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WE'RE STILL EMERGING: A POETIC INQUIRY EXPLORING THE TENSIONS BETWEEN INCLUSIVE MINDSETS, TEACHER IDENTITY AND DISABILITY STIGMA

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WE'RE STILL EMERGING: A POETIC INQUIRY EXPLORING THE TENSIONS BETWEEN INCLUSIVE MINDSETS, TEACHER IDENTITY AND DISABILITY STIGMA

by

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Dedication

For my New Mission students, who inspired my journey and this study.

For my children, Joseph and Madeleine, who never fail to give me the purest joy I have ever known.

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

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Amy Accardo, Ed.D.
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This poetic inquiry sought to understand the tensions, perspectives and experiences of teachers as they work to create more inclusive mindsets and identities despite working in a system that allows for ability profiling and disability stigma in schools. This work fills a gap in the literature in that not much is known about the journeys teachers take as they come to identify as inclusive educators. The conceptual framework drew from scholarship in the fields of Disability Studies in Education, Studies in Ableism, critical pedagogy, and teacher identity. Conducted in a professional development school, I provided professional development for teachers that centered a disability memoir and critical reflection. Qualitative data was gathered through interviews and book club discussions and then used to construct transcription poems. After creating these initial poems, threshold poems were then created that juxtaposed a transcript poem with a found poem from each of the four key areas of the conceptual framework. These poems brought theory and praxis into dialogue, supplemented by my own analytical thinking. Significant findings indicate that: (1) ableism is deeply embedded in schools, policy and practice, with teachers inadvertently working from a place of dysconscious ableism; (2) inclusion must be presented as both an ideological commitment and actionable process; (3) teachers' stories to live by must be reframed so that inclusive mindsets are magnified among the school community; and (4) PDSs partnerships can be a driving vehicle to develop inclusive cultures among schools.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

It stood innocent enough.
A door,
on the right side of the general classroom.
What awaited on the other side?
Perhaps a closet?
                    Or storage?
                              Maybe an office.

But really…
what lurked beyond
was a classroom.
           For **those** kids.

A *special* room
for *special* kids
(which in truth was a closet,
       (because does it get more special than that?)).

As the primary inhabitant (the special teacher)
I assure you the only thing special about it
was the stigma
bestowed upon **those** who
(unwillingly, begrudgingly,
           sometimes stealthily,
           sometimes clinging to dignity)
crossed the threshold.
Students.
Teachers.
It didn't matter. We're all *s p e c i a l* here.

Written on the mantle,
in invisible ink, but glaringly clear for all to see
was the stigma of
specialness.

This introductory poem describes my classroom for my first two years of teaching. Even as the teacher I felt stigmatized. Later, after moving our school to a bigger building, my rooms were no longer closets. But they were distinctly smaller than "normal" classrooms, to the point that my homeroom students, both general and special education students, did not even want to be in my homeroom. My room was for the special kids they said, and "we're not dumb miss, so we don't want to be here." Teachers take pride in their classrooms, working hard to design spaces that foster the importance of learning. I had a love-hate relationship with my room. It was through my physical space that I came to understand disability stigma, ability profiling, and the pervasive nature of ableism.

Yet, it was also this space that laid the foundation for my belief in the power of inclusive education. Throughout my career I never introduced myself as a special education teacher, simply a teacher - no distinctions made, no labels used. I did not want my room to be labeled or a place of stigma, I wanted it to be a place of belonging for all students. My mindset and identity were focused on helping my students find their success and happiness in life. But at the same time, I still found myself giving in to the stigma, and letting students' labels inform my decisions. Working with high school students, I worried what lay in store for them upon graduation. Would they find their way in the world? Would the world accept them? I often did not have positive answers to these questions. The tensions between wanting my students to be included and working in a stigmatizing environment was the cause of many moral dilemmas I faced. In the years since I left, I have had plenty of time to reflect on my experience. And I wish I had this time as a teacher, for it would have made me such a better educator.

In my school, and in schools I have worked in since, I find that this tension is quite prevalent. Witnessing the stigma associated with my room alone, along with many others just like it, I believe inclusion is a matter of social justice and disability rights. The work presented here aims to help my fellow educators understand and act upon this belief.

Conceptual Framework

This study drew from three theoretical fields: disability studies in education (DSE), studies in ableism (SiA), and critical pedagogy. Foundational ideas from each of these fields were used to understand how teachers can develop and sustain inclusive mindsets.

DSE scholarship focuses on the "political, social, cultural, historical, and individual understandings of disability," (Connor et al., 2008, p. 448). Scholars in the field center inclusive education, in that "changing how societies (and ourselves!) think about and respond to disability can create the cultural space in which inclusive approaches to education, employment, living, and community can flourish" (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012, p. 75). DSE helps us to investigate the roots and assumptions surrounding disability in order to understand how ability positions people on the margins of communities.

SiA scholars interrogate and challenge what it is to be able-bodied and able-minded. Research in this field shifts from the notion of studying disability, instead focusing on how ability is performed and produced (Campbell, 2009). Understanding ability as part of the dominant ideology, SiA scholarship calls on us to understand how

able-bodiedness and able-mindedness are constructed and centered in order to then decenter the practices that allow this to occur.

Finally, critical pedagogy scholarship takes an emancipatory approach to education by calling on educators to seek out and understand barriers that exist to create oppressive educational structures. Through critical reflection educators can develop critical consciousness that allows us to be better committed to positioning ourselves alongside our students as learners (Freire, 1970). In this sense, hooks (1994) calls on us to "renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions - and society - so that the way we live, teach, and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love of freedom" (p. 34). Working from a critical pedagogy perspective allows us to understand education as a liberatory practice that can bring about more socially just spaces.

Taken together, DSE, SiA, and critical pedagogy scholarship helped me work to understand how the margins are created in order to decenter dominant beliefs and take a more culturally holistic and diverse approach to teaching and learning. Aspects of each of these theoretical fields was drawn upon to understand both how marginalization based on ability is created in schools, and problem solve ways to end these oppressive practices.

Understanding the Problem

As seen in my personal experience as a teacher, disability stigma occurs in schools, often going unchecked. The current education system requires teachers to observe, assess, and label students daily through their own cultural filters, and then act on such labels by creating ability groups, focusing on what students cannot do (Baglieri et al., 2011; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010).

Ability is seen as such a common sense notion in schools, that many teachers do not question its construction (Annamma et al., 2013; Gallagher, 2016). However, by not questioning what it means to be abled or normal, we inadvertently create stigma and marginalization by positioning students as either normal or abnormal. Teachers, as key players in this construction, need to become more aware and critical of these practices in order to work toward disability justice as part of wider social justice work.

Ableism in Education

The current educational system allows teachers to uphold ableism in their discourse around students labeled as disabled. Standardization puts pressure on teachers to get all students to perform within a certain level according to the curriculum guides rather than on students' individual developmental timeline. A prescribed timeline makes teachers label students as not adequately developing or struggling, when in fact students may be developing in their own way at their own pace. This washes over any natural developmental diversity that occurs. It assumes the validity of the normal curve, which uses standard deviations to support assumptions of the probability that a particular trait is distributed throughout the student population (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010). However, the application of statistics to human diversity was distorted by eugenicists, and used to justify the exclusion of people deemed as weak and disabled. Reliance on the normal curve undergirds educational practices, highlighted by the push for standardization, and "continues to exert a powerful influence on educational thinking, particularly among special educators" (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010, p. 10). In this sense, special education demands conformity based on ableist thought and practices that privilege White, middle class norms and values.

The system of special education is built on the myth of the normal curve, and despite its best intentions to provide an education for all students, the system upholds institutional ableism. Garcia-Fierros (2006) defined institutional ableism as beliefs that move beyond individual bigotry to "the existence of systemic, pervasive, and habitual policies and practices that disadvantage individuals based on their abilities" (p. 5). Beratan (2006) adds that institutional ableism is upheld by "uninterrogated beliefs about disability deeply ingrained within educational systems" (p. 2). Institutional ableism can be seen in the ways the governing special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, dictates the notion of appropriate education in the least restrictive environment when no such requirement is mandated for "normal" students (Beratan, 2006). It is also enacted when individual education plans often focus on disability at the expense of the total curriculum, limiting the manner and type of education students labeled as disabled receive (Hehir, 2002). These ableist practices and notions seep into teachers' beliefs and practices in that they accept it as fact (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010).

Labels & Ability Profiling

Students are the ones impacted most by these policies, especially given the legal requirement to label students based on ability. Labels are often the source of stigma that cause students to experience negative stereotyping and low self-esteem (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015; Cosier & Ashby, 2016; Hehir, 2002). These labels, while a necessary evil (Cosier & Ashby, 2016), can lead to ability profiling. Similar to racial profiling, ability profiling is the way teachers use stereotypical markers of deviance drawn from dominant cultural narratives and deficit discourses (Collins,

6

2013). Students are positioned as disabled within school boundaries, but are often seen as capable in the larger community.

In an ethnographic case study, Collins (2013) documented how a student's teacher only saw him through a deficit lens in school, but in their excursions together to museums and in his community, Collins witnessed the student's strengths and brilliant curiosity that were not allowed to flourish in his classroom. Collins argued that because his teacher's values influenced the routines and establishment of the classroom community, her deficit view of the student signalled to the other students and the school community that he was a struggling student with a disability. While the teacher in the study did not have bad intentions, Collins showed how pervasive ableism was in the teacher's words and actions. Several studies have echoed Collin's (2013) notion of ability profiling, showing that the way teachers' perceive students with disabilities impacts the students' educational journeys (Aas, 2019; Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2010; Thorius, 2016). This puts teachers in the position of determining how students are seen and who is/is not included in their school communities.

Teachers often do not even realize they are upholding ableism. Broderick and Lalvani (2017) refer to this as dysconscious ableism, defined as "impaired or distorted way of thinking about dis/ability...that tacitly accepts dominant ableist norms and privileges" (p. 895). In their study with preservice teachers in an initial teacher preparation program, Broderick and Lalvani found that dysconscious ableism made it "difficult for students to even perceive, let alone claim, more critical conceptualisations of the structural nature of inequities" which in turn made it more difficult for these emerging teachers to see how to dismantle structural ableist barriers (p. 901). Their

findings are supported by Pugach et al.'s (2021) systematic literature review of 53 studies over two decades that found that ableism is inconsistently part of social justice frameworks in teacher education. If teachers are leaving their preparation programs struggling to resist ableism, it is likely that they will not recognize or know how to resist ableism in their practice. Therefore, it is imperative to work with veteran teachers to fill in the holes left open during their preparation programs.

Investigating Teacher Identity to Understand Inclusion

Teachers' identities are complex as they are a combination of both personal and professional beliefs that are influenced by relationships (Beijaard et al., 2004). Connelly and Clandinin (1999) refer to teacher identity as "stories to live by," explaining that these stories "are shaped by such matters as secret teacher stories, sacred stories of schooling, and teachers' cover stories" (p. 4). These stories can change over time depending on the various contexts teachers find themselves in, and are influenced by national, state, and local policies that ground educational institutions (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Commitment is seen as a key factor in teacher identity, which includes a clear sense of one's values (Day et al., 2005). Given these factors, it is important to understand what values and beliefs teachers have about inclusion, and how these beliefs factor into how they act upon their identities. Do teachers believe they can teach *all* students? Or do they believe that some students are best taught by special education teachers?

These beliefs that are central to teachers' identities influence how teachers embrace or dismiss inclusive education. Unconsciously upholding ableism through ability profiling may be a hidden part of teachers' identities that they may not have grappled

with given that many do not see ability as part of the larger social justice framework

(Aas, 2019; Broderick & Lalvani, 2017; Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2010; Pugach et al.,

2021; Thorius, 2016; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Inclusive education requires taking into

account identity formation and identity change based on community membership (Artiles

& Kozleski, 2007). Therefore, to increase inclusive practices we must focus on

developing teachers, as Day (1999) explains:

> Teachers are potentially the single most important asset in the achievement of the
>
> vision of a learning society...They are at the 'cutting edge.' It is they who hold the
>
> key to students' growing or diminishing self-esteem, achievement, and visions of
>
> present and future possibilities for learning through their own commitment,
>
> knowledge, and skills...For the rhetoric to match reality, it demands investment in
>
> teachers. (p. 208-209).

Tying students' self-esteem and achievement to ability shows that ableism is deeply tied

to teachers' judgements and roles. As Day (1999) argued, we need to invest in teachers'

development, and part of this is to invest in their understanding of ableism.

Recognizing the roles teachers play as the linchpin of education requires us to

situate them at the center of advancing inclusion. To this point, Lydia X.Z. Brown, in

discussing disability justice on an episode of disability activist Judy Heumann's podcast,

described the importance of shifting mindsets, stating:

> We've had the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act now for almost half a
>
> century, same as the Rehab Act, and yet we already know that ableism is
>
> structurally, as well as interpersonally, is all pervasive in this nation. Ableism is in
>
> every single aspect of our society and our politics. And so trying to simply change

the social condition for disabled people by changing our laws and our policies

locally or nationally is not going to get us to the end goal of liberation...And to get

to liberation requires us not just to contend with law but to contend with society,

with the culture, with the values that we hold and the values that undergird the

entire framework of the society in which we live. (Heumann, 2021)

Helping teachers to understand their roles as part of the wider social justice landscape can

aid them in seeing the importance of their actions in the classroom. Schools have a

reciprocal relationship with society - being both informed and informing societal values.

Policy change can take years to implement, and so a ground-up approach that centers

teachers can help us work toward disability justice in more concrete, actionable ways.

Developing Inclusive Mindsets to Resist Ableism

In order to make schools more inclusive, teachers need to recognize the hidden

pockets of exclusion in their stories to live by. Critical reflection is necessary to begin

dismantling oppressive structures, and teachers need the space to begin such reflections.

Collins (2013) explained the importance of reflections in developing awareness, stating,

"with awareness that we are positioned to perpetuate patterns of educational sorting,

segregation, and inequity comes awareness that we have a choice to resist our

positionings and to challenge those patterns" (p. 186). Teachers need to critically think

about how they are positioned in schools so that they can reframe their positions to be

inclusive of all students. Mockler (2011) calls for inquiry-based professional learning that

allows teachers the space to reflect on the connections between their purpose, their role

and their actions in schools.

Through professional development we can begin to shift teacher mindsets from those that view inclusion as solely a matter of placement for students with special education labels towards mindsets that recognize inclusion as an entire system and way of being (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). Rather than seeing inclusion as a special education issue, we need to recognize that it is an intersectional, multicultural issue based on complex identity factors (Baglieri, 2016; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Key to this transition is to make visible the ableist systems and practices that created and maintain marginalization based on exclusion (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Collins, 2013). Realizing the pervasiveness of ableism may push teachers to think and act inclusively.

Inclusive mindsets encompass the belief in creatively and collaboratively working to reach all students regardless of identity labels (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015). Teachers can either begin to develop or further strengthen their inclusive mindsets through critical reflection (Baglieri, 2008). Moving beyond simply thinking about their thoughts and beliefs, teachers can critique and investigate the origins of their beliefs and actions. Critical reflection involves self-reflection, systemic reflection and organizational reflection, wherein the values and assumptions that undergird each of these aspects are put under a microscope to understand how they came to be and how they impact daily life (Mezirow, 1998). Similarly, as Freire (1998) states, "in the process of the ongoing education of teachers, the essential moment is that of critical reflection on one's practice. Thinking critically about practice, of today or yesterday, makes possible the improvement of tomorrow's practice" (p. 48-49). Professional development focused on this type of reflection can help us understand how teachers develop and sustain inclusive mindsets.

This will help us shift to eliminating marginalization, ability profiling, and breaking down ableist barriers in schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the tensions, perspectives and experiences of teachers as they work to create more inclusive mindsets and identities despite working in a system that allows for ability profiling and disability stigma in schools. Working with veteran teachers (e.g. teachers working for 4+ years), I used ideas from DSE, SiA, and critical pedagogy to explore how teachers reframed and reformed their identities during a professional development series that utilized poetic inquiry to investigate ableism, its impact on students, and how teachers developed inclusive mindsets (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Conceptual Approach to Teachers' Inclusive Mindsets

Disability Studies in Education

To foster more inclusive practices we need to consider the troubling foundations of special education; anchor our work in social, cultural & minority models that recognize disability as social construction

Ability Profiling & Disability Stigma

Ability profiling only allows teachers to view a student's label and not the holistic self. This leads to and/or works in conjunction with experiencing stigma based on labels.

Inclusive Mindsets: What perspectives do we need in order to create & sustain cultures of inclusion?

Critical Pedagogy

Need to remember that all humans are unfinished; Teachers must become participants in learning alongside their students. Co-construction of knowledge is key to eliminating oppressive educational practices.

Teacher Identity

Teaching is a political act; how do the politics of our practices impact how we see ourselves as teachers? Our teacher identities are fluid and ever-changing - how can we change to be more inclusive?

This work was particularly important given the local context of the study. This study took place in New Jersey, which the National Council of Disability (2018) ranked as 49th in the nation for inclusive education. The report identified New Jersey as "the third most segregated of the U.S. states and territories when it comes to including students with disabilities for at least 80 percent of the time" (p. 33), with only 46% of students being fully included (e.g. spending 80% or more of their day in general education classrooms). The report further explained how such segregation is built into state and local codes, thus revealing an educational system entrenched in ableist views. There are efforts within the state to move toward inclusive education, and to do this work it is necessary to help veteran teachers who have spent their careers working under such ableist structures develop and sustain inclusive mindsets.

The study took place in a professional development school, which is supported by four pillars: (1) professional development for teachers, (2) professional development for university students, (3) K-12 student achievement, and (4) research. For my purpose here, the first and fourth pillars were centered to conduct this inquiry. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does developing an awareness of ableism influence teachers' identities?

2. To what extent can disability memoirs inform teachers' inclusive mindsets and perceptions of their own practices?

3. Does engaging in critical reflection guided by professional development and poetic inquiry influence teacher identity and inclusive mindset?

Definition of Terms

These terms are used throughout this inquiry:

1. Ableism is the pervasive prejudice and negative attitudes, embodied by both individuals and institutions, towards individuals with mental or physical differences.

2. Ability profiling refers to the way students are viewed by educators based on educators' perceptions of students' abilities that are often based on dominant cultural norms (Collins, 2013).

3. Critical reflection is distinct from simple reflection, in that through simple reflection one may merely ponder or consider events, thoughts, or actions, whereas critical reflection requires a critique of one's assumptions that underlie beliefs, actions, and systems (Mezirow, 1998). All references and mentions of reflection refer to critical reflection in this inquiry.

4. Deficit discourse refers to the way students are spoken about in a negative way that emphasizes perceived deficiencies and what they cannot do.

5. Inclusive mindsets are frames of mind that: (1) acknowledge the social construction of students' identities (e.g. ability, race), (2) embrace diverse ways of being, doing, knowing, and thinking in learning contexts, and (3) adopt creative, collaborative, resourceful approaches to problem-solving so that all students can learn in ways that honor their diversity (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015).

6. Teacher identity is viewed here as a multidimensional, ongoing process of representation in which a teacher's beliefs, attitudes, sense of self-efficacy,

knowledge, and commitment merge to form their professional identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Avraamidou, 2014; Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006).

Approaches to Understanding Inclusive Mindsets

Using poetic inquiry, this study gathered data from several sources as teachers were guided through professional development practices meant to assist in their critical reflection. Thirteen teachers from the PDS were recruited during the first two weeks of school. They each participated in individual interviews where we discussed their teacher identity and perspectives of students in their classroom. After the interviews were completed, we began our book club, reading Mooney's (2019) memoir, *Normal Sucks: How to Live, Learn, and Thrive Outside the Lines*. Our book club met once a week for a month. Also during this time, teachers were asked to write two inclusive autobiographical pieces - one focused on ability in their own K-12 experiences and one focused on how they came to know ability in their teacher preparation programs.

Upon completion of the book club, a second interview was conducted to gather teachers' individual impressions of the book, any possible shifts in their identity and perspectives of their students. After this, the data collected from interview transcripts, inclusive autobiographies, and book discussions was used to write transcription poems. These poems aimed to capture the teachers' thoughts and feelings during our inquiry, and serve as a means to present the findings. The transcription poems were then combined with found poems drawn from the theories, and merged with my own analytical thoughts to create threshold poems. These poems served as another layer of analysis, and were an effort to bring theory and praxis into dialogue.

Significance of the Study

Discussions and critiques of ableism are sparse and lagging behind other social justice initiatives in education (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017), and "the paths that teachers travel as they learn to think inclusively about teaching practice is under-addressed in educational research" (Baglieri, 2008, p. 602). Therefore, there is a need to understand how teachers develop and work to sustain inclusive mindsets, along with helping teachers to see this work as part of larger social justice initiatives. This work must be collaborative and interdisciplinary if it is to be successful. Drawing knowledge from scholarship, disability advocates, and ourselves, we can better understand our own positions in ableist systems. Teachers taking on this work through collaborative partnerships can rely on relationships to support them through the discomfort of this work, along with supporting them to sustain their engagement in social justice advocacy. As Day et al. (2005) explained:

> The implications for those wishing to introduce and sustain systematic change are clear. Individuals' commitment to such change is essential. Change requires working closely with teachers and their individual identities because unless these are addressed it is unlikely to succeed. Tensions that are always associated with change need to be managed by teachers and others, and this suggests relationships based upon dialogue, mutual trust, and respect. (p. 574)

This study was situated to meet these calls to understand the journeys teachers take in developing inclusive mindsets, and utilized the established relationships among colleagues to engage in this work.

Helping teachers see and value inclusion helped them to reframe or reaffirm their identities and commitment as educators of *all* children. Collins and Ferri (2016) called for a Hippocratic oath for teachers, which entails teachers recognizing and valuing that every student has something to contribute, wants to participate, and wants to belong in their classroom community. Social justice work is and must be intersectional, and ability needs to be more deeply addressed in this work. If teaching is understood as a moral and political act, then we must work to help teachers ensure that they do no harm.

Organization of the Study

This chapter presented an overview of the problem at the center of this inquiry. It established definitions of terms that will be used throughout the study, along with sharing the research questions guiding this work.

The next chapter presents a synthesis of literature on the foundations of special education, ability profiling, teacher identity, professional development, professional development schools, and inclusive mindsets and attitudes. A detailed explanation of the conceptual framework that provides the foundation for this study is also provided.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach to this study. It details the theory and uses of poetic inquiry and arts-based research. A detailed explanation of the professional development approach that is used to conduct this inquiry is provided.

Chapter four details the key findings of the study by presenting transcription and threshold poems written from the data collected. Major themes are organized into poetic clusters, with several poems shared that highlight these themes.

Finally, chapter five discusses the significance of the findings and the implications of this study. Next steps for research and practice are also discussed.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides a conceptual foundation for this study by detailing the intersections between the theoretical perspectives within three fields: disability studies in education (DSE), studies in ableism (SiA), and critical pedagogy. The knowledge base within these fields will be drawn upon to create a lens through which we can understand the tensions between inclusive mindsets, teacher identity, and ability profiling, as well as critique the current systems of general and special education. A visual representation of the relationship among the three fields (see Figure 2) is provided to demonstrate the connections that are made in this chapter. These connections create an interdisciplinary foundation from which we can understand how teachers develop and sustain inclusive mindsets.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework Guiding Inquiry
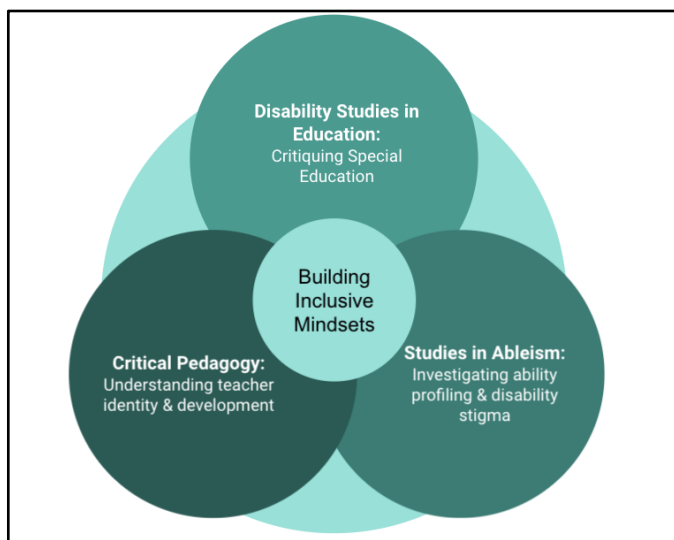
The tenets of each theory are explained, followed by relevant scholarship related to the current study. This work is then tied to the context of school-university partnerships, as such a partnership is central to the current study. Finally, suggestions for next steps are shared.

Conceptual Framework: Disability Studies in Education

Scholars within the field of disability studies rely on several models to understand how disability exists in society. Two deficit models are the charity model, which views disability as something to be pitied, and the medical model, which views disability as an individual medical issue in need of cure and eradication (Davis, 2018; Goodley, 2017). These models have been present throughout history and serve as a foundation for much of society's understanding and beliefs regarding disability (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Thus how many people come to know about disability is through a deficit lens, something that must be challenged in order to bring about disability justice.

Scholars in disability studies push back against these negative models by adopting sociopolitical models of disability focused on civil rights issues (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017). The social model is perhaps the broadest model, which distinguishes impairment from disability. An impairment is a characteristic within the mind or body (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017), and according to the social model "an impairment becomes a disability when the environment is not accessible" (Davis, 2018, p. 7). In this instance environments can refer to both physical structures and social attitudes people may hold. This repositions disability from being something inherently wrong with an individual to a barrier created by society.

Using the social model, Ferguson and Nusbaum (2012) explain that scholarly work in disability studies should rely on the concepts of disability studies work being social, foundational, interdisciplinary, participatory, and values-based. Rooting scholarship in these concepts will better enable scholars to move notions of disability out of the charity and medical models and into the social model. A criticism of the social model is that while it helps with political barriers, it does not do enough to consider the daily experiences of people with disabilities (Davis, 2018). The social model is helpful to understand how disability is created, but it does not pack enough punch to deconstruct disability. In this sense it is helpful to rely on both the cultural and minority models of disability.

The cultural model of disability is born out of the humanities, and recognizes the ways history, popular representations, and societal values influence how bodies are interpreted. It rejects both the terms disability and impairment because these are often cultural structures; this is seen in the way homosexuality was formerly considered a mental illness (Goodley, 2017). This model allows us to see the lineage of disability's construction, and once understood we can begin to disavow and distance ourselves from this negative lineage. Similarly, the minority model situates people with disabilities as a minority group within society. It was born out of the Civil and Disability Rights movements, recognizing that people with disabilities have been denied their rights for centuries. It is a direct challenge to ableism and social discrimination against diverse bodies and minds, and aligns disability with other marginalized identities to push back against White privilege (Goodley, 2017). Each of these models helps frame our understanding of ability/disability. Viewing disability as socially, culturally, and

politically constructed allows us to recognize various aspects of ableist oppression and ways in which the rights of people labeled as disabled can be restored.

Theoretical Foundations of Disability Studies in Education

Disability Studies in Education (DSE) is a branch of disability studies that critiques ways the educational system creates disabling spaces and practices. Scholars in the field call for creative and innovative pedagogies, positioning the field as critical special education that aims to close the theory to praxis gap (Danforth & Gabel, 2016). Drawing on the distinction between the medical and social models, DSE fosters partnership between scholars and educators to dismantle marginalizing structures that exist within schools based on diverse abilities. Special education traditionally relies on the medical model, focusing on remediating problems that are perceived as located within the child. But DSE shifts our gaze to the social model and "requires fixing systems, structures, and classroom practices rather than directing attention at fixing the 'broken child'" (Cosier & Ashby, 2016, p. 5). As Ferguson and Nusbaum (2012) explain:

> Situating the study of disability within and across a range of curricular areas and including the lived-experience of disability allows disability-related practitioners to engage with others in ways that go beyond acceptance or tolerance and that can foster critical reflection and understanding of the disability experience and the social phenomena of disability. (p. 76)

Bringing the concepts of interdisciplinary connections and practices, along with listening to the voices of those with disabilities, allows educators to reframe the ways they see and understand disability. Self-reflection on the part of educators will allow us to understand that "the tensions exposed by disability studies help us shift the conversation from being

'about' an individual's impairment to an understanding of disability through a range of lenses that exist in such a multidisciplinary field" (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012, p. 78). Essential to the work within DSE is critical reflection on beliefs about disability. Educators should consider the ways in which they came to know and understand disability and how this plays out within their practice. The goal of DSE scholarship and practice is the promotion of social justice and enacting inclusive education (Connor et al., 2008).

Research within the field of DSE can leave its audience with a sense of discomfort, guilt, and/or anger over the nature of the oppressive special education system, while also inspiring a "moral imagination for teaching, learning, and relating to one another" (Danforth & Gabel, 2016, p. 2). The sense of discomfort and anger will emerge from critical reflection, and is necessary if we hope for the academic arm of the disability rights movement to advance towards more equitable educational systems. As a framework it works to bring practice closer to the intentions of policies that insist on equitable educational opportunities for all students. When working from this lens, educators can move beyond tolerance and acceptance to an appreciation of diversity. Students do not want to be tolerated or accepted, but rather like any other person, want to be appreciated for the value of their diversity within a community. DSE offers a way for educators to foster this sense of appreciation.

Critiquing Special Education

DSE scholars hope to move schools towards a culture of inclusion, but this task proves difficult given the eugenic foundations of our education system. Understanding schools as places that reinforce dominant cultural expectations is a crucial first step.

Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) explained that "schools are places of cultural work...negotiations between actors and the script construct and replicate binaries between experts and novices, gifted and disabled, achievers and failures" (p. 659). These cultural labels are found throughout both national and international education policies, and serve as eugenic discourse that acts as the foundation for legalized segregation in education (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Sorting students according to these labels allows educators to act under the premise that they are doing what is best for the child, but it does not require them to consider the nature and history of such labels. The labels Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) described speak to the social hierarchy that education policies and practices uphold through tracking, testing, and curricula, with disability central to hierarchies of difference in schools (Erevelles, 2016; Gallagher, 2016).

Critiquing Special Education's Roots

Such hierarchies can be traced back to the foundations of public schools at the turn of the twentieth century. Special education is rooted in eugenics. The normal curve continues to serve as an anchor for the field, a century after it was taken out of its original context in statistics by Francis Galton, a founder of eugenics, and applied to people (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010). In the early twentieth century, the confluence of compulsory attendance and industrialization saw an increase in student populations. Many students "were difficult to teach in traditional classrooms" and the failure to teach them was blamed on "inefficient organization and defective students" (Skrtic, 1991, p. 152). These defective students were then sorted into ungraded training classrooms, which were really a holding place for "feebleminded" students until they could be placed in

institutions. Ungraded classrooms were called for by eugenicists working with educators to better society, and this classroom model became the precursor of special education classrooms (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006).

The idea of sorting out "defective" students continues in schools today, with the normal curve used as justification for their segregation. Students that fall outside the normal curve are viewed as possessing an inherent deficit that prevents them from fitting in with or achieving the "normal" standards set out in curriculum or policy, and students are sent to segregated spaces (Baglieri et al., 2011). In this sense, "schools as organizations help to reproduce inequality and discrimination" (Sleeter, 1992, p. 147) because they situate students in terms of perceived ability to conform to a mythical average that does not exist. National laws, like No Child Left Behind, exacerbated the issue by prompting normalcy through testing, thus aiming to reduce variability despite test scores masking such natural variance among learners (Annamma et al., 2013; Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010). The problem becomes located in the student rather than in the practices or environment.

Critiquing Separate Systems

Separate schools, classes, and even teacher preparation programs allowed special education to blossom as a field (Ashby & Cosier, 2016), with these dual systems leading to reinforcing binaries as students are labeled as either students or inclusion students (Baglieri et al., 2011). The classification of students based on ability, language status, and race all lead to students being perceived as deviating from the norm, and these labels and distinctions carry such stigma that parents and educators often try to avoid them (Baglieri et al., 2011; Hehir, 2002). Macro societal discourse on the meaning of normal, coupled

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with micro level school practices that uphold the larger discourse influence how students are perceived, which warrants critique of such ideology (Annamma et al., 2013).

Critiquing the Use of Labels

The intent of special education is to focus on individual needs, but it is built on a system that aims to diminish individual differences (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010). Through labeling, sorting, and classifying students schools push conformity, only embracing difference if it can be controlled and rendered invisible (Erevelles, 2016). The very language of special education reinforces oppressive views of disability in that some students receive a "special" education while others receive a "normal" or "general" education (Linton, 1998). Even the courts recognize schools' roles in perpetuating stigma. The ruling in *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) cited expert testimony that recognized schools as the first site of stigmatization of children with diverse abilities. Segregating students based on labels is perceived as a benevolent gesture to help students get individual attention, but it is a practice that allows ableist assumptions to take root and flourish. While labeling might be seen as a necessary evil that provides access to services and a common language, labels lead to stereotyping and a focus on differences (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015; Cosier & Ashby, 2016) and often lead to individual education plans (IEPs) that become deficit-based documents which continue to uphold barriers (McLaughlin, 2016).

The notion of disability "absolves everyone of responsibility for school failure: parents, students, schools, and the wider society" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2010, p. 3). Special education's troubling foundations allow for its current practices to uphold

oppressive notions of who is perceived as able or disbled, thus allowing ableism to flourish not only in schools, but the wider society as well.

Conceptual Framework: Studies in Ableism

Disability studies scholarship helps us to understand how disability is created and structured. In questioning what it is to be dis-abled, we must naturally also consider what it is to be abled. Rather than focusing on constructions of disability, scholars within Studies in Ableism are concerned with deconstructing ableism and notions of ability. Researchers in the field of SiA seek to take up the work of critical disability studies and extend it even further (Campbell, 2009).

