Editorial

"Yachts and Guns and Bears – oh my!": The Ministry of Truth… errrrr, Department of Education in the United States

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Over the summer, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos could not seem to stay out of the limelight. In July, someone quietly untied the Secretary's $40 million yacht during the night as it docked in Huron, Ohio and the crew aboard slept, causing five to ten thousand dollars of damage when the vessel drifted into the dock. As comedian Stephen Colbert reassured his late-night audience, however, no one needed to fear for the Secretary's weekend lake plans since this was one of ten opulent yachts owned by her family. In August, she again made a splash when the New York Times reported her plans to evaluate whether individual states can allow local schools to use federal funds to purchase firearms for "safety." A loophole in the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act potentially left open the possibility of utilizing a portion of the Act's one billion dollar Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants to this end. A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Education (DoEd) claimed this issue is "getting blown way out of proportion," but one could easily disagree. The Secretary heads the Federal School Safety Commission, supports the President's proposal to eliminate gun-free zones on school grounds (because, she argued, grizzly bears "might" endanger children), and belongs to a family whose politics and fortune intersect with right-wing radicalism, Christian fanaticism, and mercenarism.

In addition to these headlines, others noted that several civil and disability rights organizations—the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), National Federation of the Blind (NFB), and Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (CPAA)—filed suit against the Secretary of Education and the DoEd's Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Since February 2017, the DoEd has steadily rolled back measures intended to protect vulnerable students in America's schools, specifically students of color, students with disabilities, and female, LGBTQ, and economically disadvantaged students. For instance, the Secretary enacted policy changes that allowed the OCR to dismiss over five hundred civil rights complaints deemed "unreasonably burdensome," including many suits filed by single organizations against multiple educational institutions—a longstanding legal practice used to expose patterns of systemic violations. She also delayed implementation of the previous Administration's "disproportionality rule," intended to standardize how states track things like the disproportionate placement of students of color in restrictive and/or exclusionary special education environments or the disproportionate use of unfair disciplinary measures on students from populations vulnerable to discrimination. These unjust practices violate the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandate to provide education to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, contribute to the resegregation of K-12

schools, and set in motion processes that funnel students of color into America's notorious school-to-prison pipeline.

The current DoEd makes the disingenuous claim that decisions such as these will better serve and protect vulnerable student populations. To justify throwing out dozens of school discipline investigations, a spokesperson cited the legal maxim "justice delayed is justice denied"—a phrase famously associated with (and undoubtedly intended to evoke) Civil Rights legend Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." In keeping with the willfully ignorant practice of pretending race and racism do not exist to champion "colorblindness," the DoEd likewise argued that delaying requirements to track disproportionality in special education and school discipline protected students of color from being unfairly placed into a racial "quota" system. In other words—according to this spurious, circular logic—enforcing federal civil rights protections for students of color would unjustly single them out based on race so it is best to ignore racial injustice. After all, Martin Luther King, Jr. himself once shared his dream for the U.S. to become a nation where his children would "not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character," right? Under the guise of "concern," then, proponents of colorblindness suggest that acknowledging the mere existence of race—let alone addressing its salience in producing and maintaining social hierarchies and larger structures of power—is the equivalent of "being racist." (Obvious Side Note: being color conscious—informed about the long history and continued effects of race and racism—is decidedly anti-racist.)

Reflecting on the three-ring circus of the current Secretary of Education's tenure illuminates a number of issues. First, her wealth, privilege, and lockstep adherence to the President, the interests of the 1%, the privatization of schools, and education federalism (favoring the autonomy of states and local school boards over federal education policy) secured her position and the outsized influence she enjoys relative to her nonexistent experience as an educator. Next, her mastery over the "truth-is-not-truth" Orwellian distortions of reality used regularly by the current Administration when demonstrable facts fail to conveniently fit its agenda is a hallmark of anti-intellectualism. This categorically flies in the face of key principles of modern education like critical thinking, appreciation of diverse perspectives, and information literacy. Perhaps most significant of all, the Secretary's agenda and tactics reveal a crisis in educational leadership in the U.S. at the highest level, one often characterized by a blatant disregard for the complex ways that race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and disability status explicitly and implicitly shape educational experiences, practices, and policy.

It is precisely here that the articles in this forum, Dismantling Ableism: The Moral Imperative for School Leaders, make a significant intervention. They collectively demonstrate the power of theoretical frameworks like Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and DisCrit (Disability Studies + Critical Race Theory in Education) to critically examine these larger politics, histories, and power dynamics and situate contemporary education policy within this broader context. Individual teachers whose students benefit tremendously from their practice of DSE and DisCrit principles and pedagogy in the classroom, however, often experience

frustration and fatigue when principals, administrators, and others in positions of educational leadership fail to understand or only pay lip service to their commitment to educational inclusion and social justice.

Forum Introduction

Dismantling Ableism: The Moral Imperative for School Leaders

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Although leadership for social justice and Disability Studies in Education (DSE) have rich and growing bases in literature, bringing the two together is relatively under-theorized and rarely explored. Social justice frameworks for educational leadership recognize institutional and historic structures that bar marginalized and minoritized students from success (Theoharis, 2007). Furthermore, the emerging area of DisCrit theory (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2016) enlarges our understanding of Disability Studies in Education (DSE) (Gabel, 2005) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Likewise, we have a rich literature in inclusive school leadership with respect to disability (Capper, Frattura, & Keyes, 2008; Frattura & Capper, 2007) and in anti-racist culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). However, we have identified a gap in considering how leaders should effectively address the intertwined and mutually reinforced effects of ableism and racism that are deeply ingrained in schools as institutions, and in schooling practices. This volume is an attempt to begin that discussion.

The four articles herein constitute an illuminating conversation. They speak to the empowering possibilities in leadership preparation, the ramifications for students, parents/guardians and teachers when leaders either confront or fail to confront ableism and racism, and a powerful reconsideration of DisCrit and DSE in a framework that emphasizes context and relationship. Bornstein and Manaseri discuss the necessity of adequate DSE and DisCrit preparation for aspiring k-12 leaders, a critical perspective that would allow them to disrupt simple tropes of ableism and racism and recognize the mutually reinforced ways these forces operate that lead to students' experiences of oppression. Franklin offers a case study of how badly inclusive schooling can go awry in the absence of such leadership. Insofar as Franklin demonstrates how oppressive discourses suffuse all educators in the negative, Rood echoes that analysis and highlights how influential DSE-minded leadership can be in creating space for educators to enact case-by-case, systemic changes to disrupt ableism. Finally, Mackey takes this discussion a significant step further by building from DSE and DisCrit with an Indigenous perspective that destabilizes ableism and racism, requires leaders to look beyond the institutional geography and organization of place and services, and situates relationships at the center of how we understand either restorative, holistic practices and discourses or destructive, marginalizing ones.

The editors are grateful to these authors for answering the call to continue this vital conversation. We are most excited about the possibilities of taking DSE, DisCrit, and similar thinking into forums in which they have not yet been included. We invite readers to respond to, to grapple with, and to join with this emerging area of work that aims to build schools and communities with, and for, the children whom they serve. This is the collective moral imperative to which we aspire.

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Forum Research Article

Disability Studies and Educational Leadership Preparation: The Moral Imperative

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Abstract: This article details the experience of two instructors of P12 educational leadership programs in two university settings in different states, NY and NJ, as they seek to disrupt ableist thinking among educational leadership candidates. Analysis of data on placement of students with disabilities in New York and New Jersey from the period of 2014 to the present and state Department of Education field memos were used to contextualize their analysis of critical incidents relevant to their teaching experiences. The authors offer a critique of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Continuum as it has been used to segregate students with disabilities from their non-disabled peers and offer suggestions for how educational leadership preparation should include a Disability Studies (DS) framework as a foundation to disrupt these taken for granted practices.

Keywords: Disability Studies; Educational Leadership; Abelism

Introduction

As learning leaders (Fullan, 2011), P12 school leaders must set the tone and vision for schools and communities in order to facilitate high expectations for all students predicated on a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). In addition, P12 school leaders are responsible for developing a school culture that is inclusive and actively attends to ensuring equity, building relationships based on trust, fostering collaboration and teamwork (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Effective instruction for students with disabilities has been a significant dimension of school improvement, and instructional leadership is considered essential for fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of quality educational leadership (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Educational leaders who are invested in creating effective programs for students with disabilities ensure that teaching practices are high quality and grounded in educational research (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Crockett, 2002). The necessity of educational leadership that embraces a commitment to students with disabilities cannot be overemphasized: "When school leaders focus on fundamental instructional issues, demonstrate strong support for special education and provide ongoing professional development, academic outcomes for students with disabilities and others at risk improve" (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004, p. 3).

Yet, P12 leadership preparation programs spend little time focusing on the development of skill sets, knowledge or habits of mind that take into account the rights of students with disabilities to participate and benefit from education alongside their non-disabled peers. In 2015, the Wallace Foundation began funding a series of studies examining the preparation of school and district leaders. Bringing together findings from four reports,

one each by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), The School Superintendents Association (AASA), the American Institutes for Research (AIR), and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), the Wallace Foundation issued five key recommendations for university preparation of school leaders focusing on a high-quality curriculum and emphasizing the skills principals most need, such as: the ability to be instructional leaders, opportunities for candidates to practice important job skills, re-examining the field experience for more sustained time period with robust experiences more closely mirroring the actual job, closer relationship between preparation programs and practitioners in the field for relevance (Wallace Foundation, 2016). Yet the report gives scant attention to the need for preparation programs to become deep reflectors on inclusive practice, enhancing skills to analyze data for disparity or attention to addressing issues of equity are mentioned in the report.

Author Positionality

The authors, both former practicing educational leaders and current professors of Educational Leadership programs, are graduates of Disability Studies programs. This research is centered around a Disability Studies framework to interrogate current trends of special education placement and reflect on the ways Educational Leadership preparation programs can address the discontinuity between stated goals for the improvement of results for students with disabilities and the placement of children in separate and segregated settings at alarmingly high rates.

Theoretical Framework

The authors assert that deep analysis of root causes as they pertain to equity issues for students with disabilities and their families requires leaders to take up a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and DisCrit framework for their work. The existing literature on social justice leadership preparation accepts some of the tenets of DSE and Critical Race Theory (CRT) in terms of opposing oppressive discourses and dismantling oppressive structures, but does not yet highlight the core of DSE and DisCrit theory in terms of disrupting the core presumptions of ableism and how ableism and Whiteness intersect and support one another.

In the literature on training social justice leaders, one finds consistent suggestions for necessary skills and attitudes (Capper, Frattura, & Keyes, 2008; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2009). These attributes include democratic participation of all stakeholders, clear vision of equitably including all learners, and systematic analysis of enabling and disabling organizational structures. Whereas students with disabilities are consistently identified as one of the subgroups of students who should be fully included, the central role of ableism per se has not yet been addressed.

More commonly, structural reforms for inclusive classrooms and schools emphasize bringing all types of supports to the students, rather than sending students to other spaces for support. To that end, Frattura and Capper (2007) advocate a system of "integrated comprehensive services" for schools with heterogeneous student populations, with respect to

race, class, disability, and language of origin. One of the clearest indictments of ableist practices and dispositions arises in Frattura and Capper's discussion of including students regarded as disorderly and disordered:

> "Far too often, we hear administrators, administrative students in our certification courses, and teachers tell us that of course they believe and understand the principles of Integrated Comprehensive Services, but there are just some children who do not belong in school. We typically respond with, 'Who gets to draw the line for belonging?'" (Frattura & Capper, 2007, p. 64).

The emerging DisCrit literature (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2016) explores the ways in which disability is raced and race is disabled in education. DisCrit not only seeks to destabilize ableism and normalcy, but also to recognize how deeply racialized are the conventional definitions of normal and deviant, both in terms of learning behaviors (Mendoza, Paguyo, & Gutiérrez, 2016) and social-emotional behaviors, most often centered on compliance (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). However, none of these works address the particular role of school leaders in these practices. Bornstein has contributed qualitative studies of leaders establishing medicalized discourses of disruptive behavior via Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Bornstein, 2016, 2017). In a similar vein, Bal, et al. (2014) have produced guidance on schoolwide practices for culturally responsive PBIS (CRPBIS) that includes leadership practices as part of schoolwide reform, but does not zero in on leadership per se. Manaseri has contributed a program review analyzing leadership preparation as it aligns to social justice frameworks drawing upon the work of Theoharis (2007).

Methods

According to Johnson and Golombek (2002, p. 6), teacher narratives tell: "stories of teachers' growth within their own professional worlds." By telling their stories, teachers can not only reflect on specific incidents within their teaching world, but also feel a sense of cathartic relief for tensions, feelings and frustrations about teaching. This case study used critical narrative to interrogate our teaching as instructors in educational leadership preparation in an effort to make meaning of our experience and probe the deeper political, cultural and social context in which these experiences are embedded. Drawing upon Tripp (1993), we framed incidents from our teaching as questions which included the following:

- How do we, as teachers in educational leadership preparation programs, prepare candidates to identify and dismantle ableism?

- How does the current practice of placement of students with disabilities along a continuum of least restrictive environments impact future school leaders' understandings of ableism?

Data Sources

This study used three data sources. First, we used first person accounts from our own experience as teachers in educational leadership preparation programs. We met via distance technology every other week beginning the Spring semester of 2017 through the Fall semester of 2017 where we identified as critical friends (Swaffield, 2004) and described our teaching experiences. Our second source of data involved a review of published field memos by the New York State Education Department to school administrators as they pertain to students with disabilities from 2014–present. The third source came from the publicly available statewide data on the Least Restrictive Environment for New York and New Jersey for the same time period. During this period Holly taught at a public university in New York state, while Josh taught at a private Catholic university in New Jersey.

