PERSPECTIVES OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATORS PREPARED IN INCLUSIVE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS ON ENACTMENTS OF INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

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Although inclusive practices demonstrate positive academic and social outcomes for all students (Hehir et al., 2016; Newman, 2006) and are necessitated by an increasingly diverse student body in U.S. schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017), teachers who have graduated from inclusive teacher preparation programs frequently find themselves teaching within contexts which make it challenging for them to sustain their inclusive commitments over several years of teaching practice (Rood, 2018; Rood & Ashby, 2020). This study explored how, when, and under what conditions early and mid-career in-service educators who attended inclusive education preservice programs are, and are not, able to sustain their work.

Informed by Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and an ecological approach to conceptualizing teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2017), this study built on research that suggested enacting inclusivity is a stance towards decision making rather than solely a set of skills and practices. This study investigated the perspectives of four in-service New York City inclusive educators to determine their beliefs and commitments to inclusivity, their efforts towards implementing inclusivity, and their prior experience in inclusive teacher education programs through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and document review. Data were analyzed using qualitative analytic open coding.

Findings suggested that having previously developed a sense of self-efficacy in curriculum planning and beliefs about how inclusive curriculum should be constructed through their inclusive preservice education supported participants in achieving agency in curriculum designing. Participants demonstrated how in making inclusive curricular adaptations, they redesigned the pacing, structure, and content of curricula to reflect a commitment to their previously learned inclusive beliefs in accessible instruction for individualized learners and social justice. Furthermore, participants described relying on their relationships with like-minded colleagues to support how they maneuvered structural barriers (e.g., a school's organizational set-up of teacher observation) and cultural barriers (e.g., the culture of performativity based on high-stakes testing) to enacting inclusivity (Priestley et al., 2017). The ability to cultivate collective efficacy and rely on relationships to support inclusive action reflected the relationship-building practices that participants described developing in their preservice programs. Participants believed that having attended inclusive preservice education programs provided them with foundational skills, knowledge, and decision-making practices that supported their ability to maneuver around constraints on practice to enact inclusive teaching while in the field.

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L. M. R.

PREFACE

Carved into a seemingly invisible space between the first-floor girls' bathroom and the gymnasium, I sat in the oddly long, narrow school psychologist's office with Mr. Kevin, the psychologist. The air was stagnant as I stared out the open window at the barren black-top surrounded by a high chain-link fence. It was the last Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting of the year. Even though we had already met to review Andre's IEP in February, I had begged Mr. Kevin to reevaluate Andre before summer break.

As we waited for Andre's mother to arrive, I asked Kevin one last time if he thought switching Andre's classification to Emotional Disturbance (ED) was the right decision. "His behavior is the main reason that he is struggling in school, right? He has difficulty controlling his body and lags behind his peers in his ability to communicate his needs." I displayed a list of anecdotal notes that I had collected on his interactions.

Kevin absorbed my last-minute anxieties. "Like I told you, his classification doesn't impact what services he gets. But we are making the switch because you feel strongly about it."

"The switch in classification is about more than just services, Kevin. With the ED classification, it's easier to make the case that he shouldn't be suspended from school when he acts out."

Kevin retorted, "And what about the potential ramifications of the label? Don't you make assumptions about students who enter your classroom with an ED classification?"

"Yeah, well, I try not to read the IEPs until after I get to know the kids."

"Do all teachers and administrators do that?" Kevin asked, raising his eyebrows.

"Look. Andre was suspended from school for at least three weeks this year. I think the bias that comes with the ED classification is better than missing weeks of school," I said, as

Andre's mom walked into the office. I nodded to Kevin in support of the choice to have Andre's classification switched to ED. But I internally wavered on whether we were doing the right thing.

At the time of this story, I was a fourth-year special education teacher completing a Master's degree in educational leadership at a large private research university. In this graduate program, I had learned that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 protected disabled students from long-term school suspension if their misbehavior stemmed from their disability. But I had also learned that Black boys who have ED classifications on their IEPS, like Andre, are less likely than their peers to graduate from high school and more likely than their peers to be incarcerated as adults (Adams & Erevelles, 2016; Erevelles, 2014). Further, I had learned that the act of labeling a child as required by the IDEIA assumed that the labeled child was abnormal and needed to be remediated to a state of normalcy (Naraian, 2017). While I believed that the classification of ED on Andre's IEP could marginalize him, I had nonetheless worked to have the label applied. In this moment of inclusive decision making, there was an inescapable conflict between my desire to challenge "deficit-ridden practices" (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018, p. 179) embedded in the categorization of bodies in school and the reality of the choices available to me.

As a fourth-year educator, I was beginning to challenge the ways in which labels impacted my students, but there were limitations on how I could enact those challenges. While in this example I wanted to confront the Emotional Disturbance label, my desire to ensure Andre's access to school took precedence. I advocated for the application of the Emotional Disturbance label for Andre because the law that was attached to this label would best support his inclusion in the classroom. In effect, for me to teach inclusively, I had to make a complex decision (Ashby,

2012; Naraian, 2017), taking into account my own beliefs, the laws that support inclusive practice, and the unintended consequences of those laws.

As an educator who has worked with an equity mindset for the past 13 years, this was not the first, nor the last, time that I had to negotiate a decision of this nature. To help me navigate these types of decisions, I consistently have to consider my own belief system, larger moral imperatives, and the social and legal context. For inclusive teacher educators who prepare teachers to resist pervasive disability labeling and sorting, there exists a conflict: What does it mean for us to ask teachers like my younger self to simultaneously challenge the categorization and sorting of disabled students and to expect and prepare them to engage in practices that maintain those very same labels they are asked to resist (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018)? This contradictory nature of inclusive practice begs the question of how teacher educators may prepare inclusive teachers to make these conflicting decisions while still sustaining inclusive commitments over time.

Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

The inclusive schooling movement was codified internationally in 1994 by the Salamanca Statement, which maintained that "every child has a fundamental right to education" (UNESCO, 1994, p. viii) and that "regular schools…are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all" (p. ix). As an advancement on other equity-based notions of schooling, advocates for this perspective on inclusive schooling make the case that schools should be democratic institutions that recognize, represent, and respond equitably to marginalized student communities inclusive of individuals with disabilities[1] as a marginalized identity group (Slee, 2011). But there are discrepancies between the ways in which inclusive schooling is described in the literature, designed in policy, and enacted in schools (Artiles & Kozeleski, 2016).

The call for inclusive schooling includes a call for understanding the ways in which ability and intelligence have historically been normed around white values in the United States. Ferri and Connor (2006) contended that notions of ability are racialized and have contributed to the overrepresentation of Black students and other minority students in segregated special education classes. For instance, in the United States, the concept of cultural deprivation has historically been seen as a disability and warranted exclusion from mainstream classes (Sleeter, 1987, p. 223). Sleeter (1987) described how during the desegregation of schools in the 1960s, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and southern Blacks and whites from rural areas were believed to

[1] In this study, I largely adopt people-first language wherein a person is emphasized over his/her disability (i.e., I use "a person with a learning disability" versus a "learning disabled person"). While I come to the use of people-first language from a place of caring, I also recognize that I do not personally identify as having a disability and that some individuals with disabilities argue that people-first language fails to capture their minority group identity. These advocates prefer the political identity that can be understood via the terminology *disabled people* (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2013). As such, at times my writing may switch into this language when taking a political stance or referring to the works of other authors who use this terminology.

suffer from “learning handicaps due to environmental conditions” (p. 223). Given this background, the struggle against exclusion based on disability is inextricably linked with an historical struggle for equitable schooling practices for minority students, and part of the work of inclusive schooling includes a shift in how educators understand intelligence.

Despite the broad, equity-oriented conceptualization of inclusive schooling articulated in the Salamanca Statement, some educators/researchers view inclusive education solely in terms of a special education service delivery model known as “inclusion,” where students with disabilities are educated in a general education classroom with their nondisabled peers instead of this broader notion of democratic schooling that spans a range of diverse student profiles (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Kozleski et al., 2013). The mismatch between the idealized conceptualization of inclusive schooling and its enactments may be exacerbated by school reform initiatives in the United States (Artiles & Kozeleski, 2016). Artiles and Kozeleski (2016) have argued that the convergence of multiple school reform initiatives designed to provide equity for traditionally disenfranchised students often results in misaligned policies that then further alienate students, especially those with disabilities. For instance, while the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) called for schools to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) to uphold rigorous academic standards for all students, it created a perverse incentive for schools to employ the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by classifying students as disabled. The disability classification enabled schools to exclude students who were struggling academically from the accountability system and thus more easily demonstrate satisfactory “progress” (Artiles & Kozeleski, 2016, p. 10). As a result, a policy that on paper was designed to facilitate inclusive schooling by guaranteeing high-quality education to all students created an even more bifurcated education system. It follows that the political context in which attempts at inclusive schooling

take place has implications for how inclusive educators enact their practice over time (Artiles & Kozeleski, 2016; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee, 2011; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013).

Given the gap between the ambitious ideals and constrained practices of inclusive education and the contested nature of school reform in the United States, inclusive educators face a complicated context in which they actualize their work. The current landscape suggests that preservice education for inclusion is currently in the development stage at universities and colleges throughout the United States. While some schools have created fully inclusive programs, others still remain in an add-on stage of development. In order to continue to support teacher preparation in moving towards approaches to developing inclusive teacher education and to make a more persuasive and empirically informed case for more widespread development of these programs, there remains a need to better understand how inclusive educators who are alumni of inclusive programs working in U.S. schooling contexts are doing inclusive teaching and sustaining their commitments to inclusivity, and how they perceive their capacity to enact that work.

By examining the perceptions and practices of inclusive educators who have spent 3 or more years teaching after graduating from inclusive preservice programs, I aim to understand how these educators conceptualize inclusive education, what it means to enact inclusive education in their everyday teaching contexts, and how they perceive sustaining their inclusive commitments in light of local school circumstances, such as the lack of clarity on the idea of inclusion as well as education policies that may narrow the possibilities of inclusive teaching. In this study, I sought to inform the development of preservice inclusive teacher education programs as well as in-service inclusive teacher professional development.

Background of the Problem

In the remainder of this chapter, I situate my research problem by showing, first, how a need for educators prepared to teach inclusively has developed in the United States. In this section, I explore the legal context for inclusive practice in schools, the benefits of inclusive schooling, and the shifts in student population in U.S. schools that necessitate inclusive schooling. Next, I describe how preservice teacher education has transformed in response to this need thus far. Finally, I explain how, notwithstanding these preservice teacher education transformations, there exist dauntingly complex contextual challenges for teachers attempting to enact inclusive practices in U.S. schools (Allday et al., 2013; Forlin, 2010; Kurniawati et al., 2014). These contextual factors include a heterogeneous array of ideologies, laws, policies, and approaches to both preservice and in-service teacher education. My background review begins from a large-scale perspective that considers research and policy in global and national contexts; I then look specifically at the case of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), which in 2012 initiated an explicitly "inclusive" reform of its Special Education program.

Legal Context for Inclusive Practice in Schools

In the United States, inclusive schooling is defined both by philosophies of education and by federal legislation, which has for almost half a century called for access to schooling for individuals with disabilities. In 1975, Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; originally named the Education for All Handicapped Children Act [EHA]), which requires that public schools provide students with disabilities a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The notion of inclusion was located in the LRE mandate of this law. LRE

confers a legal obligation on schools to educate students with disabilities together with their nondisabled peers to the "maximum extent appropriate" (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 200). While much critique has been made of the policies and practices created in response to this principle that nonetheless are found to work against the full integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms (see Sauer & Jorgensen [2016] and Taylor [2004/1988] for a full discussion of these critiques), the LRE mandate in and of itself is a groundbreaking piece of legislation that calls for the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Sauer & Jorgensen, 2016) and confers an obligation on states to ensure that teachers and administrators "are fully informed about their LRE responsibilities" (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 201).