Theoretical Foundations of Studies in Ableism

Scholars within studies in ableism (SiA) are concerned with examining the underlying assumptions and values of what it means to be able-bodied or able-minded. They seek to reframe the interrogation of what it means to be abled rather than of what it means to be dis-abled to understand the structures of the dominant group that enable oppression (Campbell, 2012). As Dolmage (2017) explains:

> Ableism makes able-bodiedness and able-mindedness compulsory. Disableism constructs disability as negative quite directly and literally. Ableism renders disability as abject, invisible, disposable, less than human, while able-bodiedness is represented as at once ideal, normal, and the mean or default. (p. 7)

Understanding the qualities of able-bodiedness allows us to understand the ideology of normal, and in comprehending these ideas we can then begin to deconstruct them. Researchers in this field are encouraged to push back against comparative understandings and binary structures of abled/disabled and normal/abnormal, especially since ability and

disability are fluid and ever evolving concepts (Campbell, 2018). In explaining ableism

more deeply, Campbell (2018) explains that:

> Ableism is not just a matter of ignorance or negative attitudes towards disabled
>
> people; it is a trajectory of perfection, a deep way of thinking about bodies,
>
> wholeness, permeability and how certain clusters of people are *en-abled* via
>
> valued entitlements. (p. 11)

SiA scholars push us to consider ways we are divided and excluded, along with how

notions of disability are used to produce and maintain ableism. It moves beyond Western

preoccupations with binaries into perspectives that appreciate multiple ways of being and

knowing (Campbell, 2018). By studying what it is that excludes Others, we can better

understand what must be done to be inclusive (Whitburn, 2016). We must also ask

ourselves what it is that we are working to include students into (Artiles & Kozleski,

2007). Is it really ethical to include students perceived as having deficits into spaces that

uphold ableism? SiA helps us to rethink inclusive spaces, and what it is that makes spaces

accessible and welcoming to all.

Investigating Normalcy and Abledness

Since special education is founded on the myth of the normal curve, it is

important to examine the perceived ideas of what constitutes "normal." SiA provides a

tool for deconstructing normalcy while exposing discrimination based on ability. A

challenge in deconstructing binaries, particularly in schools, is that it requires a new way

of thinking. For example, deconstructing the smart/not smart binary is difficult because

no one wants to say they are not smart (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). SiA requires

eliminating binaries, but it is a challenge to get educators to accept that there are a

multitude of ways to be smart. Redefining abled/disabled allows us to redefine accessible and equitable practices.

SiA allows us to understand and investigate how ableism has come to be institutionalized in schools. Beratan (2006) argues that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the law that mandates students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education, upholds institutional ableism. Within the mandate of students being educated in the least restrictive environment, which many read as supporting inclusion, Beratan (2006) positng the use of the word "appropriate" in regards to placement implies that it is not appropriate for some students with disabilities to be educated alongside their nondisabled peers. The law and its judicial interpretations uphold ableist hierarchies that are veiled in well-intentioned wording (Beratan, 2006). In response to Beratan, Garcia-Fierros (2006) questions whether the law itself is enough to shift practices, adding that the beliefs associated with institutional ableism are deeply embedded within education. Thus, working from a SiA perspective, we can begin to acknowledge the limits and/or faults of laws and policies, and shift our focus to actually changing practices and shifting beliefs.

Investigating How We Come to Know Ableism

As stated earlier, much of our understanding of ability/disability is formed through macro societal discourse. The ways in which disability is represented and portrayed in wider societal spaces impacts how we see, know, and believe to be true about disability. Disability representations in popular literature and media influence how people understand disability along with impacting the identities of persons with disabilities (Biklen, 2000; Garland-Thomson, 1997). Many representations are eugenic

rather than inclusive (Garland-Thomson, 2017; Snyder, 2002), and because literature and life have a reciprocal relationship, our society is shaped by stereotypical caricatures of disability that further marginalize people with disabilities by assigning meaning and stigma to their experiences (Garland-Thomson, 1997; Garland-Thomson, 2002). Because so often disability representations employ the charity or medical models - seeing disability as pitiable or an inherent defect - many people come to understand disability this way (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000). Disability representations enhance and uphold ableism because they teach society that being disabled is a sad existence to be avoided at all costs. As Garland-Thomson (2018) wrote, "most Americans don't know how to be disabled,"(p. 17) and they fear disability given the prevalence of negative representations. This fear allows ableism to flourish and permeate school environments.

School curricula do not often teach about or discuss disability, and when it is discussed it is often supplemental (Connor & Bejoian, 2006). Further, disability is absent in curriculum studies and theory, but yet so often the curriculum constructs what it is to be normal (Erevelles, 2000). Educators often rely on texts and materials that negatively portray disability, as seen in: *Moby Dick, Richard III, Hamlet, A Christmas Carol, Of Mice & Men, To Kill a Mockingbird, Huckleberry Finn, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, The Secret Garden, Heidi, Oedipus Rex, The Sun Also Rises* (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000). Most disabled characters are minor and underdeveloped, but these classic works enhance misrepresentation and stereotypes (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Negative views of disability and ableism are so ingrained in our culture, much of it present in school curricula, that most people are unaware of the issues with such representations (Connor & Bejoin, 2006). Because we are taught from

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ableist views, we accept its construct as normal and acceptable. If it is taught, then it must be okay.

Investigating Ability Profiling

Skrtic (1991) explains that "given the inevitability of human diversity, a professional bureaucracy can do nothing but create students who do not fit the system" through methods like ability grouping, tracking, and class categories such as honors, general, or inclusion (p. 177). The act of naming some classrooms inclusive insinuates that the remaining classes are exclusive. Labeling classrooms is one way to mark who does or does not belong in a given space, which is a discriminatory practice hidden in plain sight. Ableist assumptions are prevalent throughout society and undergird many educational practices leading to low outcomes and expectations of students labeled as disabled as institutions are positioned to evaluate a student's worthiness (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Hehir, 2002). Labels create stigma and allow ability profiling to occur, mostly unchecked, in schools.

Ability profiling is similar to racial profiling in that it is a way to look for markers of deviance that draw on cultural narratives and deficit discourses (Collins, 2013). Students are evaluated based on perceived norms, and anyone not meeting such norms are seen as incapable or disabled. Taylor (2016) explores this notion in his reference to the government's 1969 report, *The Six Hour Retarded Child*, which found that students labeled based on I.Q. scores and placed in special education in schools were able to function perfectly fine at home. Ability labels are a harmful value judgment that uphold the dominant culture's values but are masked as a commonsense idea (Annamma et al., 2013), which is seen in the notion that many educators willingly accept race as socially

constructed but do not see disability in the same way (Gallagher, 2016). In this way schools and educators create and maintain an ability line based on the normal curve that functions in the same way as the color line, but do not realize the ways in which the two intersect (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). Seeing students only through scores and other standardized measures does not permit us to take a more holistic view of students, thus allowing ability profiling to occur.

Investigating the Normal/Abnormal Binary

The normal/abnormal binary is further strengthened by the good/bad student binary created in schools based on the values of the dominant culture (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). Both the normal/abnormal and good/bad binaries are tied to the ideology of smartness - either a student is smart or not - which functions as a structure of power in schools rooted in Whiteness (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). These binaries are not born so much out of cognitive ability, but rather the ability to behave and act White (i.e. sitting still, raising your hand to speak). Behaving in this way allows students to be seen as smart according to White ideals, in line with eugenics, affording them privileged status in schools, as it is more acceptable, even desirable, to be above average rather than below average (Baglieri et al. 2011; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). The intersections of the ability line and color line need to be better understood by educators in order to dismantle the oppression created by both (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). There must be a distinction of the borderlands between disability and difference (Singer, 2017), and rather than appreciating difference, we are often led to see it as a disability in need of remedy.

The impact of labels and binaries has real consequences if a student's label and/or category are only seen through a deficit lens. Students' opportunities can be jeopardized,

because instruction is often focused so intently on areas of weakness, students are

given very little opportunity to develop their strengths, engage in higher ordered

thinking, or participate in engaging literacy experiences and instruction. It should

be no surprise that students rarely catch up and, instead, fall further and further

behind once they are pulled out for instruction. (Collins & Ferri, 2016, p. 3)

Instruction that is intended and presented as a means to help a student actually ends up

hurting students because of its ableist roots. Students who are seen as deviating from the

norm are separated out and expectations are lowered, when instead educators should

assess the learning environment for any possible barriers. Discussing students in terms of

their strengths and weaknesses places the responsibility on the child to be fixed rather

than focus on any possible barriers that might limit them (Dudley-Marling & Paugh,

2010). Students are seen as fitting a particular profile, and then given the prescribed

curricular remedies. If they do not succeed, the onus is on them given their profile rather

than on the schools.

Investigating Disability Stigma

Students labeled as disabled struggle against ableist structures and attitudes in

schools, and feel as though they do not meet the normal assumptions about how a person

should act (Allen, 2019). For some students, expectations are so low that they feel as

though teachers are mothering them rather than educating them (Biklen & Burke, 2006).

Through practices like ability grouping as early as kindergarten, tracking throughout the

K-12 experience, and class categories (i.e. resource room, gifted and talented), it is clear

to students exactly where they belong in schools. Students struggle to be seen as whole

people and must work to resist internalizing the categories they are placed in (Collins, 2013). As Collins and Ferri (2016) explain:

> Informal labels, such as struggling, are also dangerous in that they position students in particular roles. Such labels get cemented over time with repeated usage until they are seen as the social identity of that student. In this manner, the interaction between learners and features of an instructional context, an interaction that can be changed or disrupted with thoughtful teaching, becomes reframed as a characteristic or trait of individual students and hence a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. (p. 6)

These labels position students into a particular community within the school, with the repeated use of labels, whether formal or informal, serve to thicken or reinforce the perception of a student through their label, leading to limited opportunities for them to demonstrate competence (Collins, 2011). Binaries send children a powerful message of where they do/ do not belong, and situates the teacher with the power to make this determination (Broderick et al., 2012). Students can take up or resist their prescribed identities, however such attempts to reposition themselves may be interpreted as disruptive behavior rather than a student's attempts at self-preservation (Collins, 2011). Educators and schools create binaries that limit students into one category or another, yet students view their lives and abilities as a continuum rather than categorically (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007), a view which may serve as a means of resistance.

Sparking Resistance to Ability Profiling

Despite the best efforts to develop inclusive classrooms the special education system itself is a barrier to access, success, and equity. It must be seriously reconsidered

and reconstructed rather than being retrofitted to accommodate student diversity. The theories that explore disability labels and stigma lead us to question the institutions of school and special education (Taylor, 2016). We must consider deconstructing the deficit-based system of special education, along with addressing the attitudes of students and educators (Skrtic, 1991; Sleeter, 1992). To do this we need to explore how deficit discourses can be reframed to focus on seeing students as capable, while simultaneously focusing on promoting access to curriculum, communication devices, and accessible environments, along with embracing high standards for all students over high stakes requirements (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2010; Hehir, 2002). Appreciating student differences "requires honoring the most efficient way for each student to operate, rather than requiring them to operate in ways that approximate their nondisabled peers" (Collins & Ferri, 2016, p. 3). We need to situate an appreciation of diversity over the need to critique differences to the point of constructing disability.

Conceptual Framework: Critical Pedagogy

The fields of DSE and SiA are not enough to help teachers become critical of special education, and so other theories, like critical pedagogy, can bolster and deepen these approaches to go beyond the medical and social models to truly unpack what it means to be inclusive (Broderick et al., 2012; Whitburn, 2016). DSE scholars encourage interdisciplinary approaches in order to promote and sustain inclusive practices, so naturally our conceptual frameworks should be interdisciplinary as well. Critical pedagogy scholars focus on notions of race, class, and gender in educational oppression, but often do not include ability in their critiques (Gabel, 2002). However, works within the field offer many connections to DSE to support inclusive education.

Theoretical Foundations of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is an emancipatory framework that seeks to help both the oppressed and their oppressors develop a critical consciousness in understanding the conditions and barriers that enable oppression (Freire, 1970). Scholars in this field recognize that every aspect of schools and education is politically, culturally, and socially framed (Kincheloe, 2004). Acknowledging this, hooks (2003) stated that "teachers are often among that group most reluctant to acknowledge the extent to which white-supremacist thinking informs every aspect of our culture including the way we learn, the content of what we learn, and the manner in which we are taught" (p. 25), with San Pedro (2018) further explaining this reluctance:

> By centering stories often held in the margins of academic spaces, norms that were once unseen are now made visible. For some, this process is painful - like flipping on the lights in a pitch-dark room. Some may cower, shield themselves from the light, close their eyes tightly, scream for the lights to be turned back off. The pedagogy forwarded in classrooms requires that we acknowledge this process as painful, and as necessary, to see that our liberation is tied together. (p. 1208)

Working from the lens of critical pedagogy requires us to confront and experience this discomfort in order to move toward social justice. Freire (1998) emphasized that humans are unfinished, but pushed educators to continue the necessary development of our critical consciousness in order for education to be a means of liberation. Calling the art and practice of teaching a "specifically human art," Freire (1998) recognizes that "those who exercise this art and practice do not have to be saints or angels. But they ought to have integrity and a clear sense of what is right and just" (p. 63). Freire (1970) called for

the development of conscientizaçao or critical consciousness, which requires that "those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (Freire, 1970, p. 60). Steps in developing critical consciousness requires a continual cycle of reflecting on problems, analyzing their roots, and then acting on solutions.

Bringing conscientizaçao into the classroom, Freire (1970) calls on educators to eliminate the banking model of education, which positions students as empty receptacles that teachers, positioned as knowledgeable authority figures, must fill. The banking style of education reinforces a discourse of management and control in schools (Giroux, 1985), rather than emphasizing the development of critical thinking and student empowerment. Giroux (1997) further outlines the problem with this approach to teaching and learning:

Rather than comprehending the world holistically as a network of interconnections, the American people are taught to approach problems as if they existed in isolation, detached from the social and political forces that give them meaning. The central failing of this model of thinking is that it creates a form of tunnel vision in which only a small segment of social reality is open to examination. More importantly, it leaves unquestioned those economic, political, and social structures that shape our daily lives. Divorced from history, these structures appear to have acquired their present character naturally, rather than having been constructed by historically specific interests. (p. 13)

In this view, teachers must recognize the role and authority they have in determining what knowledge and instructional approaches they privilege in their classrooms (Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe, 2004).

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Through conscientizaçao, teachers need to be empowered to use their professional judgement (Ashby & Cosier, 2016) and recognize teaching as a cultural practice (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). Using their judgement and critical consciousness, teachers can disrupt norms and politics that allow for the marginalization of diverse students and prevent students from reaching their full potential (Oakes & Rodgers, 2006; San Pedro, 2018). Different cultures view smartness and intelligence differently (i.e. emphasizing interpersonal skills over academic skills), and so teachers must challenge notions of merit and grit in explaining whether or not students are seen as successful in the classroom (Oakes & Rodgers, 2006; San Pedro, 2018). By dismantling practices like tracking and homogenous grouping, all students can be positioned as valuable members of the learning community capable of learning from one another (Giroux & Penna, 1988; Oakes & Rodgers, 2006). Furthering this idea, hooks (1994) explains, "To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (p. 13).

Within critical pedagogy, teachers are respected both as researchers and researchers of their students (Kincheloe, 2004). Teachers can use collaborative inquiry to challenge each other to move toward a "shared struggle for justice" (Oakes & Rodgers, 2006). Getting to know more about their students allows teachers to position themselves as learners alongside their students. Freire (1998) described the importance of this practice by reminding teachers to have "permanent critical vigilance in regard to the students" in order to design a practice that respects a student's "dignity, autonomy, and identity" (p. 63). Freire further reminded teachers that we must be mindful of the impact of our judgements and practices on our students.

I should always be alert that my presence and my work could either help or

impede students in their own unquiet search for knowledge; if I work with youths

or adults, I should not be any less attentive to what role my work may play in

either motivating the students or sending them the message that there is something

deeply wrong with them that needs fixing. (p. 68)

Taking this notion further, hooks (2003) argues that teachers rarely consider shame as a

barrier to learning when evaluating why a student succeeded or failed. Teachers must be

positioned to help students resist the dehumanization brought on by shame, and ensure

their classrooms are places of community that challenge the structures and norms that

create shame (hooks, 2003). Educators working from a critical pedagogy perspective

come to their classrooms committed to love, recognizing all members of the community

are in a constant process of becoming (Freire, 1998; hooks, 2003).

These ideas present in critical pedagogy speak to the very essence of inclusive

education in that students must actively be included in their learning and their

communities if we are to hold true to the integrity of what it is to learn - to construct

knowledge. While Gabel (2002) criticizes critical pedagogy for not including disability in

its framework, other DSE scholars emphasize the ways critical pedagogy can be

positioned to support DSE scholarship. In guiding teachers through undoing ableism in

schools, Baglieri and Lalvani (2020) rely on key ideas of critical pedagogy, like critical

reflection and problem posing, to do this work. Teachers must position themselves within

a community of students and families to advance their collective critical consciousness in

an effort to shift school cultures' understanding of disability (Goodley, 2017; Baglieri &

Shapiro, 2017). While the field of critical pedagogy may not have fully included

disability in its framework, DSE can still rely on critical pedagogy to illuminate the ways disability is oppressed in schools.

Understanding Teacher Identity

Scholarship in the field of teacher identity helps us understand what it is like to be a teacher in today's schools given all the rapid changes and pressures occurring in education (Beijaard et al., 2004). Avraamidou (2014) argued "the construct of identity provides us with a powerful tool that has the potential to capture the intersection of a teacher's knowledge and skills, beliefs, emotions, orientations, and positionings" (p. 225). Day (2018) explained the importance of understanding teacher identity, stating:

> To succeed over time as professionals, teachers need to have and sustain a positive sense of professional identity. Key components of professional identity are individual and collective efficacy, agency, emotional management, professional empathy, and a capacity for resilience. These do not exist independently of each other, but are in a dynamic relationship. They are influenced by individuals' inner strength of purpose but mediated by their workplace contexts and cultures and unanticipated personal experiences. (p. 68)

Macro, meso, and micro structures within the larger field of education and local contexts, along with an individual's personal history, all factor together to create a professional teacher identity (Day et al., 2006).

In their systematic review of the literature on teacher identity, Beijaard et al. (2004) found a consensus among scholars that teacher identity is influenced by sub-identities, a sense of agency, and a combination of personal and professional contexts. Day et al. (2006) added in sense of self, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and commitment to the

idea of teacher identity. Becoming a teacher is a multi-dimensional, non-linear, dynamic journey that is influenced by both past and current roles, along with beliefs and values about the kind of teacher a person wishes to be (Day et al., 2006; Hordvik et al., 2021). Beijaard et al. (2004) echo this notion, by explaining that a teacher's professional identity is asking "who do I want to become" rather than "who am I in this moment" (p. 122). The answers to these questions are influenced by "inevitably changing political, social, institutional and personal circumstances" along with social and personal histories (Day et al., 2006, p. 610). Teacher identities are formed and reformed continuously, influenced by turbulence in both personal and professional spheres, and are in a constant state of becoming (Day et al., 2006; Hordvick et al., 2021; Mockler, 2011).

When considering teachers' identities, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) refer to these identities as "stories to live by" (p. 4), in that the narratives teachers construct about their experiences influence their identities. Multiple narratives can converge into one overarching narrative that forms a teacher's identity, and stories may change over time, sparked by both individual and communal experiences. Further explaining stories to live by, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) state, "they express a sense of moral appropriateness of certain actions associated with spatial and temporal borders and how people position themselves on the landscape relative to these borders" (p. 113).

Akkerman and Meijer (2011) cautioned against categorizing teachers into a single category as this flattens their identity and overlooks the notion of multiplicity within their overall identity. Given the varying factors that influence teacher identity it is important to understand how they interact with each other. Cohen (2010) called for a greater understanding of the ways teachers negotiate their professional identities through their

use of language, which is similar to Akkerman and Meijer's (2011) call to understand how teacher's self-dialogue can be studied to reveal their struggles and tensions in their individual identity development. In a focus group study of three humanities teachers, Cohen (2010) found that teachers embedded identity bids within their storytelling about their teaching experiences. Through shared storytelling teachers co-constructed and supported each others' teacher identities by establishing a shared meaning for the challenges they faced in their school.

Understanding Teacher Identity Development

Teachers experience several phases throughout their careers. The initial years are focused on survival, while the next phase sees teachers taking stock of their practice and broadening their perspectives (Day, 1999). It is in this latter phase that further development of their practice is critical so as not to remain stagnant. Hordvik et al. (2021) identified three themes to what they term becoming-in-action: collaboration, commitment, and innovation. They also posited that personal reflections assist in understanding identity development. Similarly, Day et al. (2005) argued that commitment is central to a teacher's professional identity. In their study of twenty teachers with 25-35 years of teaching experience, Day et al. (2005) found that teachers defined commitment as consisting of: (1) a clear set of values, (2), a clear set of job standards, (3) continuous self reflection and adaptability, and (4) intellectual and emotional engagement. It was also found that reforms left teachers unsure of their professional identities through decreasing the level of professional judgement teachers are able to exercise. Teachers need to see how the school's or district's strategic plans and goals align with their own personal values and beliefs in order to fully engage with the plan both emotionally and

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intellectually (Day et al., 2005). Adding to this connection of beliefs and goals, Day (2018) argued that a teacher's self-efficacy is tied to the collective efficacy of all the educators in the school, in that as a collective they believe and work toward solving and overcoming issues within the school.

The emotional climate in schools influences attitudes and both teaching and learning practices (Day et al., 2006). This directly ties to the idea of teaching as emotional work as there is a level of passion and commitment necessary to teach, but Day (2018) cautions that it only becomes emotional labor when external factors are unsupportive of a teacher's work and identity. Day et al. (2005) cautioned that focusing on the stress factors teachers experience will lead to deficit perspectives of teaching, and so we should focus on commitment to maintain a positive view of professional identities and the teaching profession itself. Building on this positivity and emotional work, it must be noted that empathy is essential to teaching and teacher identity (Day, 2018). Tying to critical pedagogy, hooks (2003) argued teaching with love makes us more responsive to our learners, and a "commitment to teaching well is a commitment to service. Teachers who do the best work are always willing to serve the needs of their students" (p. 83).

Recognizing that little is known about identity change, Henry (2016) conducted a single case study to understand the complexity of a pre-service teacher's identity negotiation during their practicum using both interviews and the participant's personal writings. The study found that identity transformation occurs throughout multiple time frames - short (e.g. moment to moment), middle (e.g. over several days), and long (e.g. over several weeks). While this study focused on a preservice teacher developing their teacher identity, the findings suggest that using self-dialogue and reflections over a

prolonged period of time can capture the ways teacher identity is transformed. It furthers what Day (1999) stated about identity change:

> Teacher change, a necessary outcome of effective professional development, is complex, unpredictable and dependent upon past experiences (life and career history), willingness, abilities, social conditions and institutional support. There is a need for continuing research into this change agenda role and its relationship to moral purposes held by teachers. (p 15)

Given these calls for understanding what factors influence identity change, the present study focuses on change related to inclusive education and seeks to understand the tensions experienced by in-service teachers as they work toward developing and sustaining inclusive mindsets.

Understanding Teachers' Perceived Roles

A teacher's role cannot be to define who people are/are not and/or who they are expected to be according to a mythical norm (Biklen, 2000), and must actively reject deficit thinking (Collins & Ferri, 2016). Similarly, teachers must be mindful of their position in determining who gets to participate in particular activities, and work to actively make "positive social identities available and accessible to children who have been placed in deficit categories"(Collins, 2011, p. 416). More novice teachers are being trained through the lens of DSE, but they are struggling upon entry in the field to balance their beliefs with the demands of an ableist system (Broderick et al., 2012; Cosier & Ashby, 2016). As more teachers take up a DSE perspective, there are more educators recognizing that a student's defiance is not necessarily a symptom of their disability but rather one of a poor curriculum (Broderick et al, 2012), and these educators feel as

though they are "under increasing pressure to 'prove'" that all students are capable of achieving in the inclusive classroom without taking away from others (Ashby & Cosier, 2016, p. 31). There is a need to examine the discourse among both special and general educators in order to understand how teachers act upon their perceived roles and the impact it has on students (Thorius, 2016), which ties to calls to understand identity change among teachers (Day 1999; Henry, 2016).

Research on Inclusive Mindsets

In considering inclusive education, Collins and Ferri (2016) asked, "how is it that decades after the disability rights movement and [30] years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, inclusion in classrooms and schools is still treated as optional?" (p. 3). This question speaks to the discrepancy between policies symbolically encouraging inclusion and actually enforcing it in practice (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). In seeking a solution to these issues, we must keep in mind that "inclusive education, then, is neither static nor finite. It should include discourse spaces in which processes and outcomes are critically examined on an ongoing basis...To what extent are inclusive education communities mindful of oppression?" (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007, p. 361). An inclusive mindset developed through critical reflection is necessary to do this critical work. In developing inclusive mindsets, we should remember that a tenet of inclusive education is the need to resist in both belief and practice that there is one "normal" way of living, doing, thinking, and being (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017, p. 173).

In their handbook for inclusive educators, Causton and Tracy-Bronson (2015) discussed several aspects of inclusive mindsets. Describing inclusive education, they explained that it takes "creativity, collaboration, student advocacy, agency,

resourcefulness, a heart for this work, and a set of skills related specifically to inclusion. Inclusive educators engage in critical reflection and develop an expectation of ongoing problem solving" (p. 12). Many aspects of an inclusive mindset speak to the factors of teacher identity (e.g. self-efficacy, commitment, beliefs). The critical reflection necessary for developing this mindset may see educators consider the social construction of disability, which can help them reaffirm their commitment to their students and profession. Inclusive educators must be willing to go through cycles of trial and error, along with repeated cycles of brainstorming and failure to find what works for students because inclusive education "literally changes the lives of students with disabilities" (p. 6).

Developing an inclusive mindset is important because a teacher's beliefs about their students impact how they work with and support a student, and they must simultaneously be mindful of how labels lead to students' low self-esteem and experiences with stereotyping. An inclusive mindset requires viewing all students positively, from a strengths-based perspective, along with resilience in finding what works. This will encourage both student growth and relationship growth between teachers and students (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015). Inclusive educators need to be vigilant in monitoring the outcomes and experiences of "students whose identities have been constructed under oppressive conditions" (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007, p. 361). Teachers may experience discomfort in reflecting on their possible role in creating and/or upholding oppressive conditions, but such reflection is necessary to develop their inclusive mindsets.

Professional Development Schools and Inclusive Communities

A professional development school (PDS) is a local K-12 school that partners with a nearby university. These partnerships have existed for the past 35 years, with a formal association, the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS), coming into existence in 2007. Recognizing the multitude of school-university partnerships, and the lack of clarity around what constitutes a PDS, members of the NAPDS worked to create guiding essentials of what constitutes a school-university partnership as a PDS (NAPDS, 2021). More recently, a committee within the NAPDS worked to add further depth and clarity to the essentials, with the second edition of the PDS Nine Essentials being released in 2021. The NAPDS Nine Essentials that distinguish a partnership as a PDS are: (1) a comprehensive mission, (2) clinical preparation, (3) professional learning and leading, (4) reflection and innovation, (5) research and results, (6) articulated agreements, (7) shared governance and structures, (8) boundary-spanning roles, and (9) resources and recognition. Within the essentials, partners prefer to refer to research as inquiry as a means of making it more relatable to practitioners in the schools (NAPDS, 2021). In relation to the current study, the essentials of research as inquiry, reflection, professional learning, and boundary-spanning roles will be most relied upon.

These essentials position PDSs so that they are "not a model, but a set of community agreements arrived at through collaboration and sustained by a respectful, fair, and reciprocal approach to addressing priorities" (NAPDS, 2021, p.10). PDS communities consist of partnerships between university faculty and K-12 educators, with some university faculty taking on the roles of professors-in-residence working at least once a week in the K-12 school. Such partnerships are key in helping teachers develop,

and it is essential for university faculty to listen to teachers' needs as well as understanding the school's sociocultural contexts (Day, 1999). In describing PDSs, the NAPDS (2021) states that:

> PDSs exist as a third space at the intersection of the binaries of schools and universities. In essence, PDSs are the center of a Venn diagram, existing as a unique, innovative third-space learning community, where such binaries of schools and universities, theory and practice, academic and practitioner knowledge, and so on are integrated in new ways. (p. 12)

PDSs can be positioned to study how theory turns to practice and also how practice can inform theory (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). PDSs in this sense help educators refine their work and restructure schools to be more constructivist in their approaches to teaching and learning. In sharing seven case studies of successful PDSs, Darling-Hammond et al. (1995), noted that among the successes of PDSs is the development of teacher leadership through continued, collaborative learning among practitioners. In PDS-driven restructuring, "students are no longer seen as raw materials or empty vessels; teachers are not merely conduits...rather, knowledge is viewed as interactively constructed by learners and teachers who function in a reciprocal relationship within a community of learners" (p. 97). This speaks directly to PDSs turning critical pedagogy as a theory into practice. This shift came as a result of teacher leadership in PDSs that was a direct result of inquiry work. The work of successful PDSs directly draws from the nine essentials, which leads toward more socially just schools.

PDS and Social Justice Professional Development

Not addressed in the nine essentials, but still critical to PDS work is the notion of social justice pedagogy, with PDS structures encouraging stakeholders to adopt the identity of a change agent, using the essentials of inquiry, innovative practice, and reflection to understand and critique their local contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Zenkov et al., 2020). In a systematic review of research on how social justice is incorporated into teacher education, Pugach et al. (2021) found that incorporating disability into a social justice framework was highly inconsistent, and if it was included it was often a stand alone topic rather than seen through an intersectional lens. Reviewing 53 studies from 1990-2016, their findings show that most teachers are not adequately prepared to understand disability as a part of a social justice framework. This shows us that even in their initial training, educators are led to see disability as separate, thus in-service professional development needs to address this gap. PDSs are well-situated to address this lack of training. The present study aims to address this gap by helping in-service teachers see that inclusion is connected to larger social justice movements in its appreciation of multiculturalism and diversity.

Studying the development of social justice pedagogies in pre-service teachers (PST) working in a PDS, Zenkov et al. (2020) asked 138 PSTs in their methods of instruction course to write reflective stories of injustice. Their goal was to help PSTs develop a social justice pedagogy and teacher identity through narrative reflection. The work of the PSTs then created common ground for all stakeholders in the PDS to discuss social justice pedagogy.

Zenkov et al. 's (2020) study ties directly to the essentials encouraging reflective, participatory approaches to research that emphasize reciprocity among all stakeholders. While their results are positive, Waters (2017) criticized PDSs for not doing enough to change inequitable structures within schools. While PDSs are successfully preparing PSTs to become change agents working from social justice pedagogies, they are then being employed by schools that continue to uphold traditional, industrial, banking models of education. Waters (2017) says there is a lack of innovation in PDSs, and suggests that teachers need to be given the opportunities for more collaboration and greater say in their school structures. PDSs should enable change, and:

> This change must be about how and what teachers learn when they collaborate as thinkers, creators, and decision makers. It must be about understanding how teachers develop when they perceive their schools as places where their opinions count and continuous school improvement depends on teachers acting as agents of change. (Waters, 2017 p. 24).

In answering this call for innovation, PDS stakeholders can draw from critical pedagogy, DSE, and SiA to redesign schools to enact more multicultural, socially just approaches to teaching and learning. The nine essentials allow teachers to turn this critical framework into actionable practices through inquiry, professional development, and reflection.

PDS Professional Development Research on Inclusive Education

When speaking of professional development (PD), Day (1999) explained that "if teachers are to develop, then, attention must be paid to their thinking, moral purposes and skills as change agents" (p. 20). He calls for quality PD that relies on reflection, inquiry, and critical thinking in order to help teachers move beyond their current practices in order

to ensure our theories and practices align. Such PD should be mindful of the whole teacher, since their identities are formed and framed through both personal and professional experiences. To further develop schools we are required to focus on developing teachers (Day, 1999), and so partnerships focused on inclusion must account for this.

There is a lack of research regarding PD that centers inclusive education in PDSs (Elder, 2019; Elder, 2020; Waitoller and Artiles, 2013). In a systematic review of 46 studies on inclusive education and professional development from 200-2009, Waitoller and Artiles (2013) found only two studies occurred in a PDS, while Elder (2019) only cites four studies, which all centered on pre-service teachers development. This indicates a need to study how PDS can be used as a vehicle to offer professional development for in-service educators.

In his two studies focused on in-service teacher professional development at a PDS over the course of two years, Elder (2019; 2020) emphasized the importance of change over time regarding culture and attitudes. Approaches to PD focused on inclusion included identifying structural barriers and brainstorming solutions, using DSE to create a common language for practitioners, and situating teachers as in-house experts capable of providing PD to their peers (Elder, 2019). Similarly, Elder (2020) emphasized the need for trust, communication, and collaboration among teachers and administrators to create more effective and sustainable inclusive practices.

While not claiming to be a PDS, Carrington and Robinson (2004) shared their study in which Carrington situated herself in a position similar to a professor-in-residence to help develop an inclusive school culture. She collaboratively worked with teachers in

the school one day a week during whole staff, small group, and one-on-one meetings that addressed both schoolwide and individual professional development needs. The authors recognized that "to bring about effective change, school leaders and teachers must be actively involved in the change process together" (p. 142). Their professional development was aimed at assisting teacher learning through professional dialogue and reflection around inclusive culture, guided by the researcher who positioned herself as a critical friend in the process. Carrington and Robinson (2004) found that this professional development model enhanced the depth of teacher learning while setting a foundation to shift the school culture going forward, which is similar to Elder's (2019) conclusions.

In a similar study, Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) emphasized the need for school-university partnerships to bridge the theory-to-praxis gap to increase inclusive education. Working with three PDSs, the study focused on teacher learning and identity development as teachers explored the boundaries of their institutions. The concept of boundaries were used to understand sociocultural factors that influence when and where actions started and stopped, and helped define the activities within the schools. Teachers and researchers mapped these boundaries and made connections across contexts (e.g. teachers and university professors). One finding was that the site professors were very aware of their positions within the schools, in that they could either be positioned as a critic or a source of innovative knowledge. Teachers had to balance their daily tasks along with outside influences to plan and implement instruction, which saw them negotiating the boundaries of their work. Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) concluded by pointing out that "little is known about the kinds of tensions, learning, and identities that develop when two professional communities engage in partnership work" (p. 43).