Analysis

Critical incident analysis can help teachers to know more about how they operate, to question their own practice and enable them to develop understanding and increase control of professional judgement. It can enable an individual to reflect on their practice and to explain and justify it.

Thiel (1999) suggests that the reporting of critical incidents (written or spoken) should have at the very least the following four steps:

1. Self-observation—identify significant events that occur in the classroom.

2. Detailed written description of what happened—the incident itself, what led up to it and what followed.

3. Self-awareness—analyze why the incident happened.

4. Self-evaluation—consider how the incident led to a change in understanding of teaching.

We compiled and reviewed our bi-weekly open-ended guided reflections to identify strengths, needs, and areas for program improvement. We also identified responses indicating concerns about the topics, readings or specific teaching activities in which we engaged. We described concerns as expressions ranging from devastation, surprise, to hopeful and drew upon the data sources as described above to contextualize our reactions.

Findings

Critical Incident 1: All Means All

In our instruction of aspiring educational leaders, Josh and Holly have both focused on employing equity frameworks exposing educational leadership candidates to readings from Ferri and Connor (2006), Ladson-Billings (2006), Noguera (2008), and Taylor (2001). Candidates analyzed district policies, processes and practices, engage in deep reflection and

discussion about the presence or absence of belonging, meaningful family engagement, support systems and quality instruction and positive school environments. Candidates looked at available school data and probed 1) what the disaggregated data on academic performance between general education students and students with disabilities meant, and how educational leaders could 2) identify and remove barriers, ensure that comprehensive supports were available, and 3) work to enhance instructional practices and design to be flexible and responsive.

Our critical incident reflection from these teaching activities revolved around the repetitive phrase "all means all". Candidates would use the phrase to anchor their analysis of troubling data, policies or practices, explain their own understanding of issues of concern, or in describes next steps they would take to address such issues. We noted that across our respective programs, candidates were easily able to surface this kind of language as being prevalent in their schools and districts. Candidates in our classes were both able to write and speak about the need for "growth mindsets" in their schools, and the commitment to missions and beliefs to hold "high expectations." Students could extend their thinking and provide examples of professional learning communities where discussions about closing achievement gaps were becoming part of their everyday experience.

However, we noted that "all means all" could also work as a bromide, as self-congratulatory rhetoric that assumed educators' best intentions were sufficient evidence of meaningful change. Class discussions of school vision statements were frequently the occasions for surfacing these sentiments. National standards have highlighted the need for leaders to hold a clear vision for their schools, to generate consensus from all stakeholders on that vision, and to use it as a basis for strategic planning and assessment (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Our leadership candidates were quite comfortable with school and district vision statements that touted either success for all students, or enabling all students to reach their fullest potential. They regarded these visions as common sense.

Through critical theory analyses of popular views of education (Kumashiro, 2008), they came to understand that such popular tropes often rationalize oppressive systems. Thus, in contrast to their comfort with vague but positive vision statements, they were initially stymied by more explicit—and potentially disruptive—visions of school equity such as "eliminating class, race, gender and disability as predictors of academic and co-curricular success." They grappled first with the concept that such a vision committed them to ignoring difference, or guaranteeing identical outcomes for all students. As they worked through CRT and DSE analyses of these equity goals, they came to understand that the real pledge was to break the link between students' identities and their success.

As instructors, our reflection on these classroom discussions and review of written work where students could identify, nearly universally, the motto of "all means all" as the belief system necessary to create equitable experiences for P12 students with disabilities provided us with a sense of hope. We were further encouraged—and we use "encouraged"

advisedly in the sense of gaining and spreading courage—by our P12 leadership candidates' growing sense of the need not only for optimism, but also for mettle and resolve when crafting a truly inclusive vision.

Critical Incident 2: Allies, Advocates and Accomplices

Grounding our leadership preparation in DSE analysis disrupts not only conventional tropes about disability, but just as crucially, disrupts conventional tropes about alterity and subjectivity in our educators. Our P12 leadership candidates were teachers aspiring to leadership, with varying prior experience with special education. With or without that specific job experience, they very frequently approached their work from the stance of helper. In Josh's case teaching in a Franciscan University, the students frequently extended that role even further to the kind of charity and mission work associated with Catholicism. To be sure, both Holly and Josh have encountered secular versions of those roles teaching in public and secular universities as well.

Similar to the way that DSE and DisCrit theory helped us to deconstruct dynamics of exclusion and inclusion, we used DSE and DisCrit to explore first the history of ableist othering discourses. We intentionally worked through extensive historical surveys that mapped out the roots of charitable discourses in Abrahamic religions (Shapiro, 1999). With those analyses in hand, we moved on to challenge conventional tropes of pity and altruism that powerfully informed our leadership candidates' commitment, and yet objectified people with disabilities and denied their agency. The emotional and cognitive dissonance we engendered with those lessons was intentional, and a powerful pedagogical opportunity to reconstitute leadership as empowering people who have been marginalized, rather than providing them with educational alms. In this light, leadership students interrogated their own positions of privilege and discourses that disempowered students. Hence, the notion of being an ally took on an empowering dimension found in Freirean pedagogy.

Another important lesson from history has complicated the discussion of inclusion as a civil right. We explored Baynton's (2001) analysis of contemporary social movements that tacitly accepted ableist normativity as the criterion for belonging. In this regard, we analyzed how self-determination could be problematic from a DSE perspective. For example, where marginalized and oppressed people have advocated for inclusion because they were "just as normal" as the dominant group, this demand has implicitly accepted the power structure as currently constituted. Hence, we expected our leadership candidates to have the dispositions and skills to advocate for including all students simply because the students were there, not because of the degree to which they approximated the school's definitions of normalcy.

Critical Incident 3: Memos as Mottos or Movement?

Concurrent to analysis of the critical incident 1 and 2, we reviewed publically available state data on the placement of students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment and field memos from NYS Department of Education that serves as regulatory guidance to school districts for the interpretation of policy and reform efforts.

A New York State Education Department special education field memo (DeLorenzo, 2015) states "Students with disabilities have a fundamental right to receive their special education supports in a classroom and setting that, to the maximum extent appropriate, includes students without disabilities. Under federal law, the presumption is that students with disabilities will attend the same schools they would have attended if they did not have disabilities and that removal or restriction from their regular schools and classrooms can only occur for reasons related to the student's disability when the student's individualized education program (IEP) cannot be satisfactorily implemented in that setting, even with the use of supplementary aids and services." The memo went on to state that in New York State (NYS), data showed that far too many students with disabilities were removed from their general education classes and schools in comparison with other states, and although gains had been made, nearly two decades of reform efforts still indicated that this is a significant area of concern.

Included in this memo to administrators was an update that the NYS Board of Regents discussed "federal law and policy relating to placements of students in the least restrictive environment (LRE); research findings that support inclusion of students with disabilities; historical initiatives of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to ensure students with disabilities are in the LRE; data results at the federal, State, regional and school district level relating to LRE, for both preschool and school age students with disabilities; and a proposed policy to improve LRE placements and results for students with disabilities" (NYSED, 2015).

Data on the Least Restrictive Environment

An analysis of NY statewide data from 2014–15 showed 31.4 percent of NYS' preschool students with disabilities were placed in a separate class, separate school or residential school. When the 2014–15 preschool-only data (i.e., removing the five-year-olds from the statistical analysis) was disaggregated by Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) regions in New York state and New York City (NYC), there were significant regional variations:

- NYC placed 46.6 percent of their preschool children in separate schools and settings;

- School districts representing seven BOCES regions placed between 38 and 22 percent of their preschool children in separate schools and settings;

- School districts representing 13 regions placed between 13.1 and 22 percent of preschool students in separate schools and settings;

- School districts representing seven BOCES regions placed between four and 13.1 percent of preschool students in separate schools and settings; and

- School districts representing 10 BOCES regions placed less than four percent of their preschool students in separate schools and settings.

In the same period, New Jersey provided services for Pre-K students slightly more inclusively than New York did. For students with disabilities ages 3-5, 51.8% received most of their special education and related services in their regular early childhood program. By contrast, 36.6% of students this age with disabilities attended a special education program that was either a separate class or separate program (NJDOE, 2015).

LRE Placements of School Age Students with Disabilities (Ages 6-2)

When compared to 2013-14 national data, NY and NJ served lower percentages of their students, ages 6-21, in regular education classes for 80 percent or more of the school day and significantly higher percentages in regular classes for less than 40 percent of the day and in separate schools.

Table 1 shows statewide data for placements of students with disabilities, ages 6-21.

Table 1: LRE Placement of School Age Students in New York and New Jersey 2013–14

	Placed in Regular Education >80%/day	Placed in Regular Education 40-79%/day	Placed in Regular Education Classes <40%/day	Placed in separate schools, residential placements, or homebound instruction
New York	57.8%	11.7%	19.8%	6.1%
New Jersey	44.3%	26.7%	16.1%	7.5%

(New Jersey Department of Education, 2015b; New York State Education Department, 2017)

New York's 2014–15 statewide LRE data disaggregated by race/ethnicity shows:

● Comparable percentages of students across all race/ethnic groups were placed in general education classes for 80 percent or more of the school day.

● Disproportionately higher combined rates of separate class and separate setting placements for students who were Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders and Asian, compared to students who were White, multi-racial or Hispanic/Latino.

● Disaggregated by disability category, data showed the highest combined rates of placement in separate classes and separate settings for students with emotional disturbance, autism, deafness, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities and deaf-blindness.

New Jersey's data disaggregated by race/ethnicity showed that the trend toward more segregated placement was pronounced for non-White students (New Jersey Department of Education, 2015b).

- Whereas 58% of White students with disabilities ages 6-21 were in regular education classes 80+ percent per day, only 45% of Latino and 46% of African American students with disabilities were placed in the general education setting. Placements for Asian, Native American, and Native Hawaiian students fell roughly in the middle at 50-53%.

- By contrast, 12% of White students were in the most segregated placements, spending less than 40% of the school day in regular education classes. Twenty-two percent of Latino students, and 24% of African American students were in these most segregated placements. Again, other students of color fell roughly in the middle, at 16-20% of these placements.

- The racialized trend apparently reversed for placements in separate schools, residential facilities, and homebound or hospitalized instruction. Here, 3.62% of White students were in those placements, compared to 1.55% for Latino students, and 1.87% for African Americans.

Disaggregated by disability category rather than by race/ethnicity, the highest rates of placement in separate classes and facilities were for multiple disabilities (2.6%), autism (2.0%), emotional disturbance (1.0%), and other health impairment (0.9%) (New Jersey Department of Education, 2015b).

2014–15 NYS data disaggregated by age showed that the percentages of students placed in separate classes and separate settings increased by age (New York State Education Department, 2017). (This age breakdown was not available for NJ.)

- Ages 6–11: 4.1 percent

- Ages 12–13: 5.0 percent

- Ages 14–17: 7.2 percent

- Ages 18–21: 21.6 percent

The reflection on the state data and guidance memos provided significant context to us as instructors. We saw that state level practices regarding the "continuum of placement" endorsed segregated settings that were contrary to the regulatory guidance and stated mission and beliefs from the state office. In our work with the leadership candidates, analyzing these data was a powerful mirror of the disconnect we probed with them between what their ability to verbalize an "all means all" mission, while still failing to envision their role as leaders as those who will act to disrupt ableist policies, practices and structures.

Equity Audits and Restructuring Exercises

In a similar vein, our courses highlighted the use of equity audits (Capper & Young, 2015; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004) and inclusive restructuring (Capper et al., 2008). Students reviewed the techniques in theory and in practice (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Bull, Cosier, & Dempf-Aldrich, 2011; Ithaca City School District, 2017), and engaged in limited versions for their own schools. The equity audits often led to action research projects for the administrative internship, during which leadership candidates attempted small scale structural reform such as leading pilots of co-teaching.

However, it was the DSE focus that brought home the central idea that ableism is the controlling ideology in all the systems the candidates explored through those techniques. For example, whereas Capper and Young (2015) focus on equity audits as a central technique for leading diverse schools, they do not employ a DSE analysis that explains why inequities are justified by meritocracy, or why segregation and racially disproportionate classification are commonly rationalized in ableist language. For that, Josh exposed candidates to Brantlinger (2006), Davis (2006), and Ferri and Connor (2006). Here, they were able to expose the logic behind "fixing" students, both in the sense of remediating their deficits and in the sense of bonding a deficit identity to those students in the first place. Holly has used the NYS Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities (New York State Department of Education Office of Special Education, 2015). Developed with stakeholders, the Blueprint sought to ensure that students with disabilities had the opportunities to benefit from high quality instruction, to reach the same standards as all students, and to leave school prepared to successfully transition to post school learning, living and employment. Candidates used the document's seven core principles (self-advocacy, families as meaningful partners, access to the general education curriculum, multi-tiered systems of support, evidence-based strategies, high quality inclusive programing, and instruction in career planning) to audit their own district's efforts toward providing these components in the structures, processes, practices and procedures. Using Lake and Billingsley (2000), candidates then contemplated the role of leaders to remove barriers and better reconcile potentially discrepant views that may exist between school professionals and families of students with disabilities as they pertained to meeting the needs of the child or viewing the child's abilities.