More recent legislation has further underscored a legal obligation for inclusive schooling. The 2004 amendments to IDEA, known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), were aligned with the 2004 Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which mandated that public schools are accountable to all students, including those with disabilities (Cooper et al., 2008, p. 155; Dingle et al., 2004, p. 36; Fullerton et al., 2011, p. 45). In 2015, then U.S. President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which upheld similar principles of NCLB by protecting the rights of high-needs students, including those with disability classifications, to be taught and assessed according to "challenging State academic standards or alternate academic achievement standards" (p. 21). It follows that in the United States, it is neither a matter of individual professional choice and belief system nor the orientation of a person's teacher preparation program, but it is in fact a matter of national legislation from 1975 to the present day that teachers need to be prepared to teach inclusively.

Over time, judicial interpretation has further defined the mandates of IDEIA in ways that extend the requirements for schools, not only to include students with disabilities but to ensure that students with disabilities have access to educational benefit in those environments. In *Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Amy Rowley* (1982), the Court emphasized that an IEP for students with disabilities must be "reasonably calculated" to confer "education benefits" on the child, not merely grant the child access to school. Most recently, in *Endrew v. Douglas* (2017), Chief Justice Roberts held that an "educational program must be appropriately ambitious in light of…[a student's]… circumstances" and that "every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives." *Endrew* marked a significant advancement for the rights of students with disabilities as it affirmed inclusion and some form of educational benefit as a goal of IDEIA. The *Endrew* court decided, "when a child is fully integrated in the regular classroom, as the Act prefers, what that typically means is providing a level of instruction reasonably calculated to permit advancement through the general curriculum" (p. 13). This post-2017 legal backdrop imposes an obligation on teachers to educate students with disabilities in general education settings and to provide students with disabilities not only access to the general education curriculum, but also the opportunity to advance through that curriculum. At the same time, as advocates were quick to perceive, it provides inclusively minded educators with the legal tools to fight for equal access to schooling.

Benefits of Inclusive Schooling

Over 30 years of research supports the U.S.-based legal push towards inclusive schooling. When students with disabilities are educated alongside their nondisabled peers, there are positive social and academic outcomes for students (Hehir et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2009; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Newman, 2006). Specifically, nondisabled students are

increasingly comfortable with diversity after being educated in more inclusive environments and students who hold disability labels demonstrate improved social adjustment (Hehir et al., 2006; Newman, 2006). The benefit of these social skills is further underscored by the fact that the inclusion of students with disabilities in a general education classroom has no negative academic impact on nondisabled students (Demeris et al., 2007; Hehir et al., 2016; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). In some studies, in fact, nondisabled students demonstrated academic gains as a result of studying in an inclusive environment (Hehir et al., 2016).

For students who have disability labels, researchers have found that access to the general education curriculum can have many positive academic benefits (Newman, 2006; Newman et al., 2003). In the National Longitudinal Transitional Study-2 (NLTS-2), which analyzed a sample of students receiving special education services in the United States who were 13 to 16 years old in 2000, Newman et al. (2003) established that when students with disabilities participated in general education classes, they were more likely to obtain math and reading assessment results closer to grade level as well as less likely to experience school-based discipline. Jordan et al. (2008) have conceded that the academic performance of students with disabilities in general education classrooms lags behind nondisabled students and that students with cognitive disabilities and autism are less likely to perform near grade level. Nonetheless, disabled students in inclusive environments, overall, academically surpass their isolated peers in self-contained educational environments (Jordan et al., 2010, p. 535).

Critics of inclusive schooling have argued that severe student behavior in an inclusive environment may have a negative impact on learning. However, in their comprehensive review of 280 studies on inclusive education spanning over 25 countries, Hehir and colleagues (2016) found that the behavior of a student with a disability only impacted student learning in

classrooms where there were two or more students with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities (p. 8). Hehir et al. have suggested that this only poses a small challenge to inclusive schooling since students who have been categorized as such make up only one half of 1% of all U.S. students (p. 9). Thus, inclusive classrooms can still be highly successful if students who benefit from additional behavioral support are evenly distributed in classrooms. Given the large body of literature that supports the benefits of inclusive schooling conferred on children, there is an increased need for teacher educators to prepare all future teachers to work with racially, ethnically, linguistically, and ability-diverse students.

The Student Population in Need of Inclusively Minded Educators

It is against this backdrop of philosophy, law, and research that we find today an increasingly diverse U.S. student population[2] in need of teachers to facilitate inclusive education. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017) found that in 2014, racial and ethnic minority students represented 50.5% of the public school population, English Language Learners (ELLs) constituted 9.4% of the total K-12 schooling population (p. xxv), and 13% of all public school students ages 3-21 in the United States in 2014 were labeled as disabled (p. xxv). Further, according to NCES, "among all students ages 6-21 served under IDEA, the percentage who spent most of the school day (i.e., 80 percent or more of their time) in general classes in regular schools increased from 33 percent in fall 1990 to 62 percent in fall 2014" (p. 112). To meet the

[2] I adopt the view of inclusive practices as a reform of all education through changes in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and school organization to support marginalized students, including those with disabilities (Slee, 2011, p. 169). I acknowledge that using the term *inclusive* to simply refer to an integrated classroom of general education and special education students may reduce the argument for inclusive schooling to one of placement of students rather than one of the pedagogies and educational services that support individuals' meaningful integration into the academic community (Taylor, 2004). Yet, in what follows, I cautiously employ statistics on the educational placement of students with disabilities into general education classrooms, as one of many measures of increased emphasis on inclusive schooling practices. This is not because I see the placement of students with disabilities into general education classrooms as a measure of inclusive practice in and of itself, but trends in student placement may suggest larger philosophical shifts about access to schooling.

needs of this diverse student population, the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) called explicitly for a teacher understanding of diversity in stating "the teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards" (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2011). As a result of the increased special education schooling population, CCSSO (2011) stressed that teachers should have the knowledge and skills attendant to work with students with disabilities. In turn, preservice teacher education programs have made shifts in their programming to better prepare novice teachers to work in racially, ethnically, linguistically, and ability-diverse classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999).

While the work of preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities is not new, the current student population and increased emphasis on inclusion now require that all teachers, not just those who are special education-certified, be prepared to do this work. Since 1975, when the EHA was confirmed as a federal mandate, the teachers assigned were those certified in special education who primarily worked with students who had been assigned disability labels (Thomas et al., 2009). With the 1997 amendments to IDEA that called for special education student participation in state testing, the work of educating students with disabilities has shifted to all teachers, not just those who are special education-certified. How to best prepare educators for this work continues to be debated (Rouse, 2010). While some scholars and policymakers continue to advocate for disability-specific teacher preparation stemming from mainstream special education research, others argue that a more inclusive form of teacher preparation that treats the sorting and labeling of students as contested territory may have a more beneficial impact on society at large and on the students themselves (Hehir et al., 2016; Rouse, 2010). As

discussed earlier, Newman (2006) found that inclusive classrooms socially benefit students by cultivating individuals who are more accepting of human variances. Training all teachers, not just those who will hold special education certifications, through inclusive models may provide these social benefits to a larger student body (Hehir et al., 2016; Newman, 2006) and, in turn, may help to foster future citizens who are more accepting of human diversity. A growing call for inclusive educators prepared to educate students with diverse abilities in the general education classroom reflects a moral imperative to meet the needs of the shifting U.S. schooling population and to create a more equitable future for the U.S. citizenry, individuals who have diverse abilities included.

To meet the diverse learning needs of students across the United States, teachers must "have attitudes and skills that can lead to positive changes in students' academic and social behavior" (Allday et al., 2013, p. 299). However, teacher education practices that prepare two types of professionals, general education- and special education-certified teachers (Rouse, 2010), create teachers who feel differentially prepared to engage in inclusive work (Buell et al., 1999). To prepare all future educators, not just those who will pursue special education certification, for inclusive work, inclusive preservice teacher education programs have been developed in colleges and universities across the United States. The New York State Higher Education Support Center (NYHESC) for Systems Change (2009), which works to support New York State colleges and universities in designing and implementing inclusive teacher preparation programs, published an annotated bibliography outlining the types of inclusive teacher preparation programs from 1996 to the late 2000s. Table 1 below summarizes the program type and location of inclusive preservice teacher programs based on these findings.

Table 1

Inclusive Teacher Preparation Programs

Program Type	Location of Program(s)
Inclusive	University of Tennessee
Inclusive	Miami University
Inclusive	The University of Northern Iowa
Inclusive	University of Hawaii at Manoa
Inclusive	University of New Mexico
Inclusive	University of Colorado at Denver
Inclusive	Trinity College (Burlington, Vermont), Syracuse University (New York), the University of California at San Marco, and Arizona State University-West (Phoenix)
Add-on	Unnamed large Midwestern university
Add-on	West Virginia University
Add-on	Unnamed university in central Wisconsin and another unnamed university in Detroit, Michigan
Add-on	Project ACCEPT, an experiment at an Illinois university

Source: NYHESC, n.d.

As displayed in Table 1, modifications in teacher education programs take two forms, with some offering a selection of "add-on" inclusion classes such as classroom management (Alladay et al., 2013), while others have developed fully inclusive programs where all coursework takes up an inclusive lens (Ashby, 2012; Oyler, 2011; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013) (henceforth called "inclusive preservice teacher education"). While this national sampling demonstrates promising steps towards more inclusive teacher preparation programs, most preservice programs that have taken up this work use an add-on approach wherein the use of the word *inclusion* is often "atheoretical," implying that it is simply a code to talk about a particular type of classroom for students with disabilities (Kozleski et al., 2013). As a result, two types of

in-service inclusive educators may be working at potentially cross-purposes. While one group seeks to apply special education practices in the general education classroom, the other seeks to dismantle the philosophical foundation of special education. The meeting of these two groups in schools has the potential to cause contextual factors that complicate the implementation of inclusive schooling in its democratic form. Further, much of the literature on fully inclusive programs describes the teacher preparation pathways (Ashby, 2012; Oyler, 2011) or discusses the experiences of current preservice students (Keefe et al., 2000). But not much is known about the graduates of these programs and how they perceive the applicability of what they learned once they are teaching.

Dilemmas and Challenges of Teaching Inclusively in Context

Teachers who are alumni of inclusive preservice teacher education programs are entering a national teaching context where dilemmas and challenges inhibit their abilities to enact inclusive practices fully. While teachers in general reported that they believe there are benefits to inclusive teaching (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996), they also reported that they are currently not prepared to teach in diverse settings (He & Cooper, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). They cited a need for more support in the form of professional development, resources, and time (Avramidis et al., 2000; Buell et al., 1999; Rae et al., 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). The general educators surveyed in Buell et al.'s (1999) study, for example, cited a need for further professional development in "program modification, assessing academic progress, adapting curriculum, managing students' behaviour, developing IEPs, and using assistive technology" (pp. 153-154).

Additionally, research has suggested that inconsistency in the use of the term *inclusive* and its interchangeability with mainstream special education "inclusion" (as previously

discussed) results in a muddled understanding of the knowledge and skills that teachers need to teach in inclusive classrooms as well as an unclear understanding of what an inclusive classroom should look and sound like (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). Even in an inclusive teacher preparation program, Keefe and colleagues (2000) found that students reported faculty's mixed use of inclusive philosophy in their own teaching. It follows that inclusive educators are challenged to work in a context where there are vague, not clearly defined, ideas about the expectations of inclusive pedagogy.

Research has also found that self-identified inclusive educators further reported facing obstacles to enacting inclusive practices when education policies like NCLB narrow the types of decisions that can be made (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Nevertheless, teachers are taught to enact inclusive schooling practices in their teacher education programs and incorporate elements of these practices into their classrooms daily (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018). The work of these inclusive educators is important since some research has found that teachers have a significant impact on student learning, potentially even more so than policies like NCLB (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2005). In effect, these inclusive educators may be able to counteract the impact of policies that label and sort students into disability categories. Thus, the act of teaching inclusively becomes a negotiation of "inclusive practices alongside accountability discourses" (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018, p. 179), confusing ideas about how inclusion is defined and school-based faculty who do not feel prepared to implement inclusion. As a result, there exists a challenge in teacher education to prepare inclusive educators not only to think and act inclusively (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, Jordan et al., 2008), but also to sustain the practice of making inclusively guided decisions

within a contradictory context where colleagues may define inclusivity differently and policies may limit the types of decisions that can be made (Naraian, 2017).

