis across axes.

As qualitative research is emergent, iterative, and non-linear, the first three stages happened simultaneously (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Maxwell, 2013; Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Once the initial coding and analysis was complete for the data set, I made comparisons and completed focused coding. I used memos as a space to make connections between the data and theory – making more connections to theory as I completed focused coding. The final stage was synthesizing across the axes.

Document Analysis

I completed document analysis of the rubrics from participants' programs. My analysis of the rubrics was informed by aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) although it is not a complete CDA analysis or approach. CDA is an exploration of power with a commitment to social justice which provides tools for addressing inequalities in education sites, practices, and systems (Rogers, 2011). My reading of dispositions assessments explore their ableist power. Within the language of the assessments we learn what qualities are valued in teachers and how teacher education programs, as sites within CCS design, promote specific practices within the larger education system. Furthermore, by exposing what values are included in these assessments, CDA shows us how particular ideologies are upheld. CDA is a critical method because it operates with the assumption that discourse is not neutral. In Fairclough's (1992) words, "critical implies showing connections and causes that are hidden" (p. 9), and by decoding "the discursive patterns of ideology" we better see the power struggles of the social world (Breeze, 2011, p. 497). With these tenets of CDA in mind, I used the following questions to guide my content analysis of the rubrics:

1. How do the assessments describe the characteristics and responsibilities of today's teachers?
 - a. How are these characteristics part of an ideology of education that demonstrates what is valued in a teacher?
 - b. What assumptions about who is a teacher are hidden in these standards?
2. How do the assessments conceptualize and discuss dis/ability?
3. What ideologies of ability are present?
4. What perspectives of dis/ability are present and absent?

After the initial analysis of the rubrics, I used the rubrics and my analysis in the initial coding and subsequent analysis stages.

Initial and Focused Coding

I used open coding method for the initial coding of this data. The data coding process began with an initial, line-by-line coding phase. Codes were developed from the data sources themselves and were coded line-by-line as “actions” and then later as topics or themes, in order to “curb our tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories before we have done the necessary analytic work” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 117). The initial coding began once I had completed three interviews and then continuously throughout the rest of my data collection. This allowed me to keep the earlier interviews fresh in my mind as I continued data collection and analysis.

To determine which of the initial codes should become focused codes, I asked these questions: “What do you find when you compare your initial codes with data? In which ways might your initial codes reveal patterns? Which of these codes best account for the data? Have you raised these codes to focused codes? What do your comparisons between codes indicate? Do your focused codes reveal gaps in the data?” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 140-1). This line of questioning helped focus my analysis on the most compelling and complete data across interviews, rubrics, and my autoethnography.

Memo-writing

Memo-writing occurred throughout the data collection and analysis stages. I wrote memos after each interview that captured my reactions and thoughts as the researcher. Early memos included more observer’s comments about participants’ responses and my own reactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). After the initial coding stage, and as I continued interviews, I wrote

analytic memos to help make theoretical connections. Analytic memos also helped me “explicate ideas, events, or processes” in the data that moved focused codes to conceptual ideas (Charmaz, 2014, p. 189). In the memo-writing stage, I drew on aspects of CDA to focus the analysis. When analyzing the interviews, I paid attention to participants’ narrative choices. This included who they named as actors, what was the sequence of events, and how they portrayed any conflict or resolution (Gee, 1989; Gee, 1991; Poveda, 2004). I also drew on Poveda’s (2004) ideas of narrative positioning to pay attention to how participants described their power and influence in the stories. Similarly, I drew on Compton-Lily’s (2013) process of temporal discourse analysis to help capture any changes over time that participants expressed. These longer notes helped me take initial codes and combine the data with analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Some of these analytic memos determined my focused codes and became the basis for chapters in this study while others I am saving for future inquiry.

Synthesis

CCS requires a final step to any data analysis plan – synthesis (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). This step requires that researches merge the findings across the three axes so that they are no longer separate points of analysis. In the data chapters I wrote for this study, I draw from analysis at all axes but present the findings cohesively. In my synthesis of the comparisons, I attempted to demonstrate how individual faculty employ dispositions in their interactions with disabled teacher candidates in addition to conveying the complex layers of influence present in those interactions. In Chapter Four, I begin with a synthesis of how dispositions are defined and constructed in teacher education programs that traces levels of influence. Chapters Five and Six focus more on the individual level of analysis, but the synthesis traces the layers of influence that teacher education faculty navigate.

Summary

This inquiry focused on dispositions and dis/ability because it is an under-theorized and under-researched area of teacher education. CCS allowed me to investigate not just how teacher education faculty use dispositions in practice, but how that practice is influenced by actors at different levels. The CCS framework worked well for this qualitative inquiry because it continued to focus my attention to power inequities and layers of influence. The conceptualization and employment of dispositions is not neutral and requires critique. The connection between dispositions and dis/ability requires this type of analysis because of the ways that dispositions can be employed to discredit disabled teacher candidates.

The following chapters present and explore the findings from the study. Preceding each chapter is an autoethnographic vignette that places my own experience within the larger theme for the following chapter. Chapter Four provides an overview of how dispositions are defined and used as well as how these understandings reflect ideologies of dis/ability. Chapter Five explores discourses of dispositions and dis/ability reflected in the use of dispositions. Chapter Six explains the ways that dispositions are used to discredit and remove disabled teacher candidates from programs by positioning disability as incompatible with normative teaching expectations. Chapter Seven summarizes my findings and their significance, addresses gaps in current understandings by proposing further inquiry, and discusses my limitations.

Autoethnography: “Questioning My Classroom ‘Presence’”

I was a week into my 45-hour internship the fall semester of my senior year. This school site and placement would be the same for student teaching in the spring. It was mid-October, and my cooperating teacher was just returning after taking two weeks off to recover from spine surgery. My internship was starting later than my peers’ internships because of the “special circumstances.” It had taken a while to find a placement for a student teacher in a wheelchair, but now that it had started, I was trying to make up for the time I had lost. My peers had four weeks, an entire month, longer than I did to get to know their cooperating teachers, their students, and the school context and culture where they would be spending eight months. In the spring, these were the classrooms where we would take over as student teachers.

I had spent about nine hours total in the three English II classes Mrs. Polson taught that semester when the topic of my first formal observation came up. We were required to schedule it sometime in October. My English Methods professor, Dr. Reid, would come for the observation and then stay during our planning period for a post-observation conference. Mrs. Polson suggested that I teach Kafka’s short story “A Hunger Artist” for my observation. They would read *The Metamorphosis* later in the semester, so this could be an introduction to Kafka. I remember just one detail from that first solo lesson – students did not have the background knowledge of symbolism to answer a question about how the panther could be a symbol for the hunger artist. I had not had enough time with them to get a true sense of what knowledge and skills I needed to focus on for my lesson – I did not even know their names yet.

I remember more from the post-observation conference. My teacher education program had an observation rubric that focused on the content and pedagogy as well as a separate rubric for dispositions. While both Mrs. Polson and Dr. Reid gave positive feedback and reassurance on

my lesson, my “presence” in the classroom became a focus of conversation and critique. Mrs. Polson said, “You were speaking softly at times, very calming, but I think you need some time to feel more comfortable in front of the students. You’ll find your voice, but your confidence is something we should work on.” I admitted that I had been nervous for the observation, but I thought to myself, *I’m just a quiet person*. I resented that my tone and manner of speaking was read as lacking confidence. I had not dared mention that after my spinal fusion surgery the previous year I did not have full lung capacity. Being louder for extended periods of time was fatiguing. Shame that I could never be a louder presence in the classroom swept over me and was followed by a rush of anxiety. *How could I compensate for this?* I thought.

Mrs. Polson, a teacher of over thirty years, was barely five-feet tall. She had dyed auburn red hair and always wore vibrant red lipstick. She was loud (in my mind) and conceded that was due to her Italian American upbringing. I was immediately drawn to her personality, but we were very different. People often describe her as a spitfire. Her decades of experience had given her a reputation as a teacher who “did not play.” What she lacked in height she made up for in volume. She could command the attention of a room with just one word, and she was always moving – back and forth at the front of the room and between the rows of desks.

Dr. Reid nodded her head in seeming agreement with what Mrs. Polson had just said about my confidence. She added, “You delivered your lesson from behind the desk at the front of the room. You need to work the room. See here on the dispositions form, number eight is ‘Self-efficacious.’ We want to see that you are confident in your abilities. I know you have the content knowledge but putting it all together in front of students is a challenge.” *Where was I supposed to go?* I wondered. Mrs. Polson and Dr. Reid both scored my Self-efficacious category as proficient. As an intern, I needed to both prove myself and have room to improve. I had no idea

how I would show my confidence through movement. Mrs. Polson's classroom was a stand-alone trailer; it was already too small for the furniture she had. She had the student desks arranged in traditional rows – with no room for a wheelchair to pass through. I remembered her saying we could rearrange the room any way I pleased, but I did not know how to set up the space in a more accessible way. *Could I not become a teacher if I couldn't move to all corners of the room? How much emphasis would be placed on the physical aspects of teaching?*

What I felt at the time, but could not articulate, was that Dr. Reid and Mrs. Polson were not discussing dispositions. Not really. They were using the ambiguous categories of my university's dispositions rubric to address their concerns about my body but not my teaching. While I was able to prove myself to them in later observations, the way that dispositions were employed has always stayed with me. "But for" my physical disability, I was the imagined normative teacher (Crenshaw, 1989). The normative teacher embodies white, middle-class, mono-lingual, heterosexual, abled womanhood. I could overcome my bodily difference, but what of those who cannot?

Chapter Four: DISPOSITIONS IN PRACTICE

I used Comparative Case Study (CCS) as a framework for analysis in this study. In CCS, comparisons are made horizontally (between participants), vertically (through individual, institutional, and national requirements), and transversal (across time) (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Participants revealed a spectrum of definitions, uses, and goals for assessing dispositions. The ways in which dispositions are employed by faculty reveal the connection between dispositions and ideologies of dis/ability. Underlying their use of dispositions is the concept of an ideal teacher which I argue becomes an essentialized, normative teacher.

The evaluation of teacher candidates, particularly their dispositions, requires faculty to scrutinize the body-minds of candidates in comparison to a norm – the normative teacher. One way the normative teacher is defined is through the standardized dispositions rubrics. The normative teacher, a normate, “is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them” (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 8). Institutions construct the identity of the normative teacher through standardized dispositions rubrics that faculty members are expected to interpret and employ in practice. According to Garland-Thomson’s definition, teacher education faculty assume the position of authority and power of the normative teacher and wield its power in their interactions with teacher candidates. To become a teacher, teacher candidates must prove they also approximate the identity of the normative teacher.

The normative teacher continues to be one who embody the qualities and characteristics of white, middle-class, mono-lingual, heterosexual, abled womanhood despite decades of calls for an increase in teacher diversity (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Sleeter, 2008). The normative teacher is a product of teacher education programs that operate

under dysconscious assumptions around race and ability (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017; King, 1991). It is critical to “make explicit values, norms, and ideologies embedded in our day-to-day practices” in teacher education that construct who we believe should be a teacher (Mendoza et. al., 2016, p. 75). Because teaching remains a predominantly white, abled, and gendered profession, my goal is to expose these assumptions in the dispositional requirements of teacher education programs.

When teacher candidates do not match the normative teacher, faculty can target their deviations through dispositional assessments. Faculty assume pre-service teachers should emulate the normative teacher both dysconsciously through their own investment in the teacher education process and explicitly through the evaluation of candidates’ dispositions. Through the assessment process, professional teaching dispositions become one way that teacher educators enforce, at times dysconsciously, compulsory able-bodiedness or compulsory abledness. A compulsion for abledness is driven by the desire and preference for normalcy (McRuer, 2013; Scott, 2018). Being abled “means being capable of the normal physical exertions,” as well as the mental and emotional capacity, “required in a particular system of labor” (McRuer, 2013, p. 91). For teachers, dispositions reveal the physical, mental, and emotional expectations of the profession. The teaching profession values body-minds for their productivity and ability to embody the normative teacher.

This chapter synthesizes participants’ personal and institutional understandings of dispositions. Because dispositions reveal the characteristics of the normative teacher, I spend time exploring the basic question: what are dispositions? I begin this chapter by comparing the participant’s definitions of dispositions to reveal the tensions and layers of influence in how

dispositions are employed in teacher education. Then, I explore the assumptions and ideologies of dis/ability reflected in the interviews and rubrics provided by participants.

Defining and Employing Dispositions in Practice

My participants had varied definitions of dispositions which is not surprising because there is continued debate and ambiguity in teacher education scholarship of dispositions (Diez, 2007). Despite the variety of definitions and uses, all the participants felt the goal of dispositions should be to facilitate teacher candidate growth. However, institutional demands made this type of reflection and growth difficult to achieve. Participant interviews reveal several key themes: (a) tension between institutional practice and participants' personal beliefs; (b) complex ideas in dispositions are reduced to items on a checklist; and (c) assessment being used to identify problems, digressions, or "red flags."

I began each interview by asking the participant to define dispositions. My goal was to understand faculty's experience with and perspective on dispositions. This baseline was important to capture because of the varied conceptualizations and uses of dispositions across colleges and universities. My review of literature on dispositions suggested that although institutions have control over defining dispositions, they are compelled to assess those dispositions for accreditation purposes. The emphasis on assessment and reporting is reflected in the types of dispositions that institutions develop. Dispositions that are easier to define and assess are sometimes given priority, which complicates the goals in developing specific dispositions in teacher candidates like commitments to equity and social justice (Kyllonen et. al., 2005; Roberts, 2006; Wasicsko, 2007). The types of dispositions on which scholars focus, like teachers' commitments to equity and the moral obligations of teaching, were often not included

in my participants' rubrics even when they were reflected in their personal definitions (Dottin, 2006; Osguthorpe, 2013; Stooksberry et. al., 2009).

My review of literature informed how I have come to understand what dispositions are and how I believe they should be employed in teacher education programs. I define dispositions as one's beliefs, values, and attitudes enacted in interactions with students, parents/guardians, colleagues, and community members that are adaptable and strengthened through deliberate reflection. However, participants had varied views of dispositions. Some relied on their institutions' rubrics in their definitions while others had more generalized understandings. Table 2 details each participant's personal definition of dispositions.

Table 2

Participant Definitions of Dispositions

Participant	Years as Faculty*	Definition
Paige	1	the commitments we make as a classroom teacher, the way we hold ourselves in the classroom; it's informed by our underlying values and beliefs and ideologies and all those things that then impact the pedagogies we take up
Jasmin	1	how our pre-service teachers have their own attitude or mindset to become a teacher, and how they shape their ideas as a teacher and their positionality to serve students once they become a teacher
Devan	3	it's this internal and external type of continuous dialogue, which can inform teachers' ways of being and doing, but that's ongoing, it shouldn't be static
Sandra	5	logistical pieces such as work ethic, being on time to class, turning in assignments on time, working with other students, and responding to authority
Leslie	12	things that aren't necessarily related to the teaching practices but they're more related to the professional stance that a person has within their occupation

Tori	12	the professional aspects of someone’s teaching, like professional dress and personality in the sense of are they inclusive or exclusive when it comes to students with needs and disability and/or culturally responsive
Lorelai	15	the things that impact students and teachers like responsibility and ethics
Elisa	16	characteristics that we would want to cultivate in the kinds of teachers going out there into the world such as openness, willing to take on different perspectives, and reflectiveness about their own belief systems

Note. * = years as faculty at the time of our interview

Lorelai, Tori, Leslie, and Sandra’s definitions are focused on the personality and characteristics that teacher candidates need to be successful in their programs. These faculty members describe a “professional stance” that includes qualities like responsibility, professional dress, punctuality, and respect. Elisa, Jasmin, Devan, and Paige’s definitions focus on the role of teacher education in shaping beliefs, values, and attitudes teacher candidates learn and incorporate into their practice. The former group’s understanding of dispositions reflected the characteristics included in their institutions’ rubrics. The latter group’s definitions reflected scholarly definitions of dispositions. This difference suggests that the amount of years spent as teacher education faculty does not influence dispositions knowledge and understanding. In our interviews, participants revealed more about how dispositions are employed in ways that uphold the normative teacher and disadvantage dis/ability.

Individual vs. Institution

Participants spoke about how their institution’s expectations conflicted with their personal views on how dispositions should be assessed. As newer faculty members, Jasmin and Devan, are still learning how their respective programs are assessing dispositions. Neither of them teaches courses with field placements for pre-service teachers, the most common time

dispositions are assessed. Their definitions capture common understandings of dispositions – that they are malleable, encompass the teacher’s positionality and attitudes, and require reflection. Both Jasmin and Devan described embedding the assessment of dispositions into assignments that ask students to reflect on power, privilege, and their positionalities. These types of reflective assignments do not easily translate to the common rubric assessment of dispositions that are often used during internships and field placements. Jasmin and Devan’s assignments are not included in their students’ dispositional data which is only collected during field placements. The ambiguity surrounding what dispositions are and how they should be assessed by individual faculty is significant because assessment is often required for program accreditation.