Josh found that education leadership candidates struggled with those analyses because they disrupted the candidates' belief in the ostensible function of the special education system to be helpful and therapeutic. However, once they were able to distinguish intent from impact, they had a well-informed determination to be agents of change. By contrast, without the DSE conceptual framework, they were stymied and overwhelmed by data on disproportionality. Holly found that some candidates could recognize and relate to these analyses particularly if they had personal connections as a parent of a child with a disability, or as an ally to a family navigating these challenges. However, many candidates rated their district's efforts as well under way toward meeting the Blueprint principles during their audit and struggled to identify possible ways that deficit thinking, or biases may impact their audit process.

Discussion

Three key themes emerged when looking at the data from a Disability Studies perspective, as outlined here. First, we have identified a need for deeper analysis in a Disability Studies conceptual framework. Second, emerging from that conceptual framework, leadership preparation programs should highlight the disconnect between policy and the existing state of inclusive education (or indeed, the lack thereof). Finally, we recognize that leadership preparation programs have a moral imperative to deeply embed this conceptual framework, analysis, and skill development in their pedagogy.

The Need for Deep Analysis

Leadership standards indicate the need for both skills and dispositions (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). We find that a DSE conceptual framework provides necessary depth in both areas, a depth that it is otherwise lacking. At the level of skill development, we highlight data analysis and structural reform here. For dispositions, we see the need to have candidates analyze the familiar tropes surrounding disability.

Exploring their own systems and comparing those systems to others is a common practice for aspiring leaders in preparation programs. A DSE analysis surfaces the systemic dynamics resulting in LRE data. As Skilton-Sylvester and Slesaransky-Poe write, "The emphasis on students being placed in the Least Restrictive Environment, by definition, makes the student's placement seem like the most important aspect of inclusion when it is, in fact, the minimum" (2009, p. 33). Each school district should review, discuss and develop plans to address their data, by district and schools and disaggregated by disability category, race/ethnicity, gender and age. Data on LRE is publicly reported each year in NY (New York State Education Department, 2017).

We find that DSE analyses of LRE data and equity audit data (Skrla et al., 2004) deepen leadership candidates' understanding of systematic forces that contribute to excessive segregation via special education programming. Deconstructing the hegemonic concepts of normalcy (Davis, 2006) and a continuum of disability and services (Taylor, 2001) unsettles the leadership candidates' acceptance of such data. More particularly, it replaces the notion that the students are somehow broken and in need of fixing, and replaces it with the understanding that the system that fixes them—both by attempting to cure them and by cementing their deficit identities (Brantlinger, 2006)—is what needs to change.

Likewise, we find that analyzing the historic discourses of segregation, eugenics, and charity (Shapiro, 1999) leads to powerful discussions on leadership dispositions on equity and inclusion (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). As noted in the "all means all" incident, the attitudes and assumptions that inform inclusion are often superficial rhetoric. Deeper analysis draws leadership candidates to examine ableist assumptions about empowerment, support, and the concomitant duties of educators. Critical theory thereby encourages aspiring leaders to press beyond good intentions, and to take their colleagues to

the uncomfortable but necessary courageous conversations that unpack institutional oppression. Furthermore, to that end, borrowing protocols on confronting institutional racism (Singleton & Linton, 2006) prove to be even further deepened when joined to DSE and DisCrit analysis that exposes the intersections of racism and ableism in which ableism functions as the polite, acceptable rationale for institutional racism.

Disconnect Between Policy and Problems

Typically, researchers cite a disconnect between policy and practice. However, our review showed that policy in New York state as a response to improving the results for students with disabilities has not addressed some fundamental problems of beliefs and mindset. Recent efforts to improve results for students with disabilities had been codified in the Blueprint for Improved Results for Special Education (New York State Department of Education Office of Special Education, 2015) which outlined seven key principles for reform efforts, including: increased attention to advocacy, support through multi-tiered systems of support, parent and family engagement, specially designed instruction with emphasis on providing access to the general education curriculum, research-based instructional and teaching strategies, high quality inclusive programs and activities, and career pathways. Each principle was further described as what evidence of effective practice looks like.

However, the Blueprint provided only a very brief overview with little reference to the need to address underlying issues of low expectations. Furthermore, nowhere were implicit bias nor historical prejudice toward individuals with disabilities addressed. The policy document offered a false sense of the state of education of students with disabilities. It did not reflect the urgency required to address high rates of segregation and low rates of proficiency, high rates of disproportionality in discipline and suspension, or low rates of graduation and post-secondary attendance. In fact, no principle in this document focused on addressing the adult factors in the construction of the current environment.

The Role of Leadership Preparation

Educational Leadership Preparation programs must prepare aspiring school and district leaders to do critical DSE work as an issue of social justice and equity for all students. Far too many educational leadership preparation programs pay scant attention to students with disabilities as a civil rights issue. Lacking a Disability Studies perspective on this work is a barrier to school and district leader effectiveness and will further compromise the promise of higher achievement for all students.

We argue further that DSE and DisCrit perspectives in leadership preparation invites candidates to dismantle ableism as a central rationale for institutional racism. In our estimation, this is critical to interrupt the discourses in which special education rationales appear to be scientific (Bornstein, 2015, 2017; Brantlinger, 2006). Such discourses contribute to marginalizing culturally responsive pedagogy (Sleeter, 2012). Hence, leaders who will foster inclusive environments need DSE and DisCrit to eliminate those barriers.

Conclusion

During our leadership instruction, we have come to regard these moments of deconstructing comfortable tropes about ability, disability, and race, as some of the most generative points of all. We recognize that leadership preparation programs have incorporated numerous similar deconstructions of racism and ableism (not to mention sexism and heteronormativity) separately. We are excited by the creative and incisive possibilities that lie ahead as our colleagues in social justice-oriented educational leadership programs adopt the moral imperative of an intersectional approach.

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Forum Research Article

Socially Just Educators Staying True to Themselves: The Role of Administrators Within or Outside of their Social Support Network

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Abstract: The paper will highlight the specific relationship between administrative support in either fostering socially just educators [with a specific focus on Disability Studies in Education (DSE) teaching identity] or disempowering and disenfranchising them. It will explore this phenomenon, and describe the connection between administrative support, teacher identity and resiliency.

Keywords: Teacher Support; Support Networks; Administrative Support

School leadership continues to play an integral role in teachers' lives (Billingsley, 2005; Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004). Administrative support remains a crucial factor in teachers' experiences enacting and asserting their identities. Within situations where teachers feel supported, administrator support strengthens teachers' efforts and experiences in navigating systems, identity maintenance, and resiliency within the field (Jarzabkowski, 2009; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005). Conversely, teachers who encounter inauthentic and/or absent support from school administrators can feel increasingly isolated from their school communities, leading many to consider leaving the field (Billingsley, 2004, 2005; Schlichte et al., 2005). This phenomenon is particularly salient for teachers who choose to go against many of the commonsense notions of public schools and practice social justice teaching. Often, administrators and colleagues perceive individuals who choose to challenge these policies as unprofessional, leading to a plethora of social, emotional, and physical exclusions (Montaño & Burnstein, 2006). Feelings of seclusion from the overall school community can exacerbate individual teachers' understanding of their place in their particular school systems and in schooling more broadly. This paper will highlight how the lack of consistent and authentic administrative and institutional support in their underlying beliefs led teachers who had ideological commitments to Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and inclusion to feel increasingly isolated from their schools and from their work as teachers. The paper will highlight the specific relationship between administrative support in either fostering socially just educators (with a specific focus on DSE teaching identity) or disempowering and disenfranchising them. It will explore this phenomenon and describe the connection between administrative support, teacher identity and resiliency. I begin with literature that provides an overview of DSE, teacher identity and support theories.

Perspectives and Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) framework and teacher identity theories to examine the correlation between participant's experience with administrative support, identity maintenance, and resiliency. DSE is an:

"Interdisciplinary field of scholarship that critically examines issues related to the dynamic interplays between disability and various aspects of culture and society. [It] unites critical inquiry and political advocacy…It promotes the importance of infusing analyses and interpretations of disability throughout all forms of educational research, teacher education, and graduate studies in education" (Gabel & Danforth, 2009, p. 378).

In this manner, DSE provides a foundation for social justice within special education. In particular, teacher education programs framed by a DSE perspective ask teachers to "share a commitment to education as a site from which to work toward greater equity, more pluralism, and less oppression" (Oyler, 2011, p. 4). Specifically, it seeks to engage with systems of education that perpetuate and reproduce stigma for students with disabilities (Cosier & Ashby, 2016). DSE unlearns socially legitimated notions of the perceived commonsense nature of disability and situates disability within a social constructivist viewpoint (Slee, 2011). By observing disability through a socio-constructivist framework, individuals begin to reimagine disability and attempt to deconstruct ways in which disability has become known. Key to the deconstruction is scrutinizing ableist tendencies that continue to subjugate individuals with disabilities within special education. Accordingly, DSE attempts to reconcile the interconnected ways in which individuals are oppressed, exposing the "white," "middle class," and "able-bodied" frames of reference (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2016; Erevelles, 2011). Thus, when teacher preparation exposes teachers to DSE they begin to unearth critically conscious understandings of who benefits from school, district, state, and federal policies within education, which may become a salient aspect of their teaching identity. At this critical juncture, DSE can provide teachers with language and tools to question taken-for-granted practices in education.

Teacher identity is tied deeply to teaching practice (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Foremost, "Teachers identities are central to their beliefs, values and practices that guide their actions within and outside of the classroom" (Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010, p. 459). Identity, therefore, provides individual teachers with a pedagogical compass. The compass is "something that teachers use to justify, explain, and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate" (MacLure, 1993, p. 9). Identity thus, is "not something teachers have, but something they use in order to make sense of themselves as teachers" (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 123).

For teachers who have internalized transgressive or social justice oriented identities like DSE, their identity manifests within their daily efforts to reframe and resist dominant belief systems, while maintaining their own (Bushnell, 2003; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Parkinson, 2008). As Peters & Reid (2008) state, "For practicing teachers, opportunities will manifest themselves in the day-to-day tasks that they undertake with individual children and youth, in classrooms, in schools, and in the larger community" (p. 558). For teachers who espouse a DSE identity, this identity work may mean speaking back to and reframing deficit discourses. It may mean retaining commitments to critical discourses that honor individual students and differences, instead of aligning with performance goals attached to reform

initiatives. Since DSE offers an alternative framework to special education, individuals who commit to these types of pedagogical beliefs often butt up against current schooling contexts that do not often align with their beliefs (Broderick, Hawkins, Henze, Mirasol-Spath, Pollack-Berkovits, Clune, & Steel, 2011). Maintaining fidelity to underlying pedagogical commitments is therefore difficult. However, teachers leverage support networks, which can include administrators, to sustain their ongoing transgressive work (Lee & Shari, 2012).

Literature in teacher education notes that teachers utilize various types of network groups and professional communities within and outside of their schools to engage in dialogue, reflexive problem solving, and professional development to support their ongoing and continuing work as teachers (Lee & Shari, 2012; Montaño & Burstein, 2006). In the case of transgressive and social justice-oriented work, teacher and administrator network groups and professional communities provide an opportunity to legitimate teachers' critically conscious understandings of schooling and engage in sustained inquiry to support teachers' practicing of their critical identities (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Teacher and administrator network groups and professional communities often function to construct an area where politically aligned and like-minded educators come together to "collaborate with one another to prevent isolation, offer emotional support, and share teaching ideas around social justice themes" (Ritchie, 2012, p. 122). This study builds and expands on literature that has shown how teachers who practice social justice often leverage and rely on support as a means to maintain their transgressive or socially just identities (Lee & Shari, 2012; Montaño & Burstein, 2006; Ritchie, 2012).

Methods and Data Sources

This study was part of a larger study that explored the experiences and perspectives of public school teachers who self-identified as users of a DSE framework. Taking up and utilizing a DSE framework within schools is in itself a resistant activity; individuals who take up this identity make a clear commitment to talking back to and reframing special education and its construction of disability, in relation to both the current reform initiative and underlying mechanisms known as special education. The overarching study explored the resistant and transgressive work that participants used to enact their DSE and social justice-oriented identities. Part of this included participants' description and discussion of their experiences within schools and with administrators. For the purposes of this article, the research questions that I explored were (1) How do teachers understand their DSE identities within school cultures driven by standards and accountability pressures? and (2) What mechanisms of support do teachers describe and utilize to sustain themselves within today's public schools?

Participant Selection

As this project focused on teachers who identified with a DSE and social justice-orientation perform, participants were selected utilizing both purposeful sampling, where participants were intentionally chosen because of the specificity inherent to research questions underlying the study, and through snowball sampling, where individuals already part of the study recommended additional relevant individuals (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Flick, 2007). In order to more clearly delineate between participants, Table 1: Participant Chart is included below.

Table 1: Participant Chart

Participant	Current Position	Total Years Teaching	DSE Courses Taken	Self-identified identities	Other
Erika	Self-Contained Pre-school (Suburban)	12	PhD Disability Studies	White/ Female	
Molly	Self-Contained Elementary (Rural)	5	4	White/ Female	Graduate Assistant Center on Disability Studies
Nina	Inclusive Co-taught Elementary (Rural)	2	3	White/ Female	Graduate Assistant Center on Disability Studies
Ava	Inclusive Co-teacher & Self-Contained Secondary (Urban)	2	3	Latino/ White/ Female/ History of Anxiety/ Depression	Own k-12 experiences inclusive
Lyra	Self-Contained Elementary (Urban)	4	5	White/ Female	Brother identified with Autism
Angela	Resource Room Elementary (Suburban)	28	PhD Disability Studies	White/ Female	Inclusive experience
Norman	School Administrator Secondary (previously self-contained teacher) (Suburban)	11 3.5 months administrator	PhD Disability Studies	White/ Male	Adjunct instructor local college
Amelia	General Educator Secondary (Suburban)	16	5	White/ Female/ Physical Disability	Co-founded a disability committee and advocacy group

Anna	School Administrator Elementary (previously inclusive co-teacher) (Suburban)	7 1.5 years administrator	PhD Disability Studies	White/ Female	Adjunct instructor local college
Eric	General Educator Secondary (Suburban)	16	2 DSE focused dissertation	White/ Male/ Auditory Processing Disability and ADHD	Formed LD advocacy group during college
Yvonne	Co-teacher Elementary (Urban)	7	2 DSE focused dissertation	Bi-racial/ Black/ Female	Adjunct instructor at local college

Data Collection

In order to understand the meanings that participants conferred to their identities, I utilized repeated in-depth and semi-structured phenomenological interviews (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Like most phenomenological inquiries, interviews were semi-structured, which allowed "considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104). For the purposes of the study, I interviewed individuals twice. Each interview lasted between one and two hours. Interview questions included participants' perspectives and experiences of their role as teachers, how they came to know and understand DSE, how they translated their DSE identities within their classroom, school sites, and in the community, and the ways they negotiated their identities within the increased focus on standardization and accountability.