Non-PDS Professional Development Research on Inclusive Education

As mentioned earlier, Waitoller and Artiles (2013) conducted an international

systematic review of studies on professional development research for inclusive

education, explaining that teacher PD is a critical component for inclusive education

reform. They reviewed 46 studies of K-12 professional development that documented a

change in in-service teachers, with all studies occurring from 2000 to 2009 to capture the

work within that decade. Their findings reveal three varying conceptualizations of

inclusion: (1) related to only ability, (2) changing curriculum based on gender and

cultural but not ability, or (3) overcoming barriers related to multiple identity factors (e.g.

gender, race, ability, culture, ethnicity). Half of the studies (n=23) focused on outcome-

based PD, which focused on the end results of PD, while the other half centered on

process-based PD, which documented the actions of inclusion as an ongoing process. In

their recommendations for future PD research, Waitoller and Artiles (2013)

recommended future PD research for inclusive education focus on: (1) helping teachers

develop "robust understandings" of intersectional exclusion (p. 339); (2) examining the

influence between teachers' identity markers and the sociocultural contexts of schools

related to their learning about inclusion; (3) examining learning as it occurs in systems

that include some students but exclude others; (4) moving beyond surveys and

questionnaires to better understand learning communities and practices; and (5)

generating knowledge about how university faculty and K-12 educators create

connections across spaces and practices through shared experiences and artifacts. In light

of these recommendations the present study will focus on developing teachers'

understanding of exclusion, examining their professional identities related to their school

contexts, and strengthening the university-school connection through a collaborative learning community.

Even with professional development opportunities, teachers still exhibit a gap between their beliefs regarding inclusion and enacting inclusive practices. Aas (2019) conducted a study on teachers' partaking in cycles of lesson study as part of an inclusive professional development. During a pilot study it was established that teachers in the school have a positive view of inclusive education. The lesson study cycles were part of a larger study on teacher talk about student needs and teacher roles, with the assumption that the dialogue is reflective of the internalised beliefs teachers' actions are rooted in (Aas, 2019). Recordings were collected from nine lesson study cycles conducted between four teams of teachers, with 19 total teachers from a range of elementary grades and with an average of 10-19 years of experience. Analysis of teacher talk showed that "some aspects of the teaching staff's beliefs may hinder development towards more inclusive practice" (p. 12). Aas (2019) found that: (1) teachers understood learning as an individual phenomenon and students' needs were an individual problem; (2) teachers' perceived themselves as "drivers of student learning processes and students as passive recipients" (p. 12); (3) and that teachers viewed academic developments as their primary role, with social-behavioral needs as something to be controlled.

Working from DSE, SiA, and critical pedagogy perspectives, inclusive PD can help teachers see the sociocultural construction of students' social-behavioral needs, and shift to a more empathetic understanding of their students. Many educators are so entrenched in deficit paradigms that any attempt to shift to a more inclusive mindset challenges the very notion of their professional identity and the institutions they work

within (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2010; Skrtic, 1991; Thorius, 2016). Institutional ableism as a whole is daunting but teachers can shift their focus to what they can control - their own classroom environments and the use of effective strategies so that they truly teach all learners (Garcia Fierros, 2006). Professional development that helps teachers develop an awareness of the connections between their beliefs and practices can be particularly helpful in understanding what they can control and take action towards.

Research Identifying Teacher Tensions

Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) argued that "teaching is a political act where access to participation and educational goods is distributed according to particular value systems that recognise certain knowledge and cultures while excluding others. Teachers need to be conscious of their roles in choosing what to deconstruct, conserve, and transform" (p. 659). Teachers are the authority who determine access, and are positioned as border agents who sort and categorize students by observing and assessing students through their own cultural filters (Broderick et al., 2012; Collins, 2013; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). In helping teachers understand these tensions, it is critical to pay attention to the role their emotions play in inspiring either positive or negative change. Critical inquiry and reflection, done with critical friends can help teachers examine the tensions that exist in their practice (Day, 1999).

In a study of a teacher learning community, Thorius (2016) sought to understand how special education teachers' figured worlds - their socially constructed worlds that influence their identities - shifted over time in order to move toward more inclusive practices. Using formative intervention methodology during weekly teacher learning community sessions, teachers' dialogue about their roles was captured and analyzed. The

findings showed that special educators viewed it as their responsibility to fix students, but did not feel their training adequately prepared them for this. Teachers' dialogue revealed that "special educators performed their professional identities as fixing student academic deficits once they had diagnosed student pathologies...that accounted for learning difficulties" (p. 1333). Teachers viewed themselves as diagnosticians, which is in line with the medical model of thinking. When inclusive policies and frameworks were introduced in the conversation, special education teachers experienced tension as their identities shifted and they examined both their students' and their own marginalization related to disability. Only after several sessions where teachers experienced these tensions, did Thorius (2016) note a change in teachers' identities and thinking about their roles, and cautiously hoped the change was a permanent shift. If it was, the teachers may be working from more socially just perspectives, conscious of how their students' abilities are constructed through oppressive practices. Rather than diagnosing students we can see them as co-constructors of knowledge if we work from a critical pedagogy perspective infused with DSE and SiA.

In a similar inquiry, Dudley-Marling and Paugh (2010) conducted a study with four novice teachers that focused on students who were seen as struggling. During bi-weekly meetings the researchers met with participants and used readings and videos to launch their discussions. Their discourse analysis of the ways teachers talked about students found the teachers describing students as a "mystery" who "required the expertise of a specialist outside the classroom" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2010, p. 7). Teachers in the study struggled when asked what made their students smart, and often defaulted to deficit discourse that positioned the problem within the student. Despite

efforts to move teachers away from deficit perspectives, Dudley-Marling and Paugh were limited in their success to shift teacher discourse given how entrenched deficit beliefs are both in the teachers and the system.

Educational policy demands standardization, so educators are made to focus on students who are not adequately developing according to the standard (Annamma et al., 2013). Stiefel et al. (2018) used survey data from all students enrolled in New York City public schools to determine the social-emotional impact of inclusion. Their findings showed that the type of disability impacts a feeling of being included, and that students with disabilities were more likely to feel known by their teachers than their peers. Often this was because students were perceived as struggling, so were in need of teachers' attention. Stiefel et al. (2018) highlight the idea of teacher inclusion versus peer inclusion. If teachers reframe how they see students and resist diagnoses and labels, then more meaningful relationships can be established. This will allow classrooms to become more cohesive communities that value every member's input in creating knowledge.

Research on Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Scholars found that teacher attitudes toward inclusion play a crucial role in the successful implementation of inclusive practices. More positive attitudes lead to more inclusive spaces, while negative attitudes can act as a significant barrier. This idea is depicted in Giangreco's (1998) satirical cartoon, as seen in Figure 3, that captures many of the excuses teachers put forward when discussing inclusion.

Figure 3

Educator Excuses to Resist Inclusion

The cartoon captures the many excuses heard when inclusion is suggested in schools. The excuses are all deflections of responsibility for implementing inclusion. At the heart of the cartoon's message is the notion of keeping an open mind and a willingness to embrace inclusion. Much of this ties to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, and is supported by several research findings.

Several studies have been conducted to understand the relationship between teachers' attitudes and inclusion. In a systematic review of 26 studies from 1998-2008, Boer et al. (2011) found within the studies teachers were often negative or undecided in their attitudes towards inclusion, but with increased knowledge and training teachers were more likely to develop a positive attitude regarding inclusion. Factors that influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion included: training, gender, age, teaching experience,

class size, previous experience with teaching students with disabilities, levels of confidence in teaching skills, administrative support, and type of disability (Boer et al., 2011; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Subban & Sharma, 2005; Wilson et al., 2019).

When considering inclusion, many teachers feel they do not have enough training to work with students with disabilities and need more resources, information, and support (Subban & Sharma, 2005; Symeounidou & Phtiaka, 2009; Wilson et al., 2019). Several international studies further supported this research. After conducting semi-structured interviews with ten teachers in Australia, Subban and Sharma (2005) found that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion were relatively positive given the administrative push for inclusion, with participants emphasizing a need for more training and information about working with students with disabilities. This speaks to the need for positive attitudes and support from administrators in embracing school or district-wide inclusive initiatives.

In a similar study, citing a lack of in-service training on inclusion, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) found that teachers in Cyprus were dissatisfied with their lack of training on inclusion both in their initial preparation program and as in-service teachers, which led them to uphold the medical model and believe that specialists were better suited to teacher students with disabilities. Insisting that special training is required to work with "special" students positions these students as different, abnormal, a *special* Other, which all reinforce ableism. Therefore training that pushes against the myth of the normal child can help shift teachers' attitudes to become more inclusive.

In addition to training, teachers' sense of self-efficacy was also found to influence their inclusive beliefs, which tie into self-efficacy as part of a teacher's identity. Subban, Round and Sharma (2021) investigated Australian teachers' sense of self-efficacy

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regarding inclusion since many teachers philosophically agree with it despite their concerns regarding implementation of inclusion. A survey of 158 teachers sought to understand what variables impact teachers' sense of self-efficacy regarding inclusion. Their results found that age was a significant factor, as teachers over 40 years old were more likely to report higher levels of self-efficacy. Another finding showed that more experience with and greater confidence in their ability to teach students with disabilities led to higher self-efficacy.

Similarly, in a study conducted in Japan and Finland, Yada et al. (2018) found in a survey of 1,231 participants across the two countries, that teachers' sense of self-efficacy influenced their attitude toward inclusion. The greater their self-efficacy, along with more interactions with students with disabilities, the more positive teachers' attitudes were. This finding is echoed by MacFarlane and Woolfson's (2013) study of 111 teachers in Scotland, as well as Wilson et al.'s (2019) study of 87 Scottish general education teachers. Both studies revealed that positive beliefs regarding inclusion were tied to higher self-efficacy.

While international in scope, all of these studies show that there is a "universality in the structure of attitudes and self-efficacy and also local differences in how contexts relate to them due to the cultural-historical background" of the countries involved (Yada et al., 2018, p. 352). There is an international effort to understand the impact of teachers' roles as it relates to successfully implementing inclusion. Understanding the scope of ableism and how the international goal of inclusion relates to their own individual practices and contexts (Day et al. 2005) can help teachers reform their identities to

become more inclusive by increasing their sense of self-efficacy and commitment to work with all students.

Teacher Reflection Research

Knowing that a teacher's identity is informed by their personal and professional beliefs (Avraamidou, 2014; Day et al., 2006; Hordvik et al., 2021), it is key that teachers consider how these beliefs came to be. Beliefs and attitudes teachers have about inclusion can either encourage or impede progress on inclusive initiatives, and so reflecting on their views and actions enables teachers to "gain an awareness of their assumptions, beliefs, and how they relate to practice" (Carrington, 1999, p. 265). Many of teachers' attitudes and mindsets are developed even before entering the classroom or teacher preparation programs. In a study on beliefs about disability, Broderick and Lalvani (2017) asked 50 graduate students in their class to reflect on what disability is and why students are segregated in schools. They categorized students' responses as conservative/deficit, liberal/social model, or radical/cultural-minority oppression. At the start of the semester, 44 out of the 50 students were in the first category, viewing disability as a deficit. After going through the course and investigating how disability is established, the same reflection questions were asked again. By the end of the semester 32 of the 50 students moved toward the social model of thinking although several students still had elements of deficit thinking in their responses. Only two students had moved into the third category, recognizing disablement as a form of oppression. In the majority of responses, there was a lack of interrogation on participants' own roles in an ableist system, instead focusing on the biases of others and their wrongdoings (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017). This study highlights that shifting mindsets takes sustained reflection and effort over a prolonged

period of time. One semester might be enough to initiate some change, but to achieve deeper, more critical reflection takes time and can help us identify necessary actions needed to increase inclusive practices.

The need for reflection was also highlighted in Robertson et al.'s (2017) study of how PSTs made connections between disability and diversity. They investigated how 31 pre-service teachers made these connections in a final 7-10 page reflection on their field work. The field work was conducted in six different special education settings, and was attached to coursework that promoted strengths-based views of disability. PSTs felt that seeing the content of the course enacted in the fieldwork enabled them to make deeper, more meaningful connections between disability and diversity. The chance to observe and engage in structured reflections on a variety of settings helped them to reframe their understanding of disability as deficit to that seeing disability as diversity. Robertson et al. (2017) felt that this transformative learning was brought about by the relationships between course content, field observations, and a deepening knowledge of both self and others.

In a similar study, Baglieri (2008) studied how prospective teachers made meaning of both the social and cultural models of disability based on their personal experiences, identities, and background knowledge (p. 589). The study was conducted with five students in a graduate education course where students were asked to write narrative pieces where they critiqued aspects of culture related to disability representation. The findings revealed that the students participated in either reflection or critical reflection as they made connections between disability and their own lives. What distinguished reflection from critical reflection was the ways that students who critically

reflected reconstructed past experiences based on their new understanding of models of disability. Not all students were able to move from reflection to critical reflection, but connections were still seen as important to their understanding as they served as a means from which they could begin to challenge stereotypes and disability labels (Baglieri, 2008).

In each of these studies, reflection was central to shifting attitudes and beliefs. However, such change can cause discomfort. As Day (1999) explained,

> Teachers who are reflective inquirers need to recognize that inquiry is likely to raise issues of change and that this will involve a confrontation of inconsistencies within and between existing core values, espoused theories, and theories in use. This will not always be comfortable. (p. 41)

Thus it is important to make sure that teachers are not alone in critical reflections and inquiries. While each of the studies here focused on pre-service teachers, there is a need to understand the impact of these reflections among in-service teachers. Day (1999) posits that teachers who have achieved a sense of stability or even mastery in their career may be more willing to explore new ideas and challenges. Thus challenging their school's culture and norms related to inclusion is a great place for them to reflect, but it will not be without discomfort. The need for community and critical friends to sort through these emotions and move forward is necessary. PDS is a structure that is well-suited to conduct this work as it emphasizes collaborative approaches to PD.

Research on Teacher Agency and Resistance

While teachers' beliefs and attitudes are critical in establishing a need for inclusion, the next step is to take action in creating inclusive spaces. Teacher agency, a

key part of teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004), serves as a way to understand the actions teachers take to push back against ableist practices. In an systematic review of international studies, Miller et al. (2020) shared the findings of eleven studies regarding the connection between teacher agency and inclusion. The studies included a range of beliefs and levels of self-efficacy among teachers, but highlighted the inclusive actions teachers take to create more inclusive spaces. Across five countries (United States, Cambodia, Canada, England, China) common inclusive actions included implementing student-centered approaches, differentiation, flexible grouping, curricular adaptations, and collaboration. These actions are both formal and informal, and are incrementally developing inclusion over time (Miller et al., 2020). Further research is needed to understand what barriers may impede teacher agency as it relates to inclusion.

Oftentimes the contexts teachers work in serve as a barrier. More teachers are being trained from a DSE perspective, but they are struggling in their classrooms because so many of their colleagues were trained in more traditional, deficit paradigms (Broderick et al., 2012). In a collaborative inquiry, Broderick and several recent graduates employed as local teachers from her university's elementary education program worked to explore their sites of resistance in their own elementary schools and classrooms. The teachers felt that they had to "engage in acts of resistance to the dominant discourses and storylines of special education" (p. 828), by teaching in constructivist rather than scripted ways and by pushing their administration and staff to rethink deficit narratives presented in professional development. The teachers felt that they would benefit from a collaborative network of like-minded educators to partake in political activism that reframes how disability is understood in schools (Broderick et al., 2012).

In a similar study, Siuty (2019) utilized critical ethnography and phenomenological interviews to understand how four graduates of an inclusive teacher preparation program developed their identities while navigating the tension between their program and their new practices. Each of the participants worked as special education teachers, and an analysis of their course syllabi established that they had been exposed to and engaged in critical inclusive perspectives during their coursework. In practice, the teachers identified and critiqued several areas of inequity, particularly in the determination process. However, in many areas the teachers upheld dominant ableist notions, as seen in their acceptance and use of I.Q. scores and limited understanding of what counts as literacy. While DSE was helpful in initiating a critique of ableist systems, it was not enough to sustain such critiques as participants rarely focused their critiques inwards as it related to their own identities within the special education system. They articulated that their identities as special educators situated their skillset "as distinct and even superior to their general education colleagues" (p. 47). While they embraced critical inclusion in theory, their identity as special educators prohibited them from putting these beliefs into practice despite their initial preparation.

These studies speak to the ways the macro and micro structures of educational contexts influence how teacher identities are formed (Day et al., 2006). The teachers in these studies positioned themselves given their identity in the general-special education binary (Siuty, 2019), or positioned themselves to use their agency to resist such binary thinking (Broderick et al., 2012). Through reflection and asserting their agency, teachers can situate themselves to bring about more inclusive practices in schools.

Research on Successful Inclusive Practices

Biklen (2000) argued that we must resist ableism and teach disability

consciousness in order to ensure successful inclusion, which speaks to developing an

inclusive pedagogy. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) outlined the requirements of

inclusive pedagogy as: (1) a shift in focus to learning for all students, not just those with

labels, (2) rejecting ability as a static idea, and (3) embracing collaborative approaches to

respect the dignity of all learners as members of the classroom community.

To help teachers build inclusive mindsets, it helps to know what successful

inclusion looks like. Lyons, Thompson, and Timmons (2016) studied successful inclusive

practices in four elementary schools through semi-structured interviews aimed at

understanding the perspectives, values, and experiences of teachers, principals, students,

and other community stakeholders. Their findings revealed that relationships were the

most meaningful and valuable aspects of successful inclusion. Community and team

approaches to education and learning were central to the work in all four schools. Lyons

et al. (2016) listed the components of successful inclusion as: (1) a clear vision shared by

all stakeholders, (2) supports for teachers and students, (3) all students are valued as

members of the community, (4) the necessity of a collaborative team approach to

learning, (5) use resources efficiently, (6) supportive leadership, and (7) quality

professional development for educators.

In a similar case study of a successful inclusive elementary school, McLeskey,

Waldron, and Redd (2014) found that the school's success was in part due to teachers

being positioned as experts within the building, while also holding teachers accountable

for teaching all students. Like Lyons et al. (2016), McLeskey et al. (2014) found that

providing quality professional development for teachers, high-quality instruction for all students, shared decision making, and data driven practices were all components of successfully implementing inclusion.

Inclusive teaching strategies and approaches are also key. Focusing specifically on strategies to include students with autism, Lindsay et al. (2014) interviewed thirteen elementary school teachers about how they went about including students. They found that teachers were "committed to professional development as a way of developing existing as well as new inclusive practices" (p. 109). Through their professional development, the teachers incorporated strategies that involved:

(1) advocating for resources and essential training; (2) tailored teaching methods; (3) teamwork within the school; (4) building a rapport with parents and students; and (5) building a climate of acceptance within the classroom through disability awareness, education and sensitivity training. (p. 109)

These strategies can serve as a start to close the theory-praxis gap. More importantly they offer teachers seeking to do this work a starting point from which to implement more inclusive practices. It speaks to Day et al.'s (2005) study of commitment as part of teacher identity, in that teachers need a clear set of values and job standards. Reframing our standards and values to be critical of disability construction, we can build more inclusive practices and mindsets.

Moving Inclusion Forward

From the foundations of DSE, SiA, and critical pedagogy we can begin to work toward and understand how to sustain inclusive mindsets, as outlined in Figure 4 below.

The overlap among these three frameworks helps us to strengthen our commitment to inclusion, as deconstructing oppression must be an interdisciplinary effort.

Figure 4

Foundations for Inclusive Mindsets & Identities
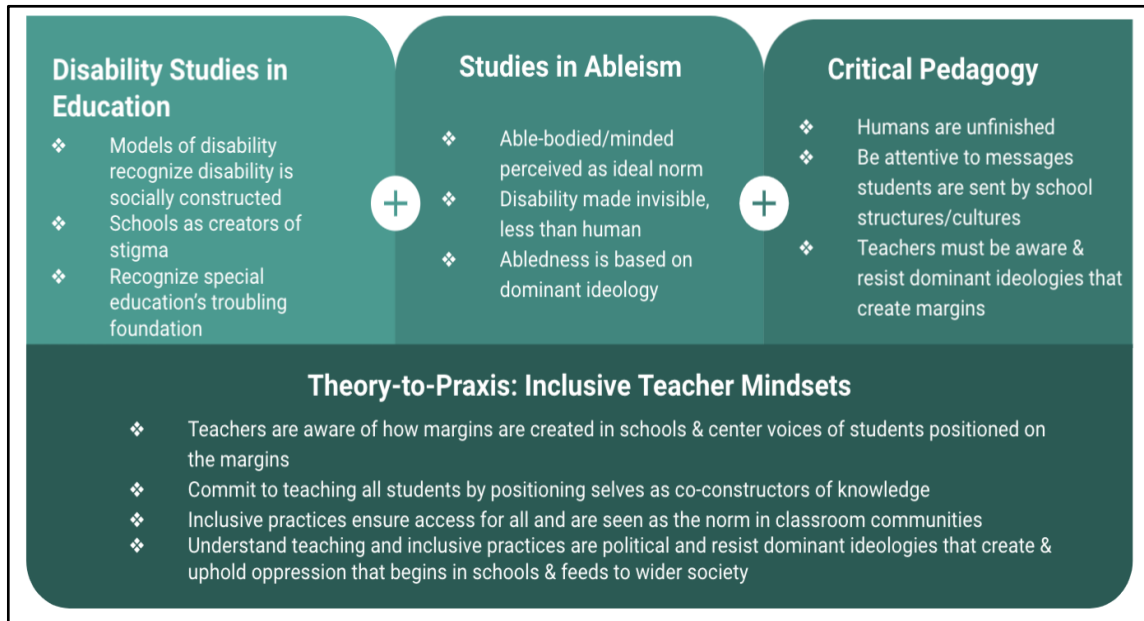
A first step in reaching inclusive mindfulness is for teachers to recognize that ableist oppression exists through critical analysis, and then use the tools at their disposal to begin changing the systems that uphold it (Cosier & Ashby, 2016). This can be done by working from the intersection of DSE, SiA and critical pedagogy. As Sleeter (1992) explained, "because schools as organizations provide structural contexts that constrain what most teachers believe they can do with multicultural education, we need to focus as much on changing school structures as on educating individuals within schools" (p. 146). Inclusion goes hand-in-hand with multicultural education when viewed along the same lines as race, gender, ethnicity, etc. (Baglieri, 2016), and all educators need to be aware

of this overlap so that inclusion goes beyond just physical presence in a classroom that is only focused on special education (Baglieri et al., 2011; Biklen & Burke, 2006). With many PDSs positioning themselves to commit to social justice work, many in-service teachers in these contexts are already working to understand oppressive structures. Working from a lens of inclusion as multicultural work (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013), teachers can begin by reflecting on their roles in such systems, as reflection is central to their identity and professional development (Day et al., 2005).

Upon reflecting on ableism's influence on education, teachers must then adopt inclusive attitudes and beliefs about their students. As Freire (1998) reminds us, all humans are unfinished, and this includes teachers. Recognizing that teachers are constantly becoming-in-action (Hordvik et al., 2021), teachers can work to become more inclusive of all students by shifting their attitude from one that is perhaps authoritarian to one that is democratic. This shift will allow their classrooms to become a community of "we" where all students are seen as valuable constructors of knowledge. This attitude shift can also enhance their commitment to all students, along with influencing their self-efficacy. They need to believe in their ability and moral imperative to teach all students. As Lyons et al. (2016) identified, the first step for inclusion is a clear and shared vision by all stakeholders of the importance of inclusive education.

After adopting inclusive mindsets through reflection and shifting attitudes, teachers must ensure that their beliefs align with their actions. As Giangreco (1998) pointed out in his satirical cartoon, teachers cannot give the excuse of only philosophically believing in inclusion, their actions must follow their espoused beliefs. Building relationships with students and tailoring instruction methods to meet their needs

can be a central component of PD (Lindsay et al., 2014; Lyons et al., 2016; McLeskey et al., 2014). Through outcome-based PD (Waitoller and Artiles, 2013), teachers can focus on more immediate implementation of inclusive practices. Using their critical reflections, teachers can begin to support each other and collaboratively work towards finding solutions that enable them to dismantle the oppressive structures within their schools. Doing this will allow teachers' beliefs to match their actions, so that they embrace a holistic inclusive identity.

Through this interdisciplinary framework of DSE, SiA, and critical pedagogy we can move inclusion forward. DSE reminds us that we must be mindful to embrace human variation, understand neurological differences as part of identity diversity, and honor the voices and experiences of students with disabilities to center our practice (Biklen, 2000; Danforth & Gabel, 2016; Singer, 2017; Taylor 2016). Drawing from SiA educators must remember that students should not be required to demonstrate the dominant ideology's notions of high intelligence in order to be included (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015), and instead we must create contexts for students to show competence (Biklen, 2000). Finally, from critical pedagogy, we must remember that it is our responsibility to care for the souls of our students (hooks, 1994), and we must also recognize that students will have their own dreams and goals. We cannot let any ableist assumptions limit how we work with and support students towards realizing their goals (Biklen & Burke, 2006). Through these reflections we as educators can become more mindful of the stories we live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Situating our practices in this foundation we can be able to identify ourselves as inclusive educators who view

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the world through a critical lens while simultaneously caring for and embracing all

learners in our classrooms.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In chapter 2 I detailed the conceptual framework for this study along with relevant research that supports the exploration of the tensions between ability profiling, teacher identity, and inclusive mindsets. In this chapter I provide the methods and processes I will utilize to examine these tensions.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the tensions teachers experience in developing inclusive mindsets while working in a system that allows for ability profiling and disability stigma in schools. Negative cultural and societal attitudes, compounded by institutional practices that enable deficit perspectives, adversely impact the educational opportunities and views of students labeled disabled (Collins, 2011; Hehir, 2002). Teachers do not enter their classrooms with the aim of marginalizing students, yet the pressures of standardization and accountability create an atmosphere that allows for marginalization to occur. These pressures lead to institutional practices that support "legally sanctioned forms of school segregation" as students are sorted by perceived abilities (Collins, 2011, p. 411). Inclusion, when viewed from a multicultural perspective, works to end the unnecessary segregation of students and create welcoming communities in school.

To better support inclusive efforts, Artiles and Kozleski (2007) call for "inclusive education research and practice [to] take into account the complex processes of identity formation and change that take place in the life of communities of practice" (p. 363). As Clandinin and Connelly (1999) explained, the "resistance of teachers to school change

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is...a question of teacher identity and of the conditions under which stories to live by are sustained and new stories to live by are composed" (p. 100). As teachers resist or embrace inclusive education, they are either attempting to maintain their former identities or are creating new identities. Exploring the processes of developing inclusive teacher identities and taking a more holistic view of what it is to be a teacher (Akkerman & Meijer, 2001; Avraamidou, 2014) can allow us to understand how to "foster teachers with a strong sense of themselves and the importance of their work not only on a local level in relation to the individual students they teach, but also on a societal level" (p. 525). Therefore the tension between inclusive mindsets, teacher identity, and disabling practices were focused on here through teacher reflection guided by professional development. Through critical reflection and collaborative discussions, aspects of teacher identity, like self-efficacy and commitment (Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006), were explored as they relate to teachers' beliefs and values regarding inclusive education, in order to understand how to develop and sustain inclusive mindsets amongst teachers.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand the tensions teachers experienced as they worked to create more inclusive mindsets despite the existence of ability profiling and disability stigma. The hope was to capture teachers' experiences as they shift and reform their identities and mindsets to become more inclusive. Understanding how this shift transpired may allow us to further inclusive efforts in more contexts. This study explored the following research questions:

1. How does developing an awareness of ableism influence teachers' identities?

2. To what extent can disability memoirs inform teachers' inclusive mindsets and perceptions of their own practices?

3. Does engaging in critical reflection guided by professional development and poetic inquiry influence any change in teacher identity and inclusive mindset?

Method

This qualitative research study relied upon poetic inquiry, a form of arts-based research, to capture the lived experiences of teachers caught between the tensions of ability profiling and building inclusive mindsets and identities.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research can be understood as an umbrella for a variety of methods used to study social interactions (Saldana et al., 2011), recognizing that a researcher can never fully capture or truly represent the experiences of participants (Hatch, 2002). The notion of subjectivity is key to qualitative approaches, as qualitative scholars reject the positivist idea of objectivity in that a person cannot be entirely free of bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Hatch, 2002). Qualitative research emphasizes scholarship that: (1) occurs in natural settings, (2) includes participant perspectives, (3) recognizes the researcher as a data gathering instrument, (4) encourages scholars to engage with participants, and (5) focuses on how individuals use meanings to understand their social situations (Hatch, 2002). The interdisciplinary nature of qualitative research situates it so that scholars can better understand intersectional oppression (Petersen, 2012). These characteristics aligned with the overall goal of this study, in that they enabled me to capture aspects of teachers' tensions with their identities, inclusive mindsets, and an ableist system. The qualitative

approach used here drew from arts-based research, specifically poetic inquiry, to employ interdisciplinary methods.

Arts-Based Research

Arts-based research (ABR) is a methodology that allows for "cultivating the social consciousness," (Leavy, 2015, p. 25). This more holistic, dynamic approach to research can be defined as "involving the researcher in some form of direct art-making as a primary mode of systematic inquiry," (McNiff, 2011, p. 385). Drawing on neuroscience and psychology, scholars who employ ABR methods recognize the arts are uniquely positioned to allow researchers and participants to deeply engage in the learning process (Leavy, 2015). The accessibility of ABR methods - whether using visual arts, narrative and written arts, performance or musical arts - allows for academic and nonacademic audiences to appreciate the knowledge created through their interactions with art. This is especially important in education where ABR can serve as a means of critical public pedagogy, as scholars have a need to remain relevant with the public (Woo, 2018). For this reason, many education scholars, especially in special education, have turned to ABR as a means of aligning their methods to social justice theory (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2018; Leavy, 2015). As Leavy (2015) explained:

> ABR can expose people to new ideas, stories, or images and can do so in service of cultivating a social consciousness...Jarring people into seeing and thinking differently is also critical if we wish to challenge stereotypes and the ideologies they promote. (p. 24)

For these reasons, ABR was well-suited for the current study as we worked to understand how teachers reform their identities and think differently about students. Teachers were

situated as active participants in the inquiry, as ABR can be particularly powerful when doing identity work, and capturing the evolution of identity can be done through poetic inquiry (Leavy, 2015).

Poetic Inquiry

Poetic inquiry, an approach within arts-based research, is mindful of dismissing binaries that constrict our thinking and instead opening up "possibilities for knowing and researching and becoming" (Leggo, 2006, p. 88). In this way, poetic inquiry allowed for this research to avoid categorizing teachers into one particular box (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011), instead allowing for both researcher and participant to capture the ways they are forming and reforming their professional identities (Beijaard et al., 2004; Mockler, 2011). In understanding teacher identity, Glesne (1997) relied on poetic transcription to capture an educator's identity and transformation over the span of her fifty year career. The poems captured her participant's reflections on her own K-12 experience, her teaching experiences, and the wider sociocultural changes that occurred throughout her career. Using poetry allowed Glesne (1997) to highlight how these contexts were interrelated to paint a picture of her participant's experiences and speak to the forming and reforming of her teacher identity over the span of her career.

Poetic inquiry helped me honor and center participant voices as we worked to reform teachers' identities and develop inclusive mindsets. It aligns nicely with DSE in that DSE embraces a "variety of art forms and modes of communication" (Allan, 2016, p. 36). I was situated in a more reciprocal position when working with participants as this method gave voice to research collaborators through its flexibility and need for trust (Leavy, 2015; Leggo, 2005; Petersen, 2011). Poetic inquiry challenges the "fact-fiction

dichotomy" (Leavy, 2015, p. 78), which positions it to help deconstruct oppressive structures like ability profiling (Faulkner, 2019). This deconstruction, along with the open interpretation of poetry, enabled us to identify the problems with ability profiling and disability stigma, and invite the audience to find a solution (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Utilizing poetic inquiry to challenge the fact-fiction dichotomy, Latremouille (2018) wrote poems that captured adult voices within her school regarding what she deemed as silencing practices - a bell system, demanding students walk in straight lines, and silent lunchrooms. Her poems highlighted how teachers' dependence on such structures actually marginalize students' humanity by silencing them. The poems were a nuanced approach to understanding how teachers talk about these practices. In this way poetry is the essence of qualitative methods because this new way of seeing speaks to the heart of the human experience, capturing moments as if in a photograph or under a microscope (Cahnmann, 2003; Glesne, 1997; McCullis, 2013). Leggo (2006) argues that "human science research needs to be challenged, even unsettled, by the perspectives of poets and novelists and artists" (p. 87). By zooming in on the ideas and topics we study, and presenting them in new, unique ways, poetic scholars can offer nuanced yet holistic perspectives that further our understanding of a particular phenomenon.

Cahnmann (2003) encouraged educational researchers to take up poetic inquiry as it "enhances our ability to understand classroom life and support students' potential to add their voices to a more socially just and democratic society," (p. 34). In line with understanding classroom relationships, Stewart (2012) used poetic inquiry to explore shame experienced in education. Her poems highlighted that students experience shame in schools by being made to feel as if they are not enough. Stewart (2012) called on

educators to understand feelings of shame as "a rupture in a relationship," (p. 107). These ideas of shame and student voice speak to the overall goal of this study to understand the tensions of building inclusive mindsets in that teachers want to empower students rather than create environments that produce shame. By using poetic inquiry to explore inclusive mindsets and teacher identities, I was able to honor the unique points that each participant is at in their individual journeys by practicing a more holistic research method that allowed me to "connect heartfully with others" (Leggo, 2006, p. 78). The creative process opened the possibility for the poetry to speak to the heart of our experiences and reveal transformations in our thinking and knowing. Presenting the findings as poemish allowed for the work to be accessible, capturing the emotions of participants present in the data while infusing a level of creativity into academic discourse (Patrick, 2016; Faulkner, 2020). This aligns with my purpose to gain insight into inclusive mindsets and identities from a DSE perspective, as poetry "speaks to what is at the heart of education: connections between people, places, and things" (Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2021).

Research Design

This study took place at the PDS where I am a professor-in-residence. It was designed with Waitoller and Artiles' (2013) suggestions to conduct research on PD for inclusive education that: (1) seeks to help teachers develop deep understandings of intersectional inclusion/exclusion, (2) make connections between their identities and school contexts, and (3) is conducted in learning community as part of a school-university partnership. A description of the PD and research approaches are provided, followed by a description of the location and participants.