Leslie shared tension with how dispositions are assessed as quantitative data when she believes they are “mushy” categories. Leslie thinks she uses the assessment better now than when she began as a faculty member. She views it as a “tool for learning and growing and supporting, as opposed to how people might just randomly mark it off and it is not useful.” Leslie described using the dispositions assessment as a platform for dialogue with students to improve their teaching. She said, “I’m not a big quantitative person, and I personally think that these rubrics are just a guide for conversation” and they should be used to “create some concrete goals based on the rubric.” This conflicts with the institutional requirement to report quantitative dispositions data for accreditation purposes – a use Leslie described as “pretty much useless” because the work that happens before the final score is more important. The possibility that faculty “randomly mark” dispositions adds another layer to their ambiguity and purpose.

Lorelai also highlighted the arbitrary nature of dispositions assessment. Lorelai shared that her institution recently re-trained faculty and cooperating teachers on dispositions. Her

university had created a new rubric for assessing dispositions. She described how her university made

a video that they were asking all the classroom teachers and all of us who score to look at, and they explain each disposition. ... Then there's a case scenario, and we have to read about this one student teacher. Then we score her, and the hope is that the teacher and the person from [the university] would have similar scores. But I can also tell you that I failed the quiz. I think that shows dispositions to me are more holistic than seeing a sentence in there that was supposed to tell me that's a disposition.

Lorelai's experience with the training video and quiz demonstrates how ambiguous dispositions are in practice. Even after watching the training video and having fifteen years of experience as a teacher education faculty member, Lorelai could not correctly identify the disposition and score the university expected. Lorelai's frustration arises from the institution's reduction of dispositions to easily observable characteristics like punctuality, respectful communication, and professional dress.

Faculty with differing ideas of how dispositions are defined or should be assessed become frustrated with the process. Lorelai's description of dispositions being "more holistic" connects with other subjective descriptions common in the interviews. She also described dispositions as being something a teacher candidate either has or does not, as another word for personality, and as characteristics and traits. Individual faculty will bring their own beliefs about dispositions to the assessment process even when institutions think any bias has been removed through training. Faculty still rely on their personal beliefs about what qualities make a good teacher when assessing teacher candidates. Sometimes these personal beliefs reflect how faculty have internalized idea of the normative teacher. When the normative teacher is the basis for

dispositional assessments, teacher candidates with disabilities will face increased scrutiny for their deviant body-minds.

In the master's program that Sandra helps coordinate, the dispositions assessment is directly tied to the Specialized Professional Association accreditation. The dispositions included in that rubric conflict with Sandra's personal definition. While her personal definition focused on the behaviors of teacher candidates, the dispositions included in the rubric focus more on equity and social justice. Students in the master's program are assessed on five dispositions that range from having the "belief that all students can learn" to modeling a "commitment to professional learning." In our interview, Sandra framed the dispositions rubric for the master's program as an item to complete for accreditation. The content of the rubric was not part of her personal understanding of dispositions. The assessment was completed as evidence for accreditation, not to help teacher candidates learn and grow.

Elisa's teacher education program has a focus on social justice teaching, and her personal beliefs align with that commitment. However, she perceives a shift in teacher education in recent years. She said, "I feel like the changes are teaching people to follow cookbook recipes. I would want teachers to be curious and innovative and compassionate, and empathetic." Her views on dispositions have changed over time, and she feels their current use is reductive. Elisa and other participants that are frustrated by the institutional expectations surrounding dispositions assessments may approach dispositions as one more bureaucratic task. This lessens the impact dispositions could have on teacher candidate growth and increases their potential for misuse.

Checklist Dispositions

Many participants who felt at odds with the assessment practice of their institution spoke about the reduction of dispositions to behaviors. Paige called this reduction a checklist

assessment. Paige's research agenda includes disposition work around whiteness, and her definition closely matches those in teacher education scholarship. However, her institution's expectations for the use and assessment of dispositions conflicted with her critical stance. She gave her "loving critique" saying

it's like a checklist version, and it's often those elements of professionalism from like a social-psychological perspective. Arrives on time. Dresses appropriately. It's underwhelming. It's an assessment that is done to candidates. They may not even know who's actually doing it. They may not get feedback on it. It may only be used in those red flag moments as a way to have a critical conference with candidates.

Paige's critique highlights tensions that she and other participants expressed. The simplification and reduction of dispositions to a checklist creates something that is done to teacher candidates instead of a tool for critical reflection and growth.

Because of the simplification, often elements of professionalism are centered, which are highly subjective and based on the normative teacher. And the checklist rubric is utilized in interventions (critical conferences) when a candidate deviates from the normative teacher. Checklist versions of dispositions are employed to document perceived deficits in teacher candidates. As Sandra explained, she and her colleagues regularly "talk about concerns, talk about superstars, talk about different issues that we have, specific to dispositions. Then the elementary coordinator keeps the documentation. She reaches out to students that we feel like need to have some type of intervention immediately." Sandra's "superstars" are not the targets of interventions. Sandra's experience highlights how dispositions are most often employed to target and fix deficit or deviant behaviors and characteristics in pre-service teachers. Rarely does

Sandra or faculty in her program employ dispositions in a positive framing to require self-reflection and professional growth.

In the Elementary MAT program Lorelai oversees, teacher candidates' dispositions are assessed at four points: in January when they start, April of the same semester, the following December, and one last time in April before they graduate. Lorelai gave an example of the difficulty in assessing her institution's disposition called "Ethical." It states: "The candidate upholds all relevant laws and/or policies, protecting students' rights and conducting themselves in honest and trustworthy ways." This reduction of ethics to following laws and being honest and trustworthy makes it difficult to differentiate between the numeric scores found on rubrics. She explained that unless a teacher candidate breaks the law, "I find that it's just kind of arbitrary. I always score them just average because I don't know if they're great at it or if they're poor at it." Here Lorelai highlights a flaw in this type of assessment – faculty must come up with a score. If faculty are unsure, they seem to default to the "average" numeric score (whatever that may be on their rubrics). Lorelai's experience illuminates how the ambiguity of dispositions can lead to meaningless assessment. If faculty can assign scores without having "evidence," then they can also manipulate scores for any reason to the benefit or detriment of the teacher candidate.

Dispositional Digressions

Sandra believes that the way her institution addresses undergraduate dispositions, without a formal assessment, is the best method. At the end of each semester, she and her colleagues meet to discuss dispositions of each undergraduate cohort. When Sandra talks about dispositions, she is referring to her personal definition. Faculty spend time talking about each student's behaviors around work ethic, punctuality, working with others, etc., while the program coordinator takes notes, but she admitted that they only discuss at length the "red flags." These

“red flags” are coded language for deviations from the characteristics in Sandra’s definition of dispositions. Similarly, Tori’s definition focused on a mix of professionalism and dispositions she calls personality. Her discussion of dispositions focused on “red flags” and issues she called “digressions” – an overall deficit-based approach to teacher candidates’ dispositions. The rhetoric of “red flags” is significant because it is an idiom used as a metaphor for something signaling a problem. In the context of teacher candidates’ body-minds, the term “red flag” also connotes questions about their mental health and overall mental fitness for the teaching profession.

When Tori and Sandra speak of red flags and digressions, they are referencing the characteristics of someone they do not believe should be a teacher. At Tori’s institution there is a committee designated to overseeing dispositional digressions. She related that “should you reach the point where you get to the dispositions committee, you can get removed” from the program. Their experiences demonstrate how dispositions are only employed when teacher candidates’ behaviors deviate from the norm and are most often used punitively.

Unlike other participants, Tori spoke about institutional dispositions data. Her understanding of the goals in assessing dispositions has changed since she started her career to now include what dispositions data can do to inform faculty pedagogy. At the beginning of her career, she says, “I don’t think that I really grasped the importance of not just following a student through the program with dispositions but looking as a college and as a program across dispositions.” Now, Tori looks at dispositions data at a program level to determine “where you can improve instruction and not just troubleshoot for individual” teacher candidates. Tori still frames dispositions as being a punitive measure used to “troubleshoot” and fix deviant teacher candidates, but she finds additional value in the assessment of dispositions and the implications

for pedagogy. However, if teacher candidates withdraw or are pushed out of programs, their dispositions data is no longer included in the university's analysis. This means that pre-service teachers who leave programs are not considered in the data. Faculty may miss opportunities to explore their own bias and discover why students are leaving programs when this data is not included.

It is through the deficit framing of digressions that the language of dis/ability is revealed. Dispositions are not something requiring faculty attention until a teacher candidate fails to meet a standard. Deficit or deviation from the normative teacher triggers a "red flag." Similarly, when a behavior or characteristic from the disposition rubric is absent in the teacher candidate's performance, their dispositions are compromised. Otherwise, teacher candidates are given proficient or better scores and can be passed along in the teacher education program without critical thought to their dispositions. When teacher candidates fail to meet dispositional standards, deficit framing is employed by faculty. The normative behaviors and characteristics that candidates do not meet are described as dispositional deficits but may be connected to the candidate's race, gender, or dis/ability. This potential targeted bias is obscured through the accepted scrutinization of teacher candidate's body-minds through dispositions assessments.

The language used in discussions of dispositional digressions mirrors that of special education and disability. There is a normative teacher described in dispositions rubrics. When a teacher candidate deviates from this norm an intervention is necessary. This is similar to how identification and intervention operate in special education. Teacher education faculty rely on the language of special education language because it is a familiar way to explain deviance and deficit. Unlike in special education, however, if the intervention is unsuccessful the teacher

candidate may be removed from or pushed out of the program. In the following sections I look more closely at the language and ideologies of disability present in dispositions rubrics.

Dispositions and Ideologies of Disability

One influential standardization of dispositions is the *InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progressions for Teachers (InTASC Standards)* which were commissioned by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The *InTASC Standards* were published in 2013 and serve as a guide for programs and accrediting agencies in developing professional standards. While teacher education programs are not obligated to follow the InTASC model, their influence was evident in many of my participants' rubrics. Critical dispositions are defined by InTASC as the "habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie the performances and play a key role in how teachers do, in fact, act in practice" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 6). InTASC groups all knowledge, skills, and dispositions into ten broad standards that focus on:

Learner Development; Learning Differences; Learning Environments; Content Knowledge; Application of Content; Assessment; Planning for Instruction; Instructional Strategies; Professional Learning and Ethical Practice; Leadership and Collaboration
(Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013)

Across these broad standards, InTASC details forty-three separate dispositions that fall across the ten standards. The rubrics participants provided connect to the *InTASC Standards* through intentional mapping. In the rubrics that are used in practice, however, teacher educators reduce these themes into observable actions and behaviors and add additional expectations.

Locating Dis/ability in Rubrics

The *InTASC Standards* infrequently address disability and only do in regard to the types of students teachers will encounter. Instead, the document more frequently uses the words and phrases “ability,” “learning difference(s),” and “diverse learner(s)” for groups of students who could possibly include those labeled with disabilities. The word “disability” is never used, but “disabilities,” as in students with disabilities, learners with disabilities, and needs associated with disabilities, is used a total of eleven times in the fifty-seven-page document. Eleven times is relatively few when compared to how often other types of learners are mentioned. Learners with disabilities are only explicitly named in three of the ten standards: Learning Differences, Assessment, and Professional Learning and Ethical Practice.

In the Learning Differences standards, teachers are expected to “understand students with exceptional needs, including those associated with disabilities and giftedness.” This includes using the appropriate instructional strategies, but the focus on disability in the *InTASC Standards* is in the Assessment standard. Teachers must understand and be committed to implementing the required accommodations for students with disabilities and making modifications to assessments as required. Understanding learning difference and accommodations is important because students with disabilities are protected by laws. In Standard 9, regarding ethics, the teacher “understands the expectations of the profession including codes of ethics, professional standards of practice, and relevant law and policy” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 41). While additional classes of students are protected by laws and policy, the assessment and ethics standards together position disability solely in the realm of special education discourse. Students with disabilities have instructional and assessment accommodations and modifications that are not made for abled students, and students with disabilities receive these accommodations and modifications because they are protected by special education laws.

Students with disabilities also fall under the umbrella of diverse learners in the *InTASC Standards*. “Diverse Learners and Learning Differences” is defined as:

Diverse learners and students with learning differences are those who, because of gender, language, cultural background, differing ability levels, disabilities, learning approaches, and/or socioeconomic status may have academic needs that require varied instructional strategies to ensure their learning. Learning differences are manifested in such areas as differing rates of learning, motivation, attention, preferred learning modalities, complexity of reasoning, persistence, foundational knowledge and skills, and preferred learning and response modes. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 49)

Here, the important distinction of diverse learners and those with learning differences is that they deviate in some way to an unnamed norm. These learners have “academic needs” requiring “varied instructional strategies” as opposed to the unnamed student without difference whose academic needs are met through typical instruction. This type of positioning reifies normalcy’s hegemony and flattens the unique experiences of multiply marginalized students (Baglieri et. al., 2011; Connor et. al., 2016). Dis/ability is named in three ways in this definition – differing ability levels, disabilities, and learning differences.

The naming of diverse learners and learning differences is discursively significant for two reasons. First, it erases disability from the standards. Diverse students and students with learning disabilities may or may not have labels of disability. This naming obscures the ableism and institutionalized oppression that students with disabilities face. It also minimizes what teachers need to know and understand to support disabled students. Students with disabilities are entitled accommodations and modifications, by law, but if we obscure disability by calling it a learning difference, it releases educators from the responsibility of understanding disability to address

structural inequalities. Second, by grouping all diversity and difference together, it makes it harder to think intersectionally about the experiences of students. It suggests that disability does not interact with race or gender to produce different outcomes for students in schools because those students are simply “diverse learners” (Connor et. al., 2016). Disability justice requires an intersectional approach. Disability experience is shaped by “race, gender, class, gender expression, historical moment, relationship to colonization and more” (Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 16). Therefore, single issue identity-based inquiry is not adequate to explain disability experience, and we must expand our understanding of disability beyond a single-axis identity.

Rubrics used by participants similarly grouped together students who deviate from an unnamed norm. In some cases, programs include a string of identity markers to better define the concepts of difference and diversity. These include: “individuals with different backgrounds, beliefs, abilities or circumstances,” “individuals with differing backgrounds, beliefs, skills, interests, needs, etc.,” “cultural background, age, ability, language, and learning needs,” and “unique characteristics and learning needs of diverse learners (age, gender, culture or ability).” While ability is named in these rubrics, disability is implied. Pre-service teachers must learn to identify these deviations to become effective teachers.

Each of the rubrics situate the pre-service teachers’ understanding of diverse learners as integral to student learning outcomes and achievement. Phrases such as “appropriately responds to,” “differentiates instruction,” “anticipates instruction needed,” “creates learning experiences that accommodate,” “implements a variety of strategies to engage all levels,” and “making accommodations or adjustments” describe the actions necessary to ensure student success. These phrases use the language of disability (accommodate/accommodations, differentiate, and levels) without explicit connection to disability. This erasure suggests that not all pre-service teachers

will need to understand disability to become effective teachers. The disconnect between disability and the dispositions is not surprising. In my interviews, faculty in general education noted that they lacked expertise of their special education peers to adequately address disability in their courses. Disability is only located in special education – reinforcing deficit notions of dis/ability through the disposition rubrics.

The rubrics also position diversity and difference as something occurring in student populations. Teachers are assumed to be a homogenous group that must learn how to teach diverse students. The *InTASC Standards* address “Professional Learning” which includes this disposition: “The teacher is committed to deepening understanding of his/her own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing), the potential biases in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with learners and their families” (9[m]). Participants’ rubrics include this disposition as being a reflective or reflexive practitioner. The implication is teachers will be biased because of their assumed positions of privilege “(e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing).” There is an assumption in these identities – that of whiteness, womanhood, English speaking, and abledness. Teachers will not be disabled, so they must learn to understand disability to serve students. Teachers will be white, so they must learn to understand the cultures and languages of their students. The normative teacher is being defined through professional teaching dispositions.

Professionalism and Dispositions

My participants talked about the importance of professional behavior or a professional stance for teacher candidates. The reduction of professionalism to a list of behaviors is problematic because it allows faculty to pathologize behaviors that deviate from the normative teacher. This reduction is also in conflict with how academics and the *InTASC Standards* present

professionalism. In the *InTASC Standards*, Standard 9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice states:

The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, p. 41)

Dispositional expectations for this standard include using analysis and reflection to improve planning and practice, deepening understanding of personal biases, and understanding professional standards like codes of ethics and relevant law and policy. However, institutional and faculty interpretation of this standard describes the “professional” characteristics and behaviors expected of teacher candidates. In this way, professionalism becomes how faculty define who they believe is the normative teacher candidate. Dispositional standards of professionalism are particularly influenced by bias around race and ability in the normative teacher. Those teacher educators who have influence in creating dispositions assessments are those that embody the normative teacher.