Data Analysis

I conducted ongoing data analysis throughout the course of the study (Brantlinger, Klingner, & Richardson, 2005). Transcripts and supporting documents were uploaded onto Dedoose (Dedoose, 2015), an online cloud platform, where they were interpreted after each round of data collection and when data collection was complete. Analysis followed the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) process. IPA method provided me with a framework to analyze data inductively and across sources where I attempted to elicit the key experiential themes in the participant's talk (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Analysis took on four interconnected aspects: (1) movement from what is unique to a participant to what is shared among the participants, (2) description of the experience which moves to an interpretation of the experience, (3) commitment to understanding the participant's point of view, and (4) psychological focus on personal meaning-making within a particular context (Smith et al., 2009). The coding framework followed the IPA framework. Coding categories were single words or phrases that represented overall topics and patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Although this data was part of a larger study, for the purposes of this article I identified two

large themes and several subthemes that represented participants' experiences with administrative support that I describe more fully below.

Findings

Administrative support was a crucial factor that impacted participants' experiences of enacting and asserting their identities. Support from leadership was a critical element to participants' emotional and professional well-being, along with their individual beliefs about longevity and retention within the profession. Participants in this study categorized experiences with school leadership in two primary ways: 1) meaningful supporters, and 2) superficial, inconsistent, and/or apathetic supporters. For participants who felt meaningfully supported by administrators, they positioned administrators as part of their social support network. Although this was a minority experience—only three out of the eleven participants reported administrators as part of their support network—in these instances, they experienced support from administrators and school leaders publically and understood it as genuine. Within these experiences, participants felt a sense of belonging. They also developed reciprocally beneficial collaborative and collegial relationships with their administrators that supported identity maintenance.

Administrators who were genuine were simultaneously open, honest, and encouraging toward participants about both the opportunities and limitations for change within their schooling contexts. In these situations, participants felt more positive about their ability to enact and work toward change aligned with DSE within their individual schooling contexts. Norman clearly stated how he had constructed the importance of ongoing administrative support in his work to promote change in his former role as a teacher:

> "Yeah, sometimes it does get a little discouraging when you think you've made progress and then all of a sudden you haven't, or you've finally gotten an administrator at a school site to understand your perspective and to start to implement and the administrator leaves or is transferred to somewhere else to another district. It's like 'oh I got to do this all over again.'"

Norman reported administrative support as instrumental to facilitating meaningful school change. To him the relationships he built with administrators propelled his "perspective" forward; administrative support was imperative to his ongoing identity work. Yet a change in administration could erase the strides he had made.

Participants who experienced more superficial, inconsistent, or nonexistent support from administration were more apt to discuss administrators as barriers to their overall professional beliefs and goals. The lack of camaraderie from administration, even at the most minute level, left many participants feeling more constrained and distraught by their own school systems and by the broader systems of schooling. Nevertheless, those who perceived their relationships with administrators as beneficial were deeply impacted and provided with more chances to enact their identities through administrators' underlying support.

Support(ed) From Leadership

Teachers who were visibly and consistently supported by their administrators expressed hope for change towards their values and beliefs, which provided a space for the cultivation and continuing development of their identities. Within these experiences, educators were also more likely to position their administrators as part of their social support network, as individuals whom they could seek out as reciprocal members of their critical communities of practice. As Anna stated:

"I really truly believe that the administrators that I work with have the students' best interest at heart. I know that they probably are not familiar and understand Disability Studies but they are very interested in finding ways to best support our students. Our Special Education Director, she's very interested in problem solving. If you come to her with a problem and you provide some approaches to make it work, she's very open to entertaining your ideas. Whether it be DSE or not…I don't know if other people think of her like that. But she's always been open to what I've had to say and she's always been willing to sit and listen to me…I feel really, really fortunate to have someone that's so open to listening. Now granted, there may come a time where she's going to say 'No, you know I don't agree with that' or 'I don't think that that's going to work, and you need to do it this way,' but I haven't run into that yet. But the best thing I could say at that point…and I feel like I'm at a point in my career where I don't mind saying in those circumstances that I have to respectfully disagree with you. I will do what you're asking me to do, however, I'm going to let you know that I don't know that this is going to work.

Luckily, I am fortunate enough to have that opportunity. I don't feel stifled by anyone. I know that some people aren't as fortunate as I am and they are much more limited in what they feel they can do and say."

As Anna suggested, these relationships offered her—like other participants who experienced supportive relationships with administrators—opportunities to engage in active problem solving that resulted in a larger impact on their school communities. To Anna, her administrator provided the space to assert her beliefs, although Anna recognized that her experience with her administrator may be unique ("I don't know if other people think of her like that"). Nevertheless, Anna saw the relationship she cultivated with her administrator as beneficial to her continuing identity work.

Administrators who were publicly supportive also helped to position participants as resources within their buildings and districts. In such cases, participants were provided with opportunities to lead professional development and expose other individuals within their communities to their underlying DSE and inclusive belief systems. Administrators and school leaders even looked to these teachers as trusted members of their own critical communities of practice. Administrators even sought out some participants to provide specific discussion on

how to make their schools and communities more inclusive and supportive of all students. Nina recalled how such administrative support affected her:

> "My first-year teaching I was doing a lot of pullout, which I didn't really agree with. I decided to talk to my principal… I told her that 'this [self-contained service] is not something that I support. I would do it for the first-year but then we could start talking about how we could change services and try to create a more inclusive school.' She was really open to it. I mean she read a lot of the articles that I got in grad school from my professors. …In our first conversation she said, 'You know I don't know much, but I'm willing to learn….' I have gotten to make a lot of changes with her. The principal and I met twice a month...I got to speak freely as a first-year teacher and communicate all of my beliefs and why I feel the way I do. She learned so much last year, and now we're trying to put it into practice. We're not there yet… but we're trying to take baby steps as a whole school."

However, Nina later remarked how these conversations and professional development had been noticeably absent during the current year, following the implementation of a new assessment system that was aligned with the Common Core. As Nina recalled:

> "I haven't done any P[rofessional] D[evelopment] except one [session] at the beginning of the year… Last year we [the principal and her] met all the time to talk about inclusion, but this year we haven't really sat down. We used to sit down every other week and talk about articles we were reading. But we haven't had those structured conversations in a while."

Nina noticed that the momentum and consistency of these planning meetings had slowed down, along with the progress on their whole-school inclusive initiatives. Although she did feel that they would begin to meet and plan again, much of their work halted. She attributed the dwindling collaboration with her administrator to the onslaught of demands that had begun since the school had adopted a new Common Core reading program.

At the same time, because of her sustained relationship with her principal, she continued to feel comfortable approaching her with issues and possibilities. Collegial relationships, like the one between Nina and her administrator, were an important factor were an important factor in her identity maintenance." Positive and meaningful relationships with school administration continue to play an even more powerful role in the facilitation of inclusive schools as shared partners (Hehir & Katzman, 2012; Theoharis & Scanlon, 2015). As school leadership acts to facilitate the schools' alignment between individual responsibility, collective expectations, and internal accountability in order to contribute to their success with inclusion (Hehir & Katzman, 2012; Theoharis, 2009). Nina's dynamic, mutually supportive, and ongoing relationship with her administrator provided her with an opportunity to put her beliefs into practice and, therefore, the ability to stay true to her DSE identity.

Similarly, Norman spoke of institutional opportunities he was provided because of the

support and relationship he had with his administrators. Since his administrators trusted in his professional beliefs and values, he was afforded the space to enact practices that supported the inclusion of his students. He described what happened when he approached administration about the need for his students to be included within the school community:

> "I went to the administrator and told him that we were going to include our students. I stated which specific classes I wanted them in and he said, 'okay.' So, we did it. I didn't really get a ton of push back on that. I have the law behind me [and], if need be, I was willing to play that card. But when I told him the benefits of inclusion, for both general education and special education students, he just said 'Okay. Let's do this.'"

In Norman's case, his reported experiences with school leadership afforded him the means to openly and sincerely express his professional beliefs, something not made available to all participants. The exchange with his administration even resulted in more of his students being included within general education. It is important to note that there was a noticeable difference in the manner in which Norman spoke about notions of administrative support. Norman's positioning and identity as a white and significantly older male with many years of experience may have led to less opposition when asserting aspects of his DSE identity. Norman's administration regarded him as positively asserting himself and his beliefs. Participants' ongoing identity work was bolstered when administrators positioned themselves as a source of support. These instances also helped secure and preserve participants' personal and ongoing beliefs in the possibility of school-level change.

(Un)support(ed) by Leadership

On the contrary, individuals in the study who perceived inconsistent, inauthentic or absent ongoing and public support reported feeling that their continuing work towards their DSE commitments was neither validated nor appreciated. I purposefully utilize the word "public" to describe administrative support because in some instances administrators privately stated to participants that they wanted more inclusive service delivery within their buildings and districts (one was even hired to facilitate this initiative), but did not provide this support publically. When administrators were in situations such as official, team, grade level, and/or school meetings that required them to demonstrate allegiance to inclusion and/or transforming their current school system with multiple school stakeholders, therefore publicly supporting the individual or initiative, they did not.

> For example, Ava had been hired to facilitate inclusive service delivery. She was frustrated by the inauthentic support her administrator offered toward more inclusive service. His public support remained noticeably absent and was sometimes in direct contradiction to sentiments communicated to her when they spoke in private. She described,

> [Ava]: "…Little things that kept happening… kept building and building. I realized I would never get support from the principal. Only behind closed doors would he say you're doing a great job, you're absolutely right… you're on the right track. But then when the opportunity would come to actually back me up and he would chicken out and be quiet."

In these instances, participants deemed support from administration as "paying lip service" or, in other words, as insincere. Ava was hired to move the school toward more inclusive models, and took the job because it aligned with her commitments and beliefs about inclusion. However, her administrator provided little to no public support for these initiatives, which led her to pursue a position in another district. Participants' experiences like Ava's intensified and became aggravated when they felt that they received little to no support, even if only privately, from administration.

Some participants were deemed by administrators to not have "earned their stripes" or were characterized as simply being unrealistic about schooling, implying that they didn't comprehend what it meant to work and be in system. In these instances, educators' concerns were not addressed which further isolated and demoralized them from the school community. Three participants—Erika, Angela, and Anna—perceived their transfers to other schools within the same districts by administrators (as happened to Erika at multiple points in her career) as a repercussion for pushing for more inclusive services. When asked about the particular phenomenon of being moved or transferred after butting heads or not complying with an administrator around inclusion and/or disability Erika recalled, "Oh this has happened tons of times… I've moved nine times in twelve years…And it's always been because of an administrator." From Erika's perspective, the only reason administrators transferred her to another building was because of her identity work. Others in similar situations were unaccompanied and unsupported by administration in their vision for inclusion, indicating the consequences of an absence of shared understanding or legitimation of their belief systems.

Participants who felt unsupported by administration became increasingly disconcerted and hopeless about their ability to make change within the system(s) of schooling. They described experiencing a professional dismissal of their overarching ideas, beliefs, and values. To them, others positioned their identities as insignificant and/or as not contributing to overall systems of schooling. Molly described her administrator's lack of responsiveness or authentic acknowledgement of her belief systems by comparing her current non-relationship and non-supportive administration in her efforts to include her students to her past positive experiences with administrators:

"I could sum up the difference between where I was before and where I am now. I would say there's a definite difference in leadership… In my third-year I've had three different special ed. administrators in three years. My first-year there, I was bringing in our professional learning communities; I asked, 'how can we could get our kids out more? You know they were doing focused reading in my room, so they could do that in general education.' And my first administrator just couldn't understand why that would be important. He just said, 'well, they're going to be working on it here or out there, what does it matter where they're working on that?'

My administrator last year she's actually the migrant coordinator of our district, so I think she got it a little bit more, but she kind of got thrown into the special ed. director's position and didn't really know she was going to be…she didn't really have

a ton of background and she didn't really get it. She did work hard to get us some materials and curriculum and things. But it was just the beginning and she was replaced or moved or something.

….My new administrator this year, I went to him about a month after school started and said, 'I've been having a lot of frustration. I think that my frustrations are coming from the fact that I don't feel like what I'm doing is true to what I feel like these kids should or could be doing. I am not sure how to get them out in the classroom more. I don't know how to make that happen, and I don't know how to bridge that gap.' He was very understanding and he listened well, but again, he doesn't have any background in special education. He said, 'you know as much as we can, we get them out there...You know they participate in lunch, recess, specials, and maybe if I can get them up there for science lessons sometimes. Other than that, they're your kids, you take care of them. You're a classroom teacher, you're not a support service.' It's a different mindset, I think special education should be a support rather than a place."