The New York City Special Education Reform

Within this national backdrop, graduates of inclusive preservice teacher education programs find themselves teaching in the racially and ethnically diverse city of New York, which has recently taken up an inclusive initiative through the New York City Special Education Reform 2012 (henceforth referred to as the NYC SPED Reform 2012). In NYC specifically, the need for teachers prepared to support a diverse student body in one classroom has become increasingly urgent. In 2010, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) reported that 174,000 students with disabilities were then enrolled in New York City public schools. However, 36% of those students spent 60% or more of their school day being educated in self-contained classrooms with 15 or fewer students, a special education teacher, and a paraprofessional (Perry & Associates, 2013, p. 8). These students had limited access to the general education curriculum and their nondisability-labeled peers. At that time, only 31% of students with disability labels graduated from high school in New York City, which was more than 20% lower than the number of students with disability labels graduating from high school in New York State (p. 9). In 2012, the NYCDOE enacted the NYC SPED Reform 2012 that called for all 1,700 of the New York City public schools to provide access to general education classroom and curriculum for all students (NYCDOE, 2012b). They set out a goal to ensure that through more access to general education classrooms, students who have been labeled as disabled would be provided with "a rigorous academic curriculum" and "held to high academic standards" (Perry & Associates, 2013, p. 14).

Through the emphasis of the NYC SPED Reform 2012 on the use of flexible programming, schools are encouraged to consider special education as a service rather than as the type of classroom in which students are educated (Taylor, 2004/1988). According to the United Federation of Teachers (UFT, n.d.), whereas in the past schools were provided funding for special education services based on the number of special education classes they retained, schools under the reform effort are provided funding based on the amount of time during the school day a child receives special education services. This budgetary switch matches with a theoretical shift. Schools are encouraged to design instructional plans "tailored to each student's unique needs" (NYCDOE, 2012c). According to the NYCDOE (2012c), schools should use students' academic and behavioral needs to offer "different special education services during different parts of the day" (p. 1). A student, for instance, who struggles with math might be educated by a special education teacher for math classes, but then be educated in a general education environment for literacy.

In addition to an increased emphasis on services to address individualized learning needs, this reform encourages family outreach and a positive staff mindset in working with students with disabilities (NYCDOE, 2012a). The combination of seeing special education as a service, increasing family outreach, and shifting staff mindset about students with disabilities sets this special education reform apart from earlier NYCDOE efforts towards equity in that it aligns more closely with the goals of inclusive schooling. Earlier reforms like the Children First 2003 initiative, which used penalties against schools that did not perform well on standardized assessments, dis-incentivized schools from educating students with disabilities (Connor, 2012). In contrast, the NYC SPED Reform 2012 emphasizes notions of inclusivity by encouraging

regular schools to educate students with disabilities and stressing the use of flexible programming, rather than a tracking system, to meet student learning needs.

With regards to student placement, New York City has made some progress towards its reform effort. Stiefel et al. (2017) found that while the number of special education students educated in NYC in between 2006 and 2016 increased, the overall percentage of students who are being educated in D75 programs decreased[3] (p. 13). New York City special education students are spending more time not only in community schools, but also in general education classrooms. According to the NYCDOE 2016-17 Annual Report on Special Education, 65.5% of those students spent 80% or more of their day being educated in a general education setting (p. 31). Further, the number of students whose services have been reduced has increased in the past 3 years (NYCDOE, 2015, p. 27; 2016b, p. 28; 2017, p. 38). Similarly, NYC public charter schools have seen increased enrollment of students with disabilities; enrollment of students with IEPS has gone up by 10% from 2015 to 2021 (New York City Charter Center, 2021b)

These data have implications for general education and special education teachers alike. As students are being moved from specialized programs to neighborhood schools and out of special education classes into general education ones, New York City general education teachers are expected to work with students with diverse abilities and collaborate with their special education colleagues in providing disabled students with services. Similarly, special education-certified teachers must be prepared to provide services in tandem with general education teachers within traditional classroom settings.

[3] District 75 is a citywide program that provides "educational, vocation, and behavior support" targeting students who "are on the autism spectrum, have significant cognitive delays, are severely emotionally challenged, are sensory impaired, and/or are multiply disabled" (Programs, 2018).

Dilemmas and Challenges of Teaching Inclusively in New York City

Outcome data published in 2017 showed that the steps taken through the NYC SPED Reform 2012 are having some positive impacts on student social and academic outcomes. But, according to Stiefel et al. (2017), there remain academic disparities between the two student groups, with general education students graduating from a high school at a higher rate and more likely to graduate with a New York State Regents diploma. They also found that although students with disabilities in 2016 outperformed students with disabilities in 2006, the difference between students' performances on standardized assessments remains large (Stiefel et al., 2017). These relatively small academic gains for students with disabilities may be the result of several barriers outside of teacher practice, including city-wide programming that essentializes the experiences of students with disabilities (NYCDOE, 2017b); lack of course options for students with disabilities educated in D75 programs (Programs, 2018); few physically accessible school buildings (Bharara, 2015); a lack of professional development in inclusive teaching (Perry & Associates, 2013); a lack of like-minded colleagues (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2014; Perry & Associates, 2013); financially strapped schools (Alverez, 2013, 2014, 2016); and school-based teacher support teachers who are not able to perform their intended functions (Alverez, 2013, 2014). For inclusive teachers operating in this context, these factors create binds in which they may not be able to enact an inclusive agenda fully.

In particular, the lack of like-minded colleagues may be a critical factor that challenges NYC inclusive educators to enact their practice. While the city has approached the NYC SPED Reform 2012 by increasing the number of special education-certified teachers (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2014), this new faculty may not be equipped to enact inclusive schooling if they attended preservice teacher education programs that utilize methodologies

identified via mainstream special education research. Teachers who have been educated through inclusive preservice teacher education programs, in fact, may be working up against the mainstream special education ideologies of their colleagues that do not necessarily serve the same inclusive interests. Further, New York City's use of funding to shift the educational support for students with disabilities may have the unintended consequence of financially rewarding schools for providing students with fewer services than they need, or teachers not educated to support students with disabilities in their classrooms (Alverez, 2013, 2014). In turn, this may leave inclusive educators strapped without staff members to support students with disabilities in their classrooms. It follows that inclusive educators may want to plan collaboratively with colleagues to best support students, but schools may have limited funds to implement these plans.

Problem Statement

Educators who have graduated from inclusive preservice teacher education programs operate within a complex terrain that both fosters and stymies inclusion. The effort to provide democratic schooling opportunities for all American students, including students with disabilities, stems from the needs of an increasingly diverse U.S. student body (NCES, 2017); the proven benefits of inclusive education (Jordan et al., 2008; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Newman, 2006; Newman et al., 2003); and the requirements of special education law (IDEA, 2004) and equity-focused education policy (ESSA, 2015). Inclusive schooling has the potential to provide desirable social outcomes for general education- and special education-identified students alike (Hehir et al., 2016; Newman, 2006), as well as being academically beneficial for students who have been identified as disabled (Hehir et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2008; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Newman, 2006; Newman et al., 2003).

To promote these student benefits, preservice teacher education has made some shifts in supporting the development of novice inclusive educators, including add-on inclusive coursework and fully unified inclusive programs (Allday et al., 2013; Ashby, 2012; Gao & Mager, 2011; Hamre & Oyler, 2004; Kurniawati, 2014; Oyler, 2011; Titone, 2005). Likewise, state and city school districts have more inclusive programming, advocacy, and faculty supports (Hehir & Associates, 2014; NYCDOE, 2017b; NYCDOE Department of Multiple Task Award Contracts, 2018; Programs, 2018). However, for inclusive educators who attended inclusive preservice teacher education programs, many systematic issues such as educational policies that enforce the use of standardized measures of intelligence (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016), not fully prepared colleagues (Avramidis et al., 2000; Buell et al., 1999; Rae et al., 2011), and a vague conceptualization of inclusive schooling (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016) challenge the enactment of inclusive practices and, in turn, have the potential to impact their beliefs and commitments as inclusive educators (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018). It is imperative that we understand how, when, and under what conditions these educators are, and are not, able to sustain their work.

Although inclusive practices demonstrate positive academic and social outcomes for all students and are necessitated by an increasingly diverse student body in U.S. schools, teachers who had attended inclusive teacher preparation programs have been and continue to teach within a context that challenges educators to sustain their inclusive commitments over several years of teaching practice. Given the sustained work in a contradictory context, even teachers who enter the classroom with inclusive commitments, inclusive teaching skills, and the capacity to negotiate decision making within these contradictions may struggle to maintain their inclusive beliefs over time.

Rationale

The rationale for this study comes from the fact that we do not know how alumni of inclusive preservice teacher education programs are perceiving their experiences enacting inclusive teaching, but we do know that conditions within which they are working challenge inclusive practice. We have little data on what it means to do inclusion under these conditions, specifically for educators who were prepared to do inclusion in their preservice teacher education programs. To continue to develop the quality of inclusive preservice teacher education, there is a need for an improved understanding of how in-service inclusive teachers who attended preservice inclusive teacher education programs already engage in inclusive practice and sustain their beliefs over the early years of their teaching practice. This study sought to know how and in what ways this population of teachers are achieving inclusive teaching and whether they are able to sustain their commitments to inclusivity.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how a sample of in-service teachers who attended preservice inclusive education programs described their beliefs and commitments to inclusivity, their efforts towards implementing inclusivity, and their prior experience in inclusive teacher education programs. Through a better understanding of challenges of practice that in-service inclusive educators described, more informed decisions can be made about the following: (a) how to design preservice inclusive education programs in order to better prepare them to sustain inclusive practices; (b) the kinds of professional development that can be provided in schools to support in-service inclusive educators in sustaining their practices; and (c) the types of resources that can be made available to support in-service inclusive educators in doing this work. Through a series of individual teacher interviews with in-service inclusive educators who

attended preservice inclusive education programs and review of teacher-provided artifacts of practice, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the beliefs and commitments to inclusive education of in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs?
    a. How have these beliefs evolved over time?
2. How do in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs, experience enactments of inclusion?
    a. What dilemmas/challenges do they experience?
    b. In what ways do they experience support in enacting inclusive practices?
    c. What rationales do they use to negotiate everyday classroom demands with their commitments to inclusivity?
3. What connections and disconnections do in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs, describe between their current practice and the goals of their preservice education programs?

Significance

By uncovering the beliefs, commitments, enactments, dilemmas, and challenges of inclusive in-service teachers with 3 or more years of classroom experience who attended inclusive preservice education programs, the findings from this study aim to support inclusive teacher preservice programs in strengthening the pedagogical practices they impart as well as the content of their courses. The research aims to help elementary and middle schools better design professional development to support and maintain inclusive practices and beliefs when novice inclusive teachers enter the classroom. This research also aims to allow both in-service and preservice inclusive teacher educators to rethink what is known about inclusion by further

unpacking the relationship between enactments of inclusivity and beliefs and commitments. This study builds on research that suggests enacting inclusivity is a stance towards decision making rather than a set of skills and practices. By hearing from current inclusive educators, this study provides an increased understanding of how teaching inclusively looks different for each educator and reveals how thinking inclusively requires a negotiation process.

Chapter 2 – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I begin by situating my study within the Disability Studies Education (DSE) tradition to present the theoretical framework in which the research methodologies and a teacher agency analytic framework for making sense of teacher beliefs, commitments, and rationales as well as the usage of the term *inclusive* are grounded. Then, I describe an ecological approach to teacher agency, wherein agency is seen as "an achievement that is the outcome of the interaction of the individual capacity with environing conditions" (Priestley et al., 2017, p. 17). I drew on Priestley et al.'s (2017) model for making sense of teacher agency that highlights past influences, current engagements, and future intentions. In what follows, I use that teacher agency framework to tease out what is currently known from the empirical literature about what happens when teachers set out with the intention of teaching with a philosophical commitment to inclusion and what we know about how they are able to sustain those commitments over time. As research on teacher enactments of inclusivity is limited, I also include literature on educators teaching with a commitment to a similar counter-normative belief system, social justice pedagogy.