Study Context

In this inquiry I relied on my role as a professor-in-residence at a professional development school (PDS). The PDS is an elementary school and has been part of the university's PDS network for three years prior to this study. There are 30 teachers at the school - 9 special education teachers, 9 "encore" teachers (e.g. art, music, gym), and 12 general education teachers. The average years of teaching experience are 11.9 years. Of the 262 students enrolled in the school, 26% receive special education services, 2.7% are English language learners, and 16% are considered economically disadvantaged. This is compared to a district average of 10,891 students, 18.1% receiving special education services, 3.9% are English language learners, and 18.2% are considered economically disadvantaged (New Jersey School Performance Report, 2020). The school is divided into general, inclusive, resource, and self-contained classrooms; the six self-contained classrooms are entirely composed of students with autism. All six of these classrooms are separated into their own hallway with no general education classrooms nearby. The school context is in line with data from the National Council of Disability which ranks the state of New Jersey as 49th in the country for inclusive education, with 14.72% of students spending less than 40% of their day in a general education setting (NCD, 2018).

In line with the PDS nine essentials, I worked on providing professional development for both in-service and pre-service teachers and conducted research in order to increase student achievement. I spent one full day a week working with students and both in- and pre-service teachers at the school. Five teachers were part of our PDS steering committee, and the committee and I created goals that guided our work for the year. Initially during our first year as a PDS, the faculty elected increasing student

stamina as their key focus. But halfway through our first year as a PDS, two other professors-in-residence and I hosted the entire faculty at our university for a full day PD on inclusive education. After this, the focus of our PDS goals shifted to developing more inclusive practices through incorporating Universal Design for Learning. However, for the past three years and while this study was conducted, the focus on inclusion has been a source of tension, with some teachers not seeing the need for it. They often questioned it during PD sessions and on surveys. This study was designed to help us continue working on creating more inclusive environments. It was conducted and presented as an inquiry-based professional development series, as opposed to a stand alone workshop, that will offer teachers a continuous space to reflect on their identity and practice (Mockler, 2011).

Study Participants & Recruitment

Recruitment for this inquiry occurred throughout the month of September. To recruit participants, an invitation to join the study was shared with all teachers at the PDS during their first in-service day prior to the start of school. Teachers had to be teaching for at least three years in order to participate. I then met with each interested teacher to further explain the study's purpose, answer any questions they had, and obtain consent. Initially, five teachers signed up to participate, but with encouragement from the principal and literacy coach, along with the incentive of district professional development credits, eight more teachers signed up. To help with recruitment, the district granted permission for participants' to count the time spent conducting the inquiry as their required six hours of self-selected professional development. However, during recruitment it was explained that study activities may take more than the allotted six hours. The length of time required for participation became a source of tension later on in the study.

The thirteen total participants represented all grades and settings (e.g. self-contained, resource, general education, encore), which afforded me the chance to see how perspectives and experiences differed across settings. Upon recruitment, each participant was asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A). A list of participants and some of the information their shared about themselves is shared in Table 1. The average years spent teaching among the participants was 20 years, and ten participants were female while three were male.

Table 1

Study Participants

Name*	Identified as**	Years teaching	Degrees held	# of schools taught at	Current Role
NICOLE	Female, white, 57yrs old	35 years	BA, MsED	4	Literacy Coach
GINNY	Female, white, 33yrs old	10 years	BA, MED, Doctoral Student	2	Basic Skills Instructor
BEN	Male, white/Asian, 45 yrs old	15 years	BA, MFA	6	Art Teacher
ANTHONY	Male, African American, 58 yrs old	21 years	BA, Masters	3	General Education
MARIE	Female, white, middle class, 55 yrs old	28 years	BA	2	General Education
MELISSA	Female, white, 28 yrs old	4 years	BA, Masters in Special Education	1	General Education
JEN	Female, white, middle class, 44 yrs old	14 years	BA, Masters in Reading	4	General Education
SARAH	Female, white, 39 yrs old	18 years	BA, Masters	2	General Education
DANIELLE	Female, Caucasian, 51 yrs old	29 years	BA	3	Special Education/ Autism Support

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Name*	Identified as**	Years teaching	Degrees held	# of schools taught at	Current Role
DREW	Male, white, 41 yrs old	13 years	BA, Masters	5	General Education
ANGELA	Female, Greek-American	30 years	BA, Masters	2	General Education
LISA	Female, Caucasian, 52yrs old	31 years	BA, Masters	3	General Education
EILEEN	Female, white, 47 yrs old	20 years	BA	3	Special Education/ Resource Room

*Names are pseudonyms
**Participants were invited to share as much as they were comfortable disclosing; identifying information is written as they disclosed it

All participants were encouraged to actively engage in the research, so that I conducted my research *with* the teachers rather than *about* them, as this allowed me to better understand the various contexts and complexities present in their experiences (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Participants were informed that all study activities were designed to be flexible to meet their needs and account for the various demands placed upon them.

Inquiry-Based Professional Development Procedures

The professional development centered in this study occurred in two phases. An overview of the procedures is included here, while each of these components is explained in more detail in the data collection procedures.

The first phase started with initial 25 to 45-minute interviews with each teacher. While longer interviews were desired, time constraints proved to be a key barrier during data collection. Along with interviews, teachers wrote two inclusive autobiographies during a half day PD session in October. After all interviews were completed our book club commenced. We met once a week for 25 minutes during the school's professional learning community (PLC) time, which is a designated time each morning for teachers to

participate in PD. The book club lasted for four weeks before abruptly ending (discussed below), and was followed by a second interview with each teacher to transition into the second phase of the inquiry.

The second phase focused on poetic writing, using poems both as and for data analysis. The original intention was to collaboratively write transcription poems, however, the demands on teachers (i.e. planning, instruction, parent conferences) proved to be a barrier. Instead, I wrote transcription poems for all but two participants. Participants Nicole and Melissa elected to write their own poems following directions provided to them. After writing the poems, I shared them with each individual to review and provide feedback on. Each participant was also asked to complete a brief reflection (see Appendix B).

Following the creation of transcription poems, found poems were created that combined participants' words with lines from the theories supporting this study in an effort to think poetically with theory. This was done as a means of overarching analysis of the findings. Finally, an overview of the findings were shared with the entire faculty to bring a sense of closure to the study along with offering next steps for their continued professional development. This PD series lasted across two semesters, and teachers spent an estimated 11 hours participating in all activities. The estimated time commitment of all activities is shared in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Time Commitment of Inquiry Activities

Inquiry Activity	Estimated Time Spent Engaged
Initial Interview	25-45 minutes*
Inclusive Autobiography	90 minutes
Book Club	4 25-minute sessions
Reading	≈5.5 hours for audiobook
Midpoint Check-In	50 minutes
Second Interview	25-45 minutes*
Review of Poems	25 minutes
Total Time	10.75 hours to 11.5 hours

*Several teachers were willing to interview during their 50-minute planning period, while others were only willing to interview during their 25-minute PLC time.

The hope was that a continued, interdisciplinary PD series would help sustain an inwards critical reflection, as a longer duration of interacting with critical ideas is needed to initiate change (Thorius, 2016). By working through their reflections over the course of two semesters, teachers were able to more deeply engage in the ideas and content presented in the inquiry.

Data Collection and Analysis

To build the data corpus for this poetic inquiry, I utilized several modes of data collection: interviews, autobiographical writings, book club discussions, and poetic writing. Each of these modes supported the call for creating space that opened both dialogue with others and self-dialogue that allowed for a reflection on the connections between our teaching identities, philosophies and practices (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004). A timeline is outlined in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Timeline for Data Collection

Timeframe: September - October

Explain scope & purpose of study to staff at PDS
Recruit participants & obtain consent

Timeframe: January - March

Data Collection & Analysis
1. Constructing transcription poems
2. Participants' feedback on poems

Phase 1: Data Collection

Phase 3: Data Analysis

Initiate Study

Phase 2: Shift from Collection to Analysis

Timeframe: October - January

Data collection
1. Initial interviews
2. Inclusive autobiographies
3. Book club reading & discussions
4. Second interviews

Timeframe: March - May

Data Analysis:
1. Create poetic clusters
2. Construct threshold poems from participants' words & theory

Phase 1 Data Collection Methods

The first phase of data collection lasted for approximately 14 weeks and consisted of interviews, writing autobiographical pieces, and book club discussions.

Interviews. Two interviews were conducted within the first phase of the study. The initial interview with each participant launched their involvement in the study, while the second interview occurred after the completion of the book club. Semistructured interviews were used, as they are concerned with understanding the "themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects' own perspectives" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 31). Questions were open-ended to invite a range of answers and perspectives (Bhattacharya, 2017), and centered on describing teachers' perceptions of their positions in schools, students, and their practices as related to inclusion (See Appendix C). Being mindful of inclusive practices, participants were offered a choice of interview method (e.g. in-person, phone, videoconference), as this honors multiple ways of being and knowing (Kerschbaum & Price, 2017). Given teachers' schedule constraints, finding time to

conduct interviews proved to be tricky. Two participants chose to do their first interview during their 25 minute PLC time in the morning, while eleven chose to give up their 50-minute planning period for their interviews. As the demands of the school year picked up, eight participants elected to have their second interviews during the shorter PLC time rather than conduct it during their planning period.

The initial interview focused on two aspects - perceptions of students and teacher identity. Participants were asked to describe their students and classroom practices. They were asked questions related to how they know and understand their teacher identities.

The second interview asked teachers to revisit the students described in the first interview. They were asked if they had any new takeaways or understandings based on the concepts and ideas explored during the book club. They were also asked if they felt any different regarding their teacher identities following our book club discussions. Both the first and second interviews were recorded and the transcripts aided in the poetic writing (discussed below). Transcripts were provided to participants to check that they are an accurate account of their words and ideas.

Inclusive Autobiographies. During a ninety-minute in-service session in October, teachers were asked to write short autobiographical pieces that explore their experiences with inclusion and disability throughout their lives. The first piece asked teachers to describe their own education growing up, reflecting on their interactions with students who were labeled as disabled in their own K-12 education. They considered how inclusive their own school experience was or was not, and then reflected on how this may impact their current beliefs and understandings surrounding inclusion.

The second autobiographical piece asked teachers to reflect on how inclusion was presented and discussed in their teacher preparation programs and early years of teaching. While their core identities remain the same, over time teachers' stories relating to their identities may be reformed given social interactions in schools (Beijaard et al., 2004). The purpose of this second piece was to help teachers understand the formation of their beliefs and explore the ways they have changed since their initial preparation program. They reflected on how they came to understand the divide between special and general education, advice they were given on dual certification, and if/how they experienced this divide in practice.

Both of these pieces served to help participants reflect on how they came to know and understand inclusion in their personal and professional experiences. During the writing session, one participant, Lisa, commented aloud how she had never even considered some of these ideas related to disability in her own life before. The autobiographies also provided some background context for each teacher's journey, as their personal biographies often influence their teacher identity formation, and their stories are tied closely to developing their professional identities (Beijaard et al., 2004; Hordvik et al., 2021). Similar to Zenkov et al. 's (2020) use of reflective stories of injustice, the purpose of these writings was to help teachers reflect on how they came to know ableism.

Book Club. After all initial interviews occurred, all participants joined in a book club that centered on disability memoir. We collectively read Jonathan Mooney's (2019) memoir, *Normal Sucks: How to Live, Learn, and Thrive Outside the Lines*. The memoir followed Mooney's educational experience from elementary school to college, and

explored how he lived through ability profiling and disability stigma based on his dyslexia. Mooney documented his struggle with normalcy and how this influenced his self-esteem and notions of self-worth. He wove disability studies theory into his personal reflections, and offered a way to reframe ability and normal moving forward. Speaking of his experiences, Mooney stated:

> I know that this is what limited me: the passive learning experience where kids sit at a desk most of the day; a narrow definition of intelligence conflated with reading and other right-brain skills; and a medicalization of differences that reduced my brain to a set of deficits and ignored the strengths that go hand in hand with many brain differences. I want you to know that I did not and do not *have* a disability, as it is common to say, but *experienced* disability in environments that could not accommodate and embrace my differences. (p. 159-160)

The personal account of ability profiling and disability stigma anchored our exploration of the tensions and impacts our practices may have on students. The book club was intended to help us understand the imperative need for more inclusive mindsets and the need to situate ourselves as inclusive educators. As a group we met virtually once a week, during the 25-minute PLC time, to discuss the chapter(s) assigned for the week. For our first session we read the first two chapters, and based on participant feedback, I revised our note-taking and discussion structure (see Appendix D). Several teachers expressed that the theory felt like a lot to keep track of, and so short summaries were added to our notes to help our understanding. During our discussions the teachers were invited to share aloud, type in the chat, or type ideas into our shared notes document.

After reading chapter 4, a midpoint check-in meeting was arranged to foster deeper discussion than was afforded in our shorter sessions. Not all teachers shared during our weekly morning discussions, and there was a great deal of historical and theoretical content shared in the first four chapters, so a longer discussion felt warranted. Given limited substitute coverage, the group was split into three smaller groups for fifty minutes each. This turned out to be beneficial as not all participants were comfortable speaking in the larger group, so this allowed a more intimate space to share ideas. The discussion was supplemented with slides sharing different models of disability (i.e. social, medical, charity models) and reading highlighted excerpts from the National Council on Disability's (2018) report on the segregation of students with disabilities. We focused on sections that discussed practices in other states, as well as the report's focus on New Jersey's troubling practices on pages 31 to 33 of the report. This reading served to further show the depth and breadth of the issues of ability profiling and disability stigma.

The following week we read chapter five of the book, which was our fourth book club meeting. This session was just before Thanksgiving break, after which teachers were going to be immersed in completing multi-page, detailed report cards and conducting parent-teacher conferences. Given the critical nature of the content which teachers felt was not uplifting, reading during personal time, and the demands of their job, the group wished to discontinue the book club. Several of the teachers spoke with the literacy coach, who then informed me that the book club was becoming too much for the group. There were also complaints that teachers not participating in the book club had free time while the study participants were doing what felt like extra work. The principal hosted a

whole staff meeting about this issue, and in consultation with both the principal and the literacy coach, I did not attend this meeting despite it occurring on the day I would have reported to the PDS.

None of the teachers ever spoke with me directly about the challenges they were facing until I asked each of them about it during their second interviews. Each participant was asked if it was the content, context, or structure that was challenging for them, and their responses are discussed in detail in chapter 4. It was never made clear to me how many of the teachers truly wanted to end the book club, as the literacy coach did not share who spoke to her about ending the book club, nor did I explicitly ask participants. Three participants did share with me that they completed the book on their own and expressed that they were fine with the book club. As a group, we only read five out of the eight chapters. All book club discussions were recorded and the transcripts contributed to the poetic writing (discussed below).

Phase 2 Data Collection Methods

The second phase of data collection focused on creating transcription poems from the data gathered in the first phase. The poems served as both a source of data and a means of data analysis.

Poetic Writing. The final part of data collection consisted of poetic writing. Since poetry can be used in multiple ways throughout the course of a project, this approach was simultaneously used as both data collection and an analytical tool (Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Initially this was intended to be a collaborative activity done with participants. However, several participants felt that the inquiry was taking up too much of their time, and so the research design was revised to offer the teachers a choice.

Participants were given the opportunity to write their own transcription poems, or have me construct an initial poetic draft that they then revised and provided feedback on (Marni & Maghzi, 2021). Two participants, Nicole and Melissa, wrote their own poems, while the rest elected to have poems written for them and provided feedback on them.

The transcripts of the first and second interviews, transcripts from book club discussions, and inclusive autobiographies were used to create transcription poems. This style of poems is created from select lines or phrases of participant interview transcripts (Glesne, 1997; Kennedy, 2009; Lahman & Richard, 2014; Petersen, 2012) with the purpose of capturing the essence of a person as if in a brief moment (Glesne, 1997).

All of the data was read through to identify themes and patterns. Lines connected to each theme were noted, and the lines were chosen that "capture[d] participants' stories, convey[ed] their voices, and would speak to a general audience" (Kennedy, 2009, p. 1419). Lahman and Richard (2014) emphasized that the goal in creating such poems is to search for "salient, valuable words and phrases and setting these nuggets aside as though one were in the act of mining, panning, and sifting through words for small pieces of gold" (p. 345). Lines were selected based on their content (i.e. highlighted key parts of teachers' stories and/or perspectives) and the ways they lended themselves to poetry (i.e. contained phrases that evoked emotion or imagery).

The selected phrases were used to create transcription poems or "poemish" which are research representations that resemble poems or take poem-like forms (Lahman, Richard, & Teman, 2019). These research poems are distinguished from literary poems, although paying attention to poetic forms and criteria is needed (Faulkner, 2020). The style and number of transcription poems created was organic, depending on the themes

emerged from the data. Most participants had ten to fifteen poems written from their individual interview transcripts and autobiographical writings.

Employing "Vox Participare" (Prendergast, 2015), participant voices were centered by creating multiple poems for each participant in the study (Kennedy, 2009), along with creating poems from multiple participants' interviews to speak as a collective voice (Faulkner, 2020; Lahman & Richard, 2014). One polyvocal poem was created from the interview question "What do you value most as a teacher?", while the remaining polyvocal poems were drawn from book club discussions. These polyvocal poems were written so that different voices are represented in different fonts to distinguish the flow of ideas as the teachers worked through the book content.

For participants who elected to have me construct poems for them, it was critical to have their feedback on the poetic draft to ensure my subjectivity was accounted for. Drawing from participant voices while infusing my own lens created a third voice in the work that is a combination of both researcher and participant perspectives (Glesne, 1997). During a 25-minute PLC session, teachers were individually given copies of their poems and were invited to read in the library or in the privacy of their own classrooms. They read through the poems written from their transcripts, offered feedback on the drafts, and then completed a brief reflection on how this process helped them reflect on their experiences. This reflection completed the second phase of the inquiry, and the transcription poems became part of the data corpus for deeper analysis.

Phase 3 Data Analysis

> *Poems are an ordinary leaf*
> *placed under a microscope*
> *its veined highways and byways*
> *revealing our world*
> *from stellar streams to bloodstreams.*
> *They show us how to see again,*
> *help us question givens*
> *with their green complexity.*
> (Tusitala Marsh, 2021)

Throughout the study I continually analyzed the entirety of the data collected. Table 3 discusses the timeline and approaches to data analysis. Data was analyzed in stages as it was collected, so that analysis was a continual, ongoing process affording me greater insight into what has been captured. As Tusitala Marsh (2021) shows in the above poem, the veins present with the data and transcription poems were examined to understand the complexity, intersections, and connections between theory and praxis present within the data.

Table 3

Data Analysis Timeline

Research Question	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. How does developing an awareness of ableism influence teachers' identities?	first & second interviews, inclusive autobiographies, book club discussions	Phase 1: analytical memos Phase 2: identifying themes, transcription poems Phase 3: Thinking poetically with theory
2. To what extent can disability memoirs inform teachers' inclusive mindsets and perceptions of their own practices?	second interview, book club discussions, poetic writing	Phase 1: analytical memos Phase 2: identifying themes, transcription poems Phase 3: Thinking poetically with theory

Research Question	Data Collection	Data Analysis
3. Does engaging in critical reflection guided by professional development and poetic inquiry influence teacher identity and inclusive mindset?	first & second interviews, book club discussions, poetic writing,	Phase 1: analytical memos Phase 2: identifying themes, transcription poems Phase 3: Thinking poetically with theory

During Phase 1, data collected was continually analyzed so that I maintained a pulse on events and emotions captured during the study. I captured my ideas, reactions, and emerging patterns in analytic memos during this phase. The memos were helpful in revising the questions for the second interview by guiding me to areas in need of further explanation, along with capturing the moments where barriers impeded the inquiry.

In Phase 2 the data collected during the first phase was read through to identify themes and patterns. Transcription poems were created from these themes. The poetic writing was both an analytical tool and a data source, as poetry can be used in multiple ways over the course of an inquiry (Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2021). After creating poems for each participant, the poems and themes were condensed into poetic clusters. Butler-Kisber and Steward (2009) described poetic clusters, stating:

> Poetry clusters help to show the tentativeness of individual interpretations…how each understanding of a theme, topic, or concept is limited by the time, place, context and stance of the researcher at the time it is written. A poetry cluster that represents different events, moods, topics etcetera, can acknowledge the 'truth' of each of the poems in the series while simultaneously uncovering something more. The 'something more' is the revelation that often occurs in the unveiling of a poetry cluster. (p. 4)

The poems in the clusters can be read as standalone pieces, but situated together offer a more nuanced glimpse into the experiences of the teachers (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009). With over 100 poems written, not all poems were selected to be shared in this inquiry. In their reflection and review of poems written for them, participants were asked which of their poems they wished for me to highlight. With participant feedback in mind, poems were selected based on their closeness to literary poems (Faulkner, 2020), in that the transcription poems were in a similar style to free-verse poems. As Oliver (1994) explained, "the free-verse poem, when finished, must 'feel' like a poem - it must be an intended and effective presentation" (p. 68). Some poems felt closer to a transcript rather than a free verse poem, and so while they were shared with participants, they were not included here. Many participants' poems touched on similar topics, and so the transcription poems that best imitated free-verse poetry and "felt" like a poem were chosen to be presented here.

Finally in the third phase, I reviewed the entirety of the data corpus relying on teacher identity, DSE, SiA, and critical pedagogy to think with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). In explaining thinking with theory, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) referred to it as "putting philosophical concepts to work via disrupting the theory/practice binary by decentering each and instead showing how they *constitute or make one another*" (p. 5). Thinking with theory requires us to plug in to the data in order to make new connections as a moment of creation (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). This analytical approach aligned with my theoretical framework by working to close the theory-to-praxis gap. According to Jackson and Mazzei, to think with theory I needed to: (1) consider each theory in my framework and identify a theorist from each, (2) identify a specific concept or heuristic

they might focus on, (3) frame an analytical question around this concept, and finally, (4) read through the same chunk of data through each lens. After doing this for each of my four frameworks, I read through all of the transcription poems created to determine what chunk of data I would use to think with theory. I selected several stanzas from the poem created from the midpoint meetings as this was a moment during the inquiry where all participants spoke up and shared their ideas. But more importantly this meeting also served as a turning point in that the teachers no longer wished to participate in the book club after this meeting. It was a point in the inquiry where the teachers truly dug into the content of the book club and tied it to their practice. For this reason, I determined this was a meaningful moment that warranted a deeper analysis.

After selecting the data chunk, I generated analytical questions for each framework based on a given heuristic and theorist from within the framework, and then attached each to one of the poetic clusters I felt it best supported. These questions were captured in a chart in Table 4 as a means of transparency to show how I analyzed the data through theory.

Table 4

Thinking with Theory Questions

Theory	DSE	SiA	Critical Pedagogy	Teacher Identity
Theorist	Ferguson & Nusbaum (2012)	Broderick & Lalvani (2017)	hooks (2003)	Clandinin & Connelly (1999)
Heuristic/ Key Concept	Inclusion as an ideological commitment	Dysconscious ableism	Teaching practice as a site of resistance	Teacher identity as stories to live by

Theory	DSE	SiA	Critical Pedagogy	Teacher Identity
Analytical Question	What beliefs about inclusion are present?	Is there tacit acceptance or critical disruption of dysconscious ableism?	How are teachers upholding or resisting normal?	How do teachers represent their stories to live by?
Poetic Cluster	Beliefs on Inclusion & Ability	Tensions	Towards Inclusive Mindsets	Teacher Identity

When considering how to present this analysis, I was inspired by Prendergast's (2015) notions of Vox - the voices present within poems. In an earlier work, Prendergast (2009) identified poems that captured Vox Theoria, poems "written from or in response to works of literature/theory," as well as Vox Participare, poems "written from interview transcripts or solicited directly from participants" (p.xxii). Later, Prendergast (2015) identified more voices present in poetic inquiry, particularly Vox Justitia, "poems on equity, equality, social justice, class, freedom" and Vox Identitatis, "poetry exploring self/participants' gender, race, sexuality" (p. 683). With the idea of voices of theory, participants, justice, and identity, I felt inspired to take my thinking with theory analysis and poetically represent the voices captured throughout my inquiry. I termed this means of analysis as thinking poetically with theory.

I then returned to Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) concept of the threshold to help me think poetically with theory. As Jackson and Mazzei explained, "a threshold does not become a passageway until it is attached to other things different from itself" (p. 6). It is in this threshold that the theory and data meet to form something new through analysis. Working within a threshold I used the analytical questions for each framework to read

through the selected data chunk, noting salient lines and phrases that also spoke to Vox
Justitia and Vox Identitatis. From these lines I created what I have termed threshold
poems that combined both participants' words, lines from the theories, and my own
analytical thoughts and questions. Figure 6 demonstrates the basic structure of my
threshold poems. The aim was to create a visual poetic representation that captures my
interpretations of the dialogue between voices that occurred within the threshold of the
poem that spoke to justice and identity. A threshold poem is presented at the end of each
cluster, tying the theme of the cluster to the theoretical framework.

Figure 6

The Structure of a Threshold Poem

Data		Theory
	Threshold	
Vox Participare	The Threshold	Vox Theoria
Stanzas of participants' voices, selected lines phrases multiple voices or just one, demonstrating the collective story told by the teachers	My voice listening to the dialogue between the voices, guided by the analytical questions seeking justice, or a lack thereof. I felt the theorist might ask if they read the data. Presented through my own questions or ideas inspired by the dialogue.	Found poems generated from the voices of theorist(s) quotes selected from their works explaining the contexts and parameters of their heuristics

Findings are presented as a combination of poems and narrative explanations. Poems from individual transcripts and polyvocal poems are shared, as well as the threshold poems I created during my analysis in Phase 3.

Subjectivity, Reciprocity, & Trustworthiness

Peshkin (1988) described a person's subjectivity as "a garment that cannot be removed" (p. 17), and pushed researchers to manage their subjectivity so it does not become a burden on their work. Because our subjectivity is ever present within discourses, we must be always conscious of it. In this work I needed to be transparent regarding my values, beliefs, and positionality in order to vigilantly monitor for rigor and trustworthiness (Bhattacharya, 2017). Self-reflexive practices and transparency are hallmarks of good qualitative research along with being conscious of participant voices and reciprocity (Tracy, 2010). Poetic inquiry naturally embeds reflection as an approach, while the use of found poetry and collaborative writing will ensure I attended to participants' voices. Positioning my voice alongside my participants' strengthens our collective stories, but must be done with transparency to establish rigor and trustworthiness. Through practices like member checks, peer debriefing with critical friends, subjectivity interviews, triangulation of data, and reflective journaling, I accounted for my subjectivity and bias while maintaining academic rigor (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Hatch (2002) argued that reciprocity is a key ethical concern as scholars need to position themselves to develop relationships with their participants to gather rich data, which is particularly important when studying disability. To help achieve both reciprocity and trustworthiness (Tracy, 2010), I employed a multivocal approach by collaborating

with participants throughout the data collection process and allowed for frequent member reflections during collaborative poetic writing. Given the PDS context and my position as a professor-in-residence, along with the nine essentials of PDS (NAPDS, 2021), it is crucial that I remain mindful of my subjectivity to ensure a trustworthy, reciprocal relationship.

Positionality Statement

Having been born and raised in a Western society, I am privileged as a white, able-bodied, neurotypical, academic, cis-woman. Given my personal positionality it is critical that I am aware of my own biases and subjectivity as I work within the field of education and continually monitor its presence in my work (Peshkin, 1988). My privilege has afforded me the opportunity to have a mostly positive educational experience, from kindergarten all the way to my doctoral studies.

My work as an urban special education teacher working with students of color from low socioeconomic backgrounds gave me insights into education as an oppressive, marginalizing system. I taught for eight years as a special education high school English teacher. I was hired without a special education license, and worked to obtain it during my first year. To say I was ill-prepared is an understatement. As a white woman teaching all black and brown students labeled as disabled, I was not in a position to truly understand the impact of my students' intersecting identities. It was only upon critical reflection taken up after leaving my K-12 classroom that I better understood mine and my students' experiences.

The first two years of teaching, my classroom was a large closet within the general education classroom. My physical space alone was marginalizing. Given the

location of my room and the labels assigned to the students in it, the school community widely regarded my students from a deficit view. This often played out during standardized tests. As the English teacher it was mandated that I spend three months before the test explicitly teaching to the test. This caused both my students and myself a great deal of anxiety and took all the joy out of learning. It was only after testing was complete that we could do anything "fun." In the spring my classroom shifted toward more project-based learning. It was during these moments that my students thrived, as I realize now that I was teaching to their strengths and offering them a choice in their learning. We were positioned as co-constructors of knowledge, utilizing many elements of Universal Design for Learning.

Looking back on these moments I realize that I shifted my own focus to consider their strengths rather than deficits. In my final year in K-12, I had one student who was constantly drawing, and no surface was off-limits for her artwork. Yet she struggled with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. I taught her for two years, worrying about all the things she *could not* do. But her comic book on *The Great Gatsby* created after the testing was over showed a level of analytical depth I never anticipated from her. I realized that I, like most of her other teachers, overlooked this talent as a means of expression for her and that there was a wealth of untapped potential that she was never given the chance to build upon. Our spaces, practices, and mindsets were not designed to be inclusive, thus limiting how I understood my students.

I must continue to reflect on anecdotes like those seen in my professional experiences in order to address the issues present within them. My experiences, like the one shared here, influenced my work in the current study. Reflecting both on myself and

my relation to others is critical to properly research marginalization, as doing so allows both myself and my participants to move from critical self reflection toward critical examination of the systems we live and work within (Milner, 2007). Keeping a pulse on my own thoughts and experiences was essential to ensuring trustworthiness as I worked within my role as a professor-in-residence to conduct this study.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting any research or recruiting participants, approval from the University's Institutional Review Board was obtained. In recruiting potential participants I spoke with them individually, explained the overall scope of the study and possible benefits or discomforts they may experience as a result of participating. This was done to achieve a level of transparency, while also reflecting teachers' vulnerability or skepticism of research (Hatch, 2002). Key to this research was the notion of reciprocity. In my position I have worked with the faculty at my PDS for three years, and so relationships have already been established to varying degrees. In order to respect participants, it was imperative that they see and understand how this project will be useful to them. As my work will not be a one-off study, but part of a larger relationship, talking through possible next steps after the study concludes was helpful in creating reciprocal relationships (Hatch, 2002). Participants had the option to use their names or select a pseudonym to accompany their poems. Any other identifying information (i.e. school name, location) was not included and was addressed through pseudonyms.

Limitations

Broad generalizations cannot be made given the number of participants, but the goal is not generalizability, rather it is to understand the tensions teachers experienced in

our particular context. This study was limited in its scope and time frame. The proposed data collection occurred over the span of one semester, and was bounded by the small number of participants. The geographic location in a state that does not have widespread inclusive practices may also limit the perspectives captured, as the wider educational community at large in the state continues to work toward better supporting inclusive mindsets and practices.

Greater limitations were present within my chosen method. As Patrick (2016) stated, poetic inquiry is "rife with tensions, subjectivities, and questions" (p. 396). Compressing the data and selecting what were perceived to be the most salient parts may limit what is presented (Patrick, 2016), but this is true of any qualitative inquiry. Presenting the findings as poems in the academy is risky as more traditional scholars question its rigor. As Prendergast (2015) argued, "in an empirical evidence-driven research world, to rely on openness, intitution, and an approach that privileges the 'itself-ness' of things feels radical," (p. 683), however just because poetic inquiry is a newer, radical form of inquiry should not discredit the study. Transparency in my methods and positionality was key to addressing any critiques.

In grappling with her positionality in her own poetic inquiry, Bhattacharya (2007) questioned the goals of research, and highlighted that her poem was evocative and meaningful for her participants. With this in mind, along with notions of reciprocity, this chosen method was meaningful for my participants and their experiences. It honored their voices, while also pushing back against oppression in a meaningful, thought-provoking way. Poetry gets to the heart of a matter, to the essence of human experience, and serves as a powerful deconstructive tool (Leggo, 2006). Despite these limitations, my selected

method contributed to understanding how teachers experience the push toward more inclusive practices and develop more inclusive mindsets.

Significance

If we are to create more equitable, accessible educational spaces for students then we need to consider the tensions present among inclusive-minded educators and systems that enable ability profiling and disability stigma. Doing this work through poetic inquiry afforded many opportunities. Work in this sphere highlights participant voices to promote change allowing the poems to act as a means of empowerment for teachers (Kennedy, 2009). Poetic inquiry done from a DSE lens infused with critical pedagogy, allowed my scholarship to have a greater impact in deconstructing ability profiling in schools. Critical poetic inquiry situates scholars as witnesses in our participants' stories, and helps us magnify their voices for change (Prendergast, 2015). Presenting the lived experiences of teachers building inclusive mindsets and identities through poetry captured the essence of these journeys in a provocative way that encourages critical reflection while prompting us to take action to resist ableism in all forms.

Chapter 4

Findings

In this study I posed the following questions: (1) How does developing an awareness of ableism influence teachers' identities? (2) To what extent can disability memoirs inform teachers' inclusive mindsets and perceptions of their own students and practices? and (3) How does engaging in critical reflection guided by professional development and poetic inquiry influence any change in teacher identity and inclusive mindset? Using poetic inquiry, the aim of this study was to understand the tensions, perspectives, and experiences of teachers as they worked to embrace more inclusive mindsets despite working in a system that allows for ability profiling and disability stigma to be perpetuated in schools.

Qualitative data in the form of transcripts from interviews and book club discussions, along with participants' autobiographical writings, were collected to build the data corpus. From each participant's interviews and autobiographical writings I created transcription poems (Glesne, 1997) and received their feedback on their poems. The book club transcripts were used to create polyvocal poems that represent the collective voice of the group (Faulkner, 2020; Lahman & Richard, 2014). Poems were organized into poetic clusters based on common themes found within the poems (Butler-Kisber & Steward, 2009). At the conclusion of each cluster is a threshold poem that juxtaposes selections from the transcription poems and found poems from one of the four theoretical frameworks that guided this inquiry.

In the first section of this chapter poems related to teacher identity are presented. Poems in this cluster speak to teachers' sense of purpose, along with poems capturing the

pressures of their work that speak to their commitment, agency, and self-efficacy. This cluster is concluded with a threshold poem that incorporates ideas from Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) notion of teacher identity being stories to live by.