Molly's experience with her last three administrators demonstrates a lack of consistency not only in the turnover of administration but also in their knowledge. Foremost, she had three different administrators within three years. Further, all of her administrators lacked knowledge about special education and inclusion. Her first administrator could not conceptualize why having her students work on the curriculum within the general education classroom with general education peers could be of any importance. Her second administrator still lacked special education knowledge, but was more helpful and had begun to support Molly's efforts in some way. However, this administrator was moved after only one year. Finally, her current administrator immediately struck down and delegitimized her concerns. He then positioned Molly as misunderstanding her role as a special education teacher, which in turn limited opportunities for her to create change towards inclusion, a critical aspect of her identity.

Like many other participants, Molly perceived the role of administration as vital to her continuing identity work. However, administration at her current school and district garnered no support. Within her current school, she felt as though her professional goals and values were being pushed aside. Without the space to enact ideological commitments that Molly espoused, she began to question her longevity within her school:

"On a personal level … I just don't know how much longer I can do this job especially in the school that I'm in. If I had stayed in the school that I was part of before (an inclusive school), I could have probably done it for a long time but where I'm at now I just know I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing... you try, and you get a little ways but then you take three steps back..."

Similarly, Angela began to feel defeated in her ability to assert her beliefs. After presenting a plan to school and district administration to move the school towards inclusive services, she was transferred to another school within the district. She began to consider leaving the profession of teaching:

"I'll be honest with you. I always used to say that I'd never quit teaching... But I was so devastated when we were all set to go to this … I mean our school was going to be an inclusion school at my district and when that got shot down. I came home and I told my husband I think I'm getting old enough, I don't think I have the fight left in me anymore…"

Molly and Angela's dedication to their underlying ideology and the lack of vision towards inclusion at their respective schools made them question their place within it. When faced with little support and opportunities from administrators to enact their identities in meaningful ways participants began to lose a sense of themselves and their longevity within the field. Notions of public support were further exacerbated by many of their administrators' responses to and public discussion of the standards and accountability-based reform as well as other initiatives.

Administrators Responses to and Support of Reform Movements

Perceptions of administrative support around accountability and standardization were significant to many participants' feelings of either isolation or belonging within schools. For participants, administrators' public responses to reform initiatives weighed heavily on participants' conceptions of mutuality and collegiality. Every participant mentioned how their administration's response to and/or acknowledgement of reform initiatives impacted their sense of belonging within their respective schools and districts. Administrators who acknowledged the challenges of reform on teachers, students, and the school culture felt a sense of kinship and community. However, participants who felt unsupported became increasingly frustrated by their administration's disconnection from and blatant ignoring of the stressors and unrealistic demands associated with reform.

Amelia mentioned how she grew unsettled by her administration's public displays of allegiance to accountability and standards-based reform movements:

[Amelia]: "The bigger piece is that there feels like there is a lack of solutions. It feels like nobody knows what to do … I sometimes think I would feel differently if the administration was actively outspoken and supportive of its teachers. But they aren't."

[Author]: "They aren't recognizing the issues?"

[Amelia]:" No, no. I do think there are certain places where this misery is being handled better because there is a structure in place, and there is more camaraderie, trust in the building, and administration itself. But that doesn't happen in my building. [If they would] just be transparent about it and try to openly talk about our values and what we think makes a great education, while still checking those boxes. Really talking about how we can support each other in this insane time. If there was any kind of that going on I think it would feel quite different."

Amelia believed that her administrator did not demonstrate any shred of solidarity with educators' experiences within the heightened and sometimes unattainable demands of reform.

Instead, the administrator fed into the legitimacy of reform by "checking those boxes," Amelia felt marginalized by the systematic limitations and expectations that had been placed on her in her role as a teacher. She felt that even just recognition of those feelings as valid might have helped maintain her.

On the other hand, individuals whose administrators openly and honestly discussed these demands as critical members of their school community felt increasingly supported by their administrators as colleagues who recognized of the pressures that schools and teachers faced. Nina recalled a conversation she had with her principal that exemplified this:

"The other day I was talking to my principal and we were joking, I said, 'I want to go to work at Starbucks. I can't even stress how much stress I'm under right now.' She said, 'I know,' she said 'what can we do?' I said, 'I don't know.' She said, 'Oh, let's just open our own school!' and then we started talking about all the supports we'd have for kids in our imaginary school. She said, 'what if these kids had a behavior problem, then we just bring them all together and we'd just talk about things. We wouldn't be constrained by the system, having to teach the content a certain amount of minutes, and all these things Common Core. I mean they're still going to learn and be taught but discussed how it would be different.' It was just kind of fun and it was nice to know that other people, even her, feel like that."

Nina's administrators' open and public expression about the impact that the demands and stressors of accountability and standardization **had** on their daily work significantly impacted her sense of collegiality and provided her with vital opportunities for camaraderie. Both stakeholders felt constrained by the demands. Even though the administrator would most likely not go through with these ambitions, developing a shared sense of place and positionality within the current demands of schooling helped support Nina's sense of self. Both could commiserate about their frustrations with policies and practices that were contradictory to their underlying belief systems. By simply telling "her truth," Nina's administrator bolstered Nina's own perceptions of belonging within larger systems. Nina was not alone or isolated by her feelings of bewilderment with reform efforts and practices.

Belonging (or not) within the larger school community became a considerable aspect of participants' experiences and mediated the perceived validity of their identities within their respective schools. To participants, owning a DSE identity as a public-school teacher became increasingly more difficult, especially for those who felt unsupported. Leadership played a role in how participants traversed their individual schooling contexts. Although, when present, administrative support played an integral role in their work, the saliency of participants' DSE identities were consistently challenged and made more complicated. The internal struggle to remain true to themselves in systems that were not supportive of their underlying values and beliefs led many to reconsider the viability of their own tenure as public-school teachers. These experiences left many doubting and reconsidering their capacity to make any real or sustained change. Essentially, they expressed losing hope of maintaining fidelity to their identities within their everyday work.

Discussion & Final Thoughts

Participants' conceptions of the level of support demonstrated by administrators played a key role in their perceived ability to act as agents of change and retain commitments to DSE as public-school teachers. the support **that was** afforded **to** them by school leadership and administration was vital to their individual constructions of mutuality within their specific school and district contexts. Participants positioned authentic, open, and collegial school leadership as significantly affecting their overall satisfaction and longevity within the field. Too often however, participants felt at risk and isolated by the lack of cohesion between administrators' understanding and their own visions for their students and the school. Impressions of being supported or not (including the level, reliance, and authenticity of support) mediated participants' feelings of belonging and/or alienation in systems of public and special education. Support had a considerable influence on the perceived efficacy of their professional identities as teachers in public schools. Although it was not a straight or perfect cadence, their perceptions of support led the majority of participants to question their longevity and retention within the system as critically conscious, socially just educators.

Taking up alternative conceptualizations of schooling is difficult and arduous work (Bushnell, 2003; Parkison, 2008). In the case of DSE identity work, many of the key ideological beliefs are in direct opposition to the overarching discourses of special education within public schools. Special education relies on the dominant medical model of disability. Further, in the midst of standards and accountability-based reform, it has become difficult for schools and educators to envision student difference as an asset that contributes to the overall value of the school (Ravich, 2013; Sapon-Shevin & Schneidewind, 2012). Inclusion is not always endorsed or embraced, and even when inclusion is, it may not be understood and/or practiced with fidelity that aligns to DSE.

Participants had a framework limited by and reflected in their individual schooling contexts, often using language that positioned efforts towards inclusion as synonymous with enacting a DSE identity. When DSE is framed as the single issue of inclusion or exclusion, we fail to reconsider the larger systems of marginalization and suppression (Broderick et al., 2011). Nevertheless, participants were operating in schools where fostering inclusion was the resistance and identity work that was available to them. Teachers who resist overarching discourses can feel increasingly isolated and alienated in their work (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006). Without ongoing opportunities to engage in reflexive dialogue and to connect with like-minded individuals, they can begin to lose hope in their ability to do what they believe as teachers. Thus, teachers who take up these stances need more opportunities and access to both formal and informal networks of support in order to reinvigorate, inspire, and collaborate with one another (Ritchie, 2012).

The majority of participants' lack of administrative support or understanding towards inclusion mirrors one of Hehir and Katzman's (2012) overarching beliefs about building effective inclusive schools: when the responsibility to educate students with disabilities lies solely with special education teachers, meaningful opportunities to alter and transform schools

are not available or viable. The dismissal of participants' beliefs may be attributed to the lack of consistent training and education that administrators have around disability and special education (Pazey & Cole, 2013). As research suggests, even administrators who are working toward social justice often do not place the needs or inclusion of students with disabilities to be included as a central issue of justice (Brown, 2004; Marshall, 2004; Pazey & Cole, 2013). Thus, school administrators must be educated in social justice and inclusive frameworks in order to better understand special education and disability as perpetuating marginalization. This might lead to more salient opportunities for collegiality and collaboration among administrators and teachers that support schools and districts working toward school change and social justice.

This research, like many studies informed by DSE, acknowledges the intersectional nature of identity. Although beliefs and commitments tied to DSE was just one aspect of the complex identities that participants took up, there could be evidence that supports the role that gender had on mediating participants' experiences with administrators. Some data might suggest that school leadership did not substantiate or legitimize female participants who attempted to practice and further align their schools and districts towards their underlying belief systems and DSE stance. In contrast, Norman—the only significantly older white male within the study—experienced little to no push back in his attempts to move the school towards his belief systems. However, given the data and methods I used, at this moment I am only able to suggest this. At the same time, the other identities (socio-economic status, age, disability, race, etc.) that participants occupied no doubt mediated their relationships with administrators and the power that was afforded or not.

"Strong caring leadership" that is open and well organized continues to be a major source of support for teachers in their professional lives (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p. 412). As stated repeatedly in the scholarly literature, school leadership plays an integral role in teacher's emotional and professional well-being as well as in their daily work and job satisfaction (Billeysley, 2004, 2005; Lueken et al., 2004; Wong, 2004). This finding further corroborates and expands on the role that administrators play in either fostering critically conscious and socially just educators or disempowering and disenfranchising them (Hehir & Katzman, 2012; Theoharis & Scanlon, 2015). Within situations where my participants felt authentically supported by school leadership, they placed their administrators as part of and central to their social support network. Participants who were afforded this type of relationship described feeling overwhelmingly supported and able to envision school-level and district-level changes that would support their overall belief systems. In these instances, participants believed that school leadership trusted and were responsive to their underlying belief systems. Conversely, participants who felt that the support from school leadership was either inauthentic or absent also felt increasingly isolated from their school communities. Participants who lacked open and authentic support were significantly impacted by the lack of camaraderie and honesty that school leadership shared with them and the school community. Within these situations, participants described feeling an ever-increasing and incessant loss of any hope for social justice and DSE within their schools and districts. Under these

assumptions, participants began to feel even less like their identities had a place in today's public-school contexts. Administrators remain crucial to teachers' experiences feeling supported and in asserting their underlying commitments and beliefs.

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Forum Research Article

Towards an Indigenous Leadership Paradigm for Dismantling Ableism

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to propose an Indigenous leadership paradigm for dismantling ableism. I begin by defining ableism within the context of school leadership, then apply an Indigenous ontological and epistemological framework to strategies educational leaders can use to dismantle cultures of ableism within school communities.

Keywords: Indigenous Leadership; Educational Leadership; Disability

Leadership discourse framing equity and access calls for dismantling oppressive conditions linked to the politics of difference as a moral imperative. However, leaders, working within nested systems governed by policies and procedures crafted around unexamined beliefs about dis/ability – and the ways ability intersects with race, class, and gender – discount "the institutions themselves (policies, practices, schools) becom[ing] instruments of discrimination (Beratran, 2006, para. 1). Government reports and scholars have demonstrated myriad deficiencies in the various approaches to effectively providing access and equity in American Indian education supported by federal education policy mandating schools meet the unique cultural needs of American Indian students (Mackey, 2017). Social justice literature in education speaks at length about institutional barriers to student success (Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011) and provide strategies for improving leadership preparation by incorporating equity frameworks into preparation curriculum and field experiences (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). I acknowledge this scholarship is valuable in bringing attention to the needs of students marginalized by discriminatory education systems, but suggest it would benefit from incorporating increased intersectional analysis of complex hierarchical relationships that reimagines the structure of "institutionally sanctioned stratification along socially constructed group lines" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2008, p. 350).

In this article, I propose an Indigenous leadership paradigm for dismantling ableism. The premise of this paradigm centers on three key features. First, U.S. educational leaders' overreliance on civil rights laws prevent them from identifying existing institutional structures perpetuating inequitable conditions for students of divergent racial, ethnic, and ability backgrounds. Second, Indigenous ontological and epistemological perspectives on the relational nature of place and space, particularly as it applies to dis/ability, can reframe (and serve to dismantle) ableist structures. Third, intersections of race, class, gender, and ability inform the ways in which ableism is enacted in different locations, requiring complex analysis on the parts of educational leaders to understand how their locations require strategies tailored to meet the unique needs of their school communities. I begin by defining ableism within the context of school leadership, discuss Indigenous perceptions of ability, and conclude by

applying an Indigenous ontological and epistemological frame to strategies educational leaders can use to dismantle cultures of ableism within school communities.