Disability Studies in Education

The notion of *inclusive schooling* has become a slogan for equity pedagogy since its inception over 30 years ago (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). However, its meaning is somewhat ambiguous, with different definitions in use depending on the context; thus, teaching practices to promote inclusive schooling for students with disabilities are not always clear. In the United States, inclusion is most often understood in practice as a special education service delivery model, where students with disabilities and their general education peers are educated alongside one another in the same classroom (Baglieri, Bejoian et al., 2011; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). As

a result, the movement towards inclusive teaching in the United States has primarily adopted practices based on mainstream special education research (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011; Danforth & Naraian, 2015).

Theoretical framing grounded in special education, however, may not be able to fully conceptualize inclusive schooling (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011). If inclusive schooling is perceived as a broader movement towards cultivating schools that provide access to high-quality curriculum and instruction for all students, regardless of and attentive to diverse identities markers (including but not limited to disability labels, as defined in a more global context), then employing teaching practices grounded in special education research may not be able to support teachers fully in doing this work. Baglieri, Valle et al. (2011) have contended that albeit well intended, inclusion research that adopts the same epistemological frameworks as special education research has served to narrow research methods and pedagogical practices in inclusion as those methods are grounded in a system of education that has assumed the disability experience can be fully defined by characteristics internal to a disabled individual. For example, special education research on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education literacy classrooms has produced various reading interventions to support the neurobiological needs of learners, such as synthetic phonics and multisensory approaches which aim to support the memory capacity and word retrieval of students with reading needs (McMurray & Thompson, 2016). While approaches to teaching reading that stem from this research are significant contributions to the body of knowledge of how to support students with disabilities in inclusive literacy settings, this research often treats the reading needs of students with disabilities as solely a neurobiological condition without exploring how social categories (including the disability label) might impact the experiences (including experiences with print) of a student

with a disability in a literacy classroom. Issues around text selection for students with disabilities, for instance, often focus on questions of decodability and lexile level, without exploring whether the characters and setting are culturally sustaining and relatable. Through this study, I sought to employ theory that not only allows for a plurality of perspectives in understanding disability so that questions about various identity markers intersecting with the disability identity may be explored, but also employ theory that treats disability as an experience beyond the physical and mental impact it has on the individual (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011).

Scholarship in Disability Studies in Education (DSE) serves as a stronger theoretical ground to conceptualize inclusive schooling (Danforth & Naraian, 2015) because unlike mainstream special education, DSE can help bring a social and political consciousness to the study of disabled individuals (Baglieri, 2017; Danforth & Naraian, 2015) by allowing for multiple and nuanced ways of understanding disability (Baglieri, Bejoian et al., 2011). From a DSE perspective, disability is historically, politically, socially, culturally, and medically situated (Baglieri, Bejoian et al., 2011).

DSE is an outgrowth of the activism of individuals with disabilities and their families (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012; Shakespeare, 2013) and borrows from scholarship in disability studies to extend political consciousness for individuals with disabilities into educational contexts. To challenge the historical marginalization of individuals with disabilities, early disability studies scholars used a social model for conceptualizing disability rather than one that stems from psychology and medicine (Baglieri, 2017; Shakespeare, 2013). A medical model (typically adopted by mainstream special education) assumes that a disability is a natural impairment within the individual in need of remediation; in the social model, disability is understood as the product of the social, economic, cultural, and political context (Baglieri, 2017;

Riddell et al., 2001; Shakespeare, 2013). From a social model perspective, disability is distinguished from an impairment or physical limitation of the body (Baglieri, 2017; Shakespeare, 2013). In this line of thinking, the environment is comprised of barriers that limit access for particular types of bodies and minds. In turn, those barriers create disability categories. For instance, a schooling climate that conveys information solely via print text may in turn disable students who are not strong readers. Adopting a social model for understanding disability has enabled individuals with disabilities, their allies, and scholars to conceptualize disability as a minority identity and, in turn, expose discrimination arising from barriers to access to physical spaces (e.g., school buildings), employment opportunities, and rigorous academic curriculum (Shakespeare, 2013).

Annamma et al. (2016) have argued that in the past, scholars from outside of disabilities studies might not concern themselves with research about individuals with disabilities and that disability studies scholars have largely left racial categories unexamined in their work. One benefit, however, of viewing disability as more than an individual impairment is that it allows scholars to see how disability identity intermeshes with other marginalized identities such as poverty, race, and gender (Siebers, 2008, p. 95). A growing body of literature in critical race theory (CRT) has found that a disproportionate number of students from "non-dominant racial, ethnic, and linguistic [backgrounds] continue to be referred, labeled, and placed in special education" (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 10). These findings suggested that research exploring the intersectionality of race and disability may provide greater insight into the experiences of individuals with disabilities. Erevelles and Minear (2010), for example, have argued that some "differences coalesce to create a more abject form of oppression (e.g. being poor, black and disabled)" and that some of "these differences support both privilege/invisibility within the same

oppressed community (e.g. being black, wealthy and gay)" (p. 129). Rather than take an additive approach to studying an individual's multiple identities, Erevelles and Minear posited that an intersectional study should foreground actual experiences of individuals who exist at the intersection of multiple identity categories and examine "the structural conditions within which these social categories are constructed by, and intermeshed with each other in specific historical contexts" (p. 131). Considering an intersectional study of disability and other identity factors is especially important in U.S. schools because "the association of race with disability has been extremely detrimental to people of color in the U.S." (p. 132). The perceived fixed nature of disability is often used to justify discrimination against other groups through the attribution of a disability label (Annamma et al., 2016; Baynton, 2001; Davila, 2014; Ferri & Connor, 2010). Contemporarily, the overrepresentation of Black students in special education classes suggests that special education may be an insidious tool to re-segregate schools based on race (Annamma et al., 2016; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Harry & Klingner, 2006).

Within disability studies scholarship are some distinctions about the extent to which a fully social model can explain the life experiences of individuals with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2013; Siebers, 2013). According to Shakespeare, while the social model for understanding disability provides a useful analytical tool that allows for a better understanding of the contextual factors that disable individuals, it disregards the lived experience of physical and mental impairments (p. 217). Shakespeare argued that researchers of disabled individuals have found "it is very hard to distinguish clearly between the impact of impairment and the impact of social barriers" (p. 218). Further, mainstream special education scholars have contested the social model, arguing that teaching with this mindset leads to a lack of provision of support for

academic and behavioral needs for which scientific research has already found interventions (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011; Kauffman & Sasso, 2006; Naraian, 2016).

According to Siebers (2013), "some scholars complain that the medical model pays too much attention to embodiment, while the social model leaves it out of the picture" (p. 25). Taking a stance that disability is neither purely a social construction nor a medical embodiment, some disability studies scholars have begun to conceptualize disability as a form of "complex embodiment" (p. 25). In the words of Siebers, the theory of complex embodiment "raises awareness of the effects of disabling environments on people's lived experience of the body, but it emphasizes as well that some factors affecting disability, such as chronic pain, secondary health effects, and aging derive from the body" (p. 25). Within a complex embodiment paradigm, the lived experiences of disabled individuals are created through a reciprocal relationship between an individual's actual body and the social representations of that body (Siebers, 2013). Siebers argued that given a complex embodiment stance, the following three types of potential interactions coalesce to create the lived reality of a disabled individual:

1. "social representations…affect the experience of the body" (p. 25).
2. "the body possesses the ability to determine social representations" (p. 26).
3. "some situations exist where representations exert no control over the life of the body" (p. 26).

The philosophy of complex embodiment not only aims to theorize the experiences of disabled individuals in a better way, but to advance identity theory in general by proposing new ways to understand experiences that cannot be explained by social constructions (Siebers, 2013, p. 30). For instance, while femininity (like disability) may be a social construction, womanhood is also a meaningful and real experience that women embody in a complex way (p. 30).

DSE, as a subset of disability studies, applies these aforementioned theories about disability to specifically examine and hopefully enhance the educational experiences of persons

identified in part in terms of disability. In turn, DSE shines light on the features of accessible schools, classrooms, curriculum, and pedagogy. One significant consequence of medical model thinking about disability has been the creation of a separate system for education where special classes are comprised of students with similar disabilities receiving similar types of remediation (Baglieri, 2017). This special education system has, in turn, constrained the schooling opportunities for students with disabilities. It dictates which classes, teachers, and curricular content students with disabilities have access to (Baglieri, 2017). Employing a social model for disability has enabled scholars and educators in the DSE framework to reconsider schooling practices to reflect on "how schools and curriculum may be constructed and reformed to enable students with disabilities to gain access" to formal curricular content and participation with nondisabled peers rather than a bifurcated system (p. 6). According to Baglieri, Valle et al. (2011), there are three key considerations for conceiving of education from a DSE perspective:

1. perceiving ability and disability, and ideas about mastery and learning as fluid;
2. considering how the interactions and settings contribute to the creation of disability (i.e., make markers of difference/impairment meaningful as disablement);
3. querying how pull-out, tracking, or containment practices both mark individuals as disabled and/or limit their access to curriculum and learning. (p. 272)

As discussed at the beginning of this section, while traditional special education research is often employed in choosing practices for inclusive schooling and teaching, the tenets of DSE may better serve as scholarly foundation for inclusive schooling.

DSE as the Scholarly Foundation for Inclusive Schooling

Models of DSE-informed inclusive schooling utilize research on the experiences of students with disabilities in schools, not only to fight for the integration of individuals with disabilities in classrooms, but also to suggest how schooling in general can be reformed to support all students better. Within a DSE-informed conception of inclusive education, inclusion

is not a form of special education; rather, it is a way to reform all education through changes in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and school organization (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018). While DSE-informed inclusive schooling is similar to other identity-based school reform movements that have come before it, inclusive schooling forefronts disability as an identity category worthy of, not the exception to, inclusion (Slee, 2011). In other words, within a DSE-informed inclusive schooling model, segregated schooling cannot be justified simply by virtue of an individual's disability identity. Inclusivity has potential as a way to conceptualize the goals of schooling because it is fundamentally concerned with interrogating the cultural practices of schooling in order to move towards the provision to all students with quality education, not simply those for whom the school is currently designed (Baglieri, Bejoian et al., 2011, p. 2128).

Some critics of inclusive schooling have argued that placing students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms will not give them adequate support to learn the curriculum (Baglieri, 2017). However, these arguments fall short because it is not a reform effort aimed at the placement of student bodies. Instead, Baglieri, Valle et al. (2011) have argued that there is no such thing as "one-size-fits-all" curriculum and teaching (p. 272). According to Baglieri (2017), DSE-informed inclusive schooling "recognizes that injustices experienced by students with disabilities are rooted in systemic issues experienced by many others" (p. 7). A DSE-informed approach to inclusive schooling is intended to remove barriers to curricular content and academic participation for all students whom the current structures of schooling do not serve. As Slee (2011) has asserted, rather than the current schooling ethos that attempts to explain "children's failure, disengagement, distraction, anger and defiance in their genetic and medical profiles," inclusive education recognizes and represents those who have been marginalized from schooling and our greater society (p. 121). Further, DSE-informed inclusive schooling is a school reform

that aims to change society at large. Inclusive schooling advocates take the stance that removing barriers to learning is not the end of its reform effort, but rather the means to the ends of a great reform effort to make a more equitable society (Baglieri, 2017).

Within a DSE-informed inclusive schooling stance, teaching becomes a critical political act. In adopting a social model perspective on disability, inclusive educators must take note of intersectional identities and avoid using disability labels as justification to segregate individuals from general education settings (Slee, 2011). As such, an inclusive educator plans instruction that is intended to be accessible to the students present in the classroom from the onset rather than "retrofitting existing designs" (Valle & Connor, 2011, p. 77). According to Burgstahler (2006), a teacher makes academic content available to a wide range of students by considering "class climate, interaction, physical environments and products, delivery methods, information resources and technology, feedback, and assessment" to design "flexible curricular materials and activities" (para. 1).