Some of the participants’ rubrics linked their institutional dispositional descriptions to the *InTASC Standards* as part of program accreditation. The idea of Professional Learning, from Standard 9, gets reduced to a list of normative behaviors that fall under themes of professional appearance, communication, attendance, and attitude. From participants’ rubrics, professionalism is observed as how well candidates meet certain expectations. See Table 3 for details.

Table 3

Expectations of “Professionalism” in Dispositions Rubrics

Professionalism Theme	Expectation in Rubrics
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Appearance	<p>“Complies with school policies and procedures regarding professional dress.”</p> <p>“Dresses professionally.”</p> <p>“Demonstrates a professional appearance.”</p> <p>“Portrays a professional image and attitude in appearance and behavior both in and out of the workplace.”</p>
Communication	<p>“Complies with school policies and procedures regarding the use of technology.”</p> <p>“Communicates in a professional manner.”</p> <p>“Demonstrates a professional demeanor that includes socially appropriate content published on social media.”</p> <p>“Interacts with others in a positive and professional manner.”</p> <p>“Communicates professionally and effectively with students, peers, teachers, university personnel, and others.”</p> <p>“Demonstrates effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills.”</p>
Attendance	<p>“Complies with school policies and procedures regarding attendance and punctuality.”</p> <p>“Demonstrates punctuality and is present for additional activities in addition to regular teaching schedule.”</p> <p>“Arrives early or on-time.”</p> <p>“Is prompt, organized and prepared, completing required duties and tasks.”</p> <p>“Attended and arrived on time for scheduled activities and events.”</p> <p>“Arrives early to class sessions and other meetings.”</p>
Attitude	<p>“Responds to unexpected situations in a calm and reasonable manner.”</p> <p>“Displays a positive attitude.”</p> <p>“Demonstrates a professional demeanor.”</p> <p>“Demonstrates a positive and respectful attitude.”</p> <p>“Responds to unexpected situations in a calm and reasonable manner.”</p> <p>“Expresses a passion for teaching and learning.”</p> <p>“Demonstrates self-confidence through body language, voice tone, eye contact, preparedness.”</p> <p>“Collaborates with others in a positive and professional manner.”</p>

The expectations in the rubrics are subjective, and they reveal the types of characteristics teacher education faculty assume the normative teacher candidate will embody. Faculty participate in dysconscious ableism and racism when targeting deviance guided by these descriptions. Any time a teacher candidate's appearance, communication, attendance, or attitude does not match a faculty member's expectation of the normative teacher, the teacher candidate's dispositions can be questioned and named a digression. This obscures the underlying bias in naming the digression because it becomes about dispositions and not dis/ability or race.

Dispositions requiring teacher candidates to demonstrate "self-confidence through body language, voice, tone, [and] eye contact" and effective "verbal and non-verbal communication skills" describe normative body-minds by using language commonly used when identifying autism. Elisa described this process in her interview. A colleague approached Elisa, faculty in Special Education, about a student they felt needed to register with disability services. Elisa recalled: "She starts describing his body. She starts talking about like 'he won't look at me in the eye.' You know, all of the pathological things that people say about autistic people." This faculty member identified deficit communication skills in the student's behavior that aligned with expectations from dispositions. The inclusion of these subjective behaviors in dispositions assessments justifies increased scrutiny of the body-minds of teacher candidates. This leaves candidates with deviant body-minds at a disadvantage because they are now marked as different and othered. At times this leads to pathologization of their differences and faculty can make assumptions about their disability labels.

When we look with an intersectional lens at the behaviors described in Table 3, students from lower socio-economic status and students of color could also be targeted. Professional dress may be difficult for undergraduates to afford, especially during the semester of full-time student

teaching. Arriving on-time or early to school and other activities also assumes that teacher candidates have reliable personal transportation. Descriptors such as “positive and respectful attitude” and “calm and reasonable manner” are subject to bias. Devan described a Mexican American student in his program who “would share a lot about her racial experience, like microaggressions.” During her student teaching, she felt like her outspokenness caused unfair treatment from a white professor in her department. As one of the only students of color, she noticed “the racial overtones of the communication patterns that this professor was having with her” compared to her white peers when they discussed dispositions. This experience led to the student withdrawing from the program. The inclusion of behaviors like reacting calmly and having a positive attitude is one way that faculty remove or push out pre-service teachers from programs.

Furthermore, when faculty use these rubrics to target teacher candidate’s deviant behaviors, they fail to evaluate their own practice and biases, “particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others” (from *InTASC Standards* Standard 9) according to dispositions they espouse and enforce. Faculty themselves fail to meet this dispositional standard when they employ dispositions as entirely punitive. Teacher education faculty must reflect on their use of disposition assessments in practice to minimize the effect of their biases on teacher candidates.

Dispositional Discrepancies

My first formal observation went as well as it was supposed to – there was an understanding that all pre-service teachers should have a mix of scores that pinpoint areas for future growth. My dispositional scores did not raise any “red flags,” so I did not feel compelled to bring up my thoughts about how my disability was an important aspect of my teaching. While the importance of moving around a classroom had been discussed, my unique way of moving

had not been. Mrs. Polson was the embodiment of the imagined normative teacher: white, middle-class, a woman married to a man with one son. She also embodied the personality and performative qualities that are disguised as dispositions. She had “the teacher voice” and was open, friendly but firm, and energetic.

My experience demonstrates how deviant body-minds can face dispositional scrutiny from classroom host teachers and university faculty. This is further complicated by the ambiguity and inherent normativity of dispositions. According to dispositions rubrics, the normative teacher always has a positive attitude and personality. They create good rapport with students and colleagues while maintaining “appropriate relationships” with students. They are enthusiastic and energetic about teaching and have abundant self-confidence as demonstrated “through body language, voice tone, eye contact, [and] preparedness.” They are always on time or early to work and meetings and respond promptly to emails and other communication. They have a professional appearance and demeanor, especially in their dress. They have excellent verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

My body, with its required mobility equipment, did not match the imagined norm, but no one ever expressed that. In my teacher education classes, disability only came up in the Diverse Learners course Dr. Williams taught and in a culminating assignment in Dr. Reid’s class where we made modifications for an imagined disabled student with an IEP. Students could have disabilities, but teachers did not. The only time my personal disability came up in class was when Dr. Williams suggested I might understand racial oppression better than my abled white peers because of my experiences with ableism. Because disability was something students experience, not teacher candidates, my bodily difference was positioned as dispositional deficits. I lacked

confidence. I spoke too quietly and did not demonstrate expected classroom management through movement.

My personality and body-mind did not match that of the normative teacher. In our interview, Leslie, who teaches English Education courses, brought up her belief that introverts cannot be teachers. She said, “I don’t want to graduate people who aren’t going to be good teachers. A lot of people that like to read are super introverts which is fine, but you can’t be a super introvert and be a teacher. You’re going to be exhausted.” When she identifies teacher candidates as introverts and perceives them as “having a lot of trouble” in their internships, she will tell them “at this point you can graduate with an English degree, here are other careers that you might think about. I don’t push anybody out, but I just say, I want you to process this and think about it.” Targeting students based on their perceived personality deficits is one way that dispositions are negatively employed in teacher education.

Discrepancies in personality, behavior, or attitude from the normative teacher (characterized most often by white, abled womanhood) are framed as dispositional issues in teacher candidates. Teacher education faculty employ dispositions to target deficits and to justify questioning the capabilities of teacher candidates. Deviant teacher candidates must perform closer to the imagined normative teacher or be pushed out or removed from their programs. Dispositional assessments outline who the normative teacher is through standardizing behaviors, characteristics, and beliefs that institutions track as evidence of effective teaching. Faculty must be more aware of their own potential bias in interpreting and employing dispositions in practice.

In this chapter, I explored how dispositions are defined and employed by my participants and their institutions. I focus on how dispositions are mostly employed to point out perceived deficits, which are at times also disabilities. I argue that the process of assessing dispositions

illuminates the qualities teacher education faculty imagine in the normative teacher. In the next chapter, I explore the connection between the normative teacher, deficit ideologies of dis/ability, and dispositions. The ways in which dis/ability was understood by my participants matches a traditional special education ideology of disability. Disabled teacher candidates' body-minds are managed through institutional procedures that require "expert" interventions like those from disability services offices. Dis/ability is also understood as deficit through curricular expectations in teacher education programs.

Autoethnography: “Blindness in a Crip’s Classroom”

My fifth year teaching, Dr. Williams emailed me to see if I could host an intern with a special circumstance. I was teaching at the same school where I had completed my student teaching, and I had maintained relationships with my professors. I already had a student teacher that year, but the tone of Dr. Williams’ email was grave. I called her the next day to find out more. There was a junior English Education student named Krystal who needed a new placement for the spring semester internship. Dr. Williams explained

Krystal is blind. She is very independent and determined. She told me that her cooperating teacher in the fall just made her sit in a corner. It wasn’t a good fit. Krystal wasn’t learning anything. Her goal is to teach at a normal school. She doesn’t want to teach at a school for blind children. Can we arrange a meeting with you, Dr. Reid, Margaret (the pre-service teacher), Krystal, and myself? I think you’re going to get Krystal’s situation and be a better placement, but I want us all to meet first.

I agreed to the meeting. I wanted to help, but I also felt like I could never refuse Dr. Williams’ requests. She had asked Mrs. Polson for a similar favor for me just six years earlier. My disability had been an issue when finding a cooperating teacher for my senior year student teaching placement.

We all met in my classroom on a cold January teacher workday. Krystal entered holding Dr. Williams’ elbow as her guide, and I realized in that moment I had never met a blind person before. When I was an undergraduate, there was a young woman with a vision impairment who was going to teach high school Spanish. My roommate and I always referred to her as Blind Samantha. There had been no cross-disability solidarity between us. I was focused on her deficits and certain she would not make it. My thinking reflected a traditional special education ideology

of disability. Disabilities that interrupted the traditional ways of learning or teaching require interventions. Samantha always brought up her impairment and access needs in the courses we shared. Her confidence in centering her disability, drawing attention to it, made me uncomfortable. I did not want any attention drawn to my difference. I was able to successfully navigate my teacher education program because I minimized my disability and proved that I could be the normative teacher. Samantha was successful because she was a strong self-advocate and knew her educational and employment rights.

But as Krystal felt the desk Dr. Williams had stopped beside and took her seat, I smiled and pushed that memory to the edges of my mind. We had made a circle of desks for the meeting. Dr. Williams began by introducing Krystal to each of us, and then she asked Krystal to share some about why she needed a new site placement. Her previous cooperating teacher seemed uninterested in having her there. She elaborated

Most of the time she ignored me. It was like I wasn't there. She wouldn't make handouts accessible for my screen reader. I didn't get to talk with students. I just sat in the back corner and listened until it was time to go. Even the staff at the school were weird about me being there. The elevator only ran with a key, and no one would let me have one while I was there. So, once I got upstairs, I was trapped there until someone from the office came to escort me back down.

Krystal trailed off, suddenly seeming unsure, as if she may have said too much. Dr. Reid spoke next, "It's not working. We need to get you in a better internship. We just need to make sure that Margaret and Katie are comfortable with you coming here since Margaret is student teaching. We wouldn't usually have two students working with the same teacher." She looked at Margaret, and Margaret looked to me. I said, "I think we can make it work. At this point Krystal will be

observing and working one-on-one and in small groups with students. So, I don't think that will interfere with Margaret's student teaching." And Margaret added, "The more the merrier," and smiled. What I did not say was that I had no idea how Krystal could be a teacher. I knew that people thought that about me, too, so if she really wanted this, I would help.

Dr. Williams thanked us and said she would be in touch soon. She stood up and said to Krystal, "Let's get back to campus," as she touched Krystal's shoulder, signaling that they were leaving. Dr. Reid stayed and chatted with Margaret and me for a while longer, and I wondered to myself how I was going to be any better than Krystal's previous cooperating teacher. Dr. Williams viewed me as an expert, and while I was an expert in my own disability experience, I did not know how to support Krystal as a blind teacher candidate. I felt my job was to teach Krystal how to better emulate the normative teacher.

Chapter Five: THE DIS/ABILITY DEFICIT

The normative teacher is connected to the traditional special education model of disability which is the prevalent ideology of disability in teacher education. The traditional special education model, a deficit model, situates disability as a problem within the individual. In deficit models, disability is understood as physical or mental impairment that has personal consequences for the individual (Pfeiffer, 2002; Wasserman et. al., 2015). The deficit model fails to address systemic barriers that disabled students encounter because of the focus on the individual body-mind.

Lennard Davis (2006) writes that to “understand the disabled body, one must return to the concept of the norm, the normal body” (p. 3). This is particularly important because “normalcy is often assumed to be an omnipresent understanding without the need for iteration” (Baglieri et. al., 2011, p. 2130). Teacher education faculty make assumptions about who is a disability expert and who is in need of an expert, a practice which reifies “ideologies expressed in ‘regular’ education and the construction of the ‘normal’ child,” without ever having to clearly define the capabilities of the normal student (Baglieri et. al., 2011, p. 2142). Often, “social organization according to able-bodied norms is just taken as natural, normal, inevitable, necessary, even progress. ... The resulting exclusion of those who do not fit able-bodied norms may not be noticeable or even intelligible” (Delvin & Pothier, 2006, p. 7). Faculty reliance on the experts in disability services offices demonstrates a common assumption: teacher candidates may end up teaching students with disabilities, but they will not be disabled.

In this chapter, I explore how participants, regardless of their discipline or background, have internalized the normative teacher, particularly as it relates to deficit ideologies of dis/ability. Faculty explained ways teacher candidates’ disabilities are managed through

institutional procedures requiring “expert” interventions – typically through a disability services office. This process is part of the disability as deficit ideology found in the traditional special education model. Teacher education curricula is also characterized by a dis/ability deficit. Dis/ability is understood as belonging solely in special education, requiring medical, rehabilitative, and educational experts to intervene. Dis/ability is not a part of diversity or an identity point, like race or gender, upon which to reflect.

Managing Disability in Teacher Education

In interviews, I wanted to learn more about the ideologies of dis/ability at work in teacher education as well as how faculty engage with disability through the cultivation and assessment of dispositions. I learned the connection between disability and dispositions was too focused for fruitful responses, so I broadened my questioning. I asked participants about their experiences with disabled teacher candidates. I also asked participants how dis/ability is taken up in their courses, through dispositions or other material. Their responses revealed the role of the disability “expert” in teacher education. Teacher candidates’ disabilities needed to be managed by experts, and expert knowledge of dis/ability was found in special education departments.

The idea that dis/ability is not a consideration for general education faculty reflects the ideologies of the normative teacher in education. General educators distanced themselves from dis/ability in their responses to my questions. They positioned themselves as novices – lacking the expertise – to disability compared to their special education colleagues. Special Education faculty expressed the tension in being viewed as “experts” by both colleagues and students. The idea of needing expertise also surfaces in our discussions of if and how dis/ability is taken up in teacher education courses.

The “Special Needs” of Disabled Teacher Candidates

When Leslie described two students with disabilities in her courses who needed extra dispositional support, she repeated, “I’m not a special needs person,” as a preface to her anecdotes. This language of special needs is tied to traditional special education ideology which relies on deficit understandings of dis/ability. In one case, the student was registered with disability services for a language processing disability. Leslie positioned herself as someone who did not have the experience or expertise to know how to support this student. She deferred to recommendations from counselors in the disability services office. The second student was one Leslie perceived to be “on the spectrum,” and she targeted his anti-social behaviors through the assessment of his dispositions. Leslie met with the student to discuss the dispositional concerns and created five concrete goals to address the concerns. These examples illustrate two functions of the normative teacher. When teacher candidates’ dispositions deviate from the normative teacher, they must prove they can overcome these deficits. Faculty have internalized the normative teacher and assume that teacher candidates will not be disabled, so faculty defer to the recommendations of institutional disability services.

Paige and Lorelai both talked about working with disability services at their institutions in general terms. Paige, as a first-year faculty member, did not have any direct experience working with disabled teacher candidates beyond accommodation letters from disability services offices. She follows those accommodations, but she had not considered how disability and dispositions may intersect for individual students. Lorelai shared that she has several students waiting for services at her university’s counseling center. They have all disclosed to Lorelai the mental health issues they are experiencing. However, she does not “know how to approach that,” but she knows their behaviors “are going to look dispositional.” Even still, she does not feel like she can make accommodations or modifications for them without documentation from the

counseling center. The disability services model in higher education is an extension of the traditional special education model. These models reflect deficit ideologies of dis/ability.