Researcher Positionality: Interrogating Dis/ability and Transmitting Knowledge

My positionality largely informs my conceptual understanding of how ableism, intersecting with racism, sexism, and classism, serves to harm school communities. My responsibility as an enrolled member of the Northern Cheyenne Nation to find my replacement and transmit knowledge to future generations requires that my research, service, and teaching be tailored to subject areas intended to facilitate Tribal nation building and self-determination in education. Professionally, I have worked in public, private, and tribal education in multiple roles for the past 17 years. As a public educator, I witnessed American Indian students who required specialized educational services being excluded on a regular basis as part of their Individualized Education Plan when the targeted measurable goals could have been attained through alternative means that would not have required such isolation. I taught the Masters level Education Law course and the Doctoral level Special Education Law course to annual cohorts of Educational Administration and Special Education graduate students after transitioning from public education to Academe. Personally, I am both a person affected by dis/ability and the parent of a child with a dis/ability. My personal experiences coupled with my experiences in public education, teaching education law, chairing doctoral dissertations with special education components, and sitting on doctoral committees for doctoral students from the Special Education program has reinforced my belief that the relational components of an Indigenous paradigm can positively influence dismantling ableism in all school contexts. Similarly, practicing educational leaders have the responsibility to acknowledge the need for dismantling ableism, engage in the work, and ensure they have prepared someone to carry on the work should they leave their positions in the future.

Framing Ableism and Indigeneity: A Paradigm Evolves

Dismantling institutional ableism poses significant challenges given dis/ability has not been interrogated similarly to race, ethnicity, and gender in schools. Smith, Foley, and Chaney (2008, p. 304) define ableism as "a form of discrimination or prejudice against individuals with physical, mental, or developmental disabilities that is characterized by the belief that these individuals need to be fixed or cannot function as full members of society". The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes provisions designed to protect the rights of students with dis/abilities. These provisions ensure students are provided a free and appropriate public education and provided services in the least restrictive learning environment alongside their peers to the maximum extent appropriate, yet this law does little to address institutional ableism requiring students to demonstrate the ability to 'fit in' as a condition of appropriateness. Gritzmacher and Gritzmacher (2010) point out that Indigenous communities may equate the normative standards of appropriateness associated with IDEA to the federal government's assimilation goals through the Boarding School era. Campbell (2008) explains that dismantling ableism, as applied to the educational context, requires more than a law mandating that students be provided specialized educational services, but also a

cultural shift in the "beliefs, processes, and practices" (p. 154) intended to reverse exclusionary, dehumanizing othering of students with dis/abilities. This is difficult for many leaders to conceptualize when they already believe they are making decisions based on the best interests of students according to prevailing legal and professional standards.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act attempts to address equity through several provisions, most notably, placement in the least restrictive learning environment appropriate to students' needs. This provision is intended to minimize the social and psychological effects of segregation, however Beratran (2006) problematized application of the provision and outlined the ways in which it perpetuates institutional ableism. His critique focused on the use of the term "appropriate", which centers around the decision-making authority of educational experts to determine how and when a student best "fits" into normative school structures rather than centering around the student's needs. Of particular concern with regard to Indigenous students are the ways in which "cultural characteristics co-exist and interact with disability related factors" (Garcia & Malkin, 1993, p. 52). For example, cultural differences between some Indigenous and Western communities regarding the importance and priority of education compared to other family/community responsibilities, or personal characteristics some traditional Indigenous students demonstrate (or are perceived to demonstrate) such as refraining from making eye contact, being less verbal or competitive compared to their peers, may be misunderstood as indicators of dis/ability by some educational experts rather than cultural differences between Indigenous students and (typically) non-Indigenous educators (Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 2010). As a modern tool of assimilation, the Least Restrictive Environment provision encourages more traditional students to question tribal identity and cultural values in order to avoid exclusion and gain access to social interaction with their peers.

CRT and DisCrit

The social, political, and intellectual understanding of dis/ability in the U.S. as it relates to people's experiences within broad social structures has evolved from a biological determinist viewpoint to a social constructionist viewpoint alongside other civil rights issues (Meekosha, 2004). However, dis/ability has largely been omitted from equity literature referencing intersectional constructs of race, class, and gender (Beratan, 2006; Garland-Thomson, 2016; Meekosha, 2004). Critical Race Theory (CRT) centers around race, positing that racism is endemic in society and has become so deeply ingrained it has become invisible (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000), yet CRT only minimally engages with the relationship between race and dis/ability. Historically, literature addressing dis/ability within an intersectional framework in education is limited to analysis and critique of disproportionate representation of marginalized racial/ethnic groups and boys in special education (Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982; Skiba, et al., 2008). Decades of empirical evidence has demonstrated that deeply entrenched practices stemming from systemic and institutional racism, secured through racist education policies (Kendi, 2016), rather than racial bias on the parts of individuals alone, influence decisions made for and about students. This line of research is useful for providing educational leaders research-based strategies for

reducing racial bias towards students who are misidentified for special education services, but it does not address equitable school conditions for students who require specialized learning opportunities.

Dis/ability scholarship is similarly limited in scope, often utilizing race as an additive feature without fully interrogating the complex social positioning of dis/ability and race. Annamma, Connor, and Ferri (2016) sought to remedy binary conceptions of race and dis/ability, arguing dis/ability and race are socially co-constructed and interdependent. The authors assert "issues of perceived dis/ability constitute issues of equity that involve all people…the social construction of dis/ability depends heavily on race and can result in marginalization, particularly for people of color and those from non-dominant communities" (2016, p. 13). To bridge the fields of critical dis/ability and race studies, Annamma, et al. (2016) introduced DisCrit, a dis/ability dimension of CRT intended to "theorize about the ways in which race, racism, dis/ability and ableism are built into the interactions, procedures, discourses, and institutions of education, which affect students of color with dis/abilities qualitatively differently than White students with dis/abilities" (p. 14).

Addressing Issues of Power

CRT and DisCrit both address issues of intersectional identity by analyzing the ways in which "multiple forms of inequality and identity are interrelated across different contexts and over time" (Annamma, et al., 2016, p. 2). Paris (2016, p. 83) further explains intersectionality as "the way multiple aspects of identity may combine in social constructs of reality…[with] the influence of multiple identifications… often mask[ing] the influence of single identity characteristics." Intersectionality recognizes people have many identities influencing the degree to which they experience discrimination with no one identity more significant than another (Collins & Bilge, 2016, Crenshaw, 1989). DisCrit is distinctively different from CRT because it goes beyond notions of inter-relatedness between race and dis/ability to assert "their embodiment and positioning reveals ways in which racism and ableism inform and rely upon each other in interdependent ways" (Annamma, et al., 2016, p. 13). As a result, educational leaders engaging in practices intended to dismantle ableism must concomitantly attend to dismantling equally oppressive racist, sexist, and classist structures within schools.

American Indigenous peoples are defined as sovereign nations, identified by their unique racial, cultural, and political status recognized through federal law and education policy crafted with the stated goals of meeting the unique cultural needs of Tribal communities (Mackey, 2017). This is particularly salient in addressing educational leaders' moral imperative to dismantle ableism because "what constitutes disability and what it means to be a person with a disability can vary across cultures" (Weaver, 2015, p. 148). The racial and cultural spheres of American Indigenous peoples' identity are not well represented through existing theoretical or conceptual frameworks intended to include dis/ability due to the continued political tension arising from the third legally recognized identity construct against which dis/ability must be considered in Tribal communities – the political sphere.

Provision for American Indigenous peoples' education, unlike other racial or minoritized groups in the U.S., is required through the federal trust responsibility established by the U.S. Constitution and defined by the U.S. Supreme Court. Additionally, federally recognized American Indigenous peoples have established tribal government structures that operate on a government-to-government level with both state and federal governments (see Helton, 2003/2004; Mackey, 2015, 2017). Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) maintain the political relationship between these with regard to American Indigenous education is best summarized as an ongoing struggle for power between constitutionally recognized sovereigns. As such, framing equity through the lens of meeting cultural needs is largely ineffective due to the power imbalance between policy-makers and those for whom the policies are written despite federal education policy goals formally prioritizing self-determination in education (Mackey, 2015, 2017). As Gorski and Swalwell (2015) discuss, conversations about equity must start by addressing issues of power, and in the case of American Indigenous people, Indigenous knowledge and culture have only been valued and incorporated to the extend they do not significantly challenge existing social power structures in American society. Dismantling ableism in Indigenous communities requires educational leaders to place equity and the cultural understanding of ability at the forefront of all education initiatives. This includes the interrelated elements of race and dis/ability found in DisCrit while simultaneously approaching work done in schools from an Indigenous worldview using traditional knowledge creation and relational understanding of space and place (Grande, 2009).

Indigenous Perceptions of Ability

There is scant empirical literature addressing Indigenous perceptions of impairment in the North American context. Senier (2013, p. 213) contends dis/ability is a modern identity "culturally imposed upon indigenous" people through colonization where prior to contact, dis/ability was treated "either matter-of-factly or as a valued capacity" (p. 214). Grech (2012, p. 52) contends modern scholars continue to legitimize colonial dominance, stating "disability studies remains profoundly…West European and North American… and focused exclusively on urban post-industrialist settings" despite the fact nearly 80% of all dis/abled people in the world live in the "so-called Global South, the bulk in rural areas and most suffer the brunt of disproportionate poverty". This trend runs parallel to dis/ability studies in the U.S. context where American Indigenous communities are largely invisible alongside their Black and brown Global South counterparts. Despite vast ontological and epistemological differences, Grech asserts:

> "[Western] theories and tenets such as the social model of disability are consistently exported to a Global South it never intended to address. As the imperialistic trail of Western knowledge and practices legitimises this process, debates are perpetually re/neocolonised, discourses are simplified and generalised, contexts (places and spaces), cultures and histories (temporalities) homogenised, and many critical issues ignored or intentionally resisted. They become ontological invisibility" (2012, p. 52).

Australian scholars have examined the intersection of Indigeneity and ability in Australia to situate what the moral imperative to dismantle ableism means in an Indigenous context. Hollinsworth (2013) posits that non-Indigenous practitioners are more likely to diagnose conditions such as intellectual dis/ability in instances where members of the community do not perceive abnormality or dis/ability to exist. Echoing Weaver (2015), Hollinsworth further notes that due to the socially constructed nature of dis/ability, the definition varies across diverse Indigenous communities. Assessing dis/ability within Indigenous communities poses challenges due to Indigenous peoples' differing perceptions about what is considered impairment, resulting in both self-reports (Hollinsworth, 2013) and standardized assessment tools and techniques yielding unreliable results for people in Indigenous communities (Holland & Persson, 2011; Senior, 2000). This speaks to the lingering effects of colonization and non-Indigenous peoples' beliefs that they are better situated to make decisions for and about Indigenous peoples than the people themselves.

Indigenous perceptions of what does or does not qualify as impairment is often assessed by the degree to which a specific condition affects an individual's ability to participate in social and cultural obligations (Anderson, 1997). Hollinsworth (2013) noted separate studies identifying loss of culture and social networks as a greater concern to Indigenous communities than other physically impairing conditions, however there is still apprehension about mental impairment due to the unpredictable behavior and aggressiveness displayed in some instances (Senior, 2000). Unpredictability and aggressive behaviors have the potential to disrupt social and cultural gatherings, therefore, uncertainty of the unknown influences the classification of mental impairment. Transmission of cultural values, customs, and stories are a critical aspect of Indigenous life (Paris, 2016). Further, everyday social interaction validates Indigenous identity within oppressive institutional structures, suggesting Indigenous perceptions of impairment are more relevant to Indigenous peoples, who tend to value social networks and cultural sustainability, than medical definitions or legal interpretations of impairment.

Indigenous Ontological and Epistemological Perspectives

Indigenous perspectives about ability differ from Western perspectives that view visible and invisible impairment as a category of otherness. Indigenous people consider all to be fully participating members of the community regardless of ability, each contributing as intended by the creator, mediated through natural, relational forces. This is a direct reflection of Indigenous ontology that does not seek to establish one objective truth, but recognizes multiple realities exist in relation to one's orientation towards the truth (Mackey, 2018; Minthorn, 2014). As such, individuals are valued while relationships and community are privileged over institutional practices. Indigenous epistemology mirrors the relational nature of Indigenous ontology and neither deconstruct reality to a static object. Indigenous knowledge is constructed through relationships between things in a macro context of interrelated cultural, spiritual, and physical elements (Wilson, 2009).

Towards and Indigenous Leadership Paradigm for Dismantling Ableism

The Ethic of Indigeneity serves as "an applied ethical lens informing educational leadership for socially just and interconnected responses" (Mackey, 2015, p. 167) aligned with Indigenous ontological and epistemological orientations. This ethical framework provides structure for applying Indigenous knowledge in practice, asserting:

1. All matters can be reduced to relationships between people and in and among communities. Indigenous values are defined through the relational nature of all people.
2. Community is comprised of family and each family member has a responsibility to be an individual while remaining a part of the collective. Despite differences, all belief systems are valued and allowed without forcing those systems on others.
3. The political contours within schools are not reduced to an either/or, this or that reductionist point of reference. Multiple solutions can exist but these solutions are not predicated on the exclusion of all other possible solutions.
4. Indigenous knowledge requires the individual to continually strive to find someone to replace them to ensure the transmission of invaluable lessons to the next generation.