In the second section, poems related to their initial beliefs regarding inclusion and disability are presented. Poems from their autobiographical writing are presented to show how teachers came to know disability growing up, along with their understanding of inclusion and descriptions of students gathered from their interviews. This cluster ends with a threshold poem that ties in ideas from Ferguson and Nusbaum's (2012) explanation of disability studies in education with selected lines from the transcription poems.

In the third section of this chapter, polyvocal poems from our book club discussions are presented demonstrating teachers' development and tensions related to their awareness of ableism. This cluster ends with a threshold poem that uses Broderick and Lalvani's (2017) notion of dysconscious ableism to read through several participant's words.

Finally, the fourth section of this chapter presents poems related to the tensions between inclusive mindsets and teacher identity. To conclude this cluster, a threshold poem that juxtaposes hooks' (2003) words on teacher resistance with one participant's words is shared.

Cluster 1: Teacher Identity

Poems in this cluster speak to two themes that emerged from the data - teachers' purpose and pressures they face. Both of these themes speak to the larger topic of teacher identity.

Poems on A Teacher's Purpose

Two questions during initial interviews spoke to teacher identity, asking

participants what three words best describe them as teachers and then asking what they

felt their purpose was as a teacher. The poems highlighted here merged these ideas

together.

Melissa chose to write her own poem, and only wrote one about her purpose. She

took lines from her transcripts, which she italicized, and then added in her own original

lines to make her poem rhyme.

The Reason Behind my Career
I feel like every teacher's purpose should be to inspire and empower
All we want for our students is success every waking hour
 I want to educate them but I also want them to learn life skills and social skills
I want to help students get over all of their fears and all of their hills
I would say that I want to inspire them to be whatever they want to be
I feel like it's up to us to kind of open their eyes to the world and be free
 You can't get a job in accounting or engineering if you don't understand math and
science
You can't be a leader if you are unwilling to break the silence
My favorite and my most rewarding moments are the moments where I hear a kid go,
"Oh!"
Those are my moments because that tells me that I reached a kid and the places they can
go
 "Why am I a teacher?" came from that student of realizing, this is a kid I need to reach
So, that is a mind game where you're like, this kid's the reason that I teach.

In her poem Melissa shared how she felt it was her purpose to expose children to new

ideas, while also helping inspired them to overcome their fears. She ties her reason for

teaching to the students themselves, stating that they are her inspiration as a teacher.

While Melissa wrote her own poem, the other participants elected to have

transcription poems written for them, and each participant had a poem related to their

purpose as a teacher. When describing her purpose, Angela reflected on her extensive

teaching career and the many ups and downs she experienced teaching in both urban and

suburban schools.

Still Evolving
My teaching career spanned 30 years.
Come to know
so many students
so many different abilities and disabilities.
Definitely a challenge to
individualize learning for
so many different needs
low reading or math skills,
attention deficit issues,
lack of social awareness.
And still making sure
the climate to the classroom
felt inclusive to them.
Many mornings crying at my desk
as I waited for the bell to ring.
How could I help a child
that didn't know how to read in 4th grade?
How could I help a child
that couldn't focus for more than 2 minutes at a time?
How could I stop
the daily fist fights in class from socially and emotionally needy children?
I tried.
I always wanted to
give special attention to
the learners
that didn't know yet how to learn,
the leaders
that had not yet found their voice,
the students
that had not yet felt included.
I can't say I always succeeded,
but with experience
I got better.
And even after all this time,
I am
still evolving,
still changing,
still learning how to help students with disabilities.

In this poem Angela emphasized that even after 30 years of teaching she continued to evolve and grow. Marie, who has taught for 28 years, expressed a similar sentiment in a poem about her purpose.

Effect that Lasts a Lifetime
Energetic. Caring. Flexible.
I jump up and down, stand on the chair, move around a lot,
make sure that I'm not a robot.
Being flexible, don't get upset or get thrown off.
I really truly care
not just academically, but socially and emotionally too.

I am definitely not the teacher I was 28 years ago.
I was not born a teacher. I had to work at it.
Things didn't come easy for me
I don't have that creative side,
I'm not a creative person.
All the tools in my tool belt
took me years to build.
But I still work hard at it.

I am a teacher because I want to be part of the solution.
Inspire the kids
to love to learn,
to know that learning can be fun,
learning new things opens your world more.
In first grade it's not about inspiring them to
become somebody when they go to college.
It's just inspiring the love of…
to read and
just to open their minds more.

The struggles I've had,
I was not the straight A student, the book kid.
The kid who got laughed at
I said something, apparently wasn't the right answer
and got laughed at.
So we don't laugh at each other's answers.
We're here to learn.
To help those kids that were me
when I was sitting in those chairs.

We're going to make mistakes,
mistakes are fine.

I don't tolerate ever laughing at somebody.
I was always afraid to ever raise my hand.
I still am
a little bit
in faculty meetings.
I'm kind of a little, always a little nervous,
am I going to sound stupid?
You carry it for the rest of your life.
Teachers have that effect that lasts a lifetime.

And I always worry sometimes,
did I respond in any way that would
negatively affect that child?
It weighs a lot.
It's exhausting.
I don't have the energy level I used to.
I'm getting close to retirement because
I don't want to ever negatively impact a child
because I'm just too tired to be as patient as I should be.

Marie expressed how her teaching is inspired by her own struggles and her

worries about how her teaching is affecting the students in front of her. Drew also

touched upon the longevity of teaching and the impact of his teaching on students.

Innovation
When you start out, you're
more flexible,
more open to stuff.
Then you get comfortable in
what you're doing, and that
starts to make you a little
more rigid.
I just want to
think like a kid again.
Every year that goes by,
I'm nervous I'm getting
farther away
from being able to do that.
It doesn't scare me,
but it makes me worry
What are they thinking?
What are they feeling?
What do they want to do?
We come in here with

our goals,
our objectives,
all the things we have to do.
You start to forget
we're not here so the teacher
can do all the things they have to do.
But in the end,
what do they need, and
what do they need in the moment, and
how can I make this fun?
how can I make this relate to them?
I miss being a kid because
you're innocent,
you want to play,
you just are wired differently.
There's business to be done,
but we can have fun in the business.

I put a lot of pressure on myself
to give them an unbelievable experience.
Some of it's going to work.
Some of the things
crash and burn.
Come up with an idea,
and people think it's foolish.
And then we try it,
and it's going to be really good.
Some of the best ideas
the most fun things,
students came up with.

When I start getting complacent
or a little down,
pick something interesting
put your mind into it,
just come up with some ideas.
I can never give up changing.
Keep trying to change with the kids
so I can relate to them.
Teachers shouldn't be
pushing their agenda on the kids.
"I have to get this done.
It has to be this."
Put yourself in their shoes,
think about what do they want.
See if you can finagle

or work whatever it is
you need to do
to create something awesome.

Drew expressed his desire to keep changing in order to ensure he continues to

relate to his students and their needs. He also spoke about the importance of being

student-centered rather than getting caught up in curricular expectations.

Several teachers also spoke of the importance of considering students' holistic

needs, and two poems by Eileen and Sarah showcase these ideas.

Be a Good Person
My purpose as a teacher is to
instill a love of learning,
not only learning academically.
I'm a firm believer in
be a good person first.
Be kind,
be good,
be accepting,
be respectful.
Learning will come.
You'll get from A to B,
it might take a really long time
but you will get there.
My purpose is to instill
good qualities,
good characteristics,
be a good person
and be a good student.
My purpose is to support them
emotionally,
behaviorally,
academically.
My purpose is to reach all learners.
My 21st year of teaching
not much has changed.
My purpose is still the same.

Like Angela and Marie, Eileen also brought up how many years she has been

teaching, and emphasized that her purpose has remained the same throughout. She

focused on the whole learner, which was echoed when Sarah discussed her purpose.

The Bottom Line
Caring, energetic, and patient.
The kids' emotional needs
are my number one,
getting to know them
giving them a voice
a chance to talk and share.
Work comes secondary.
Make the kids want to be here and
love learning.
I encourage them,
I praise them,
even when they're having their
moments of whining
I don't snap at them
I won't say I'm perfect at it.
To grow
academically,
socially, and
emotionally.
That's the bottom line.

For Sarah students' social-emotional needs are her primary concern, which was an

idea that she expressed frequently in our conversations. Similarly, Danielle, one of the

autism support teachers, also considered her students' needs beyond the classroom.

Part of Society
Caring, flexible, and passionate.
Very passionate,
caring about their whole life, everything about them.
Figure out with each child what's going to help them
I put a lot of time,
and effort,
and energy into that
Very connected with the families too,
help them,
work together as a team.
I just want to make sure I get every child

to the level that I know that they can reach.
My purpose is just
to get my students and families together
to a place that they feel that they could
be a better part of society
not feel as separated from society.
Be as independent as possible.
It's hard.
They come to us needing so much
daily living skills,
social skills,
communication skills,
academics really is not even
the priority for me,
especially with the younger kids.
There's just so much that needs to be done.
Work on being able to generalize
learn functional things that help them in life,
learn to be as independent as possible.
Get them to a place where,
they feel more comfortable with themselves
and in this world,
It's a shame, but yeah.

  When speaking about her purpose, Danielle said her concern was helping students to be independent so that they could better be a part of society and be comfortable in the world. When expressing it was a shame she highlighted how it is sad that this work has to be done in the first place.

  Finally, the teachers' thoughts on their purpose was captured through a polyvocal poem that was created from each participant's answers to the final question in their second interview. I asked each participant what they valued most as a teacher. Their responses were then constructed into the following poem.

What We Value
I value

collaboration.

helping students toward goals.

making kids want to be here,

want to learn,

want to feel good about

themselves.

giving them a unique amazing experience

where they're learning and don't even know

it.

when I see students discovering something.

I value relationships,

relationships

with my kids,

my colleagues,

with the parents.

bonding with my students.

the connections I make with kids

to support their full potential.

the connections with my students, I take pride in that.

feedback from my students and parents

that the kids are happy.

I value my students. That's why I'm here.

The participants each shared what was most meaningful to them in their practice, with

each idea being important to successful teaching.

Overall the poems show a variety of beliefs regarding the teachers' sense of

purpose. From the desire to keep evolving and changing, to the recognition that educators

must be holistically attuned to a student's diverse needs and the acknowledgement that

we need to prepare students for life beyond school, the participants' words display a

variety of factors that play into their purpose.

Poems on Pressure and Barriers

This study took place during the fall of 2021, when schools were shifting back to full in-person learning after a year of mostly remote learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In their interviews, several teachers discussed how weary they felt given all of the demands placed on them. While still committed to their students, the teachers felt worn down by district demands. The poems here demonstrate how the pressures and demands have impacted their agency, commitment and sense of self-efficacy as teachers.

Jen indicated that she puts pressure on herself to be at her best for her students, having internalized the pressure of demands to do more.

Pressure
It's very hard for me to
point out the positives that I do
I'm always hard on myself
I know I should be doing this better.
I know I should be putting more time into this.
To explain what I think I do well,
is hard.
In every facet of my life,
I'm like,
"This is great,
but I should be…
I should have…"
Looking at the clock,
I should have accomplished more by now.
I do take the impact
I have on these kids
for only one year,
very seriously.

Jen spoke of her constant self-reflection and self-critique in pondering all the things she should have done, and also spoke of the pressure she felt to accomplish more

each day. Drew also touched upon the pressures he puts on himself to do well between

his life at home and in the classroom.

Failing
If I'm good here,
I might be failing at home.
If I'm good at home,
I might be failing here.
That's a little bit of a struggle.
So much effort for kids here,
but what do my own kids get?
It's weird,
you feel guilty trying to be good.

Drew pointed out how he felt guilty for trying to be his best at both home and

school, but that he felt he could not meet the demands of both at the same time. Similarly,

Sarah shared how the impact of her teacher responsibilities has had on her personal life,

in that she felt like a failure in so many aspects of her life.

Teacher Burnout
As a teacher,
I feel burned out.
I constantly feel like
a failure
every day.
Something else is always added.
Nothing's ever taken off
the classroom teacher's plate.
I've let go of some of it,
but constantly feeling
you're not doing everything
you're asked to do.

There's no balance.

It's always
just fit it in,
integrate it.
That's always the solution.
One more thing to learn.
One more piece.
stretched so thin.

You never get a break.

I still love teaching
being in front of the kids.
It's just all that outside stuff.
At 3:45, I have to stop.
Whether I'm done or not.
But then come back the next day,
not feeling ready.
I didn't have time to finish what I needed.
I don't feel like I've done nothing,
but I've not done enough.
There's only so many hours in a day.

Kids go to the bathroom
eight times a day,
pouting and sad all day.
I can't move them academically,
I've got to move them first, emotionally.
It's really hard to meet all their needs.
Younger in my career
sat with them during lunch and recess,
groups of kids.
Here at 6:00 AM, here till late,
and that was fine.
Now that's not possible.
I can't sustain that.
Something's got to go.
I only have so much I can give.
Constantly feel like a failure everywhere,
as a teacher,
as a mother,
as a wife,
as a person, for myself.
I don't think there is balance
I like teaching,
but I don't feel like there's balance.

Sarah expressed concerns about feeling dumped on, and also felt there was a lack of balance between the various roles and identities she has in her life. Angela expressed a similar feeling of teachers getting dumped on and overwhelmed.

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Drowning
We are just trying to
battle through.
Classroom teachers
always getting dumped on.
"Oh,
here's one more thing,
here's one more thing."
Classroom teaching has become
a dumping ground.
Deal with their emotions,
deal with their academics,
your own emotional health,
here's another meeting at 8:15.
Sometimes it feels like ...
An hour!
Just give us an hour a week
that we can just breathe.
We feel like we're drowning.

Angela listed several of the demands placed on teachers, and pleads for time to

just breathe. Angela and Sarah felt that the pressure was put on them externally, which

Lisa captured by sharing her frustration at being left out of the decisions made about life

in her classroom.

Pushing Theory
These kids need to be kids.
People that are boots on the ground,
us in the classroom,
they get it.
People that push theory,
people at the curriculum level say,
"Of course, kids need to be kids.
Of course, we're keeping the kids in our thoughts"
But what they
expect us to do
expect the kids to do
doesn't support that.
Things in theory make sense, but in practice don't.
We need to be more of the decision makers
in our rooms.

Listen, I'm a rule follower, okay?

You'll probably never see me just,
"Screw it, I'm going to do whatever I want."
But I figure out a way
take what I'm expected to do
put my spin on it.
The problem comes when
I have to work 10 times harder
to make it fun, get the spin on it.
That commitment's getting greater and greater.
Maybe I'm getting tired
31 years into my career.
Maybe it's just the shift in education.
The joy is dwindling.
People are trying to kill
the joy of this profession
It makes it hard
to bounce back,
find the joy again.
You need to be resilient.

Lisa's words captured how teachers' lack of control over what happens in their

classrooms affects their ability to personalize their lessons, which led to her feeling tired.

Danielle shared a similar sentiment about being tired later in her career.

Included in Decisions
We're not included in decisions.
Going to cut this out
Not going to fund this
Take your assistants away without even observing
or asking us
or taking any data
or surveying
or anything.
I wish we were included in more discussions.
Certain things at that level, we're not privy to.
We don't understand it because we don't know why.
There's no context.
Always been a barrier.
When you're younger you get worked up over it.
But now I'm just like, well,
it is what it is.

Like Lisa, Danielle no longer felt like getting worked up over decisions made

without teachers' input. While both were still frustrated by it, given the longevity of their

careers they no longer fought against top-down decisions. Finally, Marie epitomized how

all the demands and pressure have impacted her both personally and professionally.

Exhaustion
Everything that doesn't deal with the kids
right here, right now,
keeping up with a million emails constantly,
contacting parents constantly,
filling out surveys.
The district is always asking us to do more
they keep adding more,
but nothing ever gets taken away.
That's exhausting.

PLC killed us.
We don't even eat lunch together anymore
We used to.
Nobody socializes anymore since PLC started.
It killed the community.
You come in earlier,
work through your lunch.
eat quickly so you can get your work done,
so hopefully
you can go home and not have work to do.
I still haven't figured out how to do that in 28 years.
If someone knows how to do that, they need to come and workshop that.

I began the school year,
I broke down
I can't do this anymore.
I'm tired.
I don't sleep at night.
I cannot work all day,
come home,
clean up everybody's mess from breakfast,
get dinner on the table,
clean this house.
I don't have a day off,
Weekends I'm cleaning, I'm grocery shopping, I'm doing schoolwork.
I don't ever actually have a day off.
Where's my downtime?

When the weekends come,
I don't want to think about school
don't want to work
don't want to do lesson plans
don't want to grade papers.
I want to be with my family.
My child is a sophomore,
it's going by so quick.
I spent so much time doing schoolwork
when he was in elementary he said to me,
he goes, mom, he goes, can you play with me?
He goes, oh you probably got work to do, don't you?
Broke my heart.
Always doing schoolwork, I wasn't giving enough to him.

But, the actual teaching,
I mean just *teaching* the kids,
I still love doing that.
If I could get rid of everything else and just teach them...
After I retire maybe I'll be an ed assistant
I can just enjoy the actual aspect of helping kids.

Marie opened up about her struggles throughout her career, but highlighted how this year in particular has been hard. She shared how all the demands placed on her prevents her from just helping students, which is her main goal as a teacher.

Finally, in a poem she wrote Nicole captured some of the issues she saw as a result of teachers attempting to return to "normal" after a year of both in-person, virtual and hybrid learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pandemic Lessons
I don't know how to do this
Forgotten how to differentiate
Finding and posting
What did I used to do?
Back to first year teaching
Pandemic brain

Trauma

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Kids did nothing
Issues at home
Kids are never here
Parent's did it for them
Not their choice

Stop assuming
See the positives
They paid attention
Turned it in
They're not so bad

In her poem, Nicole captured how many teachers felt as though they were learning to teach all over again after spending a year teaching like they had never taught before. There were many assumptions about what went on while students were remote, - such as parents or families completing work for students or students cheating on work because they were doing better at home than in school - along with concerns about learning loss. Nicole felt these sentiments were widespread throughout the staff, and tried to address this in her poem.

Both internal and external factors affected the pressure teachers felt. There is a feeling of imbalance, both between personal and professional demands and between classroom and administrative perspectives. These feelings of imbalance and pressure appeared across several participants' stories.

Threshold Poem Juxtaposing Teacher Identity

When considering teacher identity, Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) concept of identity as stories to live by struck me as easily lending itself to poetic inquiry. As required by thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), I was inspired by Connelly and Clandinin to ask the analytical question of "how do teachers represent their stories to

live by?" For this poem, participant voices were taken from our group conversations during our book club midpoint check-in meetings. The transcription poem is featured in the third cluster, however, excerpts are shared in this threshold poem, which is included here as it explores teacher identity. This poem was created to showcase both participants' stories alongside Clandinin and Connelly's ideas on stories to live by. In the center are my analytical thoughts inspired by the participants and scholars.

Stories from the Teachers

I'm just wondering
what changes have to be made
to make inclusion happen,
how much time it takes
        to do it well.
It's overwhelming,
it's just one more thing…
Not that I disagree with it.
But it can't just be,
    "Well, you'll figure it out."
Never in my career
has time been respected,
but I think there's a willingness
to want to do better for the
students.
But not in where it takes more
time.

But we don't make the policy,
we're just following it by law.
This needs to be taken to
        the people who make the
                difference.
I can't change what the state
does.
I can't tell the school board
        or superintendent
        or district what to do.
I can only control my room.

At this point in my life,
this is not a fight I have
time or the energy to put in.

Stories in the Threshold

Some grow,
some change,
yet, some are fixed,
thinking inclusion is
just one more thing.
But can we create a new story
here?
Or are we maintaining the story
that teachers are overwhelmed?
The hard reality and burden of
identifying as a teacher.

What beliefs are being
confirmed through this
collaboration?

Stories from Clandinin & Connelly (1999)

Teachers' working lives
are shaped by stories.

Stories to live by
compose teacher
identity [1]
Identity
a term that tends to
carry a burden
of hard reality.
Being
true to this identity,
true to oneself,
is often thought to be
a virtue.

Yet identities have
histories.

Narrative constructions
take shape
as life unfolds,
and that may solidify
into a fixed entity
or may continue to
grow and change [2]

Schools as a landscape
of interacting stories,
school change is
the creation of

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I don't have it to fight.
I don't have the space.
I'm not even interested
in fighting that battle.
I don't have the energy.
I don't.
I'm doing what I'm told
I'm going to do the best job I can,
I can only advocate for the kids
in front of me.
But I'm not fighting those battles.

I wish I could advocate for
everything.
I cannot take on the
responsibility
   of everything in the world
I can't champion everything,
I can only control what's in my
room
and in my community here.
I personally cannot take up that
fight,
   but it needs to be done.

Feeling as though they don't
have control,
that they are not the ones
to make a difference.
Identifying as overwhelmed,
overburdened,
unable to fight.

Identifying as advocate for the
kids in front of us,
But not as fighters able to do
more.
Wishing to identify as a
champion of everything,
but only willing to champion
those in our room.
Do we see how inclusion exits
(or doesn't exist)
in our own rooms/

new stories to live by [3]
Teacher resistance
is the maintenance of
a story to live by
in the face of
school change [4]

Stories to live by
communally sustained
people support one
another through
confirmation
of their
beliefs
values
and actions
as they share
stories and recollections
[5]

[1](p. 94); [2](p. 94-95);
[3](p. 100); [4] (p. 101); [5](p.
101)

Based on the stories teachers shared, it felt as though some of their stories, and identities,

were more solidified, while others were more open to changing and growing their stories.

As it related to inclusion, it felt as though the idea that it is acceptable as long as it does

not add time was communally sustained by the teachers. There appeared to be a shared

belief that teachers were willing to identify as advocates, but only within their own

classrooms.

Cluster 2: Beliefs on Inclusion and Ability

Participants' beliefs regarding inclusion and ability were captured in their interviews and inclusive autobiographies. Poems in this cluster showcase the variety of thoughts and attitudes regarding including students and their perceived abilities.

Poems About Coming to Know Disability

Poems in this theme are drawn from participants' inclusive autobiographies. They were asked to answer the prompt: What were your experiences and interactions with students with disabilities like? When and where did these experiences happen? How often did they occur? How inclusive was your own school experience? These poems help to show how the teachers reflected on the ways they came to know and understand disability, and may offer some insight into possible development of critical reflection as some of the teachers critiqued their own experiences.

In her autobiography, Danielle shared a memory of joining her peers who were bullying a student because he was different.

Danielle's Autobiography

My school career began in 1975.
Students with disabilities weren't in public schools.
My experience was limited.
One memory, forever etched in my mind,
A group of kids on the playground,
teasing a student who was very quirky.
Most likely on the Autism spectrum,
he lacked social skills and perspective taking.
Joining in,
just so I could feel part of a group
at this child's expense.
I felt completely horrible.

In her reflections Danielle brought in her current professional knowledge to assess the student who was bullied, speculating that he had autism. Danielle expressed a desire to feel part of a group, and also acknowledged how students with disabilities were often prevented from being in public school. Angela brought up a similar point about students being sequestered away.

Angela's Autobiography

As a student,
classmates with disabilities
were hushed away
in their own classrooms
rarely intermingled with us.
They were "those kids"
that seemed
strange,
different
sometimes scary.

I walked into kindergarten
the first day
and cried.
Coming home in tears
telling my dad
he sent me to the wrong school.
No one spoke Greek
my first language spoken in my home.
No ESL services that I knew of.
A first grade teacher
took me under her wing.
I was academically strong
just needed some support,
a comforting hand on my shoulder
to get me through each day.
You had to
conform to the system
that was in place.
I am proud to say

I graduated valedictorian,
but to no thanks to
the educational system
that was in place.

Angela was quite critical of the school system in her autobiography, feeling that

she could not attribute her success to the support (or lack thereof) that she received.

Similarly, Jen wrote about her traumatizing experiences in a parochial elementary school

and the harsh treatment she and her classmates received.

Jen's Autobiography

My earliest memories of school,
first grade,
a Catholic school,
taught by Immaculate Heart nuns,
scared to death to go to school each day.
Sister Rita
big, intimidating,
angry, mean,
condescending, and unwelcoming.
One time
I received a noogie on my head,
because
I couldn't understand the concept in math,
her ring
digging deep into my scalp.
I recall huge red circles on my paper
her pen actually tore through it.
My tears soaked the paper anyway.
My peers routinely vomited
before heading into the classroom.
I begged my mom daily
to stay home from school…
I was never allowed.

No in-class support
Additional support occured
outside in the trailer.

I visited the trailer
only a few times
3 or 4 sessions
for my speech
My mom said
I was mortified
going out there
so I rapidly improved.

Reading groups, various bird names
everyone knew who were
the blue jays,
the red cardinals.
It was painstaking listening
to who could read
and who could not.
I recall always knowing
who "didn't get it"
we knew
from early on
who struggled
and "needed help."
They left the room often,
dragged their feet,
frequent flyers to the office,
lost a LOT of recess time.
Let's just say
I was not familiar
with an inclusive school.
I shudder
when I think about my own experience.

Jen shared that even in her early elementary years she felt she was aware of who

struggled, and was sent the message by her teachers, sometimes through physical means,

that to struggle is "wrong."

Poems About Inclusive Beliefs

During our four years as a PDS we focused on inclusion as part of our school

wide goal. However, there seemed to be some discrepancy in teachers' understanding of

inclusion, so during our interviews I asked each participant how they would define

inclusion. The poems presented here capture their beliefs, attitudes, and understandings.

In her role as a basic skills reading teacher, Ginny expressed that she felt

inclusion tied closely to community.

Part of That Big Family
Ensuring every child is included
in the content of your lessons
in some capacity.
When I'm planning,
I'm thinking about each child
sort of like differentiation
but it's also thinking of every specific kid.
And with special education
not feeling like there's one class over here
in their own world.
Ensuring we're a part of
a classroom community,
but it's also a school community.
Everyone's part of that big family.
In my position now,
inclusivity is basically, that's what I do.
If I have four kids,
I'm specifically tailoring the lesson
to those four children's goals.
But it's more difficult in a larger classroom setting,
but it's critical.

Ginny highlighted key strategies like differentiation that allow inclusion to be

successful, but also expressed that she felt that meeting all students' needs in a large class

is a challenge. Similarly, Danielle mentioned the challenge of meeting students' needs in

a large environment without overwhelming them.

Strictly Academic
We used to be able to
just push kids in for various things.
For a snack.
For science.
Now they want it to be strictly academic.
Sometimes when you just bring them outside to recess
or a field day,
it's just so overwhelming for them.
It's a smaller class size here,
more individualized instruction, which they need.

Inclusion in my mind is
individualized
based on special, specific needs.
Not just saying,
"Well, we got to get all these kids in here
because it's the
least restrictive environment."
The parents want it.
Well, what is our goal?
It's more important for my guys,
to be more social.
But not anything overwhelming.
But just helping the children
to feel as part of society as possible.

Coming from a specialized school
that was all special ed,
my students then felt comfortable
being around other kids that were like them.
You want it to be meaningful
and going to help them move forward.
Not just to say,
"Oh look we got them. Yay!"
But then what?
They're just sitting there,
they're overwhelmed,
they're not getting anything out of it.

In this poem, Danielle emphasized the need to be mindful of a student's specific

need to ensure that inclusion is meaningful and beneficial. She drew on her background

working in a specialized school for students and adults with autism, and expressed a

desire to help them feel part of society without overwhelming them. Drew echoes this

sentiment slightly when he expressed the need to be realistic with our expectations for

inclusion.

Realistic Expectations
Inclusion is
trying to include everyone
in as many things as possible,
strategies in place to
help all students be successful.

What's fair for one
is different than
what's fair for another.
If one person needs to wear glasses,
the other student doesn't,
then one student doesn't have glasses,
and the other one does.
Students that are coming in
they might need glasses
and then five other things.
I want to know what those five things are
to seamlessly make the classroom work
for the students who come in.
Give them the best chance.

It's not always easy.
Never really had training on it
never really a routine or procedure for it.
How does it work when a student comes in?
There's going to be gray area,
but if we're trying to help
maybe there should be
an A, B, C, and D
that happens every time.
I mean, it couldn't hurt.

Kids realize stuff.
Talk to my class, have a discussion.
"If you were a new student coming in here,
what would you want?
What would you need?"
Just talk about it.
I don't like

the elephant in the room type of a thing.
Get it out there,
celebrate differences,
talk about differences.
We all have them.
And welcome the person in
Now it's their house.
It's not our house, and they're our guest.
It's all of our house.
I want to treat the kids like people.
One day they're going to be out there
in the world.
Maybe I'm wrong, but it seemed to work.

Always going to be
that one time
that one example
where it's going to be a lot more difficult.
But again,
it doesn't hurt to try.
Maybe you do try, and
come to the conclusion
it was more detrimental.
In that case,
revisit what we are doing,
keep realistic expectations.

Drew strongly believed in talking openly with students about differences, and

preparing students in his classroom to welcome a student from the autistic support

program into their community. Throughout the poem Drew questioned his ideas and he

might be wrong, but expressed an eagerness to at least try. However, the idea of realistic

expectations came up with several other participants. During his first interview, Anthony

expressed that there is a time and place for inclusion.

On the Radar
In some cases merge together,
in different cases, be separate.
Some children require
more direct attention,
a less distracting environment
an environment where

their particular needs
are focused on.
Positives…
be a part of the bigger group
at times.
Do some of the same things
the bigger groups are doing,
made to feel like they belong,
experience acceptance.
Challenges…
if they get something wrong,
how will they perceive it?
They can get lost,
want to draw back
hide,
don't want to draw attention.
If that's the case,
they're not going to get
the education they need.
They're not on the radar.

Anthony identified acceptance and belonging as strengths of inclusion, but did not

want to jeopardize students getting the support they needed. Angela expressed a similar

concern, worrying about her ability to meet all students' needs in her classroom.

Forgotten
Inclusion is all different types of needs.
We can start with academic,
kids that have IEPs,
don't have IEPs,
maybe OT,
or counseling.
Then extend it to
inclusion being maybe from the autistic classes
that are high functioning
and can come in
and participate.
Bringing children in that otherwise
not be a part of
a regular mainstream class
or being with kids
that are higher than them.
Just trying to reach everyone equally.
Sometimes

I tend to feel I'm helping more
ones that are really low.
High and the low get the attention.
but I don't want to ignore
those middle average kids
that sometimes get forgotten.

Like Anthony, Angela is concerned about meeting all students' needs and having

students be ignored or forgotten. Eileen spoke to this concern, identifying how inclusion

can have a negative connotation for some teachers.

Equal Opportunity
Inclusion for me means
all students are offered an environment
in which they could be successful
despite disability,
despite race.
Inclusion goes beyond academics.
Being given equal opportunity,
despite differences.
Challenges…
students not accepted
by their peers
by other educators.
A lot of educators have this belief
about what special education kids
can and can't do.
A negative connotation to inclusion.
Asking,
what is the purpose of inclusion?
What are they getting out of this?
Positives…
students in the general ed population
learn how much harder it is.
See someone else working so much harder,
getting pulled aside for extra help,
seeing three therapists in one day.
Maybe that will build acceptance.
Biggest positives to inclusion
is equal opportunity.

While identifying that educators and peers might question a student's inclusion,

Eileen identifies the positives of inclusion as nondisabled students seeing how hard some

students might have to work. Later in our conversation, Eileen also spoke to the stigma

that is created when our spaces and attitudes are not inclusive.

Stigma
A lot of times special ed kids
are stereotyped
once they didn't make progress in kindergarten
and didn't do anything
and had a hard time.
That follows them a lot,
especially through elementary school.
In my experience,
I feel as though
kids are labeled
not only by their peers,
but by educators.
I'm not pointing fingers,
I could take some blame for that.
Whereas I'm getting older
and have more experience
and have my own children,
being a little bit more open-minded.
We have this child here
we have to work with them,
not stereotype and label them
from their past experiences.
They're in the wrong environment
they can learn.
We have to figure out how they can learn.

Here Eileen spoke of the need to work to find the right environments for all

students so that they can thrive. She acknowledged that often teachers can take some of

the blame for labeling students.

Two teachers took a very broad approach to defining inclusion, but both were

unsure if they were correct in their thinking. Marie began by stating she does not know

how to enact social justice, and then went on to state strategies she took to be more

inclusive.

Reaching All 22
Social justice I'm uncomfortable with,
because I don't know how to…
I don't know what I'm expected to do.
I never heard the word inclusion
until a student from the AS class
pushed into my room for parts of the day.
And that was inclusion.

But it's way more than that.
Inclusion is looking at my 22 kids in front of me.
Am I reaching all 22?
When I choose stories, I'm more thoughtful.
Am I mixing up the characters in my story?
Not always the same type of character
they can now see themselves.
Noticing that the videos are showing multiple backgrounds.
Do they see themselves in this room?
Do they feel like they're part of our community,
part of our classroom family?
We're a family. For 182 days.
I see them more than I see my own family.

Marie's focus on making sure her students see themselves in her room and the

mindfulness she developed in critiquing materials in her curriculum spoke to her broad

approach to inclusion. Jen expressed a similar belief.

Two Separate Meanings
This word inclusion
two separate-ish meanings.
Obviously inclusion,
including those with needs and disabilities
in the regular classroom.
Certain students exposed
to the general ed classroom,
pulled out when need be.
Also look at it as inclusion
of the entire group,
every voice heard,
every need trying to be met,
every strength
and weakness
and difference.
All 22 students,

hearing them,
acknowledging their voice and needs.
Differentiate way more,
scaffold way more.
Not assume, and just teach
to here,
to the norm,
to the middle
Inclusion is almost,
but it's not necessarily
two separate things.
But am I correct in using the word inclusion?

In this poem Jen shared that she saw inclusion both as welcoming autistic students into her classroom and also meeting the needs of all the students in her classroom. She was torn between seeing inclusion as two separate ideas or as one broad concept, and questioned her own understanding of it.

Overall, the poems here revealed how there are a range of beliefs regarding what inclusion is and why it should be implemented. Many participants highlighted the benefits of it, but also expressed concerns about some of the challenges to creating inclusive classrooms.

Poems About Strengths vs Deficits

During their first interview participants were asked to talk about three of their students. Some participants spoke broadly about three student groups - low, middle, and high - while some participants spoke about three specific students they saw as being at different levels.

In our conversation, Eileen described three of her students, some of whom she worked with for several years as the resource teacher.