Individual students must obtain documentation from “experts” to receive accommodations to their courses. Without the required disability documentation, faculty may not support disabled teacher candidates by making accommodations. If disabled teacher candidates are not registered with the disability services office, faculty can also interpret their disabilities as deficits in dispositions. Paige commented that the disability services model “could be relevant, if the idea of self-advocacy would be talked about explicitly as students transition to formal candidacy.” Paige connects the self-advocacy of disability disclosure to dispositions, but she is not sure how to incorporate this into her institution’s expectations. Because a disposition of self-advocacy is not assessed in her program, it further disconnects positive disability ideologies from teacher education.

Tori also relied on the disability services office at her institution for their support of disabled students. However, Tori had a positive view of the support students receive at her institution. Tori said, “I mean with the accommodations that the office of disabilities gives us and then just the things we do for students should they need it, I’ve never had an issue.” Tori’s comment reveals two points. First, Tori accepts the traditional disability services model. She accepts that individual students will need to register and disclose their disability to get necessary support in their courses. Second, Tori also indicated that she and her colleagues go beyond the required accommodations to support disabled teacher candidates. While Tori’s credit to the disability services at her institution confirms that disability must be managed by “experts,” her experience indicates that a disability services model does not always meet students’ needs. When there is a disconnect between the accommodations and students’ needs, it can appear that

students are not meeting dispositional standards. If faculty do not recognize this disconnect and provide additional support, disabled teacher candidates become deviant.

Faculty in special education programs were also viewed as disability experts who should help manage the disabilities of teacher candidates. Elisa explained how she is frequently approached by colleagues with questions about pre-service teachers with perceived disabilities. She compared this to her experiences in the K-12 education system as a special education teacher when she was expected to solve problems for general education teachers. She said of her faculty colleagues, “They see me as this answer. There’s a special ed teacher.” In one instance, Elisa’s colleague approached her about a student who refused to register with the disability services office. The colleague wanted an intervention from an expert to “fix” the student because they had to change his placement because “he wasn’t having success.” Elisa remembered that the student was successful in his new placement.

However, changing the environment and not the individual deviant behaviors was not understood as an “expert” intervention by Elisa’s colleague. Her colleague still wanted Elisa’s advice about “what to do” about the student’s non-normative behaviors and characteristics. This type of thinking reflects a medical and rehabilitation model of disability where emphasis is placed on perceived individual deficits that require cure and accommodation. Even when the change in environment helped the student, his body-mind was still deviant. Deviance is incompatible with the normative teacher, so when it cannot be masked or eliminated, the teacher candidate is still perceived as having something inherently wrong.

In addition to participants’ colleagues, students also sought out special education faculty for their expertise. Jasmin and Devan shared how disabled pre-service students would seek them out for extra support in dealing with ableist assumptions inherent in the medical and

rehabilitation models of disability. Both had students talk with them about the individual pressure they felt to conform to expectations. Devan shared he was the faculty member that students felt most comfortable sharing problems with because of his openness and critical stance. He says, “Because of the paradigm I’m coming from, a lot of my students share a lot about the larger program to me that I think they may not be sharing with other colleagues who may be the agents of oppression.” Devan most felt this tension when it came to how students in the special education program were being evaluated. For students with mental health diagnoses like anxiety, the high stakes nature of assessment can be a problem. Devan explains, “assessing is so vulnerable and emotional. It can impact a grown adult’s well-being and self-efficacy in regards to how they can persist in believing in themselves, and that’s ableism.” Teacher candidates are expected in dispositions to respect authority and have reasonable reactions to critique and criticism. Any emotional reaction to assessment contradicts the expectation of the normative teacher. Faculty assume they will encounter the normative teacher candidate and assessments and feedback are designed for the normative teacher candidate.

Jasmin had a student who did not want to utilize campus disability services because of a previous negative experience. The student did not feel like she had gotten necessary support from the office in previous semesters, and she felt stigmatized by faculty when she disclosed her disability. Jasmin tried to support the student by sharing stories from other teachers with the same disability as her and additional resources. Faculty expressed concerns with this student pursuing a career in education because “certain things matter,” like meeting professor’s expectations for assessment. However, Jasmin realized that even when she tried to diversify her own assessments, she relies “on this traditional way of assessment.” Without accommodations, the student failed to meet strict deadlines. While the student self-identified as disabled, without

the intervention from “experts,” her behaviors were deemed non-normative and some faculty were not willing to provide additional support. This demonstrates how disability only counts when an “expert” identifies it within the traditional special education ideology of disability. If teacher educators only recognize disability within this deficit paradigm, they will continue to target disabled teacher candidates’ deviance.

Dis/ability in the Teacher Education Curriculum

The assumption that teacher candidates will not be disabled is also evident in teacher education curricula. I asked participants about if or how dis/ability is included in their courses, both in terms of dispositions and content. In programs that are not preparing special and inclusive education teachers, faculty shared that their institutions have one, maybe two, courses that prepare teacher candidates for “diverse students.” Sometimes special and inclusive education faculty are asked to teach the one dis/ability related course for non-special education majors in addition to the special education courses they teach. Special and inclusive education faculty also discussed the institutional expectations they have in how they are supposed to approach disability. My participants described how in approach and content, these courses follow a traditional special education ideology and deficit-based understanding of dis/ability. Course content assumes that teacher candidates are abled and must be taught about how to work with disabled students.

In the Literacy program Sandra oversees, all instruction regarding disability is the responsibility of special education faculty. While special education majors are required to take one literacy course, Sandra positions literacy faculty as novices who cannot address dis/ability. In her working with special education faculty, she explains how separated the programs are in practice. She said:

Honestly, our literacy course is more a foundations course. Not anything specifically relating to disabilities. We don't really feel like the expert in that, and I feel like the goal is more just an overview. And the people in the special ed department, who are an expert, have additional classes they would take specifically about any type of disabilities and a wide range related to literacy.

While Sandra's program does cover "reading issues" like dyslexia, the institutional structuring of the programs, departments, and curricula separate disability as a unique topic for Special Education. This type of program and curriculum distinction is characteristic of dysconscious ableism. The belief that disability is only a topic for special education enforces a "constitutional divide between abled and disabled identities" (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017, p. 895). This ideology of disability as separate was also evident in how Sandra understood her program's dispositions.

The dispositions rubric for Sandra's program includes language of diversity and ability, but she said that most often this does not lead to discussions of disability in courses. In the program teacher candidates are expected to "recognize, understand, and value the forms of diversity that exist in society" through building a "climate of respect that fosters connection and collaboration among individuals with different backgrounds, beliefs, abilities, or circumstances." She explains that "when we're talking about diversity we're talking about socio-economic, or racial, or ethnic, religious, I don't really think that disability would be part of those conversations. It probably should be." The obstacle for Sandra is that she and her colleagues are not "knowledgeable" about dis/ability. Unlike literacy faculty who specialize in English Language Learners or other specialties, if there is no "expert" then "that's something that probably doesn't get brought up as much as something that we have an expert in." While dispositions rubrics often use the language of diversity, it is up to individual faculty to determine

what that means. A reliance on “expert knowledge” to understand disability supports the ideology of disability as separate and is based on the traditional special education model of disability.

Tori and Leslie described how dis/ability was typically approached from a modification and accommodation perspective in their courses. Leslie described how she approaches disability with teacher candidates: “You’re planning a lesson. Let’s talk about kids with different disabilities. What can you do to make modifications for them to help them learn?” This approach to disability reflects the deficit-based, individualized understanding consistent with the traditional special education model. Tori’s courses have had a similar approach to disability, but she is beginning to question the effectiveness of this. Her institution is transitioning to a new accrediting organization, and she is “trying right now to be more intentional about” how dis/ability is approached. Right now, “everything gets lumped into this whole non-traditional bucket. So, we’re readjusting some of that, too, and trying not to lump English Language Learners and autism and everything together like it traditionally gets done.” Tori recognizes that grouping all difference together creates environments where pre-service teachers “struggle when they get in the field and start having to do these things in real time and in real life.” This traditional grouping of any non-normative student together is reflected in the rhetoric of “diversity” commonly found in dispositional rubrics where students are often described as having “language and learning differences.”

Paige teaches educational foundations courses at her institution. She believes teacher candidates need to engage with their understanding of dis/ability as part of “developing critical socio-cultural consciousness.” At the time of our interview, she was teaching a course on cultural representations in children’s and adolescent’s materials, like textbooks, literature, and

multimedia. In the course culture is defined broadly, but Paige intentionally includes ability and disability as a focus in the course. As a new faculty member, Paige only felt comfortable discussing her personal practices as she is still learning the institutional culture. She remarked that her university has an “inclusivity statement,” but she is still learning if “that’s actually taken up in meaningful practices and policies.” Paige describes approaching dis/ability from an identity and cultural perspective in contrast to the traditional special education model that dominates teacher education curricula.

Leslie felt that courses in her program could do a better job talking about disabilities. She said, “We talk a lot about race, we talk a lot about gender, so I think that’s something that we can work on.” Here she is talking specifically about disability as an identity “in relation to teachers.” She shared that when she had a student with a physical disability, a mobility impairment effecting his right side, “we talked about it a lot more because it was something that was relevant to him. And he would talk about it, and then we would talk about it. So, we brought it up more.” Leslie describes how her courses incorporate critical reflection on the racial and gender identities of teacher candidates, but dis/ability as an identity point is not addressed in the same way. Broderick and Lalvani (2017) observed how “discussions of ableism in schooling and in teacher education lag decades behind similar discussions about critical multiculturalism and other facets of social justice education” (p. 902-3). Teacher candidates may be diverse in race, gender, and other aspects of identity, but the assumption is they will all be abled.

Lorelai who teaches courses for elementary education majors noted a resistance to disability related topics she brings up in her courses. When she confronts teacher candidates with “what’s going on in classrooms and what role we have in our biases,” they do not want to confront any privilege or role in oppression they or educational institutions have. This critical

reflection is an important aspect of dispositional work according to scholars (e.g., Blevins & Talbert, 2016; Connor & Gabel, 2010; Connor & Valle, 2017; Lalvani & Broderick, 2015; Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019; Ware, 2018). However, Lorelai realized “the undergrads are way less open to thinking about classrooms in that way, and I don’t know why. I think they feel like if they love kids then everything is good.” She found that teacher candidates would make assumptions and unnecessarily differentiate materials and lessons based on perceived dis/ability. While Lorelai tried to shift teacher candidates’ deficit-based understanding of disability, their resistance reflects the internalized reliance on a traditional special education ideology of disability.

The resistance to asset-based ideologies of disability that Lorelai found in her undergraduate courses is something Elisa experienced as well in her special education courses. Elisa approaches dis/ability from a Disability Studies in Education perspective which resists the deficit paradigm and rejects that people with disabilities are abnormal; Disability Studies scholars instead highlight the social, economic, and institutional barriers that construct people as disabled (Shakespeare, 2018). In her courses, Elisa uses first-person perspectives from disabled people to supplement the traditional approaches to teaching about different disability labels. She says, “I’m measuring success by their ability to kind of see things from a different paradigm. But I also think that’s completely unrealistic for a one-off class.” The dysconscious ableism in teacher education curricula cannot be addressed through one course in a program. Elisa’s frustration is compounded by students’ traditional expectations. She describes that even after a semester of work using asset-based ideologies of disability, she consistently receives feedback on evaluations like, “Elisa taught us a lot about how to advocate for students, but what she didn’t tell us as what to do if we got an autistic student.” Special education students expect to learn

specific interventions based on disability diagnosis from a deficit-based understanding of disability. If most teacher education courses continue to approach disability from a traditional special education model, then the work of individual teacher education faculty to disrupt deficit-based beliefs about disability will not be successful.

Devan was the only participant who spoke of acknowledging the disabilities of teacher candidates as integral to his practice. One of the courses he teaches focuses on transition plans in Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for students with disabilities. The course's culminating assignment is a transition portfolio. Devan allows pre-service teachers to create the portfolio based on their own experiences (if they had an IEP) or a disabled sibling's experience. Devan recognizes some "my teacher candidates have come to special education from very personal backgrounds around disability. So, they have a wealth of resources in the community to practice their praxis and learn these tools with students or family members they have access to." Devan positions disabled teacher candidates' experiences as assets. This is different than a traditional special education model which relies on "experts" to explain the needs and experiences of students with disabilities. Through incorporating the experiences of disabled teacher candidates in his special education courses, Devan is challenging this traditional role of experts as abled teachers, counselors, and medical professionals. He is also challenging the characteristics of the normative teacher, by acknowledging that teachers can also be disabled.

Jasmin shared how she had to advocate for field placement changes for some of her students because her institution had placed them in self-contained, emotional support, special education classrooms. The cooperating teachers in these classrooms relied on a deficit-based, medical model perspective which meant they were "treating students in very different ways than we hope" pre-service teachers will encounter. While it is a reality that these spaces continue to

exist in schools, Jasmin felt it was her program's responsibility to challenge traditional special education ideology where segregated classrooms are acceptable. Jasmin went with two other faculty members who shared her position and "brought up the concern that this may not be the ideal place for our students to the dean and the chair of our department and the director of the field placement." Jasmin felt like this advocacy was possible because of shared understanding "about what special educators should understand about students with disabilities." Challenging traditional special education ideology and treatment of disabled students has larger implications for teacher education curricula and practice. How dis/ability is understood by teacher educators impacts how they teach about dis/ability and support disabled teacher candidates.

Teaching the Norm

The traditional special education ideology of dis/ability is the norm in teacher education. Teacher education faculty approach dis/ability from this deficit ideology either by adopting it or trying to disrupt it. Faculty like Leslie, Tori, and Lorelai work within the traditional systems of disability. Faculty like Elisa work to disrupt this system, but the traditional system remains intact. Regardless of teacher educators' personal beliefs, the traditional special education model is the basis by which dis/ability is understood. When it comes to disabled teacher candidates this ideology has two implications. First, disabled teacher candidates' body-minds must be managed by "experts" through disability services at institutions. Second, dis/ability is approached in the content of teacher education courses in a special education context. Teacher candidates may be learning to work with disabled students, but they are not disabled themselves. The normative teacher is abled, and teacher education courses are designed under this assumption.

When pre-service teachers disclose disability or are presumed to have a disability, the label becomes the rationale for decisions and actions made regarding the candidates' professional

trajectories. Disability services focus on intervention at the site of disability—rather than intervening in teacher preparation structures and practices—and pursue rehabilitation to the norm as a key goal. Collins and Bilge (2016) suggest that examining “the structural domain of power shows how schooling institutionalizes sorting mechanisms” is part of the necessary work of intersectional critical inquiry and praxis. Therefore, considering how teacher education programs uphold ableism in practice and curricula is a necessary pursuit in intersectional work because intersectionality “aims to account for relationships, collusions, and disjunctures among forms and sites of power” (May, 2017, p. 23). The focus on disability and intervention may also obscure how race and other identities are impacting decisions made by teacher education faculty. Furthermore, the rehabilitative model of disability found in traditional special education ideology and service models of disability assert people with disabilities have deficits that must be corrected to approximate or emulate normative body-minds. In the case of pre-service teachers, any deviation from white, abled, womanhood can be perceived as a deficit in contrast to the normative teacher.

Disabled teacher candidates’ success is tied to their ability to approximate the normative teacher. They must minimize and play into the overcoming narrative because while their future students will have disabilities, they cannot. My own success as a disabled teacher candidate, and then teacher, were possible because except for my physical disability, I was the normative teacher. I was the normative white woman for whom teacher education programs are designed. My disability did not require managing by “experts,” and I never registered with disability services at my university. Through my teacher education program, I was taught, along with my abled peers, to emulate the normative teacher through course content and dispositions. However,

disabled teacher candidates with different disabilities and identities than mine may not be as successful in approximating the normative teacher.

I find Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) basement analogy from "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" applicable to how disabled teacher candidates are positioned in teacher education programs. Crenshaw writes:

Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of race, sex, class, sexual preference, age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked – feet standing on shoulders – with those on the bottom being disadvantaged by the full array of factors, up to the very top, where the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are not disadvantaged in any way reside. In efforts to correct some aspects of domination, those above the ceiling admit from the basement only those who can say that "but for" the ceiling, they too would be in the upper room. A hatch is developed through which those placed immediately below can crawl. Yet this hatch is generally available only to those who – due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below – are in the position to crawl through. Those who are multiply-burdened are generally left below unless they can somehow pull themselves into the groups that are permitted to squeeze through the hatch.

(p. 151-2)

In the context of teacher education, the normative teachers "are not disadvantaged in any way" and occupy the room above the basement. In teacher education, teacher candidates can be disadvantaged on the basis of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability because the

normative teacher embodies white, middle-class, heterosexual, abled womanhood. In the basement are teacher candidates whose body-minds are deviant in any way from this norm. Teacher candidates like me who, “but for” my disability, closely match the characteristics of the normative teacher are closest to the ceiling. The more deviant a body-mind, or more characteristics that do not match the normative teacher, the harder it becomes for these teacher candidates to pull themselves into the normative group.