Given a complex embodiment understanding of disability, a model for inclusive schooling that bridges multiple theoretical commitments must be adopted (Danforth & Naraian, 2015; Naraian, 2016). Inclusive educators cannot only treat disability as a social category but must also consider the lived bodily realities of disabled students (e.g., struggling to learn how to read, regulating impulses with difficulty, ambulating in a wheelchair, etc.). As Danforth and Naraian (2015) noted, inclusive education requires a conceptual base outside of special education, but it also should not "categorically exclude the scholarship of special educators" (p. 71). Inclusivity is a political project that works to reject entrenched beliefs in education that justify the segregation of disabled students. When taking a strict social construction stance on disability, some educators reject the use of pedagogical practices that find their origins in

mainstream special education research (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018). As part of the political project of inclusive education, however, pedagogical practices that find their origins in special education research may still be useful tools for liberation (Danforth & Naraian, 2015). Take, for example, the goal of teaching a dyslexic student to read. Graham and Griesbhaber (2008) have reasoned that the "dichotomisation of literacy instruction into phonics instruction versus a whole language approach fails to realise a fundamental tenet of providing equitable educational opportunities to diverse groups of children" (p. 557). They argued that the reading strengths of students fail to be realized when those strengths fail to fit into the reading program in use in a school. Thus, relying on methods for teaching reading that come from solely one theoretical paradigm (i.e., only phonics research from a mainstream special education background or only whole language research aligned with a social constructivist understanding of disability) may decrease a student's access to the curriculum and life-long literacy. From a complex embodiment perspective on disability, the use of mainstream special education research that has been conducted on supporting disabled readers through multisensory approaches to teaching phonics (Giess et al., 2012) may be a valuable tool for addressing some of the embodied differences of disability and, in turn, providing a child with increased access. In the same vein as this argument, Danforth and Naraian (2015) maintained that when

> teachers who are situated within the complex configuration of the schooling collectively make decisions about equitable practice, they cannot rely solely on abstract ideals to guide their decision making. They are also obligated to understand the unique needs and desires of specific groups that are affected by schooling. (p. 82)

Consequently, part of the work of teaching inclusively includes strategically and consciously using teaching practices that may not always conform neatly to teaching methods that stem from research falling into inclusive paradigms. That said, research has found that some specific skills and types of knowledge can benefit inclusive educators.

Teaching Inclusively from a Disability Studies-Informed Perspective

Empirical research has been conducted to identify what it means to teach inclusively. In general, research has shown that the knowledge teachers need to work inclusively is substantively different from the types of content and technical knowledge on which traditional teacher education programs focus. A broad theme across much of the research is that inclusive educators need to have a philosophical orientation towards inclusion (Gao & Mager, 2011; Hamre & Oyler, 2004; Titone, 2005). Titone (2005), who relied on focus groups of various constituencies as her data source, asserted that this philosophy should be earned by reflection, by struggling honestly with the basic problem involved, rather than adopted wholesale by preservice students without critical reflection. Hamre and Oyler (2004) had similar findings, but relied on only a six-person, self-selected, highly motivated sample of preservice teachers for data collection. Since these preservice teachers already demonstrated a high level of commitment to inclusion before study, the article did not address concerns related to preservice teachers' resistance to the concept of inclusion.

Despite a strong belief among scholars that preservice teachers should be oriented towards inclusion, which is fundamentally opposed to the bifurcated mainstream special education model, much of the research has suggested that teachers still need to understand the current special education system in order to combat it (Allday et al., 2013). Given that inclusion is not a disability-specific education reform but rather speaks to general notions of equity in schooling, some of the research has addressed the need for preservice teachers to understand the connections between disability and other forms of marginalization (Kozleski et al., 2013; Wolfberg et al., 2009). Working out of a western state that has sizable Latino/a and Native American populations, Kozleski et al. (2013) found that preservice participants needed to

conceptualize identity in terms of "race, gender, culture, power and abilities" (p. 159) in order to engage critically with issues of social justice. Likewise, Wolfberg et al. (2009), whose work is situated in California, found that knowledge on how to teach English should be taught coterminously with special education and general education knowledge.

Research on inclusive preservice teacher education has found that inclusive educators can be taught specific skills to enact the knowledge they have about inclusion. Those skills include collaborating with colleagues and families (Allday et al., 2013; Harvey et al., 2010; Titone, 2005; Voltz, 2003), taking an inquiry stance on practice (Titone, 2005), and providing students with individualized instruction (Allday et al., 2013; Titone, 2005). In her survey of 252 teacher preparation programs, Voltz (2003) found 25% of preservice teacher education programs used a collaborative infusion model for teacher preparation, wherein special education teacher educators and general education teacher educators worked collaboratively to "co-plan and co-teach courses and/or field experiences" to support novice teachers studying in general education teacher education programs (p. 5). She found that while this form of teacher preparation was time-consuming for faculty, faculty engaging in the practice reported that it supported their students in preparing to collaborate with colleagues in inclusive classrooms because it modeled what the collaboration actually looks like and provided for more "meaningful integration of special education content" (p. 10). Voltz (2003) found that general education preservice teachers who engaged in an inclusion-focused preparation program expressed greater willingness to coteach with a special education teacher in the classroom (p. 6). Similarly, in Harvey et al.'s (2010) survey of faculty perceptions of inclusive teacher preparation, faculty respondents reported that they offer opportunities for collaboration across disciplines and majors during field experiences in order to promote collaboration when teaching. However, the faculty also reported that

limitations to “resources, money, time, and co-teaching opportunities” as well as knowledge of special education teaching methods hindered these efforts (p. 31). In a relatively small-scale study with a series of 10, 2-hour focus groups conducted with K-12 teachers, preservice teachers, university faculty, school administrators, and families of children with disabilities, all of whom were experienced with inclusion, Titone (2005) reported that the theme of collaboration across professional relationships as well as with families emerged as a key skill for inclusive educators. Her study participants believed that “holding discussions” between parent and teachers (p. 26), the ability to teach in a team with a general educator and special educator, and the ability to preserve time to talk with colleagues were all needed to teach inclusively.

While the skill of collaboration is key to teaching inclusively, other findings from Titone’s (2005) study also suggested that it is crucial for inclusive educators to be able to disrupt American norms about ability through the use of an inquiry stance. Titone reported the participants in her study believed that general education teachers initially face the fear of not knowing how to support students with disabilities in their classrooms. These teachers may benefit from exposure to students with disabilities on the preservice level through classroom observation and interaction. This can reduce stigma, help educators build empathy, and increase the educators’ professional comfort working with students with disabilities. Titone found that once educators have this familiarity, they can start to view inclusive practice as experimenters. Moreover, Titone wrote that after this comfort level is developed, educators “can start to view inclusion in this more familiar context of teaching as an intellectual, in vivo activity that requires creativity and resourcefulness” (p. 17).

Reaffirming the mandates of IDEA, which calls for an IEP for students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2004), several researchers discovered that students

with disabilities in inclusive settings benefit from individualized instruction (Allday et al., 2013; Titone, 2005). In Titone's (2005) study, participants reported that inclusive educators must be able to determine the problems with pre-existing curricula, adapt pre-existing curricula to meet individual students' needs, and research other curricular options to support diverse learners better.

Despite the suggestions from these findings, the majority of studies investigating preservice inclusive programs produced results after a short period of time (e.g., in surveys right after a class on inclusive teaching was taught), and rarely following up with participants over time (Kurniawati, 2014). Rae et al. (2011), for example, found that teacher knowledge on an inclusive schooling topic is sometimes resistant to change in short-term curricular programming, and follow-up sessions without supported practice may result in decreased knowledge (p. 28). They argued that there is a need for a "combination of in-service training and coaching on the job" with the hopes of ensuring that "knowledge gains due to training are not lost over time" (Rae et al., 2011, p. 28). This lack of longitudinal research leads to gaps in understanding whether and how content knowledge and practices taught in preservice programs inform practices in the classroom.

In Allday et al.'s (2013) study of 109 university preservice elementary education programs, the researchers were able to identify that elementary preservice teacher education programs were not providing much preparation in content knowledge and practices that previous research suggested was required, but they did not yet know how much preparation preservice teachers did need in each of these content areas. They found that only 7% to 10% of the coursework that preservice teacher candidates were currently taking was related to educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings. In fact, they discovered that of an average of 59.80

credit hours of preservice teacher education coursework elementary teacher candidates were receiving, only .13 hours were devoted to collaboration with colleagues and 1.12 hours on average were utilized to provide instruction on how to differentiate instruction for students with disabilities. Allday et al. hypothesized that high levels of teacher burnout may be related to a lack of preparation for working in inclusive settings. Their research suggested, however, that it is not yet known exactly "how many classes or credits would be ideal to result in adequate preparation for pre-service elementary education teachers working with students with disabilities in inclusive settings" (p. 308). Further research into the experiences of current inclusive educators who were prepared inclusively may provide additional insight into which preservice coursework best prepared them to sustain their work, and what and how much coursework content they may have additionally benefited from at the preservice level.

Conceptualizing Teacher Agency

In this section, I present teacher agency as a tool for conceptualizing how educators enact and sustain enactments of inclusivity since how teachers negotiate competing interests and theoretical models is essential to the design of teacher preparation for inclusive schooling (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018). Teachers and schools that make attempts at enacting inclusive schooling are situated in a legal system and culture that, at times, complicate the adoption of an inclusive schooling model (Slee, 2011). Extrapolating on this point, Danforth and Naraian (2015) have noted that "advocates are embedded within specific historically produced sociocultural contexts where meanings of learning and achievement, ability/disability, success/failure are continually contested, negotiated, transformed, and abandoned" (p. 74). Given how contextual factors continually contest meanings, they reasoned that it might be more fruitful to think of inclusive schooling as an ever-evolving process of decision making rather than a potential

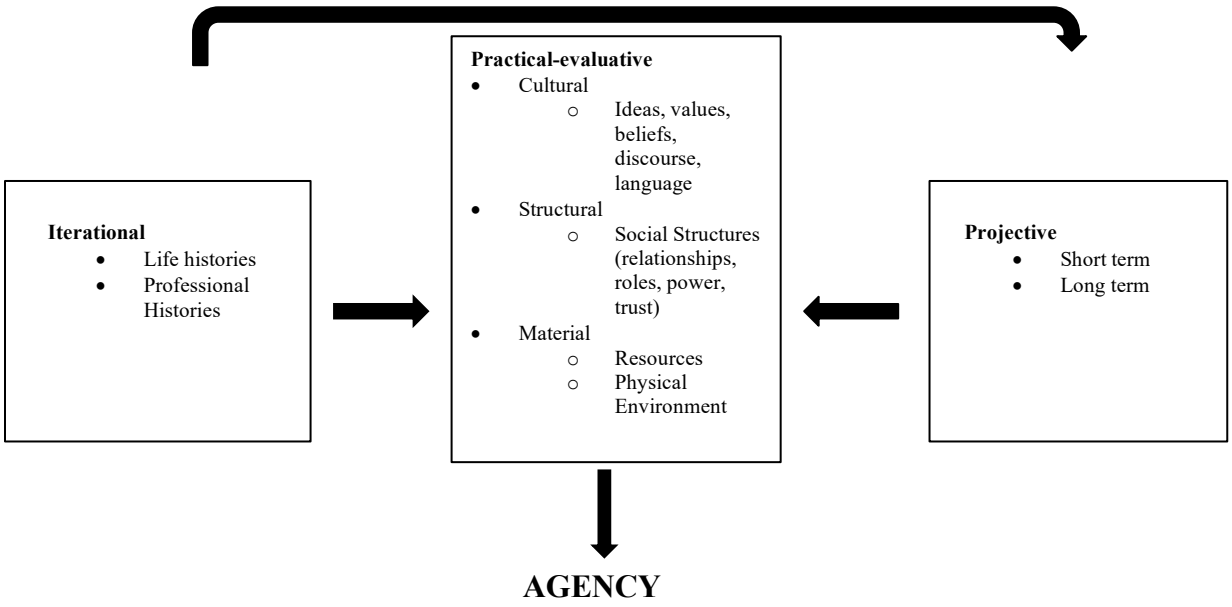
outcome (Danforth & Naraian, 2015). As such, Danforth and Naraian have contended that teachers need to achieve a situated form of teacher agency if they are to negotiate competing interests successfully within this process-oriented approach to inclusive practice.