Never Heard Him Laugh (*student names changed for privacy)
A fifth grade student
performing on a second grade level
across the board,
His performance is a little inconsistent,
did a diagnostic with him
a lot of reds that said
second grade, second grade, second grade.
He's like "Mrs. M. I'm in fifth grade.
Why do they say second grade?"
I said "I don't know, Pete,
there must be a glitch."
Quickly got out of that screen.
My fourth year with him.
In second grade,
recommended to his parents
go to an LLD program.
They live right around the corner,
they did not want him going to another school.
I guess the district didn't
push hard enough for it to go through.
He's made progress,
some significant progress,
but this isn't the right placement for him.
He needs
a more intense small group,
the same teacher all day,
social skills too.
His academic gap is so large.

Danny had never been in school,
didn't go to preschool,
never even had any exposure
to school or other kids his age.
Siblings are all older.
Working parents,
a lot going on at his household.
Danny barely spoke in kindergarten.
His teacher thought he couldn't speak.
He wasn't sure of his name,
the letters in his name
When he saw himself in that classroom
and what these kids were doing,
he shut down.
Referred to child study team,
his best interest in mind.

Mom got very upset,
very defensive of her son.
It didn't go well.
Teacher and mom
a very volatile relationship.

Danny is very smart.
Despite the fact that he wasn't showing that.
First grade, started to see
little rays of sunshine,
little sparks.
Through the pandemic
on the computer,
nobody could see him.
In his mind
he wasn't comparing himself to his peers.
His progress soared.
He's funny.
He learns differently but
we expect the same thing from him
as we do from other students.
We just need to find a way to meet him.
Danny's a different person now.
Engaged,
asking questions,
laughing.
I never heard him laugh before.

Tommy,
when we first met him in first grade,
almost every teacher was like,
we have to get him out.
I think the fact that

we gave him a chance,

put him in the least restrictive environment,
helped him immensely.
His issues were not academics,
needed to be around typically developing peers.
Some behaviors can be overlooked,
or should be overlooked
Maybe encourage more tolerance
when it comes to inclusive education.
I'm very patient apparently,
but not everybody has to be tolerant and patient.

In her description of students, Eileen shared how even at a young age she felt

some students were comparing their progress to that of their peers. With each student she

discussed how the environment played a role in the student's success, and recognized that

teachers' patience in working with students was a factor. Along these same lines, Drew

began to talk about his students by acknowledging that he was going to try avoiding

labeling them.

No Labels
I'm going to try not to respond
with labeling.
A student who is
very responsive to the teacher,
organized,
does all their homework,
and knows the content.
Another student
someone who does all those things
but maybe doesn't participate as much.
probably have to study a little bit more
to get the grades or the results
My final student
a student who,
their desk is a mess,
calls out a lot,
sometimes answers off-topic.
That level of student whose
desk is unorganized
and is off-topic,
sometimes
leads to the best idea.
It's trying to find
awesomeness from
all different students.

Drew recognized a strength and weakness in each of his students, and

acknowledged that a student who is unorganized often has the best ideas. In her

description of students, Angela also spoke of the need to meet a variety of students'

needs. She highlighted how difficult it was for both students and teachers to return to

school after a year of remote learning due to the pandemic.

Passed the Panic (*student names changed for privacy)
One student, Adam,
a lot of anxiety
from COVID
from being home
having a lot of support last year
not having that now in class
not having someone next to him all the time.
emotional needs but not academic.

A little girl, Frankie,
home-schooled last year
academically really low.
Kindergarten level reading.
Doesn't even have a number sense at all.

Then there's Josh,
who can't sit still for a minute in his seat
academically, is right on,
right there with me,
participating the whole time.
Falls out of his seat 20 times a day
maybe will call out.
Definitely fidgeting all the time
but just there.
just really present
really participating
on the ball and really where he should be.

There's so many different needs.
There's not just academic.
There's emotional.
The first month,
five kids cried every single day,
they wanted their mommy.
It was so hard
It's so emotionally hard.
For them and for me.
I'm down to one crying every day.

…3 months later…
Adam is not crying anymore

works independently,
not asking for help every two minutes.
Come a long way.

He's not smiling yet.
But he's passed the panic.

Frankie,
doing better academically.
setting her feet down
doing better even though
she's at a deficit from last year.

She is progressing on her curve.

Josh,
academically strong.
constantly falling off his seat
there's a whole lot of mess all over his floor.
He can't find anything.
Help him with his chaos.
I feel like he lives in chaos here.

They've all made progress in their own way.

During our first interview, Angela shared a lot of weaknesses and concerns she had about her three students, however, during our second interview three months later she identified how each student grew and made progress.

While Angela, Drew, and Eileen spoke of three specific students, Anthony spoke of his students more broadly, identifying three groups of students.

Data
I'm a data person.
I love data.
I like to see how my kids do,
know where they are.
My kids that are well,
give them more freedom,
more independence.
Kids on the other side of that,
they're low,

spend more time with them.
Kids in the middle,
right on the borderline,
my target group.
Get them to come over
onto the more proficient side.
Not put that pressure on the lower ones.
Help them do well,
but realize kids who are low
have focusing issues
and different things,
and I can't beat that out of them.
Make school enjoyable for them,
but I'm not going to put
the pressure
or the focus
as much on that with them
as I am with the kids who I know will get it.

My high students
typically self-motivated.
They get it.
Accelerated.
don't have to put them
with the rest of the class.
work independently.
They'll just keep going.

My middle kids
I really need to watch
they're on that borderline.
In most cases
they have the potential,
but not the focus or
some don't care.
Really bright and it just doesn't matter to them
My low kids,
I'm understanding the fact that
they don't get it as much.
Break stuff down
smaller bites
create something they can succeed in,
might not be on the same level.
In the long run will
help them want to do better,
and hope,

and get further.

During our conversations, Anthony shared how much he relied on data to help tailor his instruction to students' needs. Anthony relied on test and quiz scores, along with rubrics from district programs and assessments to measure students' success. He discussed how that informs the various approaches and expectations he has for his students. Based on this data he categorized them based on their perceived abilities as being high, middle, or low. These informal labels became filters for how he viewed these students.

Finally, Danielle shared how she focuses first on her students' behavior and communication needs when working with them.

Make it Meaningful
If by 5th grade they're still not reading,
and they can't learn adult words
or whatever the words are,
it's not meaningful for them.
So make it meaningful.
What is more important to them? Their favorite things.
See if they can use those words first.

Keeping it very hands on, functional.
They need to know how to type.
Fill out maybe an application.
His first and last name,
his address,
his phone number
What would a student need to function in society?
Typing your personal information by 5th grade.

They might be in a shelter workshop. They might be working
Set the bar high,
but you don't know where they'll be in seven years.
Teach them to be able to function
as typically as possible
so they leave
as independently as possible.

It takes us so many years
when they're little to
get to a point where we finally teach academics
because you're working on
daily living skills,
toileting,
hand washing,
opening lunch.
It takes longer
because they're still teaching them
how to open the lunch box.

Things that come naturally to a typical student
doesn't come naturally for our kids.
Behaviors and communication.
Get those under control first
Then academics would be easier.
But to sit down
and try to get a child to do Fundations
when they can't even sit in a chair…
I've had kids that
are runners.
are really aggressive
are eating everything
are really low
still almost like a toddler and very, so impulsive.
In 4th grade and so impulsive.
Just grabbing everything,
flushing whatever he can down the toilet.
He's got eight arms.
He's so fast.
That's a big challenge.
Then he has other strengths where he's very affectionate
he's more aware of things.
In other ways than some of my other kids
who are more in their own little world.

Danielle expressed that her focus was helping students with their behaviors and communication first, rather than having academics as her priority. In another instance, she shared how she also worked with parents in setting expectations for their child in school.

This Is Where My Child Is
Sometimes these kids have been coddled
a little bit, maybe more at home.
Maybe things done for them
because it's hard for the parents.

One year where I had a parent,
she was very challenging,
just beat me down so bad.
Just wanted him to be in a typical class and he wasn't.
He had a lot of challenges.
He broke an assistant's foot.
This child needs a different placement
or a different assistant
or something.
But just the way she would talk to you
at meetings in front of everybody,
and the cursing.
She was just very nasty.
I'm here trying to help your child.
I try to be empathetic and understanding,
but these poor parents have to live,
have this child in your care
forever.
But to blame a teacher for something that I had no…
I didn't give birth to that child. I don't know.
A lot of times you do get the blame pushed on you.
I don't mind hand holding
and helping
and teaching.
But when it's just a denial and all that,
I like the older grades now
I feel like the parents
are little more accepting and just,
"All right. This is where my child is and yeah, I wanted to get them here."
But just celebrating the small successes
rather than wanting them to be
on grade level when they're...
they can't even-

Here Danielle shared how she appreciated working with parents in the upper

elementary grades (i.e. 3-5) because she felt they had a better understanding of what their

child can and cannot do. Finally, Danielle shared an anecdote about one student, Jake,

who was given a position as a fifth grade safety. In this role, Jake helps fellow

nondisabled fifth graders escort younger students to their buses at the end of the school

day.

Best Friends
Jake does safety
A couple days a week
the other safeties are good with him
he'll try to talk to them
I stand there and listen
he tries in his way to have this conversation
but it's more like a little OCD,
he's obsessed with the numbers of the buses.
They talk a little bit
and they kind of move on,
but they're respectful
and they're, you know,
they seem like they attend nicely to him
and are kind enough
I mean, they're not gonna be
best friends
or anything like that.

Danielle shared how she appreciated how the fellow students are kind to Jake, but

also acknowledged that she doesn't expect them to be best friends.

Across the participants there was a range of both strengths-based and deficit

approaches to how students were viewed. Some of the participants, like Drew, tried to be

mindful of labels while others, like Anthony, spoke of students in terms of high, middle,

and low labels.

Threshold Poem Juxtaposing Disability Studies in Education

When considering an heuristic that represents a foundational idea in DSE, I turned

to Ferguson and Nusbaum's (2012) concept of inclusion as an ideological commitment.

Inspired by this idea, I asked the question "what beliefs about inclusion are present?"

Once again returning to the data from the midpoint check-in with all participants, I read

through their collective voice from this lens. This threshold poem is an opportunity to analyze their collective thoughts on inclusion.

Thoughts from the Teachers

I'm just wondering
what changes have to be made
to make inclusion happen,
how much time it takes
      to do it well.
It's overwhelming,
it's just one more thing…
Not that I disagree with it.
But it can't just be,
   "Well, you'll figure it out."
Never in my career
has time been respected,
but I think there's a willingness
to want to do better for the
students.
But not in where it takes more
time.

But we don't make the policy,
we're just following it by law.
This needs to be taken to
      the people who make the
         difference.
I can't change what the state
does.
I can't tell the school board
    or superintendent
   or district what to do.
I can only control my room.

At this point in my life,
this is not a fight I have
time or the energy to put in.
    I don't have it to fight.
    I don't have the space.
    I'm not even interested
in fighting that battle.
    I don't have the energy.
    I don't.
I'm doing what I'm told

Thoughts in the Threshold

An ideological commitment
that's just one more thing,
overwhelming.
But commitment is just that,
wholehearted,
consuming,
enlightening,
empowering.

A willingness to do it,
but not dedicating more time to
it.
Will this allow inclusive
approaches to flourish?
Or does it focus on the technical
implementation over the
why behind inclusion?

To advocate for the kids
in front of you,
first think of who
those children are.
Who gets to be in front of you?

Ferguson & Nusbaum's (2012) Words

Inclusive education,
an ideological
commitment
as well as
technical
implementation[1]

Develop a deeper,
broader understanding
disability
as part of our

shared human
experience.

Changing how societies
(and ourselves!)
think about
respond to
disability
can create
cultural space
in which
inclusive approaches to
education
employment
living
and community
can flourish[2]

[1](p. 76) [2] (p. 75)

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I'm going to do the best job I can,
I can only advocate for the kids in front of me.
But I'm not fighting those battles.

I wish I could advocate for everything.
I cannot take on the responsibility
    of everything in the world
I can't champion everything,
I can only control what's in my room
and in my community here.
I personally cannot take up that fight,
    but it needs to be done.

How are you thinking about
responding to
their dis/abilities?
What cultural space are you
creating for them?
This is not a fight with
the state
the school board
the superintendent.
It must first be an internal
battle.
Are you willing to fight it?
Who takes up that fight?

After reading through the participants' words and Ferguson and Nusbaum's ideas on inclusion as an ideological commitment, I was inspired to ask several rhetorical questions that came to mind when reading between the competing ideas. It felt as though a spectrum emerged between those participants who were wrapped up by the "technical implementation" of inclusion and those who were embracing the ideology of it. In theory teachers appear to agree with it, but worry about the implementation.

Cluster 3: Tensions

As the project progressed tensions began to arise. The poems captured in this cluster attempt to reveal the tensions teachers felt related to their practice and their participation in the book club.

Poems Highlighting Tensions Arising from the Memoir

Our book club read Mooney's (2019) memoir, *Normal Sucks: How to Live, Learn, and Thrive Outside the Lines*. As a group we read five out of the eight total

chapters, with the group asking to stop meeting after four book club discussions. The

book club started out well, with teachers acknowledging that it was a fairly easy read,

which they appreciated. Some felt the theories Mooney introduced were hard to keep

track of, and so our group notes were changed to accommodate a brief summary of

theoretical ideas. The first two chapters were discussed during our initial meeting. Both

of these chapters introduced the history of how normalcy was constructed, and shared

how eugenicists held a competition to find both a man and woman who represented

normal. The poem from this first discussion captures the teachers' thoughts on these

events. Different participants' voices are indicated by the location and font of their

stanzas.

A Bunch of Hogwash

<div align="center">

They never found anybody that met their criteria,
None of us are normal.

</div>

In our political climate now,
so difficult to follow everything
people making decisions about something
they know nothing about.
They created their normal
based on who they were

<div align="center">

took no one else into consideration.
So right there,
it's already flawed.

</div>

<div align="right">

Society
still defines us by that.
If you don't fit in that
little perfect square
of normalcy, then you
question yourself
question your family
question your position in
society.

</div>

But reality is
nobody fits in that square.

<div align="center">

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</div>

The internal battle
everyone has,
your intelligence tells you
no one fits that.
So why are we striving for that?
                        When you're younger,
                when you're a kid, teens, 20s 30s 40s,
                        you try to fit in,
                          be normal,
                    be like everybody else.
                      But in my 50s now
                  I don't care to fit in anywhere,
                just be the best person I can be
                        just be happy.
                    This whole thing of normal,
                          to me,
                    is a bunch of hogwash.

The teachers agreed with Mooney's (2019) notion that normal does not exist and was

created by society. They discussed how ideas related to normalcy have defined them and

how it has taken until later in their lives to finally begin to let go of those judgements.

During our second book club meeting a week later, teachers had read chapter

three. This chapter introduced the concepts of the medical and social models of disability,

the normal curve, and how schools create the normal curve, particularly through

programs like tracking and special education. The poem created from this conversation

showcases how teachers began to grapple with these concepts. As in the previous poem,

changes in font and stanza location indicate a change in speaker. It begins with a

discussion of a quote from Mooney's (2019) memoir that stated, "That great sorting of

humans is not in the past, but stuck right here in our present, like shards of glass that

refract, reflect, and puncture our day to day--and wound some of us deeply" (p. 57).

Teachers highlighted this quote in our notes, and then proceeded to share their thoughts

on it.

A Little Pain in My Heart
Stigma
how he felt growing up,
just to me, felt horrible.
The shards of glass quote,
thought that was really important
to read
to take it in
think about it
just how he must have felt
just being wounded so deeply
it's upsetting when you think about
our kids
and my kids, too
what they know
what they think about where they are
what they go through every day
It's just, it's tough,
it's a tough situation
things really haven't changed all that much to a point.
we try to work and change
but still
You wonder if what we're doing,
how it's going to affect their future

                                                    But hopefully
                                                    maybe things
                                                    will start to change.
                                         I look back now as an adult,
                                         how awful it must have been
                                                    put in this room
                          you're not in all the other classes
                                         with the rest of the school.

Shocked how
he stigmatized himself.
Made me think of my own students,
even students without IEPs.
In my own class kids
feel like they're dumb.
I've heard them use the term.
Kids that do get it,
labeled as the smart ones.
We play a game,
they want the smart ones
on their team
help them win.
How can we reverse that?
Because honestly,
I feel a little

pain in my heart.
When I hear a kid say
he's dumb.
I don't know how to undo it.

I'm right there with you.
I don't know
if it will help in the long run
I keep talking about
the power of yet
A student says "I can't read,"
and I'm like "yet."
kids are now saying
"I can't do this…yet"
I'm hoping
they'll keep remembering this.
It might be a struggle now,
doesn't mean it's a struggle forever.

I see the problem
being outside influences
I would like to think
none of us put the kids out there
and go
"Okay, butterflies,
you're the low group"
But the kids figure it out.
That's just part of life.
The problem is so hard to fix
because it's out of our control.
Kids are not getting these negative messages
from me or my classroom.
They've heard it
at home
on the soccer field.
We celebrate things we're good at,
but when the problem
is outside of our room,
it gets so much bigger for us to fix.

Socially kids figure things out.
May not be something we say or do.
But kids figure things out
by what kind of tasks they're given,
how they're redirected,
all those kinds of things.
My son was little,

it was brutal.
Nobody ever told him
he was the bad kid.
But things were said
about him
around him.
The way he was redirected
the way he had his special island
kids noticed.

We look at our students
we collect all this data
this student is struggling in
reading
math,
and now we need to fix it.
It is embedded in school

One of the biggest problems
we're judged on data we collect
We have to make them grow.
sometimes they grow in ways that
aren't quantifiable.
But the teachers are held to that
quantifiable standard

Students with behavior problems,
or at home problems,
or learning disabilities,
or just all around difficult,
moving into the next grade.
You're looking at class lists.
I feel sometimes educators,
myself included,
tell the teachers getting the students after us
negative things about the student.
And then we have preconceived ideas.
It's not everybody.
but this is what came to mind
when I was reading it.

The content of chapter three led several teachers to reflect on their own practices and how

they may or may not connect to normalcy. Teachers acknowledged moments where they

saw stigma emerge in their classrooms, and reflected on how their students may feel as a

result of it. Some teachers felt it was factors outside of school that lead students to see and understand stigma, while other internal factors like data collection and instructional practices lead to stigma. At the end of our third meeting, after the conversation captured in this poem, I asked a concluding question about how aware the teachers were of how ableism exists in schools. For a full minute no one spoke, so I then asked if they needed a definition of ableism, to which Anthony replied yes. Marie then shared that she had been looking up a definition. This conversation and the revelation that not many appeared to know about ableism felt like an emergence of tension within the book club.

After reading the fourth chapter and having our book club meeting, which was the halfway point of the book, we arranged for three small group meetings during the school day with substitute coverage provided for the teachers. This afforded individuals who did not speak up in the whole group a chance to share their thoughts in a more intimate setting. Because the groups followed a similar structure and discussed the same topics, there were many similarities in the three group conversations. Each group began by sharing general reactions to the memoir thus far, and then discussed the National Council on Disability's (2018) report on the segregation of students with disabilities. We concluded the discussion by bringing these topics back to our immediate context and talked about what we could do. For this polyvocal poem, the voices of several participants are blended together as one group to showcase how the thinking among the groups were similar.

Committed to the Cause

It's a lot of big words
to just give one point,
normal doesn't exist.
How do we fix that?
Sometimes things can't be fixed.
Or shouldn't be,
it's not something to be fixed.
Just something we learn to live with.

Listen, we're doers, okay?
So we get it.
What are we not doing that we should be doing?
If I'm doing something in this book,
that's as awful as they make it sound,
I want someone to tell me
because I don't see it.

I'm just wondering
what changes have to be made
to make inclusion happen,
how much time it takes
to do it well.
It's overwhelming,
it's just one more thing…
Not that I disagree with it.
But it can't just be,
"Well, you'll figure it out."
Never in my career
has time been respected,
but I think there's a willingness
to want to do better for the students.
But not in where it takes more time.

That's hard work, but it can be done.
There are many, many
reasons or examples
of why it could not work
or be hard,
but it doesn't mean
you don't keep trying to figure out a way

But we don't make the policy,
we're just following it by law.
This needs to be taken to
the people who make the difference.

I can't change what the state does.
I can't tell the school board
or superintendent
or district what to do.
I can only control my room.

At this point in my life,
this is not a fight I have
time or the energy to put in.
I don't have it to fight.
I don't have the space.
I'm not even interested
in fighting that battle.
I don't have the energy.
I don't.
I'm doing what I'm told
I'm going to do the best job I can,
I can only advocate for the kids
that are in front of me.
But I'm not fighting those battles.

I wish I could advocate for everything.
I cannot take on the responsibility
of everything in the world
I can't champion everything,
I can only control what's in my room
and in my community here.
I personally cannot take up that fight,
but it needs to be done.

So we didn't start the fire.
but we're in the fire every day.
So what do we do about it?
Not one person can put out the fire

A committee could address it.
conserve their energy into
solving this problem
One step at a time.
At least feel like
You are not doing this alone.
There are people
committed to the cause.

In each group, the teachers shared how they felt the fight for inclusion and resisting

normal was necessary, but they felt that it was beyond their control and something they did not have the energy to pursue.

During our final book club meeting, the group read the fifth chapter which discussed Mooney's difficulties in school and finding his way to college. This followed a difficult chapter four which dove into eugenics and its history in America. In this poem, teachers continued to explore the tensions they were feeling between the content and their practice.

Putting Me In Conflict
He writes with a very dark side.
Past that,
his story is very uplifting
Some of the teachers
I'm shocked by things said to him.
In spite of that,
he found himself,
he found his people.
Everybody needs to find their people
Other people are not wrong,
but
they're just not your people.
Those people saw things in him
that he didn't see in himself
pushed him beyond those limits.
One of our biggest jobs as teachers.
Not to see just who our students are
but see what they can become.
And push them along those lines.

His journey through education
very much a lifelong journey.
Makes me think about
ways to get kids to
think about learning
as something that they can pursue
not just information.
It's a passion.
That was what saved him
teachers that taught him how
to love learning,
that there was
strength in his weaknesses.
Makes me think about
how the system is very much
all these tests

but how can you disrupt that system
to help the kids who
don't fit into that system?

On page 123
his therapist said,
"You don't need accommodations for dyslexia.
You need accommodations for their dys-teachia"
I thought it was really interesting.
In our situation,
in the Autism Support program,
we are a little bit luckier.
We don't have to necessarily,
        not that we don't,
follow a strict program and schedule
like a curriculum map and all that.
So we hone in on our students,
because they have so many struggles,
to find what their strengths are
and their passions
really find what they're good at.
We have the time, the ability, the staffing
in here to work on that
more so than in general education

I'm always thinking about how
in elementary
we accommodate and differentiate
as much as possible
for everyone,
special ed student or not.
I wonder
if we're not preparing them
properly,
for the real world,
and that might be slightly controversial.
The real world
not always going to bend
to their differences.
We need to teach all the kids
how to be more resilient
how to handle things
when they don't go their way
or when something is difficult,
I wonder
how many kids might be more successful
if the differentiation went with them
in middle school and high school
And again, in the world,
because the world doesn't bend.

Kids just learning
how to deal with their challenges,
just learning strategies to to help,
understand how to appear normal
Escape to the bathroom
75 times in the morning
they really have trouble
reading
sitting still
doing math
They cope in their own ways.
If we do our job,
help them negotiate tasks,
how to break up assignments,
how to do certain things,
They've internalized
things that work for them
by middle school and high school.
I question when I'm teaching,
I stop myself
from saying or doing something
because I want them to be normal.
to be like everybody else
and allowing them to be them.

What I'm reading
it's kind of
putting me in conflict
A conflict between what I am reading
and my perception
of what my job is supposed to be
as a teacher.
This teacher quote
I don't want to be those teachers
that didn't believe in him
thought he was the problem.
But
I'm looking at the data
my kids' math scores
half are below grade level.
I feel like
it's a problem that I need to fix.
But is it really?
So, I'm kind of
I'm struggling.
Just want to put that out there.

You know that you're doing a great job
in your classroom every single day.
We're all cognizant, aware
of what we're trying to do.
We're all conflicted.
To start the day on a Monday
I'm motivated. I'm excited.
I know what my plans are for the day
and then we come here
and Oh my gosh.
Are we really helping society?
Are we really helping these kids grow
from the time they walk in,
to the time they leave?
We are making a difference
but you better make sure that
as of November 22nd,
you're testing
and reading the ELA assessment
and be ready for conferences
and report cards.

The last 18 months,
homeschooled
or parents worked with them
They're coming in here
They need expectations.
need routine.
need a little bit old school
some haven't had
any structure
or regulations
or expectations
for almost two years now.
So we're fighting that battle.

Now more than ever,
our mind is that tab
with 47 open windows
of what we should
and could
and want to do
I know I feel confident
but I'm overwhelmed,
almost every day.

This chapter I can see the light.

a few light bulbs went off
The logical consequence
of being told you are a problem
is to see yourself as the problem.
We may think it's just first grade
or just for a short amount of time
but what types of things are people
keeping with them
that carry on for the future?
Little problems
as a six-year-old, that then
become huge problems
as teenagers and adults.
That is a real thing.

In this final book club discussion, one of the teachers, Anthony, shared how the content of the book was causing him conflict between the outline expectations of his role and the effects of stigma Mooney described. One participant, Danielle, highlighted Mooney's quote about accommodations between dyslexia and "dys-teachia" and acknowledged that in the Autism support program their guidelines were not as strict, while Lisa shared that differentiating too much might be hurting students later in their school careers. Finally, Jen acknowledged the difficult environment of working in a "post-Covid" classroom has impacted her, coupled with the tensions she experienced between her perceived role and the content of the memoir.

In each of the book club discussions, teachers shared how the memoir was putting them in conflict with their job expectations and the need to resist normalcy.

Poems Highlighting Tensions with the Book Club

After reading the fifth chapter, I sent a survey to the teachers asking for how they would like to proceed with the remaining chapters, offering several options for our meetings (i.e continue with the schedule as is, take a week off from reading). This survey prompted several teachers to go to the literacy coach and complain about the demands of

the inquiry. They no longer wanted to participate in the book club. The literacy coach, who worked closely with me related to our PDS work, then communicated this with me and the school's principal. The teachers never came to me directly about their complaints. The principal met with the whole staff, as the teachers who complained felt the demands on them as a whole were overwhelming. After this meeting, it was agreed that the book club would end, and we moved on to conducting the second interview.

During the second interview I asked participants if they felt it was the content, context (i.e. current teaching environment), or structure (i.e. Monday mornings) that made the book club a challenge. Four participants shared that they were fine with the book club and had finished the book on their own, while others said the book club was too much to deal with. The poems here showcase what participants felt made the book club difficult.

Several participants pointed to the current context of education as the main issue. Their poems highlight the many demands placed on them that made participating in the book club problematic. Many spoke of report cards and conferences as major stressors. Reports have become multi-page documents that required teachers to assess students on multiple standards using data and rubrics, as well as write individualized comments for each student. Teachers were not given extra time to complete report cards beyond a few twenty-five minute PLC sessions. They were also stressed by preparing for parent-teacher conferences, as it was the first time in over a year that they were meeting in-person. Many parents were concerned about perceived learning loss, and teachers wanted to be prepared to address this. Several participants addressed these demands in their interviews.

December Hits
I'm pretty realistic.
This time of the year, very hectic.
There are conferences.
Conferences,
for the first time after Covid,
don't want to look ill prepared.
Report cards right after that.
Another thing
a colleague died around this time.
All the stress from the outside,
December hits and
teachers' ability
to roll with it
to go with the flow
is very minimized.
The book club was fine
it just hit December.

Drew highlights how the pressures of preparing for conferences and report cards

increased the stress in the building. He also shared how the staff are melancholy in

December remembering a colleague who died a few years ago. He feels that the overall

feeling in the building in December is one of stress and sadness. Jen captured a similar

sentiment, pinpointing other factors that added to a stressful context.

Hard on Ourselves
Mondays are really tough.
Reading was a chore on my mind.
Time away from family,
time away from sports.
Starting off the week
walking out of PLC at 8:45,
with not uplifting content,
was depressing.
Right now
the state of education
we all feel like
more
and more
and more
and more
and more

is being thrown on us.
With the state of,
I don't want to say politics,
I just mean our society
is so torn and
I feel like
we don't need any more
guilt being put on us.
We are hard on ourselves as it is.

Jen spoke to both the personal, professional, and even societal demands she felt

were placed on her. The book club took away her time from family commitments, and

she felt overwhelmed by school demands. Jen also noted how she felt society is torn, and

adding more guilt to that was too much for her. Eileen also pointed out the personal

commitments that were affected by the book club.

It's Reality
It was a Monday morning
people are coming into school
overwhelmed as it is.
Just trying to think about their day,
looking for time.
Most people in the book club are parents.
I don't think it was necessarily
the content of the book.
It's reality.
It's his reality
and a lot of people's reality.
Not the structure either
very flexible,
allowed us to have voice and choice.
It was more the timing.
People are very stressed out.

When speaking to the content Eileen acknowledged that it was Mooney's reality

and the reality that many people live with. She shared that it was the timing of the book

club rather than the reality of the content. For Sarah, she felt that she couldn't pinpoint

the challenges to any one aspect, but rather a confluence of factors that made for a

difficult context.

Can't Pinpoint It
So many factors.
you can't pinpoint it on one.
My personal life, completely overwhelming,
I have to
come and be happy,
respond to kids,
parents are very demanding,
not in a bad way,
but they're needy,
quarantining,
my husband having covid.
The factors just with teaching,
made the book club a challenge.
On top of that,
didn't find anything
uplifting.
didn't find anything
practically useful
didn't feel like it changed
anything for me.
And it just wasn't uplifting.
To read outside of my workday,
I don't have an extra minute.
And maybe I missed the point of
what I could take back.
But I didn't personally feel like
there was something to use.

Here Sarah expressed that the content was not useful for her. The many personal

and professional demands, coupled with content she didn't feel was practical, made the

book club a challenge. Similarly, Lisa also expressed frustration with the content in terms

of its practicality.

What Else Can We Do
I was enjoying reading it.
But, okay, I know, there's a problem.
It was
problem
problem,
problem.
Okay, we get it,
It was bad.
Now what are we gonna do with this?
Our time is very precious.
So let's identify the problem. I get that,
But now,
what else can we do that we're not already doing?

Lisa wanted content that she felt she could immediately put to use. While she felt

understanding the problem was important, she hoped for something that would direct her

towards actionable ideas to implement.

While several participants felt it was the context of the school environment that

made the book club a challenge, others pointed to what they felt was the heavy content of

the book as the main challenge. Ginny highlighted this when she shared that heavy

content during a difficult context is what she found most difficult.

Where's the Light
It was the content personally.
The tone, a little bit dark.
There's a place for that, of course.
I really respond more to
where's the light,
positivity.
It was a little
too heavy
when life can be
a little heavy right now.
Monday morning doesn't bother me
the meetings structured well,
the content,
took a lot to get through it,
I'm just looking for more
lightness and uplift personally.

A different book club,
How to Be an Antiracist,
dealt with a lot of heavy issues.
But the general tone was
Okay, well, this is where we're coming from,
it's really dark, it's really awful.
But let's take this information
and let's change ourselves
and make ourselves better.
and move ourselves forward.
I didn't get that from this one.
Maybe it was too much narrative
maybe I wanted a little more on his personal life story.
maybe his style just didn't work for me.

Similarly to Lisa and Sarah, Ginny did not see how to turn the memoir's contents into actionable steps to move forward. She mentioned how during the previous school year she participated in a faculty book club, reading Kendi's (2019) *How to Be An Antiracist*. Despite this book also dealing with heavy content, Ginny felt it was more manageable because there was a positive side that allowed her to consider how to make herself and others better.

Along these lines, Danielle also identified the content as the main challenge, expressing how it might have made people feel guilty.

Inadvertently Guilty
A lot of what he was going through.
I could see how that
happened way more often
than we realized.
But he did find some people
A shame it took so long
and that's what you need
just be able to find your people.

It was a lot to take in.
Enjoyed reading parts of it
It was helpful for me with my kids,
but my kids are

already in that place,
on the radar for so long
it would be hard for them to falter.
But like a kid like that,
I'm sure it was easier for the gen ed teachers,
to connect to some kids that might be happening to.

The content.
not purposely,
made people feel
guilty about their teaching,
especially when
the past couple years have been so hard.
This year is even
actually harder than last year.
People are just
really beat down
not as appreciated
trying to do so much in a classroom when
resources have diminished.

It wasn't really the content
but just how,
maybe inadvertently,
people were comparing it to
their teaching
I didn't feel like that
but I don't teach kids like…
It's just different, you know,
we're more individualized in here
and the kids are already, you know?
Smaller class size so it's not,
as easy for a kid to struggle and not realize it.

It did make me rethink
how I interact
how I work with the kids and plan things.
I'm always critiquing myself
I'm always hard with myself,
What can I do better?
And I do better.
Getting to the point in my career
starting to get a little burned down
I love the kids.
it's just all the other junk,
political stuff.

We're trying to make things better and improve
I'm always kind of doing that anyway
but that's just me.

Danielle felt that the teachers were comparing Mooney's experiences to their own teaching and feeling guilty. She distanced herself from it by sharing that due to her small class she is very attuned to her students' struggles, but that the general education teachers might inadvertently have struggling students not on their radar. She also shared how the content made her rethink how she works with her students, but that because she always critiqued herself the content did not phase her as much as the others.

Like Danielle, Angela also felt it was the content that affected the participants the most.

Put Our Blinders On
It was the content.
We're all dealing with
our own mental health
right now
in this climate
to stay positive.
To read something
so heavy
was hard for people.
As a teacher
It was interesting to see
his point of view,
Sometimes
we just put our blinders on.
It's hard to,
you know,
think outside of that.

Angela explained how maintaining their own mental health is a challenge for teachers during this time, and the content of the book made that an even greater challenge. She also acknowledged how the content pushed them to think outside of their "blinders" to see education from a different point of view, and how this was difficult.

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Finally, Ben shared how the content was hard during what was already a very

tough year for teachers.