When I met Krystal, I only had my own disability knowledge and memories of Samantha as examples of being blind and teaching. I was convinced as an undergraduate that Samantha, who was visually impaired but not blind, could not be a teacher. I believed that teachers need to see to teach. However, Samantha started teaching at a high school in the same district and year as me. She was still teaching when I left, but I continued to wonder how she taught. Krystal struck me as less capable than Samantha because she has no sight. Krystal’s blindness was an insurmountable obstacle in my mind. Could I reach down through the hatch and pull Krystal up to upper room? And should I if I doubted her ability to be successful?

I did not recognize it at the time, but I felt obligated as a disabled teacher to teach Krystal how to become the normative teacher. Her previous cooperating teacher had ignored her. I felt the personal hurt of that ableist discrimination, but I struggled with feeling obligated while not knowing how Krystal could become an English teacher. I had internalized the normative teacher, and because my proximity meant I was successful, I believed that there were certain qualities and beliefs teachers needed. Like me, Sandra has internalized the normative teacher. Sandra had no examples of working with pre-service teachers with disabilities. She suggested that may be because of the type of students her university attracts: “[the university] is really competitive to get into, so our students are achievers, Type A, like emailing me before the semester even begins

asking for the syllabus.” Sandra may have encountered disabled teacher candidates without realizing it because they appeared to be normative teachers, or the expectation of the normative teacher had kept disabled teacher candidates from her program.

Leslie reflected on her own negative assumptions and bias around disabled teacher candidates by saying, “Those are the thoughts we have, and we have to recognize them and then we say, no no no.” In Krystal’s case, I said ‘no no no’ aloud, but my internal dialogue was far more critical. Dr. Williams and Krystal had asserted her independence – something I had been forced to do countless times when proving my proximity to the normative teacher. But I did not believe Krystal’s independence. My teacher education journey taught me that teachers did not have disabilities that required modifications to traditional teaching methods. I would like to say that Krystal and I together imagined a future classroom for her where she would thrive. However, my own internalized ableism prevented radical imagining. I worked to include Krystal in the classroom on the days she observed. She interacted with students and asked lots of questions. “But for” her blindness, she was the normative teacher, but in my mind that was not enough.

Teacher education programs continue to rely on deficit understandings of dis/ability in their approaches to working with disabled teacher candidates. This deficit understanding upholds the normative teacher – one without disability. When pre-service teachers have disabilities that interfere with normative teaching expectations, there is a pattern to faculty responses. First, the increased scrutiny leads to expert intervention, typically from the disability services office. If the teacher candidate “corrects” their deficits and closer approximates the normative teacher, the digression is resolved. However, if the disability cannot be managed through intervention, faculty can turn to dispositions to further scrutinize these candidates. They often remain in

Crenshaw's metaphorical basement, unable to pull themselves up through the hatch. The most deviant body-minds are forced out of programs or leave instead of facing the ableist system. Finally, internalized ableism is at work in this system. Disabled teacher candidates, like myself, benefit from being the normative teacher "but for" our disabilities. However, we still internalize the shame and stigma of the ableist system.

In the next chapter, I explore how faculty position disabled teacher candidates across a spectrum of deviance. Some disabilities, like my own, do not disrupt the concept of the normative teacher. When a disability is irreconcilable with the normative teacher, teacher candidates face increased scrutiny from faculty. The anecdotes that faculty shared with me suggests that the prevailing traditional special education ideology of disability in teacher education will always result in some body-minds being too deviant to become teachers.

Autoethnography: “Putting Feelers Out for Your Situation”

My “Diverse Learners” class had just ended, and I packed away my notebook and placed my bag in between my feet on my scooter chair. The auditorium in the School of Education building was too large for our forty-five-student class, and it was built so long ago there was no place for someone in a wheelchair to sit comfortably. My physical separation from the rest of students exacerbated the stigma I felt as a new wheelchair user (Goffman, 1963; Linton, 1998; Siebers, 2008). I had positioned myself on the left side of the auditorium, not too far from the front, in the narrow side aisle. As students stood to leave, the theater-style seats creaked, and the seats banged back into their upright positions. A gentle hum of many conversations filled the space.

I took a deep breath to steady my heartrate, I could feel my pulse quickening and my face becoming flush with nerves. I needed to talk to the professor. Student teaching placements were supposed to begin next week, but without transportation, my placement was undecided. I had returned to college after a spinal fusion surgery and was now using a wheelchair all the time. Although no one had ever said so, I could tell I was the first physically disabled pre-service teacher the program had enrolled in recent memory.

The previous spring semester, when I returned after a semester of medical leave, I arranged to do my internship at the same school as my roommate. She had been willing to drive us and help me by getting my wheelchair in and out of the car. But she wanted to teach middle school, while I was only going to be certified for high school; it was not possible for us to do our student teaching at the same school. Plus, I got the feeling that relying on someone else for transportation was frowned upon.

Before my spinal fusion surgery, I used a scooter as a mobility aid, but I also could walk short distances, stand for short periods of time, and drive a standard vehicle. I was disabled but not in ways that deviated very far from the normative teacher. There were times when I could still pass as abled. In my previous internships, I never brought my scooter with me. I had hidden my bodily difference as much as I could from the teachers and students I worked with before. The semester I returned, I was so overwhelmed with adjusting to my new lived experience, I did not realize the new forms of ableism I was experiencing.

Dr. Williams had told me the week before that she was “putting some feelers out” to find a good match for my “situation.” While she had never said what my “situation” was, I knew it was not just that I needed to find wheelchair accessible transportation. There was an unspoken understanding that she needed to find a cooperating teacher who would welcome a disabled student teacher. Perhaps welcome is not even the right word. I was beginning to realize just how hostile people could be towards me now that I used a wheelchair all the time. Maybe it was more a matter of finding someone who would tolerate my deviant body for an entire year.

I rolled slowly to the podium where Dr. Williams was still standing and chatting with other students. She was wearing one of her many brocade jackets, and the gold embroidery gave her light brown skin a warmth it would have lacked under the harsh florescent lights. Her chin length bob gave her face a sharpness that matched how intimidated I felt by her. I waited for my classmates to leave, rolled up to the podium, and looked up at Dr. Williams; she peered down at me from behind her thick black framed glasses.

I began, “So, I think I’ve figured out how to get to a placement as long as it’s in city limits. There’s a handicap bus I can call and schedule rides with, but it only gives rides in city limits.” I looked up at Dr. Williams; she leaned against the podium and smiled slightly. Then she

said, “There’s a teacher at a school downtown who owes me a favor. She’s about to go on leave for back surgery, so I don’t know if she’ll agree right away. But I can use your surgery to make a connection and convince her, I think!”

I remember the sting of realizing that my good grades and successful internships were not enough to convey my worth as a future teacher and tears filled my eyes. I quickly erased my embarrassment from my face and smiled. I assured Dr. Williams that a high school downtown would work with the bus and thanked her for the extra work she was doing for me. I turned my scooter around and rolled quickly up the auditorium incline to the exit. Outside the doors my roommate was waiting for me. She asked if I had my placement, and I said, “Not yet. Dr. Williams thinks she may know someone who will take me though. Progress, right?”

My peers had been matched with their cooperating teachers based on their personalities, shared interests, and strengths and weaknesses. Dr. Williams had been following all secondary education students since our first internships. She tracked our dispositions and evaluations from internships, and she used this information to arrange our student teaching placements. My “situation” meant that my placement would not be given the same considerations. The potential stigma against a disabled pre-service teacher discredited my accomplishments. Dr. Williams’ progress in finding a cooperating teacher who would work with me did not feel like progress at all. However, I knew that when Dr. Williams found a cooperating teacher for me, I had to make it work. I might not get another chance.

Chapter Six: DISABLING DISPOSITIONS

In this chapter, I explore the impact of the assessment of dispositions on disabled teacher candidates' experiences/progressions in programs. In my data analysis, I made comparisons across the horizontal axis – participant interviews – to learn more about faculty interactions with disabled pre-service teachers. In these interactions, faculty relied on their internalized normative expectations of who should become a teacher and the special education model of dis/ability and disability services to make decisions about disabled teacher candidates. When teacher candidates did not match the dispositional norm, faculty used a disability intervention model approach to address the deficits they perceived.

Teacher candidates are expected to have or approximate the qualities of the normative teacher or learn to before they graduate. The normative teacher is one who embodies white, middle-class, mono-lingual, heterosexual, abled womanhood. Teacher educators assume pre-service teachers should emulate the normative teacher. Faculty target teacher candidates who do not match this norm through interventions based on dispositional assessments. The disposition assessment, intervention, and re-assessment cycle is driven by a compulsion for abledness. A compulsion for abledness reflects the desire and preference for normalcy (McRuer, 2013; Scott, 2018). Being abled “means being capable of the normal physical exertions,” as well as the mental and emotional capacity, “required in a particular system of labor” (McRuer, 2013, p. 91). For teachers, dispositions reveal the physical, mental, and emotional expectations of the profession. The teaching profession values body-minds for their productivity and ability to embody the normative teacher.

Digressions from the Normative Teacher

At times pre-service teachers with disabilities are positioned by faculty as lacking dispositions or essential teaching qualities in their programs. I propose there is a connection between disability and dispositions in how they are used in teacher education programs to discredit disabled teacher candidates. At the core of this connection is deficit-based pathologization common in traditional special education understanding of disability and a compulsion for abledness. Faculty may first be aware of a perceived deficit due to disability and then use dispositions as an avenue for intervention, or faculty may first recognize a deficit in dispositions and then read disability into the experience. For disabled student teachers, the closer they can appear to the normative notion of a teacher, the less scrutiny they face from teacher education faculty.

Often this increased scrutiny surfaces as the result of a dispositions system organized around identifying digressions or deficits and implementing an intervention. In many teacher education programs, there are protocols in place for when dispositional issues occur. Tori calls these issues *digressions*. At her university she describes

how it is set up: a certain number of digressions and then there's a dispositions committee, and should you reach the point where you get to the dispositions committee you can get removed. And then there's like the school district is basically going to kick you out, and you won't be allowed to be certified in the state.

Tori describes a system of interventions, where specific behaviors and deficits are documented, and a plan is implemented to correct them. When candidates fail to align themselves with the dispositional norm, their candidacy is jeopardized. Tori's description of dispositional digressions also connects the university requirements to state licensure requirements. High-level digressions, like illegal activity or physical violence, are rare in Tori's experience.

More common than illegal activity, is when a teacher candidate's behaviors do not align with dispositional expectations. Leslie described placing students on "programs" for dispositional issues. While these were less formal than Tori's institutional disposition's committee, Leslie and her colleagues use dispositions as a conversation starter for deviant behaviors. She describes:

We put them all on programs. And so, what I mean by that is that concrete thing I was talking about. ... We would use the dispositions as a prompt. It's nice because I could say, you got to have this. Then we would say ... here are three to five goals. Very tangible concrete goals.

In this framing, dispositions are a concept that can be operationalized in interventions for deviant behavior. When a teacher candidate presents as outside the normative ideas of who should be a teacher, these interventions are more common.

In the examples that follow, I examine how teacher education faculty position different disabled student teachers' dispositions across a spectrum of deviance in relation to the normative teacher. I organize the examples based on the teacher candidates' disclosed or perceived disability labels. This organization highlights how the type of disability is less important than how faculty position teacher candidates in proximity to the norm through the assessment of dispositions. Pre-service teachers with the same disability label can have very different outcomes based on their interactions with faculty and the support they receive. The more normative a disabled student teacher appears and performs regardless of disability label the more willing faculty are to support them in becoming teachers. These examples highlight dysconscious ableism of teacher educators, significant obstacles in supporting disabled students in becoming

teachers, and insufficient institutional frameworks of disability based on the traditional special education model of disability.

Students with Learning Disabilities

Jasmin is a newer Special Education faculty member at a small private college. In her first year, she had a student who she felt was very bright and a “critical thinker” – the student had excelled in Jasmin’s course. However, when the student started her field work, she struggled with writing lesson plans. Jasmin described the student as passionate about teaching: “she loves teaching students, she loves being with students, she’s good at performing the lesson,” but the student’s academic deficits removed her from the norm. Jasmin recalled that the student “has everything in her mind but typing her thinking to a lesson plan format is such a difficult thing.” The student came to Jasmin when she realized her academic performance was not meeting faculty expectations. Faculty recognized an incompatibility between the student’s lesson planning skills and the normative teacher.

Jasmin said the student is not registered with disability services because “she had pretty negative experiences with the people working there,” but she self-identifies as having ADHD and a learning disability. Jasmin tried to encourage her to seek support because she believed that “we need more teachers with different experiences, [she] will serve students much better.” However, Jasmin admitted that the student would likely have to retake an entire semester of courses because of her grades, and the student will continue to face increased scrutiny from other faculty members. The normative teacher candidate makes good grades. Jasmin recognizes the value of disabled teachers working with students, and she positions this student as a future asset to the teaching profession. Without formal identification and disclosure of disability, Jasmin’s colleagues could frame the student’s deficits as entirely dispositional (the student is lazy or does

not meet professional expectations) and absolve themselves from providing her with any extra support. At the time of our interview, Jasmin's student had not been removed, nor had the student decided about continuing in the program.

Leslie also described a student with a learning disability who failed the semester of student teaching. Leslie described her student with similar language – someone who was enthusiastic about teaching and good in front of kids – however, “she never completed the work that she was supposed to do,” and Leslie “was not confident that she should be a teacher.” Leslie described her student as needing “more time to process,” so Leslie, the cooperating teacher, and student teacher supervisor all decided, along with the disability services office, that extending the student's student teaching by an additional semester was a reasonable accommodation.

Leslie highlighted a tension in her past experience, as a high school English teacher, and her current role in determining workplace accommodations: “I was not a special needs teacher, so I did not diagnose people, so I don't know if processing goes along with ADHD. ... I remember her saying like she would have a hard time focusing, which I could definitely tell, but then also she would get super focused on something.” Even though Leslie was not qualified to diagnose her student, she relies on the language of pathologization – processing, ADHD, focus – to explain deviant behaviors in her student. Leslie remembered the student writing more than fifty pages for a lesson plan at one point, saying, for the student “it was this balance of knowing when to focus just enough to get [work] done.” Although Leslie describes a common challenge for the student – trouble with focusing (either too much or not enough) – the only accommodation provided is an additional semester of student teaching. It is possible that Leslie's student needed different or additional accommodations to the extended student teaching semester, but Leslie was not aware of what those might be. Because she does not have

experience with disability, Leslie defers to the recommendations of the disability services office. This positions the teacher candidate as lacking normative qualities and absolves Leslie from learning how to best support disabled student teachers.

Lorelai reiterated several times how complex disability makes the assessments of dispositions in programs. Recently, she had a student who had not disclosed her learning disability. Other faculty members approached Lorelai with concerns about the student who was in danger of failing courses. The student's professionalism was in question because she was late to her field placement multiple times and she was not turning in lesson plans until the night before. Faculty members came to Lorelai asking about this student because "she just didn't get things." Lorelai called the student in for a meeting, and the student told Lorelai that she has a language processing disorder. She had not disclosed before because she was "afraid people would start basing judgments on what she could or couldn't do and expectations" based on the label. However, in the absence of disability disclosure, the student was scrutinized through the mechanism of dispositions for failing to maintain professionalism.

All three of these examples also highlight a problem with the institutional framework for disability services. Jasmin's and Lorelai's students felt stigmatized by the disability services model. Jasmin's student felt unsupported in her courses when she was registered with disability services. She decided to stop registering and disclosing her disability as a result. Lorelai's student never registered because of her fear of stigma. Both students did well enough in their courses to progress to field work where their dispositions were questioned. It was the addition of teaching expectations to academic expectations that revealed the breakdown in institutional support for disability. Leslie's student's experiences and academic accommodations did not translate to a professional teaching environment. The student completed an additional semester

of student teaching, but she never turned in the required unit plan and reflection. After the additional semester of student teaching, Leslie reframes her student's perceived deficits as dispositional instead of disability related. Her student simply did not meet professional expectations. This reframing justifies the student's failure and exit from the program.

Students with Cognitive and Developmental Disabilities

Elisa remembered a student from early in her career that had returned to university with a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) after a cycling accident. Before the accident, he wanted to teach secondary history, but he switched his major to Special Education when he returned. Faculty members used his TBI to position him as too disabled to teach. Elisa said he had failed student teaching twice by the time he became her student. Elisa said the injury had "affected his short-term memory," so what they did together was "come up with systems" of support for his memory challenges. While she worked to create accommodations and modifications for him to successfully manage a caseload of special education students, her colleagues maintained he could not be a teacher. He failed a third and final time.