The question of how to develop and sustain democratic teacher practice has challenged teacher educators for over a century. In *Relation of Theory to Practice*, Dewey (1974/1904) called for democratic classrooms arguing that teacher education required the connection between theory and practice and the treatment of would-be teachers as intellectual decision makers to achieve this ideal. However, the education reform efforts of the 1990s and early 2000s deemphasized the role of the teacher as an agent in achieving reform by placing emphasis on prewritten curriculum and standardized assessment (Priestley et al., 2017). In calling for inclusive schooling, more recent policy initiatives have returned to the necessity for teacher agency (i.e., "active contribution to shaping their work and its condition" (p. 1). These reform efforts, though, may not in fact offer educators with the space, cultures, structures, and relationship building conducive to achieving agency (Priestley et al., 2017). Scholars Biesta et al. (2015) developed a teacher agency framework designed to understand the extent to which "experienced teachers achieve agency in their day-to-day working contexts…on factors that promote or inhibit such agency" (p. 2). In their research on the role of beliefs in Scottish teacher agency, Biesta et al. combined sociological agency models with teacher education research to theorize teacher agency. They argued that the achievement of teacher agency is informed by past experiences (the iterational dimension), future goals (the projective dimension), and the present (the practical-evaluative dimension) (Biesta et al., 2015). The iterational dimension includes a teacher's personal and professional biographies; the projective dimension includes long-term and short-term potential futures as she/he conceives them; and the practical-evaluative dimension

constitutes her/his active, in-the-moment decision making informed by cultural, structural, and material influences. Context, time, as well as an individual's life history inform all three dimensions of this teacher agency framework, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Model for Teacher Agency



Source: Biesta et al., 2015, p. 627

Drawing on the model for teacher agency developed by Biesta et al. (2015), Li and Ruppar (2021) conducted a systematic review of studies which use teacher agency to conceptualize inclusive teaching. This review aimed to summarize factors which enhance and constrain teacher agency for inclusive education. The findings from their review led them to identifying the following five core aspects of teacher agency for inclusive schooling: "inclusive teacher identity, professional competence, inclusive professional philosophy, autonomy, and reflexivity" (p. 48). Li and Ruppar argued that these core aspects of teacher agency may serve as "temporal units of analysis" that can guide the data collection and analysis of empirical research.

Within these models for teacher agency, researchers have taken an ecological stance on teacher agency, arguing that teacher discourses are "subject to structural, cultural and material influences" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 629). They noted that teacher agency may be fostered or inhibited as a result of a teacher's "positioning within their professional environment" as well as the larger policy context (p. 629). They also found that while teacher agency was dependent in part on a teacher's personal individual characteristics such as pedagogical knowledge and skills, "teachers struggle to locate their work with deep consideraton of the purposes of education" as a result of the larger culture of schooling in which they work (p. 636). These findings suggested that the ecological factors influencing teacher agency play a significant role in the achievement of teacher agency.

Agency in Inclusive Schooling

The role of ecology in enacting teacher agency poses a challenge for inclusive teacher education because inclusive educators are operating within policy contexts where competing belief systems collide (Danforth & Naraian, 2015). As discussed in Chapter 1, these opposing interests challenge the capacity of inclusive educators to sustain their belief system. Borrowing from the work of Third World femininst writers on *oppositional consciousness*, Danforth and Naraian theorized a form of agency that attends to how inclusive educators commit to, believe in, and enact socially just practice within contradictory contexts. They proposed that inclusive educators require a particular type of thinking that allows them to enact practices that may not always align with their ideals, but still serve the interests of children, families, and communities. In this form of situated agency, teachers might "actively push back against labels in one context, but may just as equally use them, if necessary, to obtain the supports required by a student that are not made freely available to her" (p. 81). For instance, a teacher might deliberately pursue

obtaining IEPs for students to get them access to extra time to complete standardized tests while simultaneously criticizing how state exams are a restrictive form of assessment and design classroom projects that better assess student learning. While seeking accommodations for state exams validates the existence of these tests as a measure of student learning and stands in opposition to an inclusive teaching philosophy, it may also be in the child's best interests to perform adequately on the required exam, and thus the child may benefit of the accommodations.

In sum, this view on teaching inclusively rejects a binary approach to understanding teacher practices as either "inclusive" or "exclusive." Instead, it suggests that teaching inclusively is a mindset and decision-making process that guide educators to adopt a plurality of possible teaching practices, based not on a measure of what constitutes inclusivity, but instead premised on the question of which course(s) of action best serve the interests of the child and his/her family. As I discuss below, the literature demonstrates how some educators are able to sustain their commitments to inclusive practices while negotating competing interests. Using a DSE theoretical lens combined with an inclusive teacher agency framework in the sections that follow, I conduct a review of the existing empirical literature on how teachers are able to enact inclusive practice and what is known about how/whether inclusively educated teachers stay committed to these beliefs over time. Included in this review is research on/with teachers engaging in social justice pedagogy as well as inclusive pedagogy as the types of commitments that social justice-oriented teachers make to diversity are similar to those in the inclusive paradigm. As research on teacher enactments of inclusive schooling is limited, drawing on research from social justice pedagogy in this literature review allows me to explore more thoroughly the ways teachers with counter-normative philosophical commitments remain engaged in those commitments in their practice.

Enacting and Sustaining Inclusive Practice

Researchers have worked to understand the ways in which inclusive educators enact their practice by investigating the roles of collaboration with colleagues, teacher learning communities, and institutional context, both at the preservice and in-service levels of teaching practice. Prevalent across the literature is the idea that when teachers are able to sustain progressive teaching in diverse settings, their work is often "messy" and reflects a teacher's need to make sense of contradictory obligations, at times resulting in the adoption of practices that may only conditionally or opportunistically support inclusivity (D'Amant, 2012; Naraian, 2010, 2014; Thorius, 2016). Specifically, three major themes emerge from the literature that suggest the types of contextual complications teachers face in enacting inclusive schooling. Those themes include: (a) colleague and school staff mindsets (Broderick et al., 2012; Dotger & Ashby, 2010; McKay, 2016; Rood & Ashby, 2020; Rood, 2018; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013); (b) accountability culture (Buchanan, 2015; Day et al., 2005; Naraian, 2014); and (c) marginalized teaching position (D'Amant, 2012; Howes et al., 2011; Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016). Below I discuss each of these themes in further detail to demonstrate the need for additional research to determine how teachers perceive their ability to sustain enactments of inclusive practices over time and how they do or do not attempt to maintain their commitments in practice, given these contextual complications.

The Influence of Colleague and Staff Mindset

Despite the deliberate designs of preservice inclusive programs to promote inclusive thinking, findings from the study of different models for inclusive preservice education, including student teaching placements, university and school partnerships, and apprenticeships, indicated that inclusive preservice teaching is often mediated by ways of thinking about

education of more experienced teachers in placement schools (Dotger & Ashby, 2010; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). In their study of inclusive preservice teachers, Dotger and Ashby (2010) posited that the identities of student teachers in an inclusive preservice program were often influenced by faculty in field placement schools where "varying degrees of commitment" to inclusive philosophy were practiced (p. 114). While university-based faculty in the inclusive education preservice program where they studied had worked to support novice inclusive educators by integrating inclusive theory into "in-the-trenches practice," they postulated that the conjunction of field experiences with theory mitigated student teacher beliefs about inclusivity (p. 115). Dotger and Ashby investigated how inclusive preservice teachers described their inclusivity with an individual who reflected a more mainstream view of special education practice. To conduct this research, they invited students to complete a simulated "getting acquainted conference" with a pretend paraprofessional (p. 118). The actors portraying the paraprofessional were trained to use "traditionally exclusive" language triggers in these conversations (p. 123). Dotger and Ashby found that while initially students adopted an inclusive stance in their conversations, they quickly transitioned into more conditional talk about inclusivity, at times espousing approval for elements of segregated teaching practice. The authors concluded that despite professional preparation in inclusive theory, novice inclusive educators were likely to modify their stance in light of the advanced years of experience and contrasting philosophy of a colleague (p. 126). While this study did not provide a truly authentic look into teaching practice because an actor conducted the conversations between colleagues, this study highlighted the contingent nature of novice-inclusive educator speech and how the greater experience of a colleague may easily influence the ways newer teachers come to understand inclusivity.

Methodologically, Dotger and Ashby (2010) did not fully explore with participants the rationale behind their speech actions. While the authors did conduct debrief interviews with participants to discuss the mock conversations with the paraprofessional actor, they did not indicate whether they asked the novice-inclusive educators why their talk about inclusivity shifted throughout the conversations. Instead, they assumed that the shifts in inclusive educator talk signified a waffling of belief system about inclusivity spurred by a more experienced colleague. It is potentially possible, however, that the novice-inclusive educators may in fact have purposefully made changes in the language they used around inclusivity to better collaborate with the paraprofessional in the interview. Since collaboration is a hallmark of inclusive practice, these participants may have been hoping to build a relationship with a collaborator before introducing a counter-normative mindset. Discussion of the perceptions of the participants into how and why language about inclusivity shifted when they came in contact with a more experienced colleague who held a traditional special education mindset could have provided further insight into the types of decisions that inclusive educators make when enacting their practice.

It is potentially possible to believe that once a teacher has graduated from an inclusive preservice teacher education program and works in his/her own classroom (free from a cooperating teacher), the mindsets of colleagues may no longer impact a teacher's ability to enact inclusive practice. However, research has found that other school-based staff often play a role in either hindering or fostering inclusivity in novice educators. Broderick et al. (2012) created and facilitated their own inquiry circle of seven first-year educators and one of their former professors. All of the teacher-participants were graduates of the same inclusive preservice program. This inquiry group used shared theoretical text and discussion to investigate how they

> might nurture and develop their own emerging identities as inclusive educators and their own understandings of disability that are informed by DSE perspectives while often feeling like they operate on a day-to-day basis as "cog in the machine" of the special education bureaucracy. (p. 827)

Using a collaborative inquiry methodology, each participant in the circle pursued his/her own inquiry question. Data sources for each inquiry included each participant's own reflective journals, student work, classroom artifacts, written essays by participants, and dialogue/ discussion during collaborative inquiry meetings and via email. This inquiry group found that teaching inclusively is isolating. To sustain inclusive teaching, there is a need to build "connections to and alliances with a community of colleagues/teachers/students/families/ activities who are…in pursuit of inclusive educational goal[s]" (p. 837). Broderick et al. contended that preservice teacher education programs might play a role in fostering these types of communities post-graduation through outreach to alumni. This study confirmed some of Dotger and Ashby's (2010) conjectures that colleagues play a role in sustaining inclusive mindset but is methodologically limited. Broderick et al. (2012) investigated their own inquiry group of like-minded inclusive educators and suggested that participation in this experience helps them to sustain their practice. This study did not explore the experiences of graduates of inclusive preservice teacher education programs who were not able to participate in an ongoing inquiry process with colleagues, so it did not provide insight into how educators without the support of a continued university partnership perceived their ability to sustain enactments of inclusive schooling.

McKay (2016) also investigated inclusive educators in their first year of teaching practice. She explored the emotional response of six participants from their final year of university-based undergraduate preservice teacher education into their first year of teaching. McKay contended that novice educators develop an inclusive teacher identity through a

nonlinear process, spurred in part by teachers' emotional responses to student difference. By and large, participants began their work using teacher-centered practices as a survival mechanism to attend to their lack of experience working in diverse classrooms. The workload required by these pedagogical practices caused fatigue and anxiety and, in turn, ended up shifting participants towards more student-centered classrooms that included peer tutoring and student choice over resource use.