Teaching Feels Dissatisfying
The content was hard
this year made it
push more buttons.
Right now
teaching feels very dissatisfying,
just getting out of bed
is an extreme effort.
Having that kind of material
on a Monday
can be very challenging.
Not everything has to be
Pollyanna and positive.
The timing of it was hard
keep focused on
the classroom
trying to stay positive
for the kids.
But at the same time,
having this stuff
in the back of my head
it's been very frustrating.
Reading the book,
it feels like we're failing kids.
It's hard to process that right now.

It's the kind of thing where
you read it
you digest it
then think about how
that can apply in the future
Having a hard time
thinking about the future right now.
Very much living day to day.
in the now,
the big picture is hard to think about.

It's hard to talk about
without hurting people's feelings.
It's about how we're teaching.
Everybody's putting
as much as they can into it.

And then it's telling them,
this is the wrong way.
Especially with a lot of teachers,
compensation is not really great
So people do things out of passion,
because they care.
Then, having that kind of information
can be discouraging maybe.
It's just a hard conversation.

Having read the book,
I'm trying to be aware of
or mindful of
when I lose my patience
or feel frustrated,
try to think about what,
the action or
the behavior is and
whether the student is in control of that,
which isn't always easy.
Certain things that I expect from students,
I try to think about
routines and things,
and is it for compliance
or is it for a bigger goal?
Am I asking them
to not move in their chairs because
it's a compliance thing?
Or is it because I want them
to work
or not disrupt other people?
Just trying to think of the reasoning
behind a routine or an expectation.

Ben opened up about the very real toll teaching in a "post-pandemic" classroom

has taken on his mental health. He identified how the content of the book brought up

some very hard feelings, which were especially hard to manage during this time. Yet he

also acknowledged that these conversations are hard to have without hurting people's

feelings, but that it is important to digest the information and think about the future,

which he admitted he currently struggled with. Ben went on to share how the content did

make him reconsider many of his practices and rethink what he asked and expected of

students.

Overall poems in this cluster show how it was a mix of the context of teaching

and the heavy content that made participating in the book club a challenge for the

participants.

Threshold Poem Juxtaposing Studies in Ableism

When analyzing the tensions present in the midpoint check-in I chose to view

them through the lens of SIA. I drew from Broderick and Lalvani's (2017) notion of

dysconscious ableism, asking the question "is there tacit acceptance or critical disruption

of dysconscious ableism?" With this question in mind I read through the lines, noting

points where I felt acceptance or disruption were at play.

Thoughts from the Teachers		Broderick & Lalvani's (2017) Thoughts
I'm just wondering		
what changes have to be made		Not absence of
to make inclusion happen,		consciousness
how much time it takes		but,
to do it well.		impaired,
It's overwhelming,		distorted
it's just one more thing…		way of thinking
Not that I disagree with it.		about dis/ability.
But it can't just be,		
"Well, you'll figure it out."		Tacitly accepting
Never in my career		dominant
has time been respected,		ableist
but I think there's a willingness		norms and privileges.
to want to do better for the		
students.		Limitations and
But not in where it takes more		distortions
time.		of teachers'
		consciousness of
But we don't make the policy,	*Ruptures in the Threshold*	the existence of
we're just following it by law.		ableist oppression
This needs to be taken to	*Pushing off responsibility,*	make it difficult
the people who make the	*we don't make the policy,*	to create

difference.
I can't change what the state does.
I can't tell the school board
    or superintendent
    or district what to do.
I can only control my room.

At this point in my life,
this is not a fight I have
time or the energy to put in.
    I don't have it to fight.
    I don't have the space.
    I'm not even interested
in fighting that battle.
    I don't have the energy.
        I don't.
I'm doing what I'm told
I'm going to do the best job I can,
I can only advocate for the kids
in front of me.
But I'm not fighting those battles.

I wish I could advocate for everything.
I cannot take on the responsibility
    of everything in the world
I can't champion everything,
I can only control what's in my room
and in my community here.
I personally cannot take up that fight,
    but it needs to be done.

just follow the laws,
placing limitations that enable
normative ways of thinking
and ableist oppression
to continue.

A willingness to engage,
but only if it does not take up
more time,
leaves little room for disruption of
ableist oppression.

Not having time or energy to put
into deeply engaging
with personal experience and
emotion.

Wanting to advocate for
everything, but only controlling
what happens in your room.
Is there a space and place in your
room to generate
transformative practice?
Is that what it means to advocate
for the kids in front of you?

and enact
equitable,

liberatory,
just,
educational practices
for
all
students.

Persistent failure to
question, or
even acknowledge
structural inequities.[1]
normative ways
of thinking
actively contributes to,
reproduces
ongoing
dysconsciousness.[2]

Disruption requires
engagement
intellectual but
simultaneously
deeper than that.
Engages deeply with
personal experience and
emotion,
places
the critically self-
reflective learner
at the very center
generating
new transformative
forms
of knowledge
and practice in schools [3]

[1](p. 895) [2](p. 903) [3](p. 904)

Similar to participants' range of beliefs on inclusion, there is a range of teachers who are

either tacitly accepting or disrupting dysconscious ableism. Some participants felt their

was a willingness to embrace inclusion and inclusive practices, but others felt it was not a

fight they were willing to take up. Their words speak to Broderick and Lalvani's call for critical self-reflection in order to bring about transformative practices.

Cluster 4: Towards Inclusive Mindsets

This final cluster draws mainly from participants' second interviews that were conducted anywhere from three to ten weeks after the final book club meeting, in order to give participants the space they needed to focus on their immediate responsibilities. The second interview offered a space to reflect on their learning from both the book club and the project as a whole.

Poems Highlighting Key Takeaways

One of the questions participants were asked was to share their takeaways and insights from our book club readings and discussions. Poems in this cluster showcase the variety of responses the teachers gave to this question.

Practice & Theory
Like any major topic
we've come a long way
but still have a ways to go.
I'd like to believe that
things are not happening
the way they were,
when the author was younger.
I know that doesn't happen here,
but who knows in certain schools?
But we do have a ways to go.

The kids here are
very second nature to it.
they're around children with special needs
It's wonderful, the culture.

We're not done.
Hey we're not done.
Our town and school in particular,
we are far ahead of other people
but we're not done.

Still figure out ways to make it better
We're doing all we can.
I'm doing all I can right now
but let's look at the next group of kids.
What else can I be doing?
What else can we do?
Continue to make sure
we are including all of the kids with special needs.
But also be very careful
not to put the needs of one
over the needs of 22.
If it's not a good fit right away,
then let's not force that.

Everything has to be considered,
not just the needs of the teacher,
not just the needs of one kid
or the class
or admin.
We have to talk about all of it.
Teachers need to be
more part of the decision making.
I don't ever see that changing.

People who either
have never been in the classroom
or haven't been in the classroom
in a long time,
are making decisions based on theory.
Theory is good
but practice doesn't always match theory.
We're tasked with making the theory work
it's exhausting sometimes because
you're trying to do something
that you know is not working.

In her reflection Lisa shared that the book made her realize there is still work to be done

regarding inclusion, but felt that our PDS and the town it is in is far ahead of others. She

also expressed how she wants to balance the needs of all students in a classroom, along

with sharing how she felt theory and practice do not always align.

In his second interview, Anthony shared how the book caused him to feel

conflicted over his role and purpose as a teacher.

Conflicted
Written from his perspective
he had an amazing story
of achievement.
It was inspiring reading
what he overcame.

From the perspective
of a teacher reading it,
I felt conflicted.
It made me
not fully understand
my role
or my goal.
If I'm looking at it
from his perspective,
the role is
acceptance
accommodations
acknowledgment,
he may have a problem
but he's not *a* problem.

But
from a teacher's perspective
the expectation is
if they're not on grade level,
I should get them
on grade level.
If they're not functioning
to standard
I should be getting them to that place.
How do I do that without
making them feel bad?
What should my expectation be?
What are my expectations in light of this?
What are my expectations as a teacher?

I didn't find it helpful as a teacher
to help me do my job better.
The content
didn't really strike a nerve,
it just wasn't enough to help us as teachers
do our job better.

I was hoping to see something.
that I can incorporate in my class.
From the teacher's perspective
I can hear his story,
I can appreciate it.
appreciate the the diversity
of students in my class.

It just put me in conflict
I was really torn
and honestly,
I still am.

Anthony asked several reflective questions during our conversation. The content of the

memoir made him think about his practice that put him "in conflict." Yet he also

expressed how he appreciated Mooney's perspective, while still wishing for something to

help him move forward in his practice. Similarly, Jen also expressed an appreciation of

different perspectives while still wishing for tools to use in her classroom.

More Cognizant
The whole thing was sad.
We already know
that's how things were
years and years and years ago.
We've made so many strides
to not be that way.
It was just resurfacing all of that,
instead of giving us tools
to move forward.

I'm much more aware
I'm more cognizant of
what may be going on
in their minds
as far as their
successes and strengths and weaknesses
on a daily basis.
Not necessarily
goal oriented reading, writing, or math,
but,
where do they see themselves
in these chairs every day?

Where do they fit in?
Where do they feel like they belong?
Do they feel like
what they're doing and saying
is just as important as the next person?
Do they feel like I am striving towards reaching all of them?
Those are good conversations to have one-on-one.
We don't get enough time to be one-on-one.

Jen also asked some reflective questions during our interview. She expressed how they

are meaningful conversations to have with her students, but shared that she does not get

the time to do so. Like both Anthony and Jen, Sarah shared that she wanted something

more practical and useful from the memoir.

Open to Changing
All I remember is
the negatives
of trying to classify students into normal.
All the awful things in history.
But also thinking
I have to do that,
categorize kids as normal.
I have no control over it.
Stop telling me stuff I'm doing
that's bad
that I don't have control over.
I have to give a standardized test.
I have to give the ELA assessment,
whether the kid can write or not,
they have to do it.
And I have to score them low
say they need to be on I&RS,
and they have to go through this process.
I don't see a way around that.

It's not a battle I'm taking on.
I come in,
I do my job the best I can,
but I'm not fighting
those battles above my job
even if they're unequal
even if they're unjust.
I don't have the space for that

so I didn't see what to do.
I like teaching
I like being with the students
but other pieces of administrative work
or writing letters to people
or bringing about change
or being part of those committees
is not how I want my time.

I would love a suggestion
what I could do
but I don't have something different than
what I already do.
I'm open to changing
and making things better for the students
but I don't have an immediate action
that I can do right now.

Sarah acknowledged that the practices she is required to do can lead to students being

perceived as normal, but was frustrated by her lack of control over that. She shared that it

was not a battle she had the capacity to fight, but then expressed that she is open to

suggestions for making her individual practice better. When reading over her words,

Sarah shared that this poem, particularly the second stanza, made her feel guilty but wrote

that she had to set her boundaries somewhere to care for her own mental health.

While Sarah and several others found the book very negative, Drew shared that he

found those moments eye-opening.

In Our Lifetime
When I look at this book,
it's eye-opening,
just the awful things
that happened years ago,
that I didn't even really know about.
Talking about differences
leads people to
get scared and nervous
about what they don't know.
I want to know the history
It makes you think,

knowing that that history.
It's shocking to me
it's not far in the past, right?
It's in our lifetimes.

Drew found the difficult parts of the book (e.g. eugenics history, stigma) eye-opening in

that parts of it are still occurring in our current times (i.e. genetic testing), which came up

in our book club conversations. He shared that he felt people get nervous talking about

differences when they do not know much about it.

Finally, Ben shared how he felt reading the book reaffirmed several of his beliefs

about his students and inclusion.

Everybody's Story
The approach I have to inclusion
how to reach those students
I don't know that it
changed much for me.
It kind of made things
that I think about
more vivid
of doubts that I had
or thoughts that I had,
what ifs,
The book made them seem
more relevant.

Thinking about students
who might be reluctant,
to think of
why they might not be trying
what's the reason
trying to think more about
everybody's story
a little more,
trying to get to know them better,
trying to find out more about them
trying to find ways to make
a connection to their life,
how can I show them art can be meaningful for them
trying to challenge myself,
I guess,

to not,
not write anybody off.

Ben shared that the book helped his views around including students "more relevant" and reminded him to get to know students and their stories more before making judgements.

In all, teachers had a wide range of takeaways from the book. They acknowledged there is still work to be done, reaffirmed beliefs, and expressed frustration with the demands placed upon them.

Poems Highlighting the Shift from Ableism to Inclusion

In this final theme poems drawn from the second interviews are shared. They showcase the different positions and perspectives teachers took up at the end of our inquiry. During the second interview I asked teachers if they had ever heard of ableism before, two had, but for many it was a totally new concept, with Marie sharing that she had to keep looking up the definition as she read. The poems here highlight how this new knowledge impacted their practice in regards to ableism and inclusion.

In her second interview, Danielle shared how the book related to her personal experiences with disability and being diagnosed as an adult. She discussed her struggles and her perspectives of how kids are today.

Baggage
Diagnosed as an adult with ADD
I just remember struggling
but, you know,
just figure it out
just kind of suck it up
I didn't,
we didn't
have supports
and you made it through,
and here I am.

As an adult
medicine to help focus
but I still have a hard time with all that
but you just find your own coping strategies

Kids are always mean
I was always teased,
not a lot of friends,
the nerd,
always made fun of.
People said stuff that
always stuck with me.
Struggling all the time
trying to focus
not knowing why.
My family life was crazy
abusive
But you know,
people had it way worse growing up
than I did
We all have our things.
There's so much baggage.
There's always something going on
behind closed doors.
It's just always be kind.

Nowadays,
kids are so needy.
"I need a therapist"
Therapy is great, but not right away.
Try some things on your own,
do some research
Some of the kids
have to have so much
and it's like, well,
you have to kind of figure it out,
Sometimes,
you make those mistakes.
Parents don't want their kids to fail or anything.
That's how you learn.
I can't be there my kid's whole life to help them,
they have to learn at some point.
It's hard,
you don't want to see them
struggle like that.

After becoming a parent
my perspective was so different
be more empathetic and understanding
of what these parents are going through.

Me being so blessed that I have a child that's typical,

She didn't really have those struggles.
she had some social stuff,
but we all do.
I feel definitely different
after becoming a parent.

Danielle reflected on her experiences growing up in response to discussing her reactions

to the book. She shared how she struggled with focusing and had a difficult home life.

She then discussed how she felt it is important to try some solutions on one's own first,

and shared how becoming a parent impacted her perspective of her students' parents.

Danielle stated that she was grateful that her child was typical.

Similarly, Anthony touched upon how normal is created and what students are

seen as normal or not normal.

A Sensitive Topic
Based on academic standards
there's a tendency to
equate normal with
being on grade level
not normal if you're
not on grade level.
The ones that are on grade level
are praised,
the ones that are not,
are targeted.
We're even taught that.
We sit and
go over data as a staff.
Look at things,
create a target group.
Focus on them,
get them to perform better.

That's kind of embedded in me.
I go through my data.
I even do it subconsciously.
I know my kids that
I have to target,
make sure they're
doing what they're supposed to do.

Inclusion
still a very sensitive topic
Mindset of the class,
the general population
has to accept
someone that's different.
Honestly,
I don't think our students
have been given that opportunity
enough.
It will only help them.

Anthony acknowledged how sorting students is taught and embedded within teachers, in

that they are constantly going over data to determine target groups. He felt that inclusion

was still a sensitive subject, but that the opportunity to accept peers who are different will

benefit students.

Drew was also unsure about inclusion, which he shared during his second

interview. He began by talking about how he felt the book was pushing too far in one

direction, and then explained his concerns with inclusion.

Heart vs Brain
It's going very far in one direction,
doing whatever it takes
give everything they need at all times.
That part of it makes me nervous.

If you go all the way in one direction,
which I fear that we are
in today's world right now.
If the student can't swing,
you pull every swing away
because we're not all the same.

We can't have food at a party, because
one student can't have this.
I don't love that.

I'm very torn.
my heart is,
I want to include everyone,
always try our best to do it.
But my brain is,
we have to be realistic,
it's difficult.

If you have
a student in a wheelchair
playing kickball.
Find a way they could play,
figure out if
they could wheel to the base
And that would probably work.
You wouldn't be able to hit them
so now everyone kind of
can't play.
This sounds harsh,
but if one student
can't walk or run
does that mean everyone else playing
can't walk or run either?

So I'm torn.
But,
do everything I can
make sure student have
every opportunity to
somehow do the things that we do.
Also make sure I do everything I can
to not take away things
from everyone else.
I think that's the key.

We all have differences.
Let's learn about them
Let's see how we can incorporate them.
Including is
not taking away entirely
because someone's not included.
If you live that way,

it's almost like
now you can't do anything.

Drew shared how he felt a tension between wanting to include all students and what that looks like in practice. He expressed concern that inclusion might mean taking away things because not everyone could participate in an activity. Similarly, Sarah expressed a concern about her understanding of inclusion.

Still Make the Kid Feel Good
I did have one thing
and maybe it's small
and I felt like I didn't
understand inclusion.
I don't want to be
blind to something.
Provide the choices to students
to do what works for them.
but the options don't go towards
the standardized test.
They have to be able to
write a response
independently.
Some kids verbally tell me what was happening
really well, but
they still need to write it.
We have to give it.
But you can still make the kid feel good.

Sarah shared that she felt it was important to offer students choice and make them feel good, but worried how that would affect them on standardized tests. During our interview, Sarah wanted to know more about what inclusion meant and what it looked like to be sure she understood the goal.

Nicole picked up on a similar idea, that there needed to be a better understanding of inclusion. In a poem she elected to write, Nicole captured her thoughts on what inclusion is and teachers' reactions to it.

Understanding Inclusion
Accommodating
fit their needs
totally distinct personalities
got the skills
Patience
Talk about status
Launch

Bounce back
No stamina
My goal
True meaning of inclusion
who's in front of you
the objective
get everybody to move forward
plan effectively
Every student gets the best
right course
THAT kid
We're not planning for him
It's just a bad moment
haven't really solved the puzzle
Working on it
Something different
Heart's in the right place.
They're tired.

Nicole's poem showed that she felt teachers are well intentioned, but were overwhelmed given all the demands they needed to meet. Nicole's goal was to have everyone gain a better understanding of what inclusion is, what it looks like in action. She highlighted several of the actions, but also added in several ideas, like patience, that are needed when thinking about inclusion.

When thinking about the inquiry and inclusion, Marie tied it to our PDS work in general and shared how it has impacted her perspective.

Mindful
I'm even more aware
since we've started
this whole journey
our PDS work.
Being very mindful of each kid
how I come across.
In my head,
this is what I'm saying,
but how are they taking it?
Is it coming across wrong?
I have a child who loves to sing,
all the time.
Get her to understand
there's no way you can
read while you're singing.
But not squash her love for singing.
I think she has
a focusing problem, easily distracted.
But when she answers a question,
it's like,
wow,
like she's on stage.
I was told her
You should do theater.
You love to sing.
You love to be dramatic
You're good at it.
I try to be very mindful with my kids.

By reflecting on our work, Marie acknowledged that she has become more mindful of how she is coming across to her students. She acknowledged a student's strength and talent for singing, while also recognizing an area she may struggle with. But she felt it was important to highlight the student's strength over her struggle.

Finally, Jen reflected on ableism and inclusive mindsets in our interview together, acknowledging that some ideas were new to her.

Still Emerging
Ableism,
a totally new concept to me.
In the back of my mind since
reading about it,
hearing about it.
I'm sure it is happening
in classrooms
and among teachers.
And what can we do to
obviously avoid that?
We're instructed to
teach to the norm.
teach towards the standard.
I mean,
that's what we're evaluated on.

An inclusive mindset is
where we all need to be and
our efforts need to be.
Including all kids,
all voices,
all walks,
all levels, abilities.
An inclusive classroom.
for sure is positive
when it's done the right way.
We're still emerging with that mindset.

Jen shared that she had never heard of ableism, but since our book club
discussions it has been something she's kept in her mind. She acknowledged the tension
with ableism and inclusion, and felt that inclusion is where our efforts need to be but that
teachers' mindsets were still emerging in that regard.

The poems here highlighted how in their final reflections on the inquiry some
teachers were still torn about what inclusion looked like in practice, while others showed
how they have become more mindful since participating in our inquiry.

Threshold Poem Juxtaposing Critical Pedagogy

In considering these final poems, I chose to view them through the lens of critical pedagogy, specifically hooks' (2003) idea of teaching practice as a site of resistance. Using hooks (2003) as a guide, I asked the question "how are teachers upholding or resisting normal?" Again using the voices from the midpoint check-in, I felt these words would dialogue well with hooks' (2003) ideas on teaching practice as resistance.

Teachers' Words
I'm just wondering
what changes have to be made
to make inclusion happen,
how much time it takes
        to do it well.
It's overwhelming,
it's just one more thing…
Not that I disagree with it.
But it can't just be,
   "Well, you'll figure it out."
Never in my career
has time been respected,
but I think there's a
willingness
to want to do better for the
students.
But not in where it takes more
time.

But we don't make the policy,
we're just following it by law.
This needs to be taken to
        the people who make the
                difference.
I can't change what the state
does.
I can't tell the school board
        or superintendent
        or district what to do.
I can only control my room.

At this point in my life,
this is not a fight I have

Words in the Threshold

*There is a willingness,
but does that willingness
cultivate a spirit of
hopefulness?*

*Not having energy to fight,
is a tacit acceptance of the
dominant norms,
refusing to build the capacity
to change.*

*Pushing change off to
the state,
school board
superintendent,
leaves little room to enter
open spaces, only serving to
further close these systems.
Reinforcing beliefs we cannot
change until they do.*

hooks' (2003) words
teachers
often most reluctant
to acknowledge
white-supremacist thinking
informs every aspect
of our culture

the way we learn,
the content we learn,
the manner we are taught[1]

To successfully unlearn
domination,
a democratic educator
cultivates a spirit
of hopefulness
the capacity to change[2]
If
we are not able to
find, and enter
open spaces
in closed systems
we doom ourselves
reinforcing beliefs that
educational systems
cannot be changed[3]

[1](p. 25,) [2] (p. 73) [3](p. 74)

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time or the energy to put in.
I don't have it to fight.
I don't have the space.
I'm not even interested
in fighting that battle.
I don't have the energy.
I don't.
I'm doing what I'm told
I'm going to do the best job I
can,
I can only advocate for the
kids
in front of me.
But I'm not fighting those
battles.

I wish I could advocate for
everything.
I cannot take on the
responsibility
 of everything in the world
I can't champion everything,
I can only control what's in
my room
and in my community here.
I personally cannot take up
that fight,
 but it needs to be done.

*Cannot take on the
responsibility to change
everything.
But we can become aware
that the manner
in which we teach
influences the people
our students will become.
Do we honor their future
personhood in our
ways of teaching
in our ways of
inviting them to learn?*

*Reluctant to acknowledge
Reluctant to personally take
up that fight.
Does our privilege preclude
our involvement?
A need to find that open
space,
a need for a willingness to
enter it.*

While the teachers acknowledged that ideas and systems may be unjust, they felt that they did not have it in them to take up this fight. They identified several people or groups who can make a difference, but did not identify how they can make a difference in their own classrooms. In this sense, hooks' idea of opening spaces up speaks to an area of growth for the teachers- how can they open and enter closed spaces within their own classroom? The dialogue between the teachers and hooks led me to consider who takes up these battles, and wonder how privilege factors into who enters the battle and takes up the fight for inclusive justice.

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Summary

In this chapter I shared transcription poems that highlight the major themes and findings of this inquiry. In the next chapter I detail the connections between these findings and the conceptual framework, discuss their significance, and offer suggestions for next steps and future inquiry.

Chapter 5
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the tensions, perspectives and experiences of teachers as they took part in PD to help them create more inclusive mindsets and identities despite working in a system that allows for ability profiling and disability stigma in schools. In this chapter, findings are analyzed and discussed in relation to the research questions guiding this inquiry through the theoretical lens of DSE, SiA, critical pedagogy, and teacher identity. Evidence from the findings is synthesized with the literature shared in Chapter 2. Following these connections, suggestions and implications for practice and scholarship are shared, along with limitations of the study and concluding thoughts.

Working with teachers at a professional development school, thirteen teachers participated in a book club centering a memoir on disability stigma, two interviews, and writing autobiographical pieces. The transcriptions from this data were used to create transcription poems, and later combined with words from key theorists to create threshold poems. Evidence from the transcription and threshold poems suggests that dysconscious ableism was deeply embedded in the school community, which created tensions as teachers moved toward embracing inclusive mindsets.

This inquiry captured the initial steps teachers take as they develop or strengthen their inclusive mindsets. The findings address a gap in the literature surrounding lack of knowledge regarding the paths teachers take on their journey toward becoming inclusive educators (Bagelieri, 2008), with the findings revealing that these initial steps are discomforting and difficult for veteran teachers. Guided by the PDS essentials that require reflection and inquiry for in-service teachers, we engaged in work that captured

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how teachers began their exploration of their beliefs around inclusion and disability

stigma. Through the use of transcription and threshold poems this study revealed that the

participants: (1) felt they had little control in advocating for systemic change beyond their

classroom; (2) did not collectively understand inclusion to be an ideological commitment

that required grappling with their own values and purposes; (3) inadvertently aligned with

dysconscious ableism; and, (4) struggled to view their teaching practice as a place of

cultural work and resistance of dominant norms. As a community there was a hesitancy

to embrace inclusive mindsets as the collective group was unprepared to work through

the difficulties that accompany social justice initiatives and critical educational practices.

However, there were pockets of individuals who did embrace and recognize that

inclusive mindsets are necessary to promoting and enacting equitable and just practices.

This highlights a need to help teachers with developed inclusive mindsets become leaders

in their schools in order to help their peers embrace inclusion.

Gaining an awareness of the ways students are marginalized based on perceived

ability, especially after working for so many years blind to these oppressive practices,

was jarring for several of the teachers. A lack of critical reflection has led to teachers

being unprepared to deeply examine their beliefs and assumptions related to their

teaching practice. Because ableism is widely under-addressed in teacher preparation

programs and social justice initiatives (Pugach et al., 2021), the teachers in this inquiry

experienced discomfort learning about its history and prevalence in education, and they

wavered between wanting to fix issues related to ableism and feeling as though they

could not do anything. Despite the majority of participants teaching for more than fifteen

years, they did not easily recognize tools and practices already in their established

toolkits that they could use to begin addressing issues. The findings indicate that PD must be more explicit as to how teachers can become more inclusive and work to change systemic inequities within their spheres of influence. This inquiry provides insight into the tensions teachers experienced as they began to investigate their beliefs on inclusion by listening to disabled voices, while also offering insight into the juxtaposition between ideas from theory and praxis through the use of threshold poems.

Synthesis of Findings and Literature

The four key takeaways of this study are summarized here as: (1) a lack of awareness of ableism created conflict among teachers' identities; (2) these conflicts led to a denial of or refusal to engage in dismantling ableist oppression; (3) reading a disability memoir led to feelings of frustration between the perspectives of the author and teachers' perceptions of their jobs; (4) there is a lack of critical reflection included in professional development, which inhibits evolution and growth among teachers' identities, however PDS and poetic inquiry are well-suited to fill this void. The findings are discussed in further detail as they relate to each of the three research questions guiding this inquiry. The questions were: (1) How does developing an awareness of ableism influence teachers' identities?; (2) To what extent can disability memoirs inform teachers' inclusive mindsets and perceptions of their own practices?; and (3) Does engaging in critical reflection guided by professional development and poetic inquiry influence teacher identity and inclusive mindset?

Exploring Ableism and Teachers' Identities (Research Question 1)

The first key takeaway from this inquiry is that a lack of awareness of ableism created conflict among teachers' identities. During both the book club discussions and

their second interviews several participants shared how ableism was a completely new concept. As Jen shared in her interview as seen in the poem "Still Emerginging," ableism was a totally new concept that she has kept in the back of her mind since she read about it and we discussed it in our book club. Several of the teachers shared they did not know of ableism, or knew very little about it, before participating in the inquiry. When I asked for the group's thoughts on ableism during the book club, their silence for a full minute spoke volumes. As a whole group, very little was known about ableism or else there was not a willingness to speak about it. This lack of awareness allowed dysconscious ableism to flourish unchecked in the school (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017).

Despite our talk about the creation of normal and ableism, dysconscious ableism was still present in many of the conversations, both within the book club and in second interviews. It was clearly seen in Danielle's statement in the poem, "Baggage," when she said that she was "so blessed [to] have a child that's typical." As an autistic support teacher, this statement can be interpreted as Danielle feeling that her students are a burden on their parents, which is ableism hidden in plain sight. Does she feel that neurodivergent students are burdens? Throughout both of her interviews, and captured in her poems, Danielle often spoke of her students from a deficit perspective, and did not see disability from a strengths-based perspective despite working exclusively with autistic students. As a teacher, she only ever worked in segregated settings, which clearly influenced her conception of normal/abnormal. Moving forward, the teachers, especially Danielle, may benefit from learning and reflecting on neurodiversity and the neurodiversity paradigm in PD sessions.

However, in the same poem, Danielle shared she was diagnosed with ADD as an adult, and throughout the poem was working through her ideas and experiences. Stating her child is typical is akin to saying she is normal, and embracing this as a blessing is, perhaps unknowingly, embracing the ableist concept of normalcy. This lack of awareness speaks to how deeply rooted our beliefs about minds and bodies are (Campbell, 2018; Dolmage, 2017) in that the teachers never thought to question constructions of ability/disability. If teachers are unaware of the creation of ability based on cultural norms, then it follows that they may struggle in accepting, embracing and promoting multiple ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing (Campbell, 2018). Similarly, being unaware of ableism and ableist oppression speaks to Giroux's (1997) acknowledgement that "only a small segment of social reality is open to examination," which limits teachers' own abilities to fully advocate for the needs of all students in inclusive settings (p. 13). Danielle, like the other teachers, were grappling with this new area of social reality that was now opened to critique.

In exploring ableism, teachers agreed that normal is socially constructed and acknowledged how they are still defined and judged by the concepts of "normal" as captured in the poem "A Bunch of Hogwash." But as the conversation turned to how their practice was involved in the creation of "normal" the teachers began to experience tensions. The teachers did not realize how schools are locations of cultural work by the ways they sort students into binaries of abled/disabled or achievers/failures (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). This ideology of sorting warrants critique (Annamma et al., 2013), which the teachers did in their acknowledgement of the social construction of normalcy,

but they were not prepared to turn this critique inwards towards their own practice as the memoir shifted from history to Mooney's (2019) experiences with stigma.

As the book club progressed, the content put teachers in conflict. Anthony, in particular, openly said in the book club poem "Putting Me In Conflict" the book and our discussions made him feel conflicted, which was echoed in his individual poem, "Conflicted." Jen also struggled to process the difference in perspectives in the same book club poem, that the content and their emerging awareness of ableism was causing tensions and conflicted feelings. Recognizing the extent of ableism and disability stigma in their work was shocking for them. The tensions created by the developing awareness of ableism were also particularly highlighted by Ginny's comment in the poem "Where's the Light" that reading about antiracism was easier for her. This may be in part because issues around racism are more widely discussed, and therefore teachers in that book club could more easily pull from their background knowledge of it. When discussing the experience of developing an awareness of marginalization and oppression in education, San Pedro (2018) compared this experience to turning on lights in a darkened room. The conflict the teachers experienced here mimics the experience San Pedro highlighted - some of the teachers cowered, shielded themselves, covered their eyes, or wished for the lights to be turned back off.

This conflicted experience speaks to Danforth and Gabel's (2016) assertion that work in the field of DSE will cause discomfort and guilt. The teachers' conflict may have been caused by guilt of inadvertently being part of an ableist system that challenged their teacher identities, which they were not fully ready for. When asked in their second interview if it was the content, context of teaching in the current moment (i.e. post-

pandemic), or the structure of the book club that led to it ending early: seven teachers said it was the content that made people feel guilty, four said it was the context, and two said it was all three of those factors. As Nicole said, it was the perfect storm of factors that led the book club to end, but mostly that the teachers were prompted to reflect deeply about the content and it seems that they did not like what they saw.

In capturing their stories to live by, the teachers' identities were revealed in their poems about their purpose. The teachers all echoed similar sentiments in these poems - they valued helping their students become good people; they valued relationships and connections with their students most; and they were concerned about students' holistic development, paying attention to their social, emotional, and academic growth. Their purpose speaks to Freire's (1998) notion of teaching as being a "specifically human art," but perhaps the guilt came into play when the teachers experienced Freire's idea of being guided by a "clear sense of what is right and just" (p. 63). Their emerging awareness of ableism may have troubled their understanding of their purpose as it relates to valuing relationships and the holistic development of *all* students. As hooks (2003) reminded us, we must care for the souls of our students, but the concept of inclusion reminds us that it is imperative to care for the souls of all students *equitably*.

As Collins and Ferri (2016) noted, teachers are involved in creating the social identity of students through both the formal and informal labels teachers place on students. This is seen in how Marie shared in the poem "Effect that Lasts a Lifetime" from her first interview, the need to be cognizant of teachers having an effect that lasts a lifetime, and her concerns over the ways she has impacted her own students. Developing an awareness of ableism led the teachers to acknowledge how their judgments influence

their students' lives, which contradicted the stories they created about their identities and purpose as teachers. Many of them were aware of their impact, but given their possible dysconscious ableism, they did not recognize a very real way marginalization occurred in their classrooms.

As teacher identities are captured through their stories to live by, we must also be mindful of the impact of the stories we tell, especially those stories related to perceived ability. Identities and commitment are reinforced through our collective, communal stories, and we need to pay attention to what it is that we are reinforcing. When considering the stories that circulate in schools and among educators, Ferri and Connor (2021) stated:

> If we are honest, as teachers we can all tell horror stories - the one about the kid who throws a chair or bites a teacher, smashes a window or explodes in rage. But as reflective practitioners, we need to consider what our stories *do* in the world. How do we create worlds through our tales? How do we remain cognizant of whether we're doing more or less harm through the stories we tell?...The value of all our stories as educators…cannot be underestimated…Most important, if we tell them well, stories can be seeds that have the power to bring different worlds into being. (p. 313-314)

Several of the participants, like Marie and Jen, expressed an awareness of their impact on students. But several others, like Anthony and Danielle, spoke of their students in terms of students' perceived struggles. Being mindful of how our stories frame students is important to resisting ableist practices.