Elisa tried to position him as an important role model for students with disabilities: "we should have him working with young people with disabilities to like build the lives that they want." Elisa positioned the teacher candidate as competent and capable in his role in a high school transition program. She described how "he got it in terms of thinking about crafting individual lives for people." However, the teacher candidate's perceived deficits from his TBI were too great. In the body-mind dichotomy, the mind of future teachers is especially important to faculty. Because he could not always immediately recall students' names, Elisa's colleagues felt that his short-term memory issues posed a possible safety issue in addition to questioning his capacity to build relationships with students.

This student's experience highlights how even when faculty think creatively and inclusively about disabled teachers, they meet obstacles that are sometimes difficult or impossible to surpass. Elisa and the student working out a system so that he always had the students' names and pictures with him, but his inability to match the face and name from memory was an insurmountable obstacle for faculty. His deviant memory became the defining characteristic of his dispositions and teaching. Elisa's experience with her colleagues demonstrates how there are some disabilities that are deemed incompatible with the teaching profession.

Leslie had a student she felt may be "on the spectrum" although he did not disclose any disability to her. She used the dispositions rubric to meet with him and come up with an intervention plan. The intervention with this student was to require specific communication behaviors, such as greeting his students at the door. The importance of a specific type of communication is clear to Leslie:

He was super smart but just a little off. He wasn't cued into that social intelligence. And as a former teacher that makes me think I wonder if that's more of Asperger's or something, ... but I never said anything to him honestly because we were able to have a conversation about it. We were able to make a plan, and it worked, and worked rapidly. It wasn't that big of a deal.

Because the candidate was able to start communicating with students in more conventional and acceptable ways, both his disability and dispositional status are resolved. He more closely approximated the normative teacher after the interventions, so he was allowed to continue as a teacher candidate. Leslie's intervention was successful. However, when interventions do not work, deficits associated with perceived disabilities are framed as student's dispositions.

Elisa described how she was approached by other faculty members to help “fix” a student who is autistic. A colleague approached Elisa about a student who “wouldn’t make eye contact,” had “terrible handwriting,” and would get “agitated” – descriptors that Elisa recognized as “all the pathological things people say about autistic people.” Elisa’s colleague was frustrated that this student would not register with disability services, but she was not clear as to what she wanted disability services to do. Elisa said: “And she kept talking, I said I really wonder if you just have really normative expectations for who you think should be a teacher. So that is not a disposition, but I suspect that it would be used in the student’s case to make the case of why he couldn’t be an effective teacher.” The student’s behaviors deviated so far from the norm that his teacher candidacy was jeopardized. Elisa’s colleague wanted him to register with disability services as a desperate measure to “correct” these behaviors – a reflection of the traditional special education ideology of disability. At the time of our interview, Elisa did not know if the student was still in the program.

These exchanges highlight the dysconscious ableism present in teacher education. Teacher educators use deficit-based naming of disability characteristics found in the traditional special education ideology of disability. Teacher education faculty rely on this deficit model in their approaches to managing disability because it is the “normative way of thinking and naming experience” (King, 1991, p. 207). Disability status, or perceived disability, complicates how behaviors are interpreted in teacher candidacy because faculty often react according to the traditional special education disability ideology. When teacher candidates are not receptive to interventions, or interventions do not work the way faculty expect, their candidacy is jeopardized. In some cases, even when teacher candidates find accommodations that work for

their teaching, faculty still deny them entry to the profession because they deviate too far from the norm.

Students with Mental Health Disabilities

Several participants noted a growing number of teacher candidates with mental health disabilities. Participants with more years of experience noted an increase in the number of students who disclosed their disabilities and registered with disability services for mental health diagnoses. Newer faculty spoke of mental health issues as a given for students. Participants positioned mental health issues as incompatible with the teaching profession and as a problem in need of a timely solution.

Devan spoke about mental health in terms of stress and self-efficacy. He has noticed that students are increasingly anxious because of the high-stakes nature of assessments and reaching milestones in teacher education programs. In particular, he recalled a conversation with an older student, a man in his fifties, who was taking courses to add a teaching certification. The student approached him after another faculty member had “chewed him out about his performance.” Devan believes that faculty need to be more mindful and critical of “the way we assess [because] assessing is so vulnerable and emotional it can impact a grown adults’ well-being and self-efficacy.” Students with anxiety and other mental health labels could stray from the idea of normative teacher if they are perceived as not being receptive to feedback. This is a commonly assessed disposition, but faculty may not be accounting for how assessment practices impact students.

In the past several years, Tori has noticed an increase in depression and anxiety among her students, at least insofar as they are registering with disability services to receive accommodations. In her experience, these labels have not drastically impacted student

performance in her program. However, she recently had a veteran with PTSD in her class, and he did not complete his student teaching. She explained:

He was having panic attacks in the classroom. We had conversations about it. It was terrifying for him to be up in front of the students, and so that became an issue. There was nothing that we had to do; it was just a conversation because he called us in and decided he wanted to take a break from the licensure portion of the program.

Tori states that “there was nothing we had to do” in response to the student’s deviant behaviors because he took a break from the program. This implies that, had he not voluntarily left the licensure portion, Tori and the institution would have intervened. While teacher candidates with depression and anxiety are often perceived as close enough to the normative teacher to successfully complete programs, PTSD and panic attacks were too far from the norm for Tori’s student to complete his field experience.

Lorelai expressed concern and frustration with the current institutional and professional response to students and teachers with mental health disabilities. Like Tori, she has also noticed an increase in students disclosing mental health disabilities in her program. She admitted that she is not sure how to approach mental health disabilities saying, “Right now, I know we have two students, one feels very depressed and the other is highly anxious. And health services says they’re full and can’t see them. And those things are going to look dispositional.” Lorelai makes two important points here: 1) the university’s support systems (here, health services) are not adequate to help students, and 2) mental health disabilities will appear as dispositional digressions. She elaborates:

It shows up in classwork ... meeting deadlines. What if that morning you can’t even get out of bed? And so, is that something that we work with? Is it a disability? Do we

consider having some kind of modifications for that? Or is it just, I'm sorry you couldn't get out of bed so you can't be a teacher? I don't know. . . . We hold teachers to such high standards. So, you missed two days, you couldn't possibly be a teacher, and yet, if they were interning at an engineering firm, it probably wouldn't even come up.

Lorelai seemed frustrated by a lack of institutional support and understanding for students with mental health disabilities. Her own limitations in not understanding how to support students is compounded by an institutional infrastructure that is not capable of handling the student demand for mental health counseling. Teacher candidates with depression and anxiety must manage their disabilities without intervention because taking time off or needing extra time for lesson planning is incompatible with the normative teacher.

While different from a typical mental health label, Leslie talked about confronting a student she felt “was off” due to alcohol and prescription drug use. This was a post-traditional student who was returning to college after having another career. Leslie shared that she knew he had a back injury, but she suspected he often came to class under the influence of narcotics and alcohol: “You could tell things were off. I remember smelling alcohol on his breath. I remember him talking about how he had hurt his back, and he was also on pain medications. So, I could tell he was in an altered state a lot.” This “altered state” was a problem only when the student began behaving in ways that made Leslie uncomfortable.

She framed these behaviors as dispositional issues, saying that in interactions he “seemed a little volatile.” When she brought up her concerns with another faculty member, her colleague shared similar concerns and had even saved emails from the student that “were on the verge of being a little scary.” Following protocols, Leslie and her colleague arranged a meeting with the student and the Dean of Students, but he never showed and subsequently withdrew from the

program. The Dean even recommended that Leslie and her colleague lock their classroom and office doors because they “thought there was going to be some sort of backlash because [they] were never able to help, to talk to him.” Leslie regrets how it ended with this student because she understands dispositions as a tool to foster conversation and teacher candidate growth. However, when the teacher candidate’s dispositions strayed too far from the norm, his alcohol and prescription drug use were a problem. While alcohol and prescription drug abuse are a problem, this example is notable because of how dispositions are utilized to act against the student. Leslie’s use of descriptors like “altered state,” “volatile,” and “backlash” are indicative of perceived mental illness or instability, and Leslie’s example highlights how candidates who appear mentally unstable are at risk of being removed from programs through dispositional scrutiny.

The ways faculty positioned students with mental health disabilities reveals how these perceived deficits are incompatible with teaching. When mental health issues disrupt normative teaching expectations teacher candidates face increased scrutiny. The normative teacher has the capacity to handle the mental and emotional exertions of teaching without extra support or medication. It becomes the responsibility of faculty to enforce compulsory abledness in these instances. Mental health deviations from the normative body-mind are perceived as individual problems by teacher education faculty. Even when teacher candidates seek mental health support, these deficits are positioned as incompatible with teaching.

Students with Physical Disabilities

Physical disability is a broad label that encompasses mobility, vision, and hearing impairments among others. In the examples given by participants, students’ proximity to the normative teacher was the determining factor in how their experiences were framed. Tori gave

an example of a student in an online program who has multiple sclerosis. The student is registered with disability services and still participates in a field placement despite the program being entirely online. Tori describes the student as “a wonderful student in general in the sense that she’s really thoughtful about her work.” The student has an accommodation for extra time on assignments when she experiences a “flare up” and her body needs to rest. Tori did not elaborate on whether the student had utilized her accommodations, but it did not seem to matter because of the student’s performance. Tori framed this student as standing out because of her thoughtfulness which indicates that her academic performance is exceptional. But for her multiple sclerosis, the student is the normative teacher plus being an exceptional student. This student’s experience demonstrates how being closer to the normative teacher makes disability less of an issue for programs.

Leslie recalled a similar experience with a student whose gait was impacted by a mobility impairment. She remembered “something had happened to left side of his body. The whole left side, and he kind of had a limp, and I think that was due to some sort of accident when he was younger.” In this student’s case his disability did not impact his academic performance, in fact, Leslie frames how he handles his impairment as an asset. She remembered,

one of the first things that he did in the internship of his student teaching was tell the story. I think he did it along with an assignment. ... He liked the way he handled that because he felt like the elephant was out of the room. He did it in a way that fostered compassion from students because they were also supposed to share a story about some something, you know, kind of related. So, I thought that was interesting and smart of him.

Leslie’s student felt the need to manage his disability because of the presumed stigma he would encounter from the students in his class. She positions the student as smart for minimizing his

disability while fostering compassion and connection with students. Other than potential curiosity or stigma related to his disability, this teacher candidate was a normative teacher.

Lorelai told me at the time of her interview about an incoming student who uses a wheelchair. Her university's education department has only had two other wheelchair users in recent memory. The student reached out to Lorelai before she applied because she "was trying to decide if [teaching is] something that she can physically do." Lorelai felt like that was not a question for her to answer, and that the student should be given the opportunity to try the program regardless of her future ability to teach. Another faculty member on the MAT in Elementary Teaching team was very skeptical of admitting this student. Lorelai recalled him saying, "I don't know. Well, I'm just thinking we should probably call principals and ask them if they would hire someone like that." Lorelai admitted the student to the program, but her colleague still called principals. Her colleague's inability to imagine a disabled teacher as employable further illustrates how physical disability separates teacher candidates from the normative teacher. His reservations also point to bias that disabled pre-service teachers will encounter in their programs.

Lorelai positioned herself and the MAT program in such a way that removed employment from the conversation. Lorelai recalled from her conversation that she said, "Are you saying that we don't admit her and develop her as a teacher because she may not get hired? Which we have no real authority on," and "just because you have a degree in education, you can do a million things, it doesn't even mean she wants to be in a classroom." These statements minimize the responsibility faculty have in supporting disabled teacher candidates.

Lorelai also shared how a visually impaired student prompted her program to devise Technical Standards that teacher candidates must meet in addition to content, pedagogy, and

disposition standards. Lorelai said this student was “really struggling to teach reading” because of the sight-based expectations of teaching, and faculty members were not sure how to approach the issue. Here the institutional mechanisms to manage disability were not adequate, so technical standards were created to resolve the issue by forcing out student teachers who are too disabled. The technical standards outline what teachers must be able to do with reasonable accommodations, like read, stand, talk, or hear. Pre-service teachers review these standards and then sign their names indicating that “with accommodations [they] can successfully do those things.” Lorelai’s program modeled these technical standards after the Birth – K program’s technical standards. The purpose of these technical standards was to create an assessment or checklist for the qualities of teachers that do not clearly fit into dispositional or performance standards. Therefore, they function as an additional way to question a teacher candidate’s capability when the teacher candidate demonstrates normative dispositions.

Physical disabilities disrupt some of the most basic assumptions about who we imagine to be teachers. We imagine that teachers will stand as they teach, write on the board, walk around their classrooms to work with individual and small groups of students, and have sight and hearing to interact with students. Teacher candidates with these types of apparent impairments must prove how they can overcome their perceived deficits to move closer to the norm. In some cases, having exceptional skills and characteristics in other areas was a way teacher candidates could prove their worth. Physical disabilities that do not disrupt normative teaching, like Tori’s and Leslie’s students and my own, can be positioned as assets. However, the same type of disabilities can easily be positioned as incompatible with teaching based entirely on normative assumptions.

Revisiting Our “Situation”

I was overwhelmed by relief and gratitude when Dr. Williams found a cooperating teacher for my senior year field experience. My gratitude for Dr. Williams was part of my larger internalized ableism. At the time, it was understandable to me that classroom teachers may not want me as their student teacher. I had learned that having a disability was a wholly individual tragedy. I had internalized the stigma of a spoiled and discredited identity (Goffman, 1963). Because my disability is apparent, my identity is instantly discredited. I felt pressure to be “normal” by asserting my independence. I fell into the narrative of overcoming disability – where it seemed best to minimize my disability and the different ways my body interacts with the world. I also felt pressure to maintain top academic performance (an ideal of the normative teacher) to compensate for any bodily deficits. I could prove my worth in a system that prefers a compulsion for abledness by highlighting my mind’s capabilities and minimizing my body’s deficits.

However, I learned my bodily difference was too far from the norm for an abled teacher to want me as their student teacher. Whether cooperating teachers had told Dr. Williams they did not want to have me in their rooms, or she predicted this might happen, her search for Mrs. Polson only confirmed to me that my body was a problem. Dr. Williams had to find someone who had been through a similar surgery for my student teaching placement. A normative teacher would not have been a suitable match for me. My experience demonstrates how Dr. Williams, other faculty, and cooperating teachers have internalized the normative teacher. The values and characteristics of the normative teacher are upheld through measures like dispositions.

My professionalism was compromised by my inability to drive to and from field placements. The framing of my lack of accessible transportation as an individual problem only further demonstrates how disability status informs all reactions and decisions to problems that

arise. Teacher education programs assume that teacher candidates will have their own reliable vehicles. While I figured out the para-transit bus system in my university's city, it was not always a dependable mode of transportation. I had to schedule rides weeks in advance and was given pick-up and drop-off windows. This meant that to arrive at my placement on time, I often had to arrive an hour before the school day. Sometimes the building was not even unlocked yet. Even when I planned this extremely early arrival, there was more than one occasion that I was late because of the bus schedule. My cooperating teacher, Mrs. Polson, could have critiqued my professionalism when this occurred. Instead, I was praised for overcoming this challenge and finding a solution.

My disability made me a deviant teacher candidate. My body made the typical expectations of teaching a challenge. However, faculty and my cooperating teacher were able to look past this deviance because in every other way I was the normative teacher. I was able to approximate the normative teacher by "overcoming" the limitations of my body. I would never be the normative teacher, but I was close enough. This is not always the case for disabled teacher candidates, as shown in my interviews with faculty. The type of impairment a teacher candidate has seems less important than how faculty perceive their approximation of the normative teacher. This has implications for teacher candidates who are multiply marginalized, such as disabled candidates of color or others who deviate from the normative teacher by more than one marker. Once a candidate is deemed deviant, faculty can use disability and dispositions together to scrutinize the actions and abilities of disabled teacher candidates. The combined use of disability and dispositions mimics traditional special education processes of identifying deficits. A deficit positioning of disability disadvantages teacher candidates with disabilities. Faculty must be made aware of how their dysconscious ableism is at work in determining who gets to be a teacher.

Autoethnography: “The Freshmen Retreat”

There was not a single moment when I realized there was a normative teacher against whom I would be compared. It was not until I was working on my doctorate that I could apply the language used in this dissertation to my experience. My journey through my teacher education program happened simultaneously with my journey of becoming disabled. I was diagnosed with facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy when I was eleven, but I appeared abled until my freshmen year of college. I had made the decision to be a teacher when I passed as abled. When I imagined myself teaching, I was still standing and walking. I clung to my abled identity long after I became disabled. Even after my spinal fusion surgery, my medical team talked about how I would walk again with enough physical therapy. When I graduated, I was still “recovering.” Despite the narrative I believed, to everyone else, I was disabled. Throughout my teacher education journey, I learned that my body-mind was not going to be anticipated or accounted for without my own advocacy and disclosure.