Relational Components to Dismantling Ableism

There are practical steps leaders can take that honor relationships between members of the school community while examining structures, processes, and procedures to identify areas where ableism exists and can be dismantled. Leaders can begin by interrogating overreliance on traditional (Western) approaches to data collection and analysis (e.g. who collects data, conducts observations, and/or contributes to conversations regarding referral and assessment; which data are collected; what they mean in the context of Tribal customs and values) and identify all possible cultural differences that offer alternatives to special education placement and services that prevent students from participating in school as fully valued members of the school community. Federal mandates requiring schools to meet the needs of students with dis/abilities rigidly implemented in communities that previously did not recognize the otherness of conditions defined as dis/abling reinforce the social construction of dis/ability introduced as a product of colonization. Indigenous communities seeking self-determination and autonomy in education require educational leaders willing to acknowledge "pedagogy is…inherently political, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual" (Grande, 2009, p. 201). As such, identifying tensions between Western and Indigenous cultural values, then prioritizing Tribal culture over the superficially imposed dominant culture begins the process of reasserting Tribal Nations' identity. Educational leaders should ensure the provision of research-based, ongoing professional development for all school personnel that addresses Tribe(s)-specific culture, history, and values, ableism, bias, and the ways Indigenous communities viewed people with dis/abling conditions prior to colonization. Dis/ability should not be avoided or compartmentalized into special education-specific professional development. Professional development should emphasize unexamined beliefs, Indigenous perspectives regarding impairment, and provide concrete examples for developing sustainable improvement

initiatives based on the expressed needs and priorities of those in the school community affected by ableism. Educational leaders should seek out and develop relationships with community members who can serve as consultants or guide curriculum development to ensure dis/ability is authentically portrayed from a Tribal perspective. In addition, educational leaders should find ways to reciprocate within the community as needed in order to strengthen and sustain these relationships.

Responsibility as an Individual and as Part of a Collective

Each school community is unique, and each educational leader will have to determine how to best dismantle oppressive structures. As a moral imperative to dismantle ableism, educational leaders will have to firmly resolve that determining how to best dismantle structures is not the same as selectively dismantling structures or waiting until a politically opportune time to dismantle structures. Relationships between people, cultural, spiritual, and physical elements all comprise an Indigenous paradigm centering space and place where people of all abilities flourish and learn from one another. Indigenous communities understand that responsibility to the collective group is just as important as individual responsibility for personal actions and needs. As such, dismantling ableism provides educational leaders a pathway for fulfilling their responsibility to the collective group while creating pathways for previously excluded individuals to do the same. Similarly, creating an unrestricted environment where difference is respected, rather than othered, honors traditional perspectives about dis/ability that existed prior to colonization. As Grande (2009) suggests, dismantling ableism as a moral imperative troubles dominant values and prepares Indigenous youth for future nation building.

Political Contours with Multiple Possible Solutions

An Indigenous leadership paradigm for dismantling ableism starts by redefining dis/ability within the school context. Because Indigenous ontology and epistemology do not recognize one objective truth and reality is understood through multiple, complex relational features, this paradigm begins by interrogating the real or imagined limiting features of impairment within the context of the school community. Further, in what ways is the impairment the dis/abling condition, or conversely, in what ways is the environment or activity creating the conditions of dis/ability? This is an important question because dismantling ableism requires leaders to interrogate structures, processes, and procedures to identify where changes can be made to better facilitate an integrated school community. Another key aspect of redefining dis/ability as a means of dismantling ableism is examining phenomena that have become so normal they no longer seem abnormal. For example, do educational leaders question whether it is students' behavior or lack of classroom management that causes a group of students to regularly be held inside for recess as a disciplinary measure? Are there educational games in classrooms that reward creativity and cooperative problem-solving rather than earning the most points per team at the fastest rate of speed? How dis/ability is defined and making intentional efforts to correct structures, processes, and procedures rather than people is an important first step to developing a

relational approach to dismantling ableism.

Conclusion: The Importance of Educational Space and Place

The social construction of dis/ability is comprised of a complex set of assumptions about what it means to be 'able-bodied' and 'able-minded'. As a social construction, factors such as architectural barriers, poverty, housing, transportation, access to healthcare, violence, illness, and many other factors influence dis/ability (Wendell, 1996). Similarly, as a social construction, dis/ability can be dismantled by attending to the social factors contributing to dis/abling conditions and limiting factors. Deconstructing the moral imperative to dismantle ableism into a paradigm prioritizing relationships between members of the school community, and encouraging educational leaders to view dis/ability and structural ableism through multiple lenses in order to reimagine the ways in which school culture can change, is a simplistic approach to a very complex problem of practice. Ableism is not an issue isolated to educational institutions, rather, it permeates all of society in the same way racism and sexism permeate it. Because of this, an initial Indigenous leadership paradigm for dismantling ableism is at this time conceptual. Centering the experiences and worldviews of those who face discrimination and exclusion due to ableist structures within the unique context of the school community is an important way to correct the dehumanizing effect of ableism.

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Forum Research Article

Wounding: Individual and Cultural Marginalization of a Student and Parent "Too Difficult to Serve"

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Abstract: The bounded entity in this case study is the educational team (parent, teacher, administrator and paraprofessional) surrounding a Native American student with Emotional Disturbance. Data analysis involved repeated coding of narratives developed from open-ended interviews of team members. This case study reveals an individual and cultural wounding of the student and parent.

Keywords: Wounding; Marginalization; (Dis)ability

> "I have to try and focus on my own story and how it gives me hope. There has always been hope. Even at my most desperate, most frustrated, most overwhelmed, there was still hope. With each new setback I suffered, I reveled in the novelty of it- of hope, of the possibility of success, of validation, of being heard" (Fassett & Morella, 2008, p. 154).

Being heard is inextricably linked to identity and can provide continual hope. However, there are students, parents, and families who receive special education services but are not heard or validated and do not have hope. In the United States, students who qualify for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) category of Emotional Disturbance (ED) are often placed in separate, segregated classrooms from their general education peers. As a result, students and families feel powerless and marginalized. Educational placement decisions create a form of social discourse that "constructs an identity of 'disability' which constitutes certain student types that general education 'finds too difficult to serve'" (Harry & Klingner, 2006, p. 9). The lack of control over where students receive their special education services, and how parents, teachers, administrators and others discuss students during meetings about these determinations permanently and negatively affect students' self-perception and identity.

Introduction

Societal norms and negative discourses surrounding disability create spaces where marginalized populations in special education are being wounded. In this research, I critically analyze the experience of a young man who is both a member of a Native American tribe and a student with ED who receives education services in a segregated, self-contained behavior support classroom. Many aspects of this student's identity reveal the effects of repeated and continuous forms of individual and cultural wounding. I explore and define what this wounding looks like and how students experience it throughout my discussion in the framework and analysis of the research.

Current Disability Studies in Education (DSE) scholars and Irving Goffman's work on stigma informed this research and situates my discussion of students' experiences of wounding. Three distinct threads emerge from this body of scholarship. First, this research highlights the need for critical analysis of the processes through which students who receive special education services are Othered after removal from general education classrooms. Second, this scholarship reflects the structural oppression that Native American students experienced in both the past and the present when educators segregate them and remove them to special education classrooms. The third and final thread focuses on how one student with the special education label of "Emotional Disturbance" (ED) coped with the negative stigma that came with this categorization.

Critical Analysis of Other

Reutlinger (2015) explains the experience of being "Othered" as separate from the experience of being regarded as "in the norm":

> "The discourse of Othering becomes an exertion of heinous, subconscious, and invisible power over cultural groups considered different-from-the-norm. That is, the Othering of 'abnormal' groups occurs without anyone of-the-norm mindfully recognizing that the process is occurring because it has become commonplace to view someone 'different' in a negative way" (p. 25).

> Goffman (1963) presented this example: when a stranger enters a room possessing an attribute that sets him or her apart from the norm embraced by society (i.e., a difference in what is expected or allowable) then that individual is reduced from a whole person to a tainted or discounted one. Applying this idea to entire groups of people who experienced negative societal stigmatization throughout history illuminates how the marginalization of populations continues to perpetuate a social stigma that pervades the identities of those viewed as abnormal "social outcasts" (Goffman, 1963).

When students qualify for special education services in the United States, they often experience marginalization and are viewed as "fundamentally different from general education students" (Brantlinger, 2004, p. 20). Qualification for special education services, and the subsequent labels that come with it, are part of a system of othering that creates divisions between students considered normal and regular and those seen as deficient and disordered (Slee, 2004). Othering is denoted by the separate label received under special education classifications and professionals understand this labeling is required "in order to provide students with services" (Apple, 2001, p. 261). However, although this categorization is necessary to receive special education services, it conveys a "less-than" status. This less-than status is often times exacerbated by the disability categorization of ED because emotional dis-regulation can manifest in a variety of physical and verbal manners. When physical or verbal violence characterizes these manifestations, the othering that occurs in the educational setting begins to take on a cultural judgement and perception of the student as too far outside of "normal" expected classroom behavior. This ultimately marginalizes the student even further, placing students at even greater risk for removal into a separate, segregated space.

Structural Oppressions Facing Native American Students

Education is a system that institutionalizes and perpetuates individual, cultural, and structural oppression by favoring the dominant groups at the expense of those who are excluded- such as Native American peoples (Freire, 1990, 1994). The exploitation and marginalization of Native American peoples is well documented (Jimmy, Allen & Anderson, 2015, Squires, 2016). The educational system fails to see the interactions within the school context as the major component of marginalization of students and, instead, legitimizes the problem as an issue located with the students themselves (Gritmacher & Gritzmacher, 2010). Scholars have researched the impact of cultural differences on learning and the co-existence of disability-related factors and cultural characteristics for over two decades (Garcia & Malkin, 1993; Garcia & Ortiz, 1988; Gritzmacher & Gritmacher, 2010). However, educators have yet to recognize these discrepancies and take actions to repair them.

Squires (2016) explains that any discrepancy between a student's home culture and the school culture can disadvantage the learner if the culture of the school does not recognize the impact of difference in the student's life. Her study examined one school's process of referring students to special education that funneled only Native American students into the program due to dissonance between teachers' perceptions and actions as well as complicated understandings of tribal cultures' influences on the referral process (Squires, 2016).

Segregation of Students Labeled with Emotional Disturbance

The stigmatization and marginalization of students associated with the ED label is concerning because the potential for participation is limited when "dealing with non-physical impairments, such as intellectual disabilities, mental illness, traumatization or (eventually resulting) disruptive behavior" (Kiuppis & Soorenian, 2016, p. 5). This explanation of non-apparent disabilities (those that are not immediately physically discernable) includes the special education category ED and, many times, educators place students with this label into more restrictive educational settings. These settings may include separate self-contained behavior programs or separate schools focused entirely on students with emotional and behavioral needs. The separation from the general population of students and the experiences of these individual students carry very powerful messages (Bradley, Doolittle, & Bartolotta, 2008; National Education Association, 2010) because they give voice to the Othering that special education labels produces and the ultimate wounding inflicted on individuals and cultures.

There are personal, social, and educational costs when students are labeled and segregated. "Rejected by peers and diminished by teachers, students who are labeled must learn to cope with a stigmatized identity" (Ferri, 2009, p. 425). The following discussion of an individual and cultural wounding that occurred in a segregated special education classroom explores how an individual student learned to cope, deal with, and ultimately internalize the ED label as part of their educational identity.

Theoretical Framework

Wounding

Populations of students labeled with ED and who are physically separated from their general education peers are the exact students whose "bodies and histories 'bear the weight' of segregation" (Ferri, 2009, p. 426). Their voices and stories need to be at the forefront of social justice movements in education to make the experience of school more equitable and just.

The idea of a wounded learner has been minimally explored in a study by Lange, Chovanec, Cardinal, Kajner & Smith (2010). They describe socially and economically marginalized adult learners who experience wounding as shame, depression, and despondency in their educational careers that made it difficult for them to return to the classroom. To continue developing the concept of a wounded learner, I propose an expanded definition of "wounding." Wounding is internal emotional turmoil created when violent influences and stigmatizing perceptions lay blame on an individual and their cultural identity because their lived experience is viewed as too far outside the societal norm and the disconnect is too great between home (marginalized) and school (dominant) cultures. If the student and parent hold another identity descriptor of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD), they may also experience a cultural wounding.

Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace (2011) describe the strength and possible transformative power that can guide the bridging of lived experiences of individuals with and without disabilities to continue walking the path toward social justice for all (p. 238). A transformative paradigm intersects with critical disability studies (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009) in a broader manner that includes discrimination based on disability, gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, national origin, Native American tribal membership, immigration, and other dimensions of diversity typically employed to discriminate and oppress (Mertens, et al., 2011, p. 230). Recognizing disability as a critical category of identity deeply intertwined with the many other facets that comprise identity incorporates a new perspective of (dis)ability that calls into question the processes that dehumanize and marginalize individuals.

Hindman (2011) explains that individuals within marginalized groups can be silenced or their identity overlooked. There is a need for discourses that do not emphasize demographics and descriptors, but encourage "us all to rethink the forms of citizenship invoked by the prevailing signifiers of group identity" (p. 210). Rethinking how individuals are identified within various groups can allow for a more transformative discourse instead of continuing to fracture individual identities within fractured groups.

Little available research includes the experiences, voices, and perceptions of those students marginalized and othered twice over through the processes of both historical and systemic oppression in the educational system and the segregation that the ED label requires in special education. This case study focuses on Ben, a student labeled as ED and receiving special education services, and his mother, Charity. Analysis of Ben and Charity's narratives

capture their resistance vis-à-vis the dominant groups' oppressive practice of individual and cultural wounding.

Methodology

Weaving together my analysis of the participants' stories and my observations as a researcher with the experiences of a student and parent silenced and marginalized by the educational system is designed to bring the experience of wounding to light so that it can be honored. This case study is a "microscopic approach" that emphasizes an "intensive examination of the 'particular'" (Lapan & Armfield, 2009, p. 166). The main goal of this type of research is to present an authentic portrayal of the case with observations, participant dialogues, and other first-hand accounts to reflect on everyday activities (Lapan & Armfield, 2009).