In answering the first research question of this inquiry, the teachers' conflict and tensions that emerged from their growing awareness of ableism challenged their stories to live by, thereby their teacher identities, in that teachers seemed to question how their purpose played out in practice. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999) shared, teachers maintain their stories to live by thorough resistance, or create new stories in response to change. This finding that learning about ableism caused teachers to either maintain or evolve their identities which has implications for practice in that there is a clear need for continuous, ongoing learning and reflection on social justice issues related to education. This will enable teachers' stories to continue to evolve and grow so that teachers can be better supported in working to meet the needs of *all* students.

Exploring Disability Memoir, Inclusive Mindsets, and Perceptions of Practice (Research Question 2)

A second key takeaway from this study is that the conflicts that arose from an emerging awareness of ableism led to a denial of or hesitancy to engage in dismantling ableist oppression. As discussed earlier, teachers acknowledged that the concept of normal is constructed and oppressive, however, when they turned this gaze on their own practice, tensions emerged as they felt conflicted. Given their lack of awareness of ableism due to their limited preparation in their certification programs and subsequent professional development, this conflict is understandable as a significant issue of marginalization was almost entirely unknown to them.

After reading about the troubling foundations of special education discussed in the memoir, Lisa said in the poem "Practice & Theory" that she felt as though the experiences depicted in the memoir might still happen elsewhere but stated "I know that

doesn't happen here." Lisa also felt her school and town "are far ahead of other people,"

and then added that they were not done in regards to growing and improving. Given that

the school has six self-contained autism support classrooms that are segregated in their

own hallway, along with the school being in the state ranked 49th for inclusive practices,

Lisa's statements here can be read as a denial of the existence of ableism in her local

context or a complete lack of awareness of what true inclusion looks like. Her words

speak to the immediate need for more professional development on what inclusion looks

like in practice. It is hard to see how the school is far ahead of others when the state is

ranked so low for inclusion. Lisa's story to live by was that having students with autism

in the building was inclusive, but in her thirty-one years of teaching was never challenged

to think differently about this. As Cohen (2016) found in their study, this was an identity

bid by Lisa to position herself as still doing good work. She struggled with admitting

flaws and with recognizing there is still more work to be done. This perspective speaks to

San Pedro's (2018) analogy of people covering their eyes when marginalized voices are

centered. The ideas in the text appeared to cause discomfort, which led to teachers, like

Lisa, denying the extent to which disability stigma and marginalization occurs in their

school context. To address this discomfort and help teachers feel empowered to address

ableism, PDS can be positioned to help teachers work to critique their local contexts

(Zenkov et al., 2020).

 Besides the wariness of acknowledging the existence of ableist practices in their

school, teachers also appeared to not make a connection between learning about the

historic oppression of disabled people and their role in influencing educational systems.

Teachers were hesitant to take up the fight to advocate for inclusion because they felt

they did not know how to do so. During our midpoint check-in, each small group shared that they did not want to hear the dark history of eugenics and special education that was heavily discussed in the first half of the book. As stated in the poem "Committed to the Cause" the teachers said about the book:

It's a lot of big words
to just give one point,
normal doesn't exist.
How do we fix that?
Sometimes things can't be fixed.
Or shouldn't be,
it's not something to be fixed.
Just something we learn to live with.

In this stanza we can see how the teachers were frustrated with the content, feeling as though it was "a lot of big words to just give one point." Some of them then stated how some things cannot or should not be fixed, expressing that they may be comfortable learning to live with ableist oppression. This way of thinking ties to the idea of the ability line and labels being common sense notions (Annamma et al., 2013; Gallagher, 2016), and therefore teachers do not see the need to make any changes. But within this dialogue about whether or not the push for normalcy can be fixed, the teachers also questioned how such a large issue can be fixed. This indicated a willingness to do something, but the teachers were at a complete loss of what actions they can take. Because it is such a complex issue that entails difficult work, some of the teachers simply threw up their hands in exasperation. This finding shows that it is imperative to detail out concrete, actionable steps - both big and small - that teachers can take within their own classrooms and practice to make education more inclusive and equitable.

Later in this same poem, the teachers stated, "Listen, we're doers, okay?" indicating they just wanted to know what to do about the problem. Lisa brought up this

idea again in her second interview, stating in the poem "What Else Can We Do":

It was
problem
problem,
problem.
Okay, we get it,
It was bad.
Now what are we gonna do with this?

Both of these instances demonstrate that the teachers did not want to learn about the roots

of the problem, but at the same time wanted a quick fix, a strategy, or actionable steps

they could take to respond to ableism and disability stigma in schools. However, they did

not appear to regard critical self-reflection as the first step necessary to begin dismantling

oppressive structures. Yet, Day (2005) recognized that part of a teacher's commitment

must be intellectual engagement, which can come about through reflection on disabled

voices. The present study suggests that teachers want actionable steps to take to create

more inclusive spaces, however, as Cosier and Ashby (2016) explained:

> the first step for educators committed to more socially just schools and classrooms
>
> is simply recognizing these patterns of oppression. The next step is using tools to
>
> support changing these systems in ways that support more access for all students.
>
> (p. 4)

The teachers in the present study were eager to move past the first step of recognizing

patterns and wanted the tools to support change without fully committing to inclusion as

an ideological commitment (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012). Creating more inclusive

classrooms must embrace a two-pronged approach of sharing both the *why* of inclusion

along with providing the *how* it can be possible. The teachers in this study began to

understand and embrace the why, but they struggled to understand the tools that either

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were already at their disposal or that they needed in order to begin enacting inclusive practices. Future PD must explicitly offer tangible tools and model how they can be used in the classroom so that teachers gain a sense of what inclusion looks like in action.

There was hesitation among the teachers regarding their ideological commitment. The variety of beliefs on inclusion, as seen in the poetic cluster "Beliefs on Inclusion and Ability," demonstrate how the teachers had a wide range of interpretations on inclusion, its purpose and its successes. The ideas of being one big family, only including for academic reasons, and being realistic with our expectations showed that not all of the teachers were fully onboard with inclusion as an ideology. Several of the teachers expressed worry and concern about inclusion taking away from the general education population, which meant keeping track of all students' needs would be difficult for them to monitor. These ideas were further echoed in the poem "Committed to the Cause," when teachers shared that inclusion was overwhelming and felt like it was just one more thing added to their overburdened plates. It speaks to the idea that ableism is deeply embedded in education laws and policies (Beratan, 2006; Garcia-Fierros, 2006), while also requiring students with disabilities to prove they can succeed in general education before they are included (Cosier & Ashby, 2016). These ideas impacted teachers' ability to fully commit to inclusion. This lack of a wholehearted ideological commitment helped foster resistance to taking up the fight to dismantle ableist structures.

Scholars within DSE emphasize the need for building partnerships with practitioners in order to dismantle marginalizing structures, going beyond acceptance and tolerance (Cosier & Ashby, 2016; Danforth & Gabel, 2016; Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012), but the practitioners must be fully willing participants. The teachers' resistance to this

commitment to social justice came about clearly in the poem "Committed to the Cause."

Several teachers expressed that they were not interested in fighting the battle for

inclusion - they did not have the energy, space, or time to advocate for it. This weariness

was captured in the poems in the poetic cluster on teacher identity, particularly the poems

on pressure and barriers. The idea of resisting the fight for inclusion due to weariness and

being overburdened became a prevailing theme for several participants. For these

teachers, the emotional work of teaching was at risk of becoming emotional labor (Day,

2018), in that their work would not be supported, jeopardizing their identities. In resisting

the fight for inclusion, several of the teachers were clearly setting the boundaries of their

practice, similar to Waitoller and Kozleski's (2013) study that saw teachers negotiating

multiple boundaries based on sociocultural influences that indicated where their actions

started and stopped related to inclusive pedagogies. This ties back to Connelly and

Clandinin's (1999) explanation of stories to live by as understanding where teachers

morally position themselves in relation to the borders created in schools. For some of the

teachers in this inquiry, engaging in a wider fight for inclusion was a boundary they were

unwilling and/or unprepared to cross at this moment.

However, several participants embraced inclusive mindsets and ideologies in our

one-on-one interviews together, along with our group conversations. This was captured in

the poem "Committed to the Cause," when teachers acknowledged it is a hard fight and

there are many reasons not to do it, but that should not prevent us from trying. These

sentiments stood in response to the ideas of teachers being overburdened. But when we

were together as a group the prevailing idea of weariness dominated the conversations.

This ties to Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) notions of teachers' stories to live by being

communally sustained. Several voices here reinforced that idea that teachers are doing too much, while several others are more quietly pushing forward the idea of inclusion as a worthy cause. The louder story, repeated frequently throughout all the poems, captured here is that the teachers are too weary to commit to inclusion. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999) explained, these stories can collectively solidify into a fixed identity or can continue to grow and evolve, similar to the collective identity bids made by teachers in Cohen's (2016) study, wherein colleagues supported each other's interpretations of their practices. This story reveals that both the individual and collective resiliency and capacity to change among the teachers was low, putting their identities at risk (Day, 2018). There is a tension present in these findings between teachers resisting changes as a means to maintain their identity and those willing to create new stories to live by as they embrace school change (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Given that the teachers were working in a "post"-pandemic school year, attempting to return to the normal routine of school, along with working after an ongoing societal reckoning of racism and civil rights, the lack of resilience is simultaneously understandable and disheartening.

In embracing inclusion as ideology, Li and Ruppar (2021) identified two aspects of having an inclusive pedagogical practice as embracing a "disposition to social justice" and a "willing[ness] to enter collision with others" (p. 48). The findings here demonstrate that some teachers have this disposition, but may not have willingness or competence to enter into collision over ideas and beliefs. Trying to dismantle ableist practices requires a new way of thinking (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011), and this new way of thinking has to become more communally sustained in the stories teachers tell so that there is less resistance to engaging in more equitable practices. The present study suggests centering

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disabled voices through memoirs can help introduce new ways of thinking, but also that centering these voices must be accompanied by ongoing PD that shares concrete tools to enact inclusive practices. This is essential to encourage teachers to take action in relation to their new thinking.

A third key takeaway from this study, in conjunction with the teachers' conflicts and resistance at times, was that reading a disability memoir led to a frustration between the perspectives of the author and teachers' perceptions of their jobs. There was a feeling of helplessness and uncertainty in what to do to ensure that students do not experience the stigma Mooney (2019) depicted in his memoir. As stated earlier, the book led teachers to feel conflicted between what they were reading and the demands of their jobs. These conflicts prevented the spirit of hopefulness hooks (2003) called for, as seen in the threshold poem juxtaposing critical pedagogy. In the poem "Conflicted" Anthony details how he did not understand his role or goal as a teacher when he considered Mooney's perspectives and experiences. Later, in the poem "A Sensitive Topic" Anthony shared how data collection and creating focus groups based on data was embedded in him throughout his practice. Anthony saw the need for inclusion, but struggled to reconcile this ideology with his years of experience, training and practice. His tension was shared by Jen, who commented on this in the book club poem "Putting Me in Conflict":

I know what my plans are for the day
and then we come here
and Oh my gosh.
Are we really helping society?
Are we really helping these kids grow
from the time they walk in,
to the time they leave?
We are making a difference
but you better make sure that
as of November 22nd,
you're testing

and reading the ELA assessment
and be ready for conferences
and report cards.

The memoir led her to consider some very deep questions about her purpose and role, but

then these questions were thwarted by the demands of the system to prepare for a variety

of assessments and accountability measures by a given deadline. This tension is captured

in the research that shows many teachers generally have a positive attitude toward

inclusion in theory, but are unsure of their skills, knowledge and resources to put

inclusion into action (Subban & Sharma, 2005; Symeounidou & Phtiaka, 2009; Wilson et

al., 2019).

The findings here both complement and contradict Subban, Round and Sharma's

(2021) finding that a sense of self-efficacy is tied to teachers implementing inclusive

practices. In their study they found that teachers with more experience working with

students with disabilities had a higher sense of self-efficacy, which we can see with

several participants here like Eileen and Drew. However, Subban et al. (2021) found that

teachers over 40 were more likely to have a higher sense of self-efficacy, but the findings

here appear to contradict that as many of the teachers, the majority of whom are over 40,

seem to struggle in their beliefs in their own ability to teach students with disabilities. In

order to help the teachers know how to implement inclusive practice they need to further

develop their sense of self-efficacy. Li and Ruppar (2021) call for professional

development that helps "develop teachers' imagination and ability to visualize alternative

futures for themselves and their students. A projective world with multiple alternative

possibilities can encourage teachers to take new actions and set new goals for themselves

and their students as well" (p. 56). Similarly, Broderick and Lalvani (2017) felt

transformative practice was necessary to dismantle dysconscious ableism in schools.

Given their responses and concerns that arose from their reading, the teachers in this study can work to be more imaginative in what is possible in their practice in order to help all students succeed. But as their collective resilience was low due to the context of teaching, the teachers here struggled to reimagine the boundaries and purpose of their work.

As Kozleski and Waitoller (2010) argued, teachers must be mindful of what they choose to "deconstruct, conserve, and transform" (p. 659), and reading this particular memoir caused the teachers to experience tensions and conflict as they were directed to reflect on their choices related to deconstructing, conserving, or transforming stigmatizing practices. In answering the second question of this inquiry, disability memoirs can cause a conflict for teachers who are unaware of the extent of ableism in education, leading them to either resist or embrace changing their practice. A book club centering such memoirs can either offer teachers a place to grow or collectively reaffirm their existing beliefs and practices.

Exploring Poetic Inquiry, Teacher Identity, and Inclusive Mindsets (Research Question 3)

A fourth key takeaway from this inquiry is that there is a lack of critical reflection included in professional development, which inhibits evolution and growth among teachers' identities, however PDS and poetic inquiry are well-suited to fill this void. During their second interviews the first question I asked each participant was how often they were given time to deeply reflect throughout their careers. None of the participants could pinpoint a specific time, with some saying that a PD here or there may have given time but it was not much time therefore it was not meaningful. Several teachers shared

that they reflect daily on their practice, but this is separate from critical reflection on their underlying assumptions and beliefs (Mezirow, 1998).

Through PDS, a professor-in-residence (PIR) can serve as a critical friend helping teachers move toward critical reflection on their practice (Carrington & Robinson, 2004). But as Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) found, PIRs or university faculty acting in a similar role must be mindful that offering innovative practices can lead to their own marginalization in the community, as such practices may challenge established norms in the community. This was echoed in the ways the teachers did not speak to me directly about ending the book club, but rather went through the literacy coach to share their discomfort. Because the district did not offer meaningful moments of critical reflection, using the structures of PDS (i.e. centering inquiry and reflection) to offer these moments was perhaps startling for the teachers in this study, many of whom were teaching for more than fifteen years. It is especially meaningful to note, this lack of reflection in PD may have allowed teachers' identities to become stagnant as they did not often examine their underlying beliefs. Only two of the thirteen teachers have been teaching for ten years or less, and the lack of time for critical reflection may have allowed these veteran teachers to solidify their stories to live by as it seems they were rarely pushed to think differently about their practice. Without examining our beliefs on a regular basis we run the risk of becoming complacent in our thinking. This study prompted teachers to think deeply about ideas that they may not have visited in several years, which while beneficial, can also be a challenging, but necessary, practice to pick back up later in one's career.

While the participants were willing to join the study, as it pushed them to reflect deeply on their practice, their willingness diminished. PDS as a structure is well situated to support more critical reflection, as it can act as a third space between the school-university binary, that allows scholars and practitioners to be more constructivist in our pedagogies and instructional approaches (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; NAPDS, 2021). Through these critical reflections PDS can help practitioners critically examine their local contexts while also sparking innovative change (Waters, 2017; Zenkov et al., 2020), but K-12 partners must be willing to take on this work knowing it will cause tension and discomfort. Districts and faculty at partner schools must be fully aware of what the essentials of reflection and inquiry entail, and be willing to embrace any possible negative emotions. Likewise, PIRs and university partners must be equipped to help educators navigate the difficulties emerging from working on social justice initiatives. A degree of care for teachers' social-emotional well-being must be built into reflections and inquiry, and PIRs must build relationships both within the PDS and their universities to care for teachers if we are to empower them to resist oppressive educational systems. Both K-12 educators and PIRs must deeply embrace the partnership and be willing to work and learn together through mutual support.

Along with the structures of PDS and quality PD, poetic inquiry can also help in critical reflection. To aid teachers in moving toward critical reflection after the transcription poems were written, the teachers were asked to reflect on their poems. Danielle shared in her reflection that when reading her poems she felt "a calming sense of relief of seeing everything I have felt over the years in writing and that someone listened." Similarly, Drew shared that reading his poems "highlight and document what

you stand for as a teacher."Like Drew and Danielle, when reading the poem, "Exhaustion," Marie cried because the poem not only resonated with her but made her realize how much she is going through this school year. These comments emphasize the importance of offering teachers a space to share their stories, but also reflect on what stories they have constructed so far in their careers. For both Danielle and Drew, their poems captured who they are in the current moment, but Beijaard et al. (2004) also stressed the importance of teacher identity moving beyond the current moment to ask "who do I want to become" as a teacher. In reflecting on her poem, "Open to Changing," Sarah felt guilt over what she said in her interview, but also shared that she needed to set boundaries for herself. In the poem she said she was open to change, which when coupled with her reflection on her words, might indicate she is considering who she still wishes to become.

Poetic inquiry allows us to look at classroom practices as though under a microscope (Cahnmann, 2003), and this close inspection can cause discomfort but also provide a path forward. When considering how poetic inquiry and professional development influenced inclusive mindsets, it helped to analyze the data through the threshold poems. These poems revealed a lack of collective commitment among the teachers to embrace inclusion as a means of social justice. The PD provided through the book club and the voices captured through the transcription poems showed that there is a need for continued, sustained dialogue that allows teachers to process the issues surrounding disability stigma and further develop their understanding of ableism. In this sense, poetry is essential as it "is an appeal for recognition of injustice and an awareness of how inaction as 'spectators' is part of the problem" (Faulkner & Cloud, 2019, p. 163).

The threshold poems revealed that the teachers struggled with their identities as they reflected on disabled perspectives of disability stigma in schools and with whether or not they had the tools and capacity to enact change. By juxtaposing teachers' stories with critical theory, these poems were able to "help us to see why the story matters…[and] transcend the particulars of time and place to get at the essential knowing that is unearthed in the telling" (Ferri & Connor, 2021, p. 306-307). Poetic inquiry was well-suited in this inquiry in unearthing what was at the heart of teachers' beliefs on inclusion.

While the transcription poems spoke to Prendergast's (2015) idea of Vox Identitatis, or poems that capture an aspect of participants' identities, the threshold poems spoke to her notion of Vox Justitia, which are poems that speak to "equity, equality, social justice, class, freedom" (p. 683). In both forms of poems, the emergence and development of the teachers' critical consciousness was captured, which is essential to understanding how teachers are moving towards embracing inclusive mindsets. The poems reveal a spectrum of inclusive mindsets among the teachers. This is similar to Broderick and Lalvani's (2017) findings that sorted graduate students' reflections on their beliefs on disability into three categories of conservative/deficit, liberal/social model, and radical/cultural-minority oppression. Some of the participants, like Danielle, Anthony, and Lisa, appeared to resist change by insisting that what they are doing is just fine or that inclusion is not always appropriate, speaking to Giangreco's (1998) cartoon on "excludes" teachers offer when they are hesitant to embrace inclusion. Yet, there were moments in their poems where some of their beliefs waver, capturing the uncertainty they felt around their values and assumptions as they reflected. Despite their uncertainty, they indicated an openness to growing. Other participants, like Drew, Sarah, Melissa, Ginny,

and Angela, seemed to waver in embracing inclusion in theory while worrying about the technical implementation of it. Interestingly, Drew was supportive of inclusion in his first interview, especially when he clearly stated he would try not to speak of students using labels. But in his second interview, he worried inclusion would take away from general education students. Finally, Marie, Nicole, Eileen, Ben, and Jen offered strong explanations of inclusion, taking a bigger picture approach of including all students. Several of the teachers expressed a willingness and openness to changing their practices, and even recognizing how their practices may have led to stigma. In this inquiry, putting teachers' beliefs under a poetic microscope allowed us to see where the teachers stood in relation to inclusive mindsets and offered a means of identifying areas in need of growth. There were pockets of inclusive mindsets within the community, but the voices of these teachers were often quieter in the larger group. There is a need to help teachers who are thinking and working more inclusively to magnify their voices among those who are more skeptical.

In answering the third question of this inquiry, critical reflection guided by professional development and poetic inquiry reaffirmed teachers' stories to live by but also provoked them to create new stories. It revealed which teachers were further along in embracing inclusive mindsets, while laying a foundation for others to develop theirs. Throughout the PD and poems in this inquiry, the teachers revealed they feel they have a lack of control in working towards more inclusive practices. PDS and poetry can help uncover teachers' histories and experiences, while pushing for more institutional support to foster change.

Significance of the Study

There are several findings from this inquiry that emerge as significant related to existing relevant literature:

(1) Given that the findings highlight deeply embedded ableism, initiating the journey towards inclusive mindsets can be difficult, discomforting, and/or disheartening. Teachers, especially veteran teachers who may be unaware of ableism, need a great deal of support in developing a heart for this work (Baglieri, 2008; Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015). Dysconscious ableism must be addressed, and centering disabled voices can help identify areas where dysconscious ableism has gone unchecked. Teachers undertaking this work need to be prepared for the tensions it may cause.

(2) Given the teachers in this study continually wanted to learn about how to be inclusive in their practices, the findings highlight how inclusion must be simultaneously presented as an ideological commitment - the why - and as a tangible, actionable process - the how. Despite their years of experience, teachers need to be supported in recognizing their areas of strength when it comes to inclusive practices they may already be implementing.

(3) Given that teachers can communally sustain their stories to live by, and thereby their teacher identities, the findings indicate a need to reframe which stories get attention so that stories oriented towards a social justice lens are magnified. Critical reflection on the stories we tell, who our

stories are about, and how we are telling them is necessary to help teachers embrace inclusive mindsets.

(4) PDS can be a driving vehicle that helps build inclusive cultures, but it must be a true partnership where all parties are mutually supportive of the goals and initiatives. More work is needed that explores the tensions and identities of partner work so that all those involved are willing participants (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). PIRs must be seen as educational partners, and must work to support teachers - socially, emotionally, and professionally - in developing their capacity to become change agents. Developing a network of multiple PDSs can strengthen social justice initiatives across local school contexts so that teachers at any one school do not feel alone in this work.

(5) Given the use of threshold poems, poetic inquiry can be merged with thinking with theory to offer a means for theory and praxis to enter into dialogue. Exploring educational practices and theories together in this fashion may enable scholars and educators to better identify areas of disconnect - places where praxis falls short and/or moments where theory fails to recognize the systemic demands placed on practitioners. This exploration can provide insight into next steps that need to be taken to close the theory-praxis gap.

This inquiry highlighted the need for schools to develop a culture of critical reflection in order to sustain inclusive mindsets, pedagogies, and practices. Teachers returned to school after a highly disruptive year of remote and hybrid teaching during the

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Covid-19 pandemic. They showed a tremendous weariness working in a "post"-pandemic context along with the continuous accountability measures and district demands. This led to a disruption in any commitment to social justice initiatives. When offered a new space to critically reflect, rather than change, teachers reaffirmed, and some retreated, into their existing identities rather than embracing new stories and evolving their practice and identity. Inclusion felt as though it was "just one more thing," an add-on, not something that is deeply embedded in the fabric of their school's culture. The culture of the school must support the difficult work of inclusion to ensure that emotional work does not turn into emotional labor (Carrington & Robinson, 2004; Day, 2018; Elder, 2019). A school culture must be mindful of whose voices and stories are centered in our schools, and we need to magnify the voices of inclusively minded teachers.

This inquiry sought to help teachers lay the foundation so that they may begin to identify as inclusive educators who did not view inclusion as an add-on but as a fundamental right. Li and Ruppar (2021) posited that "teacher education and professional development, whether for general education or special education, should emphasize the development of inclusive teacher identity, professional competence, inclusive professional philosophy, autonomy, and reflexivity" (p. 56). This inquiry found that the participants do not yet take up an inclusive teacher identity. Practices need to support inclusive identity bids both individually and collectively, so that teachers begin to identify not as general or special education teachers, but as inclusive educators.

Implications for Practice

      The findings of this inquiry can offer several recommendations for future practice and research:

(1) Critical reflection needs to be a regular part of practice, which offers practitioners the space to examine their teacher identity and ways their beliefs influence their practice. While many schools have built in professional learning communities - as was the case for teachers in this study - it is often not a space for teacher-directed reflection, but rather district-mandated activities. Teachers must be afforded the time and opportunity to continually grow in ways that meet their individual needs. Through such reflections they can examine what values they uphold and what they feel needs to change (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). This will allow them to better align their values with their instruction, reflect on tools and areas they need support in, develop actionable growth plans, and embrace change.

(2) Initial teacher preparation programs and professional development for in-service teachers need to address and teach about disability rights from a social justice perspective. Inclusion needs to be viewed as both an ideological commitment but also as a fundamental right of all students. Such training needs to center the voices of people with disabilities. Understanding this will enable more educators to embrace inclusive mindsets.

(3) Both pre-service and in-service teachers would benefit from knowledge of and training on tangible, actionable tools that can be used to make inclusion a reality. Professional development on topics such as Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, alternative and augmentative communication, and

assistive technology would help teachers understand how they can make a difference within their own classrooms. Such training should be provided to both general and special education teachers collectively to foster greater collaboration in schools. In-service teachers should also be provided with time and support in incorporating new tools into their instructional practice and classroom environments.

(4) PDSs can focus on supporting in-service teachers' learning about social justice initiatives in education. PIRs can be positioned as both coaches and collaborators in learning and implementing new ideas in classrooms, who can also act as critical friends in helping teachers critically reflect on their practice. This requires trust and time to foster relationships, which should be accounted for by all parties involved in the partnership when assessing needs and resources. PDSs and PIRs can be situated to help teachers develop their teacher identities so that they view themselves as inclusive educators and change agents within schools.

As the teachers shared here, they feel overwhelmed and overburdened by the demands placed on them, so districts need to reconsider what is most important for teachers in order for them to do the most essential task of their job - caring for their students. Just as teachers are expected to differentiate instruction for their students, we must also differentiate supports provided for teachers' professional growth and learning so that they get what is most beneficial for their individual needs at any given point in their careers.

Implications for Research

More scholarship is needed on understanding how to help teachers develop a heart for this work and the journeys they take in developing inclusive mindsets that go beyond

the initial steps taken (Baglieri, 2008; Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015). Sustained inquiries either done in a PDS context or through poetic inquiry, can help teachers embrace critical reflection by offering university faculty as critical friends and/or a means of reflecting on their words as if under a microscope (Cahnmann, 2003). Similar to Broderick and Lalvani's (2017) study with graduate students, future scholarship that explores how teachers move from more conservative/deficit mindsets toward more radical/inclusive mindsets would be beneficial in understanding how teachers grow and evolve in their philosophies and pedagogies. Such research can be useful in understanding how teachers can become change agents within schools.

Similarly, related to the NAPDS nine essentials, research that involves both pre- and in-service teachers as collaborators in the inquiry process that explore the development of inclusive mindsets and practices would be beneficial in promoting practitioners' growth and learning. Including practitioners in the research process can also offer the space they may need for critical reflection, while also uncovering action steps teachers can take toward social justice initiatives in their own classrooms. This echoes Waitoller and Artiles (2013) call for PD research on how university faculty and K-12 educators create connections, but adds the focus on connections related to specifically developing inclusive mindsets and practices.

Finally, poetic inquiries that further explore the use of threshold poems and the combination of poetry and thinking with theory would be beneficial to advance this method of inquiry and analysis. Exploring ways to visually show the analytical process can help scholars become more transparent in their process, thus increasing trustworthiness by addressing their subjectivity in an accessible poetic form. Juxtaposing

practitioners and theorists words can bring these views into dialogue and uncover new ideas that emerge from the connections and conversations found within a threshold poem.

Limitations

Given the context of this study, there are several limitations that need to be addressed. First, there was a small number of participants, and so the findings are not generalizable. Second, time and context were very limiting factors that acted as barriers to this inquiry. The data was collected over a semester, and might have been improved if this inquiry were extended throughout the school year. Returning to a "typical" school year after working remotely for a year impacted teachers' resiliency. There were also district-influenced time constraints in that many of the activities of the study were only able to occur during a brief 25-minute period of professional development in the morning.

Finally, transcription poems written by the researcher may be a limitation. Originally it was intended that participants would write their own poems in collaborative writing sessions, but given time constraints this was not feasible. Greater reflection may have occurred if teachers wrote their own poems. Further, my position as a PIR working in the school for two years prior to the study may be a limitation in that I wrote the poems about the teachers, many of whom I developed relationships with in the years prior to this inquiry. Future inquiries can explore the possibility of increased reflection through participant-written poems.

Concluding Thoughts

In exploring the presence of ableism and disability in social justice initiatives in teacher education, Pugach et al. (2021) found that disability is often left out of the

conversation. Most teachers are not adequately prepared to address disability injustices. This inquiry captured the impact of teachers' developing awareness of ableism on their professional identities, and highlights how detrimental a lack of critical reflection can be on both their identity and practice. Beliefs and practices that remain unchecked do not afford us the opportunity to listen to new ideas and voices, to reimagine what is possible in our practice, or to be innovative in how we include diversity in our classrooms. Capturing the teachers' perspectives and experiences through poetry allowed for a more nuanced look into their beliefs and mindsets. Further, juxtaposing participants' words with ideas from scholars through threshold poems offered insight into the theory-praxis gap, which can lead to innovative practices and scholarship that seeks to find common ground. The development of inclusive mindsets must be done through a social justice lens, and foster a critical consciousness that recognizes inclusion as a right not a privilege. Educators cannot view this work as something they can opt-in or out of, but rather a value that guides their purpose and actions in the classrooms.

As a poetic inquiry exploring inclusive mindsets, disability stigma and teacher identity, it is only fitting that this work both begin and end with poetry. The poems shared throughout captured various moments in the stories teachers told about their professional lives. To conclude this inquiry, I offer a final poem that captures my reflections inspired by the literature and stories gathered together within this inquiry. Poetry tells a story, while teachers' identities are built from stories told, and inclusion is a story that is still being realized as it is written. And so we must be ever mindful of the stories we choose to tell.

Our stories shape
who we are as educators
and the positions we take up
in our schools
and communities.
There is power in our stories.
Power to
value all students,
believe in all students
trust all students are capable
of learning,
of living,
of finding their happiness.
The power of our stories enables us to
resist or retreat,
advocate or limit,
change or keep the status quo.
The power of our stories
dictates our mindsets, while
mindsets direct our actions.
Our stories as teachers can create
the world
as we wish it be,
if only we are brave enough
to tell stories seeking justice.

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Appendix A
Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Building Inclusive Mindsets
Teaching Demographics Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire so that I have a better sense of your teaching career history. This information will help in our reflections on your journey and experiences as a teacher.

Name:

1. If you are comfortable, please share how you identify (i.e. race, ethnicity, gender, ability, class, age). You are welcome to share as much or as little identifying information as you like, along with adding in information not suggested above.

2. Where did you complete your teacher preparation program? Please list all schools/programs (i.e. Bachelor's, Masters, etc.).

3. What teaching certifications/licenses do you hold?

4. How long have you been teaching overall?

5. How many schools have you taught at, and how long did you teach at each location?

6. How many different grade levels have you taught? How long did you spend teaching each grade?

7. Have you taken any breaks in your teaching career (i.e. maternity/paternity leave)? If so, when and for how long did you take your leave?

8. Have you held any other positions in a school besides as a teacher? (i.e. substitute, educational assistant, literacy coach, specialist). If so, where and how long did you hold this position?

9. Please describe your current classroom community (i.e. grade, number of students, general or special ed).

10. Is your current classroom a typical classroom for you (i.e. have most of your classes over your career been like this)?

Appendix B
Participant Reflection on Transcription Poems

Poetry Review

Thank you for taking the time to read through your poems, your feedback on them is greatly valued and appreciated!

Please write any comments and suggested revisions directly on the poems. Then complete the few questions below.

1. Do you feel the poems accurately reflect your words and ideas?

2. How did you feel reading through your poems?

3. In what ways did the poems help you reflect on both your practice and the inclusive mindset project?

4. Which poems did you connect with the most? Why?

5. Which poems would you like me to highlight when I write about this project?

Appendix C
Interview Questions

Building Inclusive Mindsets

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Interview 1:

1. What are three words you would use to describe yourself as a teacher? Please explain your choice of words.
2. Who are you as a teacher at this moment? Who do you strive to become as a teacher?
3. What do you feel your purpose is as a teacher? What do you feel the purpose of school is?
4. What do you feel is one of your best moments as a teacher?
5. What was a moment in your career that made you reconsider your practice?
6. What are your thoughts and feelings about inclusion? What do you see as positives? What do you see as challenges?
7. What are your thoughts about general vs special education? What are the expectations and responsibilities of these teachers?
8. Describe three of your students who you perceive as being at different performance levels? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
9. How do you work to help all students be successful in your classroom?

Interview 2:

1. How often in your career have you been given the space to reflect on why we do what we do as teachers?
2. What are your takeaways and insights from our book club readings and discussions?
3. What challenged you about the book club - the structure of our meetings (i.e. Monday mornings), the context of school right now, or the content?
4. [Have participants re-read purpose statements in the first interview] Do you feel differently about your purpose as a teacher after our reflections and discussions?
5. Have our book club conversations caused you to rethink what you do as a teacher?
6. We spoke about ableism and disability stigma. In that sense, how do you see "normal" enacted in our school?
7. Have our reading and discussions given you any new takeaways or insights about inclusion?
8. Do you have any new takeaways or insights about general and special education?

9. [Have participants re-read description of students from first interview] You
    described three of your students who you perceive as being at different
    performance levels. Have your perceptions of them changed?
10. What are some actions you can take to help all students reach their potential?
11. Based on your experiences, what do you value most as a teacher?

Chapter # & Title

Group Norms:
- Shared document for all to contribute and add to
- Honoring multiple ways to participate - active listening, sharing aloud, or sharing in the notes/chat

Critical Principles & Concepts:
(researcher filled in)

Quotes to Ponder:
(participants filled in)

Capturing Our Conversation:
(researcher filled in)

Possible Guiding Questions:
(researcher & participants filled in)