As I was deep into data analysis for this dissertation, social media memories reminded me of my Teaching Fellows Freshman Retreat from September 2006. Teaching Fellows was a scholarship program that paid tuition for students who agreed to teach in the state for at least four years. I was one of about five hundred fellows in the state, and my university had a cohort of about sixty. I scrolled through picture after picture of smiling, tired faces. Some of these people became my closest friends. I sent my best friend, Rikki, a photo of us from that weekend. We were standing with five other young, white women. I could see the slight forward curve of lordosis emerging in my posture, but otherwise I appeared entirely able-bodied. She immediately texted back a joke about “surviving” that weekend and commented on how young we looked.

This weekend has stayed with me as the one where I first had to challenge the typical expectations of my teacher education program.

I had been a college student for just a couple of weeks when the Labor Day long weekend occurred. Many of my friends were going home or planning extra weekend activities, but my new friend, Rikki, and I were preparing to depart for Camp Carefree and a weekend with our Teaching Fellows cohort. We were made aware of this tradition the first week of classes. I remember sitting in the auditorium where I would spend every Wednesday evening for the Teaching Fellows Seminar. As our instructor, Dr. Emily, described a weekend at a rural camp about an hour from campus filled with team building activities and time outside, my stomach began to churn. People around me groaned or sighed – no doubt they going to have to cancel plans. I took a breath and thought, *how physical is this weekend going to get?*

I was worried I would be put into a situation my body could not handle, and my disability would be exposed before I was ready. I had arrived at school with a new mobility scooter, so my peers knew I was disabled. However, they did not know specifics. I didn't want my peers to know intimate details about my body before they got to know me as a person. That evening I sent e-mails to the three Teaching Fellows directors and instructors. My main concern was being able to navigate the terrain and whatever walking might be required. It was decided that I should bunk with the "adults." The Teaching Fellows directors and the upper-class mentors were all staying in the main building. My peers would be in cabins some distance away from them. The saving grace was that they asked if I had someone with whom I'd like to room. It was Rikki, of course, and she agreed to room with me mainly because she didn't want to bunk with everyone else if I wasn't going to be there.

And that's just it. We weren't there. While the rest of our cohort bunked together and bonded over late night talks, Rikki and I were bunking in a private room to ourselves. We joked that it was better that way (and in many ways it was – we got to sleep and bonded in our isolation), but our experience was profoundly different than the rest of the group because I am disabled. When we gathered for breakfast after our first night, our friends were still laughing about their late-night antics. In addition to bunk beds, the cabins had some folding, metal cots on wheels. At some point, they had competed in cot races down the ramps outside the cabins, but we weren't there. By making an accommodation for me, the directors had also excluded us from parts of the experience. The whole weekend was organized around assumptions about what types of bodies would be present. Future teachers were expected to be physically active and abled.

Among the countless team building exercises from that weekend, there was one that highlighted my deviant body. We were broken into groups of eight. Everyone had to stand on top of a vinyl tablecloth that was just large enough for the group. Then we were told we had to flip it over without stepping off it. My heart was racing. This was worse than anything I might have imagined. I could stand, but it was fatiguing. After about ten minutes my muscles would be trembling, and I'd want to sit down. I realized this was going to involve Twister-like moves, and I panicked. I had very little balance and core strength. I started sweating. *Great, just in time to get touched by seven strangers*, I thought. I probably could have told a director or upper-class-person and sat out, but I felt pressure to pass as abled. I did not want to draw attention to my bodily difference.

I don't remember how long it took my group, although we were one of the first teams to finish. However, I do remember that Dean scooped me up; first, like we were newlyweds about to cross a threshold, and later, I hopped on his back. I wrapped my legs around his waist and

clung as tightly as I could to his shoulders. Dean maneuvered us to the corner of the tablecloth, and somehow our team flipped it little by little. I can still feel the tangle of sweaty limbs all around us, but the details of my disability were not exposed. My deviant body had not let my group down, but I carried that potential shame with me.

I remember that my group celebrated our success, and I pretended to be happy. But I was more relieved than anything. Like Rikki said so many years later, I “survived” the team building exercises with my version of an abled identity intact. Even though I had advocated for myself by pointing out the inaccessibility of the camp environment, I had not known all the ways my body would be tested that weekend. Teaching Fellows administrators did not know me well yet, but they knew I was disabled. I had disclosed that information before the semester began. However, the tradition of the Freshmen Retreat, with its underlying assumptions about who becomes a teacher, left it up to me to point out the inaccessibility of the weekend. We were expected to be the normative teacher – a willing and able participant in all the team building exercises. I was accommodated, but my presence did not alter the activities and schedule of the weekend. The idea of the normative teacher remained intact.

Chapter Seven: CONCLUSION

The normative teacher is a pervasive construct in teacher education programs. This study connects how dispositions illuminate the qualities of the normative teacher, which then is employed to determine who should become a teacher. However, dispositions remain an ambiguous concept in teacher education after over three decades of continued scholarship. Teacher educators have varied views on the definition, use, and purpose of dispositions in their programs. This ambiguity leads to the weaponization of dispositions rather than to their cultivation. In particular, this study demonstrates how when teacher candidates' body-minds do not fit the norm as imagined by their instructors, dispositions are operationalized to cast doubt upon these teacher candidates' abilities. However, if teacher educators used dispositions as a method of reflection, including for their own pedagogy and practice, they might become a critical tool toward equity and justice.

Summary of Findings

This study was guided by three research questions: (1) How do professional teaching dispositions reflect assumptions and ideologies of dis/ability? (2) How do teacher educators engage with disability through the cultivation and assessment of pre-service teachers' dispositions? (3) How are dispositions employed by teacher education faculty in their interactions with disabled teacher candidates? I used a Comparative Case Study (CCS) framework to analyze eight interviews with teacher education faculty and the dispositions rubrics they provided. Comparisons were made horizontally and vertically across faculty interviews and rubrics. Comparisons across the axes revealed three key findings: dispositions reflect normative assumptions about who should be a teacher, teacher educators rely on deficit models of dis/ability when working with disabled teacher candidates, and disabled teacher candidates face increased scrutiny of their body-minds through dispositions assessments.

In Chapter Four, I explored how faculty defined, conceptualized, and employed dispositions in practice. Faculty had varied definitions of dispositions; some relied on their institution's rubrics for definitions, and others had definitions that aligned with scholarship on dispositions. Scholars tend to agree that dispositions are the values, attitudes, and beliefs that teachers enact in their professional practice that promote equity (e.g., Diez, 2007; Johnston et al., 2011; Katz & Raths, 1985; Ros-Voseles & Moss, 2007). However, in practice, faculty focused more on observable characteristics and behaviors of teacher candidates. In interviews, faculty most often read a list of dispositions from their institutions' rubrics. This reduction of dispositions creates a checklist of behaviors that faculty use to measure effective teachers. Behaviors and characteristics included in the checklists also outline the imagined normative teacher.

Most commonly these behaviors and characteristics fell into the category that assesses "professionalism" in teacher candidates. According to participant's rubrics, the imagined normative teacher is one who has a positive attitude and personality. They create good rapport with students and colleagues while maintaining "appropriate relationships" with students. They are enthusiastic and energetic about teaching and have abundant self-confidence as demonstrated "through body language, voice tone, eye contact, [and] preparedness." They have excellent verbal and non-verbal communication skills. They are always on time or early to work and meetings and respond promptly to emails and other communication. Finally, the normative teacher has professional appearance and demeanor, especially in their dress. Any discrepancy in personality, behavior, or attitude from the normative teacher is framed as a dispositional issue in teacher candidates. This finding highlights the necessity for continued intersectional analysis of how dispositions are employed. While, this study focused on disability, the normative teacher is

often racialized and gendered. The normative teacher most often embodies white, middle-class, mono-lingual, heterosexual, abled womanhood. Disabled teacher candidates can face additional dispositional scrutiny when their body-minds do not match this norm.

In Chapter Five, I learned more about how faculty have internalized the normative teacher and deficit ideologies of dis/ability. The normative teacher is constructed against unnamed deficits and is connected to how dis/ability is understood in teacher education. Faculty explained the ways that dis/ability is taken up in their courses – almost exclusively from a traditional special education ideology. In both how disabled teacher candidates are understood and in curricular decisions, dis/ability was approached as a deficit. Disability was most often managed through institutional procedures that required interventions – sometimes from disability services offices but other times created by faculty. This process mimics that of special education in K-12 settings and is based on deficit understandings of disability. Faculty also spoke about how dis/ability is included in their programs and curricula. Typically, dis/ability is approached as a special education topic and not as an element of diversity.

In Chapter Six, I analyzed how faculty discussed disabled teacher candidates progress and dispositions. Faculty positioned disabled teacher candidates in relation to the normative teacher. A focus on characteristics and behaviors coupled with deficit models for understanding dis/ability proved to disadvantage disabled teacher candidates. Faculty relied on their internalized normative expectations of who should be a teacher in their interactions with disabled teacher candidates. When candidates do not meet normative expectations, dispositional interventions are created based on the traditional special education model. If these interventions fail and candidates do not appear closer to the normative teacher, they are pushed out or removed from programs.

Significance of the Study

As I reviewed in Chapter Two, there is little scholarship that connects dispositions and dis/ability. When dis/ability is a focus in this type of research, it assumes that students will have disabilities for which teachers must be prepared. Scholars tend to focus on the attitudes of pre-service teachers toward students with disabilities (e.g., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Castello & Boyle, 2013; Cook et. al., 2000; De Boer et. al., 2011; Killoran et. al., 2014; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Schumm et. al., 1994; Taylor & Ringlaben, 2012; Woodcock, 2013). Faculty that I interviewed also operated under the assumption that teachers will not have disabilities, but their future students will. The reliance of a traditional special education model of dis/ability in teacher education disadvantages disabled teacher candidates. Dispositions become a tool for faculty to manage disability according to deficit, rehabilitation models.

This study also demonstrated the ambiguity of how dispositions are defined which is a common topic in academic literature. Each of my participants had a different definition and understanding of dispositions. Diez (2007) outlined several tensions in the use of dispositions in practice including entity versus incremental approaches, viewing dispositions separately or holistically, using them to screen individuals or build community, and their assessment. My participants described dispositions as malleable and something to cultivate but juxtaposed these descriptions with very rigid assessments. This suggests that faculty have different ideas about how to employ dispositions in practice than the required institutional assessments.

This study also provides examples of how dispositions are employed to target teacher candidates who do not meet normative expectations as well as how faculty negatively perceive disabled teacher candidates. At times this happens dysconsciously, so even faculty with the best intentions may be penalizing disability when they think they are acting equitably. Macleod and

Cebula (2009) surveyed disabled teacher candidates in Scotland about how they disclosed their disability. Overall, students reported that their classroom teachers responded positively.

However, some students responded that the classroom teacher was “concerned about how this should affect her marking of me as she had received no guidance if such a situation were to occur” (Macleod & Cebula, 2009, p. 465). Other comments from students were that classroom teachers “found it difficult to understand my career choice” (Macleod & Cebula, 2009, p. 465).

My study adds to this area of teacher education research by highlighting the normative expectations of teacher education programs.

I recommend that teacher education programs and individual faculty take steps to reflect on how dispositions are employed in practice. This study suggests that dispositions are most often used punitively. Faculty should ask, when do I bring up students’ dispositions? Or when do dispositions become an “issue” in practice? Reflecting on their own practice is a disposition for faculty to model. I found that when teacher candidates deviate from the normative teacher, dispositions are employed to question their candidacies. Faculty can reflect on how they personally employ dispositions in their practice in contrast to what they believe the goals of cultivating dispositions might be. Resolving this tension with a goal of creating equitable practice may change how dispositions are employed.

Additionally, teacher education faculty can reflect on their experiences with disabled pre-service teachers. The role of dispositions in targeting disabled teacher candidates was not always immediately apparent to the faculty I interviewed. Faculty have internalized the normative teacher and perpetuate dysconscious ableism, racism, and oppression in their interactions with teacher candidates. If faculty were to simply reflect on their interactions with pre-service

teachers, they might reveal the assumptions they make about who they believe should be a teacher.

Limitations

Like the current demographics of teacher education, my participants were mostly white women. When I created my initial list of teacher education faculty acquaintances and contacts to send recruitment e-mails, seven of the twelve were white women. In my analysis, I brought up participant demographics in ways that match how they spoke about their identities in interviews. I did not have enough data and participants to compare perspectives across gender, race, and other identity points. With the interview data I did collect, it was not possible to trace similarities and differences based upon demographics. Findings are not generalizable, nor were they intended to be. I used a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. I sent recruitment e-mails to twelve contacts initially. Six of those twelve agreed to be interviewed for the study. I asked participants to send out the study information through e-mail, listservs, or other channels to faculty that may be interested. The additional two participants contacted me after receiving information about the study through the snowball recruitment. I hoped to interview about fifteen teacher educators, but I exhausted recruitment avenues and interviewed all interested faculty.

In research design and method, I was limited by my own capacity. In both the vertical and transversal axes, I was limited by what influences I pursued for this study. As I worked iteratively on data analysis, the individual level became the focus because I could trace how faculty employed dispositions assessments in interactions with disabled teacher candidates. On the vertical scale, future inquiry can include additional influences on disposition conceptualization and assessment, like state licensure requirements and Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs). Additionally, a limitation is the use of the transversal axis which

historically situates the phenomenon. Future studies could work to collect iterations of dispositions assessments over time.

Further Inquiry

When I first began generating ideas for this dissertation study, I wanted to focus on pre-service teachers with disabilities. Given the confidential nature of disability status, I knew there would be challenges in identifying and recruiting disabled teacher candidates which is why I decided to focus on teacher education faculty. Therefore, I included autoethnographic essays from when I was a student myself. As a disabled student, I also wanted to acknowledge and respect how often students with disabilities are asked to give of their time and experience for research. I did not feel that requesting unpaid time from current disabled students for a potentially unpublished dissertation would honor the value of their experience.

In the future, I would like to use a similar set of research questions with disabled pre-service teachers or newly graduated disabled teachers as participants. A study that follows disabled pre-service teachers through their programs would be another way to approach this topic. My findings also suggest that disabled teacher candidates may be choosing to leave programs because of increased scrutiny and insufficient support. Those that are pushed out in this manner, in addition to students who are removed from programs, should also be the focus of further inquiry. In this study, participants who spoke about disabled graduates or disabled students who left their programs did not know what those individuals were currently doing. Teacher education programs will not be able to fully confront and change their ableist ways unless these perspectives are included.

The role of cooperating teachers in how dispositions are assessed should also be addressed in future inquiry. Several of my participants mentioned the classroom teachers with

whom teacher candidates worked, but it was beyond the scope of this study to investigate the impact of their role on candidacy. Teacher education programs rely on the school sites and classroom teachers that pre-service teachers work with. Tori and Lorelai mentioned the type of minimal training that cooperating teachers in their programs receive, and other participants mentioned the importance of relationships between the teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, and institutional personnel. For disabled teacher candidates, these relationships can be fraught with subjectivity, as Krystal's and my own experience demonstrate. Cooperating teachers, like faculty, will have bias about who should teach based on normative expectations of teaching. Additional research that focuses on these partnerships will be an important part of dismantling ableist practices in teacher education programs.

I am also interested in the types of workplace accommodations disabled teacher candidates are granted, if any. Faculty commented on the tensions, frustrations, and obstacles they encountered working within a disability services model. Typical academic accommodations, like extended time or a separate testing location, do not translate to a teaching environment. In one of Leslie's examples, she talks about extending a teacher candidate's student teaching by an additional semester. While this was arranged with Leslie, the cooperating teacher, disability services, and the student, it was the extra accommodation given for the student's processing disability. This type of academic accommodation, extended time, does not translate to a work environment. Furthermore, disabled teacher candidates may not know that they are entitled to workplace accommodations or what those may be.

There is some existing research about disabled college graduates entering the workforce. Disabled college graduates do not experience the same rates of employment as their abled peers (Pilette, 2019). Disabled graduates, in addition to meeting job qualifications, must also

understand their accommodation needs, disclose disability status to potential employers, understand disability rights laws, and be prepared for hostile or biased interactions with employers who may not have experience with disabled employees (Nicholas et. al., 2011; Roessler et. al., 2007). Because teacher education programs include internships and student teaching semesters, disabled pre-service teachers need these advocacy skills before graduation.

The 2019 National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) Research Brief “College Students with Disabilities and Employment: Career Development Needs and Models of Support” suggests that colleges and universities are not providing equitable career services to students with disabilities. Studies suggests that college students with disabilities cannot describe their disabilities or how their disabilities will impact their professional performance (Hennessey et. al., 2006; Hitchings et. al., 2001). Teacher education faculty are experts in the teaching profession, but they may not be experts in designing and implementing professional accommodations. Furthermore, there is mismatch between academic accommodations and workplace accommodations. Even when disability services offices are involved, disabled teacher candidates still face barriers. Disabled teacher candidates are disadvantaged by a lack of support in finding the appropriate accommodations for teaching, and further inquiry into the types of supports and services they need is required.