In this study, the participants who were more supported during the first year of teaching (e.g., having a teacher coach) demonstrated an easier time "responding to students with different learning needs in a variety of ways" (McKay, 2016, p. 394). The supported teachers made more connections between inclusive theory and the pedagogical practices with which they were engaging. In turn, they engaged in more critical reflection on moments of rupture, forcing them to attempt new ways to address learning dilemmas. McKay's work suggested that novice teachers who have more experienced teacher coaches or supportive administrators, not just like-minded colleagues, are more likely to grow and sustain an inclusive teaching practice as taught in a university-based preservice program. While all of the study participants engaged in and around dilemmas to meet diverse learning needs, those who had a more experienced educator to support them were more likely to select teaching strategies based on reflection.

Likewise, in two papers that reported out on the data of a larger phenomenological interview study with current public school teachers who each championed a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and social justice teaching identity, Rood and Ashby (2020) and Rood (2018) found that consistent lack of authentic administrative support was a common reason for participants to feel isolated in their work and consider leaving their public school teaching positions. Rood (2018) contended that not "belonging" within a school community led to

participants "doubting and reconsidering their capacity to make any real or sustained change" (pp. 13-14). On the other hand, some participants described how a school administrator's "open and public expression about the impact that the demands and stressors of accountability and standardization had on their daily work" played a role in those educators developing a "shared sense of place and positionality" (p. 13). While this study only collected data from DSE-informed educators without also speaking to the school administrators, it provides helpful insights into how relationships with school administrators may constrain or enhance a DSE-informed educators through the type of support they provide.

Key among all the literature on sustaining inclusive practice was the idea that teachers working in isolation struggle to sustain their beliefs, while those who benefit from the support of like-minded colleagues (Dotger & Ashby, 2010), critical friends (Broderick et al., 2012), a mentor (McKay, 2016), or administrators (Rood, 2018; Rood & Ashby, 2020) are more likely to engage in inclusive practices. However, much of this research did not trace inclusive teachers beyond their first year of classroom practice (Broderick et al., 2012; McKay, 2016), nor did it explore with educators the reasons behind their seeming expressions of shifting beliefs beyond feelings of isolation. There remains a need to better understand how inclusive educators' commitments to and enactments of inclusivity are influenced by relationships with colleagues.

Enacting and Sustaining Inclusivity in an Accountability Culture

The literature has suggested that in addition to the mindsets of colleagues, the ability of inclusive educators to enact and sustain inclusive schooling may be impacted positively or negatively by the policy culture of a school and the state or country in which that school is situated. The work of Waitoller and Kozleski (2013), which looked specifically at preservice inclusive educators in their student teaching placements, found that school policies may impact

the beliefs of beginning inclusive educators. The authors posited that novice educators teaching within the context of a university inclusive education program and its three professional development school partnerships developed their inclusive identities across the boundaries of different institutions (i.e., the boundaries of their university-based preservice education program and of the professional development school where they are teaching). Waitoller and Kozleski discovered that the novice-inclusive educators in their program appropriated tools associated with inclusive education (e.g., differentiated instruction, co-teaching, or cultural responsiveness) from the university, but these tools were mediated by the policies that operated within the professional development school (p. 42). For instance, they found that "teachers differentiated instruction by segregating students into ability profiles according to their school district's classification framework for reading performance" (p. 42). This interpretation of "differentiation," an approach designed to promote inclusive practice, instead created a more segregated classroom environment because of the policies in place in the school district where differentiation was being implemented (p. 43). Given this finding, Waitoller and Kozleski suggested that inclusive teacher education programs that use professional development school partnerships need to "explicitly communicate and negotiate" tools among various stakeholders, including novice educators (p. 43).

However, this study did not fully explore the novice educators' perspectives of why they were using tools differently across boundaries. Power relations inherent in the student teaching experience may have been a factor, for example. To assume that novice-inclusive educators' *belief system* is shifting because of their use of materials in a policy-driven teaching context overlooks other reasons these new educators may be choosing to collaborate with and/or abide by the preferences of their more experienced colleagues in materials use. Given the short nature

of student teaching experiences, it is possible that inclusive student teachers choose to adopt the practices of their placement schools, even if they do not agree with those practices because there is scarce time to shift the mindsets of their colleagues.

Similarly, Naraian (2014) found that school policies on how a school year is structured play a factor in a teacher's ability to enact inclusivity. Naraian conducted a review of the data she had previously collected from four different studies on inclusive practices. In this review, she reanalyzed data to determine "the particular conflicts and struggles that characterize the engagement of school practitioners seeking to implement inclusively oriented practices" (p. 1). A primary finding of her analysis was that there was an incompatibility between how time is understood in general education contexts versus special education contexts. Naraian argued that the general education system is based on the developmental assumption that student academic readiness can be determined by chronological age, while special education uses time as a tool of accountability to provide individualized education catered to a student's needs. Special education teachers, general education teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and therapists all reported that the structure of the general education school day and academic year did not fully meet the needs of students with disabilities who required more individualized goal-based instruction. This finding suggested that teacher enactments of inclusive schooling may be inhibited by the underlying ideologies of the school system in which they teach, regardless of their mindsets about working inclusively. Without a restructuring of the ideology underlying the construction of the general education system, teachers may always need to negotiate the way time is conceptualized in order to enact inclusivity and, in turn, may take actions that do not neatly align with skills and practices stemming from the literature on inclusive teaching because of the restrictions on their school scheduling.

Research on social justice pedagogy has found that educators, who operate within contexts where larger state-level or national education reform efforts are seemingly antithetical to their beliefs, may struggle to sustain their practice if they are unable to make connections between their beliefs and the current reform (Buchanan, 2015; Day et al., 2005). Day et al. (2005) found that for educators to sustain their work through a reform, they must be able to "make connections between the priorities of the school and their individual, personal, professional and collective identity" (p. 575). More telling in their research was that even though educators may "mobilise 'occasional identities'" in response to certain circumstances, beliefs about teaching often formed at an early life stage are difficult to change (p. 575). In fact, Buchanan (2015) found that early teaching experiences play an especially significant role in the development of teacher identity. This suggests that if an inclusive teacher identity is not core to an educator, it may not be easy to sustain throughout different contexts.

In her study, Buchanan (2015) examined how California teachers were "shaped by reform contexts and discourses, as well as how they resist and negotiate in order to create a place for themselves in both their schools and the current national policy and reform climate" (p. 700). She found that educators whose identities meshed with a school culture "stepped up" in their practice by exhibiting an agency that went "above and beyond the perceived expectations of her role" (p. 710). Moreover, educators who had a lack of fit between identity and school culture "pushed back" or "reject[ed], negotiated[ed], or reconfigure[d] particular school and district policies with which they d[id] not agree" (p. 710). Despite these two forms of teacher agency, there were forces teachers could not "push back against" to be the "kind of teachers they wanted to be" (p. 711). While eight out of nine of her study participants were critical of standardized assessments, Buchanan found that for all participants, the "preoccupation with the new forms of

testing indicates that the use of standardized assessment measures to drive classroom instruction has become a taken-for-granted way of thinking about teaching and learning" (p. 713). They still altered their instructional practice to mesh with the demands of standardized measures and used test scores as a measure of their own success. The use of measurable performance became an "unexamined influence" on teacher practice that the participants did not fully reject (p. 713). Buchanan discovered that the educators who worked in more collaborative contexts with philosophically aligned colleagues were more likely to push back against the use of standardized assessments. Her research suggested that for teachers to sustain their counter-normative practice within an accountability context, they may need to avoid working in isolation. This study confirmed the need for like-minded colleagues as a resource for progressive educators when operating within a policy context that restricts counter-normative teaching.

Marginalized Teaching Role

Another factor that the literature suggested impacts inclusive educator practice is an educator's role within a school or the society in which they work (D'Amant, 2012; Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016). Since in practice, teaching students with disability labels and general education students in the same classroom often requires a special education and general education teacher to collaborate, Naraian (2010) used a case study methodology to look at how a special educator constructed her inclusive teaching identity in relation to her role in the classroom. Naraian identified that a special educator's inclusive identity was positioned in relation to her colleagues and the broader school culture about special education. Throughout the course of the year studied, the special education teacher co-taught with two different co-teachers in the same Integrated Co-Teaching Classroom (ICT).[1] This shift in her collegial relations

[1] ICT classes have two teachers assigned to them, one special education-certified and one general education-certified. Students with disabilities and general education students are educated in the same classroom.

changed the way she identified as an inclusive educator. In the first half of the year, this educator saw herself as "an educator striving to create a caring community" (p. 1681). Naraian contended that this identity was built in relation to her cooperating teacher, who took the lead in designing and delivering academic content instruction. She was forced into a "disempowering" position by virtue of the way the role of the special education teacher was constructed. Additionally, her interactions on her larger grade team further subordinated her professional identity.

When her co-teacher left for a maternity leave, however, this special educator took the lead in teaching the first-grade room, bringing about a new vision for her inclusive identity. As she took on more curriculum work and broader classroom management, she questioned her previous stance on the social-emotional well-being of students and took up a teaching style that more heavily emphasized behavioral accountability as a means to accomplish academic goals. As she felt more empowered, she "pushed for recognition of her re-fashioned identity" in non-classroom spaces by requesting a general education teaching placement for next academic year (p. 1683).

Naraian (2010) found that inclusive teaching practice was heavily mediated by the ways special education and general education were viewed within a schooling context. In this study, the general education teacher was seen as the lead teacher and the special education teacher was a supporting teacher. While the primary participant in this study viewed herself as inclusive, her ability to enact inclusivity morphed in relation to the ways she was disempowered and empowered by her context. Within a teaching context that was divided by special and general education, the creation of an inclusive teaching identity, which did not exist in either space, became challenging for a special education teacher to adapt.

They maintain a ratio of 12 students with disabilities to 1 special education-certified teacher through the two-teacher model. The phrase "co-teacher" is often used to describe the relationship between the two teachers.

Thorius (2016) studied how special education teachers saw themselves before, during, and after participating in an inclusively oriented researcher-facilitated teacher learning community. Similar to Naraian (2010), Thorius (2016) argued that inclusive teacher identity is informed by participating in activities, social relationships, and how individuals "cognitively make sense of who they are" as they perform (p. 1328). By analyzing transcripts of seven inquiry group sessions of special educators, Thorius found that the special educators shifted their self-perceptions in relation to the introduction of artifacts of inclusive education such as the Universal Design for Learning (UDL)[2] framework. At the onset of the inquiry group, special education teachers positioned themselves as diagnosticians and remediators for disabled students. After the introduction of inclusive artifacts, Thorius discovered that tensions arising in the existing identities of special educators caused them to shift their identity into educators who ensure all students have access to academic content. Despite the identity shift, Thorius's research also suggested that special education teacher identity was largely constructed in relation to how the special education teachers were marginalized in the school setting. As the educators in this study became more aware of the ways their practice constrained the success of students, they became more aware of "issues of fairness around their access to material and other resources, general educators' responsibility for the success of students with dis/abilities and histories of interactions in their particular schools which excluded them from their general education colleagues" (p. 1338). The works of both Naraian (2010) and Thorius (2016) suggested that research should further investigate how the marginalization of special educators, as the norm of American schooling, impacts the perception of special educators to actualize inclusive practice. This

[2] Organized around three principles (multiple means representation, action/expression, and engagement), Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a method of instructional design that demands a lens of accessibility at the onset of planning (Thorius, 2016).

research also begs the question of whether general education teachers, a less marginalized role in most schooling contexts, enact inclusive practices differently than their special education-certified peers. This line of inquiry may be especially important because general education teachers engage in less collaboration with colleagues and therefore may feel less pressure to negotiate colleague mindsets during their instructional planning and delivery.