Within this case study, the bound entity consisted of narrations of those individuals who surround and directly affect the educational experience of Ben, a student who is Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) with multiple special education labels (Emotional Disturbance, Specific Learning Disability, Speech and Language Impairment). The individuals involved in Ben's life and education who contributed to this case study include: Ben's mother, Charity; his special education Behavior Support Program teacher, Mr. Jonah; his paraprofessional, Mr. Terrance; and his administrator, Ms. Chase.

Researcher Positionality

As both a researcher and practitioner during the time of my data collection, I found myself in a unique situation. I was, simultaneously, both an insider and outsider, a contributing factor and a judgmental observer, and a part of the problem, while also hoping to be a microphone for Ben and Charity's stories.

As the research progressed, my position within what was being studied became clearer and the insider role, as well as role of other, came into play. Adams, Holman-Jones, & Ellis (2015) explain this back-and-forth as being able to "look inward - into our identities, thoughts, feelings, experiences - and outward - into our relationships, communities, and cultures. As researchers, we try to take readers/audiences through the same process, back and forth, inside and out" (p. 46). Chang (2008) explains this interpretation and meaning-making process as a shifting back and forth between self and others, as well as within the personal and social context.

Findings: Bodies Bearing the Weight of Segregation

Ben and Charity

The observation began at immediately after Ben had pushed his desk over and thrown a chair at Mr. Jonah and the 4th grade student Jerry. The chair struck Jerry in the back of the leg and the side of the arm. Ben attempted to run at Jerry with fists raised and

Mr. Jonah, the lead Behavior Support Program (BSP) teacher, called for a team restraint with Mr. Terrance, the paraprofessional. Ben was restrained for 40 seconds during which he yelled obscenities and tried to get out of the restraint hold. Ben quickly stopped screaming and fighting the restraint. When Mr. Jonah asked him if he was ready to be released, Ben replied affirmatively with a nod. Ben was released from the restraint and walked to a chair where he and Mr. Terrance sit.

These episodes of entire loss of control happened so often that they grew defeating to all involved, particularly given the violence of a restraint situation. The teachers call for a restraint in a calm, automatic manner and the student appears to know how long to attempt to break the restraint hold before calming himself down to the required point where he can verbalize that he is ready to be released. This normalization of violence not only results in the wounding of Ben as a student, but fractures the relationship between student and teacher.

Immediately after Ben threw the chair the remaining seven students were escorted next door and Jerry was sent to the nurse to be checked for bruising and/or scrapes. After releasing Ben from the restraint, Mr. Jonah calls Mrs. Chase, the principal, and informs her that she will need to call the officers and file an assault charge. Ben's mother, Charity, is then called and informed that Ben will be suspended from school the remainder of the school day and the following day. Charity will also need to come and pick Ben up.

After the phone calls, Mr. Jonah sits at his desk and begins to talk to Ben about what happened and why Ben became so upset about not bringing his homework back and needing to complete his morning work. Ben sits in the chair with his head down, breathing hard. Ben does not reply until Mr. Jonah starts talking about how Jerry was waiting to turn in his morning work and that it was unfair Jerry got hurt while he was doing what he was supposed to.

> Ben: "I don't care that Jerry's hurt."
>
> Mr. Terrance (to Mr. Jonah): "He means it."
>
> Mr. Jonah: "He doesn't care."
>
> Ben replies (to both): "Fuck you. I don't care."

Mr. Terrance and Mr. Jonah continue to sit silently with Ben while they wait for the arrival of Charity and the police officers. The rest of the class remains next door. Charity arrives before the officers and takes Ben in the hallway to talk.

Ben's body language conveyed his sense of feeling trapped and held within a physical space long after the physical restraint ended. His words, "I don't care" are believed to be a half-hearted attempt to push back on his lack of control in his current physical and emotional situation. However, his verbal push back is met with a reaffirmation by both his male educators that is simultaneously reassuring and instigating. This prompts Ben to again

verbally lash out and try to add a more intense expletive to regain any sense of control as he and the teachers wait for the inevitable. This scenario has occurred before so the players know their expected roles. However, there is such a tone of resignation in the dialogue offered by both Mr. Jonah and Mr. Terrance that their words take on a provoking aspect.

Charity arrives before the officers and takes Ben in the hallway to talk.

> Charity: "You have to do homework! You have to! It's never gonna stop. Home or jail? You're gonna get it real bad at home. You worry about your damn self. Why, why, why?!"

As the rest of the class and the teachers remained in the classroom, Charity and Ben are physically isolated in the hallway, which is in on the first floor in the school and strategically placed at the very end of the hallway to be as far away from the general education students. Their conversation is emotionally charged and full of blame and fear. When Charity is yelling about "It's never gonna stop. Home or jail?" her response is fueled by her own educational and personal experiences that wounded her.

> Ben (beginning to sniff and cry): "I don't know."

> Charity: "You are the one doing it to yourself. You like it when you're bad? Well, it's not cool. You look stupid when you do that."

Charity attempts to console and bridge the divide between mother and son when she explains "it's not cool." She knows that her experience and the experience of her son are linked, and she is also speaking to her memories of being asked if she liked it "when you're bad?" She is attempting to heal both her wound and her son's without even knowing the depth of her own.

Through interactions with Charity, Ben's identity is further shaped and the positions of power and culture within the school and district became clearer. Through each participant's individual narratives, Charity becomes viewed as the reason behind Ben's own actions. For instance, when she came to the BSP classroom to pick him up after the police were called, there was little to no interaction with her beyond a brief description of what had occurred and the need to talk to the officers. Or, when Ben was restrained by Mr. Jonah and Mr. Terrance, the blame was leveled on Charity with the "apple doesn't fall far from the tree" mentality.

Pieces of Power

Judgement of Home Life

Mr. Terrance, the paraprofessional, describes his perceived experiences with a lack of support from home:

> "Yes, I would just like to do the support, like when we send homework home, make sure they get on it. Maybe even sit down with him, not do it for him, but sit down and

maybe help him. You know what I'm saying? And make sure he brings it back and stay up on it."

This description of a perceived lack of parental involvement and support directly targets Charity as a root of the "problem" that Ben has in returning homework. Mr. Terrance is laying the expected norm of school behaviors on top of the cultural norms of Charity and her family structure and background. This assumption of the superiority of school and societal expectations of compliant, consistent routines at home is housed in the systemically oppressive educational system:

"Um, I wouldn't even mind, uh, looking into Ben getting a Big Brother. Show him, show parents how to mentor him, you know what I'm saying? How to deal with him and stuff. I believe, between me and you, I believe Ben, at the house, is around a lot of cussing cause when he gets mad, that's words I've never even heard before."

Mr. Terrance makes the point that the Big Brother program might be able to show Ben's mom and other family members how to mentor him and work with him in a manner that will give Ben some success. This perspective on the need for mentoring and discipline is also a direct attack on the culture at home, on Charity, and on Ben himself. It is a triple wounding for this family and it happens because of the widespread view that cultures outside the established school culture are not acceptable and/or are inferior.

The dominant expectation of submissive student actions is clear in the critique Mr. Terrance makes about the aggressiveness of the swear words Ben chooses to use when he is angry. The appropriate level of anger is also supposed to remain contained within the dominant cultural norms. Therefore, the comment made about a Big Brother program showing Charity "how to deal with him" shames Charity and Ben in multiple ways. The lack of people first language in the phrase "deal with him" paints Ben as more animal than human. Instead of working with a student, paraprofessionals and educators frame Ben as a thing they have to "deal with." This is dehumanizing. Again, Charity's inability to parent her son and the lack of cultural support for the needs that Ben expresses are at the center of this individual and cultural wounding.

It's Your Fault

Mrs. Chase, the school administrator, describes Ben and her perception of why Ben acts in a verbally or physically aggressive manner:

"I think when he's on his good days – he's as sweet as he can be. But I think he lives with men in his life that give him, that he sees no hope for himself, otherwise than living on the government, off of somebody else."

This administrator encapsulates the social, historical, and systemically oppressive perception of Native American tribal culture. Her descriptions contain derogatory statements of male Native American tribal members as unable to be self-sustaining individuals. The broad and sweeping stereotypical statement also attacks Ben as "sweet as he can be," but only

on his "good days." Therefore, if Ben has a "bad" day he is less than, not good enough, and not able to meet the dominant expectations of appropriate behavior within the school culture.

Charity gives further insight into the male influences in Ben's life. She also notes that Ben is alone or in the presence of adults most of the time he is home:

> "Benny's really not exposed to a lot of kids. So I think when he is, he wants to be in charge. He wants to be the alpha man and I have, I have a feeling that this has to do with the fact that his father's not involved. And he's asked me that question. He's like, 'How come my father doesn't see me?'"

She continues to describe the difficulties in establishing a relationship with Ben's biological father:

> "I know that he wants to have a relationship because he spoke about him. But it's so hard to even try to get in contact with them. Um, they think I'm still head-over-heels with their son, so even if I tried to contact they would assume that I'm stalking Benny's father. So they're on a way different level than I am which makes it difficult for Benny to have a relationship with his father."

Charity is explaining and giving context to the negative and demeaning stereotype that Mrs. Chase states. She is sharing her experience as a marginalized female navigating through dominant discourses of multiple layers of oppression. The difference in Native American tribal culture and the Mexican-American culture of Ben's father create yet another piece of the story that Charity has to make sense of for herself and for Ben. She is explaining the impact that multiple different cultural norms is having on her and her son. She intensely feels the dominant group's marginalization of her and her son as well as the expectations of a second non-dominant cultural group. She continues to express her pain at being located at the center of these specific expectations that are not her own. Her final thought resonates within her own identity and within Ben's as she layers yet another piece of her story that breaks negative stereotypes and gives further context to who Charity really is:

> "I think, I think when you grow up in a household where there's some sort of abuse going on, I think you learn how to manipulate – 'cause I did. And I know I wasn't the best parent with Benny and I think he learned how to manipulate through me."

Her regret, shame and ownership of the blame leveled at her is poignant. Why is she expected to navigate through dominant cultural perceptions when the educators and administrators within these dominant groups fail to even see her to begin with? Why does her wounding have to continually occur as a woman, as a Native American tribal member, as a parent, and as a victim of abuse?

Continued Wounding of Marginalized Bodies

From experiences, interactions and observations with Ben, his behaviors are always a form of communication. Ben does not have any other ability to communicate clearly except

through his actions and those actions have become increasingly violent. The most violent wounding observed was in the manner through which Charity was discussed by, informed, and interacted with the BSP classroom and the school district policies. The blame has consistently been assigned to Charity and, in turn, to Ben's background experiences and culture. They have both been internally and culturally wounded. The dominant school culture consistently created an "us vs. them" scenario. Therefore, within the ED label there also exists a wounding. This wounding occurs as a result of the stigmatizing effects of special education labeling and subsequent segregation into specialized programs. This wounding is most violent for individuals like Ben who carry the ED label more prominently through his actions. His actions, however, are a form of communication and he has consistently been communicating his experiences to "Us." As I am part of the educational communities that continue to fail Ben, it is clear to me that we are not listening because the programs and interventions in place for Ben are only marginalizing and separating him further. Charity's internal emotional turmoil is consistently reinforced through the violent and stigmatizing blame assigned to her by school personnel. Her wounding has conditioned her to think this is as good as it gets and she has to live day-to-day with a fragile hope that Ben will be safe and not hurt someone.

Survival

Ben's avoidance and violent behaviors are a survival strategy and he has learned to manipulate his environments to his benefit. His learning environments replicate these practices, modeling aspects of these survival strategies and implicitly encouraging Ben to continue them. For instance, Ben's education perpetuates violence and avoidance in the form of restraint practices, police involvement, and segregation from peers and curriculum out of fear of other peers not being safe if Ben is in the room. The survival strategies of the BSP classroom perpetuate Ben's own survival strategies. Violence mirrors violence and survival mirrors survival. The wounding of Ben and Charity feeds the continuing cycle of violent and stigmatizing perceptions.

Continued collection, storying, and re-storying of individual voices that continue to be marginalized in violent ways must ask the difficult questions: "How do we engage, understand, and resist the ways words move in, through and upon our bodies? How do we honor the distinctions that matter in ways that respect their roles in forming our identities?" (Fassett & Morella, 2008, p. 141). There is a clear need to break the cycles of systemic failure that have perpetuated Ben's own cycles of failure. It is my hope that conversations begin with paraprofessionals, special and general educators, administrators, district representatives, and policymakers who write special education legislation and that these discussions might ultimately lead to a greater awareness of the many forms of violent wounding that unfold in the classroom and ultimately challenge the social norms that feed into them. Without awareness, there is no beginning ground for change toward a more socially just educational system.

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Creative Works
Normal

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Abstract: This poem reflects on various conversations from a parent's perspective when someone uses the word "normal" to describe a child who has a disability.

"She looks normal", you say.
She is normal.
She is my baby girl.
What is normal?
Are any of us normal?

"She looks great", you say.
"I didn't think she would be born like that."
What do you mean? Like that…
Nobody is born in a wheelchair.

"She looks cute with her walker."
"I would like one of those for myself", you say
For what? I wonder.
Do you need help to walk too?

"Look at how fast she runs."
"She doesn't look like she has a disability", you say.
How does a disability look? I wonder.
Will she always be questioned?

Will she always have to prove she is disabled?
Does she have to show you her scar? I wonder.
Do you need to see her catheters?
Do you need to see her bowel program?

She has no shame.
She was raised to be proud.
She is determined.
She is fierce.
She is disabled.

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