Retreating from the Normative Teacher

On my Teaching Fellows Freshmen Retreat, I learned some of the normative expectations we have for teachers. There were assumptions made about the physical capabilities of my cohort, but the team building exercises also expected us to be enthusiastic, helpful, and collaborative participants. These exercises were intended to highlight the types of personality traits normative teachers have. Most importantly, that weekend I learned that I needed to pass as abled or

approximate the normative teacher as closely as I could. As I continued through my teacher education program, this idea was reinforced through the way dispositions were employed in practice. My deviant body disrupted the idea of the normative teacher, but it did not prompt any critical reflection on the use of dispositions. My presence was treated like an exception, and because I (but for my physical disability) had all the characteristics of the normative teacher, dispositional deficits were overlooked.

This study demonstrates how teacher candidates whose body-minds are deemed too deviant can become targets of increased dispositional scrutiny from teacher education faculty. Teacher educators should have clear ideas about the qualities and characteristics they want to cultivate in future teachers. Scholars suggest that dispositions should be focused on social justice teaching, the moral work of teaching, and enacting equitable practices. However, dispositions should not enforce compulsory abledness or target candidates for deviations based on gender, race or ethnicity, or sexuality. Moments when disabled teacher candidates' body-minds disrupt the normative expectations should be taken as opportunities to dismantle ableist structures and beliefs in teacher education programs. Faculty need to critically examine their own internalized normative teacher, retreat from that norm, and reimagine the dispositions they believe should be cultivated in future teachers.

A retreat from the normative teacher gives faculty an opportunity to reconceptualize how dispositions are used in their programs. Retreating from the prescriptive behaviors included in dispositions rubrics will take work. It is easy to check off whether teacher candidates are punctual or dressed appropriately, but it will be harder to cultivate meaningful dispositions and will require that faculty reflect on their own practice and pedagogy. A retreat from the normative teacher will require faculty to look inward and decide who they truly believe should be a teacher.

Appendix A

Recruitment E-mail and Consent Form

Recruitment E-mail

Dear [Insert name of Contact],

I hope you are doing well. I am currently completing my dissertation at Syracuse University under the advisement of Dr. Alan Foley. I would like to interview professors of teacher education as part of my dissertation research. I am interested in learning more about how dispositions are defined, cultivated, and assessed. Would you be interested in participating in an interview? Even if you are not able to participate at this time, I would appreciate your forwarding this information to teacher educators you know.

Many thanks,
Katie Roquemore

Teacher Educators:

Would you like to be part of a research study about dispositions in teacher education?

Share your experiences of being a teacher educator in an interview about:

- How you and your program define dispositions
- How dispositions are assessed at your college/university
- How teacher education courses develop dispositions

To participate in an interview, you must:

- Be a faculty member in a school of education
- Currently teach courses in teacher education
- Evaluate students' dispositions in teacher education courses or fieldwork
- Be at least 18 years old

Interviews will last about an hour and be held through an online platform like Google Hangout or Skype. You will get to choose a date and time that works best for you.

If you would like to participate or find out more information, please email Katie Roquemore –

kdroquem@syr.edu

Informed Consent

Dispositions and Dis/ability in Teacher Education: Faculty Perspectives

Principal Investigator/Key Research Personnel:

Dr. Alan Foley – Principal Investigator

Katie Roquemore – Doctoral Candidate

Chair of Dissertation Committee

Student Researcher

Email: afoley@syr.edu

Email: kdroquem@syr.edu

Introduction:

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about participation in this research study and offer you with the opportunity to decide whether you wish to participate. You can take as much time as you wish to decide and can ask any questions you may have now, during, or after the research is complete. Your participation is voluntary.

What is the purpose for the research study?

- The purpose of this study is to learn more about how you understand teaching dispositions as a teacher educator. We want to learn more about your experiences defining, cultivating, and assessing dispositions in pre-service teachers. We hope to interview about twenty teacher educators. Katie is completing this project under the advisement of Dr. Alan Foley for her dissertation.

What will I be asked to do?

- If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview. Before the interview, you will be asked to complete a brief demographic survey. You will be asked to share examples of rubrics or assignments that are used to assess dispositions in your program.
- The interview will take approximately an hour of your time. Interviews will be done online using Skype, Google Hangout, or a similar platform with Katie. Katie will audio-record the interview for accuracy in transcription. During the interview you will be asked questions about how dispositions are defined and used in your teacher education program.

What are the possible risks of participation in this research study?

- Although risks are minimal, some of the questions may be difficult for you to answer or may make you uncomfortable. You can skip a question, take a break, or stop the interview at any time with no consequences.
- There is always risk associated with sharing information online and confidentiality. Steps will be taken to keep personal information private.

What are the possible benefits of participation in this research study?

- While you might enjoy sharing your experiences, there are no direct benefits to participating.
- You may be contributing to knowledge of teacher educators' perspectives on dispositions.

How will my privacy be protected?

- During the video interview, Katie will be in a private location, and you can choose where you are for the interview to protect your privacy.
- Pseudonyms will be used in all writing after the interviews and identifiable information, such as your college or university, will be changed.

How will my data be maintained to ensure confidentiality?

- All information that you share will be kept confidential. All files containing identifiable information will be stored on a password protected laptop in separate folders, so data can not be linked to participants.
- Katie will create a key code for the pseudonyms. This will be saved as a password protected file to which only she has access.
- Katie is the only person who will have access to your identifiable information. When she meets with Dr. Alan Foley, they will only discuss de-identified information.

Will photographs, audio, video, or film recording be used?

- Interviews will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy for transcription. Only Katie will have access to the audio-recording.
- The audio-recording will be transcribed and used for data analysis purposes. The transcription will also use your pseudonym, and Katie will also change details about the names and places you describe. The audio-recording will be saved for the duration of the study. At the conclusion of the study, all audio-recordings will be erased.

Will I receive compensation for participation?

- There is no compensation for participating in this study.

What are my rights as a research participant?

- Your participation is voluntary.
- You may skip and/or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

Whom may I contact with questions?

- For questions, concerns or more information regarding this research you may contact:

Dr. Alan Foley	Katie Roquemore
315-443-5087	828-460-9569
afoley@syr.edu	kdroquem@syr.edu
- If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at (315) 443-3013.

All of my questions have been answered, I am 18 years of age or older, and by signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this research study. I have received a copy of this form for my personal records.

I give my permission for the interview to be audio recorded:

YES NO

Date: _____

Printed Name of the Participant

Signature of the Participant

Date: _____

Printed Name of the Researcher

Signature of the Researcher

Appendix B

Participant Demographic Survey

The following survey was exported from Qualtrics.

Participant Demographics

Start of Block: Demographics (Base/Universal)

What is your name?

With which college or university are you affiliated?

Which categories describe you?

- White (1)
 - Black or African American (2)
 - Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (3)
 - Asian (4)
 - American Indian or Alaska Native (5)
 - Middle Eastern or North African (6)
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (7)
 - Some other race, ethnicity, or origin (8)
-

What is your gender identity?

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Non-binary (3)
 - Another gender identity (4) _____
 - Prefer not to say (5)
-

Would you describe yourself as transgender?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Prefer not to say (3)
-



Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual (84)
 - Gay (85)
 - Lesbian (86)
 - Bisexual (87)
 - Questioning or unsure (88)
 - Another sexual orientation (89) _____
 - Prefer not to say (90)
-

Do you identify as having a disability?

- Definitely yes (1)
 - Not sure (2)
 - Definitely not (3)
 - Prefer not to say (4)
-

Display This Question:

If Do you identify as having a disability? = Definitely yes

Which categories best describe your disability or disabilities?

- Autism (1)
 - Deaf-blindness (2)
 - Deafness (3)
 - Hearing impairment (4)
 - Intellectual disability (5)
 - Mental health disability (6)
 - Multiple disabilities (7)
 - Orthopedic impairment (8)
 - Specific learning disability (9)
 - Speech or language impairment (10)
 - Traumatic brain injury (11)
 - Visual impairment (including blindness) (12)
 - Other health impairment (13)
-
- Prefer not to say (14)
-

Do you know how to speak any languages in addition to English?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you know how to speak any languages in addition to English? = Yes

What other language(s) do you know?

Display This Question:

If Do you know how to speak any languages in addition to English? = Yes

What was the first language you learned to speak?

End of Block: Demographics (Base/Universal)

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. (Probing questions below as needed.)
 - a. How long have you been a teacher educator?
 - b. How long have you been at [university or college]?
 - c. What courses do you teach?
 - d. What are your research interests?
2. How do you define dispositions?
3. How would you describe the overall goals of your teacher education program?
 - a. How do dispositions fit in with these goals?
4. How are dispositions connected to curriculum, licensure, and accreditation in your program?
 - a. How are dispositions developed?
 - b. How are dispositions assessed?
 - i. At what points would pre-service teachers be screened out based on dispositions?
 - ii. Do you have an example of a time a student was counseled out based on dispositions?
 - iii. How is dis/ability status considered in assessments of dispositions?
5. How is dis/ability approached in your program (broadly) and in the course(s) you teach?
6. Do you have any experiences working with disabled pre-service teachers?
 - a. Describe those experiences.
7. Have any of your thoughts about the goals of teacher education and dispositions changed over time?
8. [Specific questions based on a rubric or assignment that the participant shared with me prior to the interview.]

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Vitae

KATIE D. ROQUEMORE

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•Education•

Syracuse University	August 2015- June 2020
Ph.D., Cultural Foundations of Education	
Certificate of Advanced Study in Disability Studies	2018
 The University of North Carolina at Greensboro	 August 2011-May 2014
Master of Education	
Major in Curriculum and Instruction	
Concentration in Secondary Language Arts	
 The University of North Carolina at Greensboro	 August 2006-May 2010
Bachelor of Arts, Major in English	
Concentration in Secondary Education	
Certification: NC License in Secondary Education (English 9-12)	
Graduated with International Honors, Summa Cum Laude	

•Professional and Teaching Experience•

<i>Field Supervision Specialist</i>	UT-Arlington	Spring 2020
❖ Managed caseload of students in the M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction – Literacy Studies program.		
❖ Met virtually with students for pre- and post-observation conferences.		
❖ Assessed students’ 45-minute video recorded lesson.		
❖ Mentored and guided students’ literacy practices.		
 <i>Crippling Social Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion</i>	 Syracuse University	 Spring 2020
❖ Designed new online course for graduate students in Education and related fields.		
❖ Created syllabus and selected course materials.		
❖ Created assessments, including weekly discussion posts, midterm assignment, and final project.		
❖ Held weekly virtual office hours using Google Meet.		
❖ Managed the Blackboard website for the course.		
 <i>Intro to Disability Studies Instructor</i>	 Syracuse University	 Spring 2019
❖ Created syllabus and selected course materials.		
❖ Held office hours for students weekly.		
❖ Managed the Blackboard website for the course.		
 <i>Sociology of Disability Course Instructor</i>	 Syracuse University	 2018/2019/2020
❖ Selected course materials to include intersectional approaches from the fields of sociology and disability studies in online course for graduate and undergraduate students.		
❖ Created assessments, including twice-weekly discussion posts, a midterm paper, and a final project.		
❖ Managed the Blackboard website for the course.		

- ❖ Met with students in person and virtually to answer questions and help with assignments.

Summer Start Seminar Instructor **Syracuse University** **2016/2017/2018**

- ❖ Taught six-week seminar course focusing on students' personal identities and transition to college.
- ❖ Planned and facilitated class discussions around race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, and ability.
- ❖ Attended weekly instructor meetings to discuss curriculum and pedagogy.

Graduate Research Assistant **Community 4 All Project** **2015-2019**

- ❖ Assisted in developing digital toolkits with, by, and for adults with intellectual disability about self-advocacy, community living, community participation, relationships, digital community, and life-long learning.
- ❖ Completed IRB Amendment to conduct collaborative qualitative interviews with participants with IDD.
- ❖ Participated in field testing of tools in development with groups of adults with intellectual disability.
- ❖ Helped complete quarterly and yearly reports to the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research on project progress.

•Public School Teaching Experience•

High School English Teacher **Grundy County High School - Coalmont, TN** **2019**
Weaver Academy - Greensboro, NC **2010- 2015**

•Teaching and Extracurricular Experience•

- ❖ Taught Honors English courses for grades 10, 11, and 12 and AP Literature and Composition courses.
- ❖ AP Literature and Composition Certification (2011).
- ❖ Co-sponsored Grundy County High School's Art Club (2019).
- ❖ Sponsored student organization-Weaver Academy's Literary Society (2011-2015).
- ❖ Coached Battle of the Books team (2012-2015).
- ❖ Sponsored student organization-Feminist Club (2013-2015).

•Leadership Experience•

- ❖ Led the Advanced Placement Teacher's Professional Learning Community meetings for Weaver Academy (2014-2015).
- ❖ Assisted teachers as the Service-Learning Teacher Leader to create high quality Service-Learning opportunities in their classrooms (2012-2015).
- ❖ Served as Lead Writing Teacher for the school and attended district meetings (2010-2012).

•Professional Development•

- ❖ Presented at the Triad Teacher Researchers Annual Conference (2012; 2014).
- ❖ Presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention (2013; 2012).
- ❖ Presented at North Carolina English Teacher Association Annual Conference (2013).

•Publications•

- ❖ **Roquemore, K.** (2020). Disability as pedagogy: Vulnerability as a social justice tool. In A. Boyd, J. Dyches, & B. Sams, (Eds.), *Acts of Resistance: Subversive Teaching in the ELA Classroom*. Myers Press.

- ❖ Freedman, J., L. Jaffee, **K. Roquemore**, Y. Song, & H. Veitch. (2019). Beyond Compliance: Disabled student activism on campus. In C. McMaster & B. Whitburn (Eds.), *Disability at the University: A Disabled Students' Manifesto*. Peter Lang.
- ❖ **Roquemore, K.** (2017). Convergence of Inclusive Education and Disability Studies: A Critical Framework. *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*.
- ❖ **Roquemore, K.** (2014). Can You Drink Through a Straw?: Confronting Disabling Assumptions. *English Journal*, 103(4), 97-99.
- ❖ Vetter, A., J. Reynolds, H. Beane, **K. Roquemore**, A. Rorrer, & K. Shepherd-Allred. (2012). Reframing Resistance in the English Classroom. *English Journal*, 102(2), 114-121.

•Presentations•

American Educational Research Association Conference (canceled)

April 2020

- ❖ Symposium- Building Community and Creating Knowledge Through Participatory Research: Rethinking Intellectual Disability and Educational Research
 - Paper title- Lost in Translation: The Intersection of Research (Methods, Ethics, and Dissemination) and Intellectual Disability
 - Paper title- "How Do We Be Inclusive and Simple?" An Exploration of Shifting Understandings of Accessibility in a PAR Study
- ❖ Roundtable Session- Developing Teacher Identities Through Collaboration
 - Paper title- Dispositions and Dis/ability: Teacher Educator Perspectives

American Educational Research Association Conference

April 2018

- ❖ Roundtable Session Presentation: Supporting Marginalized Students in Unsupportive School Systems
 - Paper title: The People of Disability Accommodations: Student Perspectives

American Educational Studies Association Conference

November 2017

- ❖ Panel Presentation- Lest We Forget: Engaging Memories of Displacement at the Crossroads of Race and Disability

Disability as Spectacle Conference

University of California-Los Angeles

April 2017

- ❖ Accepted to panel- Disability and Images/Reclaiming Identity
 - Paper title- Bodies on Display: How Disabled Protesters Use Their Bodies as Tools

American Educational Research Association Conference

April 2017

- ❖ Roundtable Session Presentation- Diversity and Social Change in Curriculum Studies
 - Paper title- Vulnerability and Violence: Disabled Bodies Protest in the Global South

•Manuscripts in Progress•

Roquemore, K. (In Review). Accommodations, disability, and identity: College student perspectives.

Roquemore, K. (In Progress). The dis/ability deficit: Normative expectations in teacher education preparation.

Roquemore, K. (In Progress). Disabling dispositions: Teacher education faculty perceptions of disabled teacher candidates.

•Professional Affiliations•

American Educational Researcher Association

- ❖ Division K (Teacher Education) member
- ❖ Disability Studies in Education Special Interest Group Member

American Educational Studies Association

•Graduate Student Service•

Beyond Compliance Coordinating Committee

2015-2019

- ❖ The Beyond Compliance Coordinating Committee (BCCC) is a graduate student organization that advocates for systemic institutional changes to increase inclusion and access on campus.
- ❖ 2016-2017: served as the BCCC Secretary
- ❖ 2017-2019: served as the BCCC Co-President
- ❖ Collaborated with Office of Disability Services to hold university forum on disability and access.

School of Education Committee on Diversity (Student Representative)

2017-2018

- ❖ Created survey for School of Education faculty to identify diversity issues and topics most important to faculty.
- ❖ Helped create faculty Blackboard website to store diversity related resources.