Outside of a U.S.-specific context, researchers have also identified that teachers' sense of marginalization from the broader society plays a role in their inclusive teaching practice. D'Amant (2012) investigated how historical circumstances influence the construction of educator identities in the context of a nationwide inclusive education reform in South Africa. Her study explored the narratives of 20 teachers in rural South Africa who were participating in a National Department of Education pilot project to implement inclusive schooling practices. This study is uniquely significant because the rural schools where these teachers lived and worked have a long history of "subordination and marginalization" as a result of South African Apartheid. Participants in this study were entrenched in a "deep culture" of "social exclusion and non-participation" that impacted the traditional schooling values of the region (p. 54). Having never before been perceived as "agents of transformation," participants were thrown into what D'Amant labeled a "representational crisis" (McLaren, 1995, as cited in D'Amant, 2012, p. 54). Enacting inclusive reform required participants to shift their professional and personal identities, in turn shifting their own association with the historic roots of exclusion and segregation that they faced personally, as well as "traditional assumptions about intelligence and ability that exist within a deep culture of inequality and social exclusion" (p. 56). While D'Amant found that participants engaged with inclusive reform at varying levels, she argued that the act of adopting a national policy of inclusive schooling might serve as an act of colonization on educators who are

not liberated. She urged that "a politics of involvement should consider where methods of implementing policy reflect the consciousness of the teachers themselves and reflect a commitment to working with teachers towards transformation" (p. 59). As a result, she concluded that viewing rural South African teachers as deficient when they do not adopt inclusive practices mandated by the state is misleading.

Using two unique and successful cases of inclusive teacher development—one in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) and another in Bangladesh, Howes et al. (2011) investigated inclusive teacher development in relation to contextual influences, including sociopolitical, cultural, religious, and institutional. They argued that too often, inclusive teacher development programs are focused on developing inclusive practices and beliefs in isolation of the context in which development will take place. They contended that this type of development results in a teacher's sense of "inadequacy" and inability to "change anything given the challenges of their context, or disinterest in what to them remain irrelevant and only partially understood ideas" (p. 627). In the two cases presented in this study, teachers were able to implement successful inclusive practice as a result of the sense of ownership they had over their practice. For instance, in the example in PDR, the teachers focused less on being trained and more on "taking opportunities to work together on key questions such as, 'how do I think my students learn best?'" (p. 627). The findings of these studies suggested that context may not serve as a barrier to inclusive practice if a reform effort provides teachers with ways to view themselves as agents within it.

Conclusion

The research in this empirical literature review showed that enacting inclusive teaching is contingent on factors both internal to the individual teacher, such as their belief system, and the

external environment, such as the policies of the school where he/she works (Dotger & Ashby, 2010; Howes et al., 2011; Naraian, 2010; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). While teacher education programs may play a role in how novice teachers formulate inclusive belief systems, early teaching experiences (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013), colleague beliefs (Dotger & Ashby, 2010), school policies (Naraian, 2010), and teachers' entrenched beliefs about ability (D'Amant, 2012) heavily influenced whether or not teachers perceived their ability to enact inclusive practice. However, research has found that without the support of like-minded individuals such as mentors (McKay, 2016), colleagues (Broderick et al., 2012), and adminstrators (Rood, 2018; Rood & Ashby, 2020), it may be challenging to enact inclusive teaching. Further, Naraian (2014) contended that "working within contexts configured by such conflicting priorities and visions meant that…[participants']…decision making in relation to everyday classroom practice may not always have been neatly distinguishable as indicators of an equity pedagogy" (p. 24). It follows that the contextual factors mitigating teacher capacity to enact inclusivity fully, coupled with teacher education discourses that conceptualize schooling as either inclusive or exclusive, may impact whether teachers perceive themselves as teaching inclusively (Naraian, 2014). The literature suggests a need for further research on teachers who have developed an inclusive belief system in their preservice education and perceive themselves as able to sustain those beliefs over time. The present study sheds light on whether teachers think the belief system they cultivated in their preservice program adequately provided them with the framework to conceptualize the work they do in the classroom and provides insight into how inclusively-minded educators do that work.

Chapter 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the inclusive enactments of early and mid-career New York City educators who attended inclusive preservice teacher education programs, through their own descriptions of their teacher education backgrounds, current enactments, and goals. To gain a better understanding of how these teachers perceived their experiences in inclusive education, I designed a qualitative study that used semi-structured individual interviews and document analysis to collect data. The purpose was to explore the following questions:

1. What are the beliefs and commitments to inclusive education of in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs?
    a. How have these beliefs evolved over time?
2. How do in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs, experience enactments of inclusion?
    a. What dilemmas/challenges do they experience?
    b. In what ways do they experience support in enacting inclusive practices?
    c. What rationales do they use to negotiate everyday classroom demands with their commitments to inclusivity?
3. What connections and disconnections do in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs, describe between their current practice and the goals of their preservice education programs?

This chapter begins with an overview of the study's research methodology, providing a rationale for the use of qualitative methods. Since qualitative research recognizes the researcher as an instrument (Creswell, 2007), I provide context on how I was positioned in this study and

how that impacted my research. Informed by both my pilot research and the data collected and analyzed in this study, the rest of this chapter presents the following: (a) research context, (b) methods for participant recruitment and selection, (c) methods for data collection, (d) methods of data analysis, (e) research timeline, and (f) issues of trustworthiness. I conclude this chapter by foregrounding how the findings are presented in the discussion section of my dissertation.

Qualitative Research and the Education of Students with Disabilities

Research in the special education field on and about the education of students with disabilities has traditionally been conducted by "applying scientific procedures of the empiricist variety…to enable educators not only to explain but also to predict and control teaching/learning similar to…hard scientists" (Gallagher, 1998, p. 494). While the application of the scientific method to social science research in special education has provided tools to support individuals with disabilities in schools (p. 499), this research approach has been critiqued for its narrow theoretical framing of assuming a monolithic experience for all individuals who fall into the same disability category (Baglieri, Valle, et al., 2011).

The quantitative approach assumes that human behavior can be generalized in the same way as the physical sciences (Gallagher, 1998, 2006). However, theorists like Gallagher (1998) have pointed to the lack of a causal link between interventions in special education research and student learning outcomes as evidence that it is difficult to determine if an intervention for students with disabilities results from the new "technique" or if it is the result of the "extra attention the teacher gave the students, or any other form of serendipity" (p. 497). Typically, mainstream special education research has taken up quantitative methodologies that may reasonably predict that an intervention might work, but they do not prove generalizability of a practice (p. 497).

Quantitative studies in mainstream special education have also been critiqued for operating under the assumption that a researcher can conduct an objective, theory-free observation of a phenomenon (Gallagher, 2006). Some scholars have argued that the use of the scientific method which represents individuals as statistical abstractions has allowed for the development of a knowledge base that may unintentionally "de-emotionalize, depoliticize, and disconnect" research from the "realities and complexities of the lives of children, parents, and teachers" (Danforth & Valente, 2016, p. 6). These critics have posited that the adaptation of seemingly neutral research methods, then, in turn serves "dominant power interests" (Danforth & Jones, 2015, pp. 8-9; Gallagher, 1998) by obscuring systems of power that oppress individuals with disabilities in schools (Danforth & Jones, 2015; Riddell, 2015).

Consequently, the use of special education research methodologies that rank, measure, sort, and remediate has played a potentially unintentional role in the othering of individuals with disabilities (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011). Research questions about inclusivity such as my own, asked through a typically mainstream special education paradigm, have sought to understand the integration and segregation of students with disabilities by distilling their experiences into numbers, rather than seeking out voices (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011). For instance, in their working paper entitled "Is Special Education Improving? Evidence on Segregation, Outcomes, and Spending from New York City," Stiefel et al. (2017) investigated the outcomes of NYC SPED Reform 2012 by calculating the number of special education students enrolled in general education classrooms and comparing their academic results on standardized assessments with different peer groups. But understandings of how New York City teachers have supported students with disabilities enrolled in general education classrooms through the NYC SPED Reform 2012 has not been explored. DSE-informed researchers, on the other hand, seek

methodologies that support inclusivity not only as an outcome, but also in the design of the study itself (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011). They seek research methodologies that may be emancipatory in and of themselves.

Methodological research traditions applied through Disability Studies increase the body of knowledge of what is known about the experiences of individuals with disabilities, their families, and their educators (Danforth & Jones, 2015; Riddell, 2015). Quantitative approaches in mainstream special education have asked questions such as which instructional programs benefit students with disabilities; interpretivist approaches, on the other hand, "challenge us to think differently about what we already know, to factor in different ways of knowing, different takes on the situation, and different meanings" (Ferguson & Ferguson, 2000, p. 182). While quantitative methods can provide students, teachers, and families with tools to support school-based engagement and academic learning (Gallagher, 1998), they do not fully capture individual experiences with those tools or in classrooms (Danforth & Valente, 2016).

Through the privileging of individual and collaborative experiences, DSE research has shed light on the perspectives of those who have been excluded from classrooms as well as the successes of inclusive classrooms (Danforth & Valente, 2016). DSE scholarship has provided tools to "effect change in teaching beliefs and practices" (p. 6). Through illuminating how inclusive educators make decisions, other teachers may shift their beliefs around inclusion and/or identify potential actions that they, too, can use to navigate inclusive teaching. To collect this descriptive detail, DSE-informed inclusive research has operated largely within a qualitative paradigm. Following this, I used an interpretivist approach in this study to learn about the perceptions of educators in inclusive classrooms in the practice of doing inclusive schooling.

Both the DSE theoretical stance and the teacher agency conceptual framework undergirding this study lend themselves well to a qualitative research design because they can account for the ecology of teacher agency as well as promote teacher voices. As discussed in Chapter 2, I am interested in how inclusive educators experience enactments of inclusivity using an ecological understanding of teacher agency (i.e., an understanding of agency as enacted "by means of…[the]…environment rather than simply in…[the]…environment") (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). Qualitative research seeks a rich description of the complexities of the social world at a specific moment in time in a particular place (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The history of the institution of which research participants are a part is of tantamount importance in qualitative research because it is assumed that "human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 5). Thus, qualitative inquiry was well suited for this study because it allowed me to attend to the teacher-participants' perceptions of the contexts in which their work was situated.

Further, while quantitative research is framed by variables and has a specific research question to answer or a hypothesis to test, qualitative research sets out to understand "human behavior from the informant's own frame of reference" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 2). As such, DSE-informed inclusive research, which seeks to uncover the voices of those participating in and enacting inclusive practices within a specific context, lends itself well to a qualitative inquiry. In their Executive Summary of *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education,* Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2004) found that research on and about teacher preparation often prioritized the voices of university-based faculty over those of teachers; when it did illuminate the voices of teachers, more often those teachers were preservice. Research has not often followed teachers into the classroom to reflect on their teacher

preparation. In this study, the voices of teachers, as graduates of inclusive teacher preparation programs—a group that has not yet received much attention in the research community—was given priority.

This study adopted a qualitative approach aimed at capturing the voices of the inclusively minded teacher-participants, both through data collection and the research design (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and document review geared at understanding how inclusive educators think about and enact their inclusive teaching (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Seidman, 2006), fit the research questions to this study. Through the use of a qualitative approach, I aimed to garner knowledge about how the teacher participants made sense (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) of their enactments of inclusivity by considering their practices, beliefs, and commitments within the shifting ecological context of U.S. urban schools.

Researcher Positionality

As a researcher, I investigated one aspect of my education career that I found especially challenging: preparing and supporting inclusive teachers to sustain their commitments over time. This study was situated around issues of teacher agency and inclusivity. How I understand these concepts and why I see them as integral to one another stemmed directly from my own experiences as a student, a teacher, a teacher educator, a school administrator, and an education researcher. Throughout this study, the ways of knowing that I adopted as a result of these different identity categories impacted my data collection and analysis.

When doing qualitative research, having a personal connection to the topic can hold both potential advantages and disadvantages (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam et al., 2001). An *insider perspective* can help a researcher relate to interviewees, provide insider access, and potentially produce a more authentic representation of the participants (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam et al.,

2001). However, this perspective also has potential drawbacks, such as inadvertently corrupting the interviewees' narratives with the researcher's own perspective or failing to ask deep questions because of a sense of closeness to the research participants (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam et al., 2001). Merriam et al. (2001), however, suggested that this insider/outsider binary may oversimplify the relationship between a researcher and his/her topic. Rather, they argued that the "boundaries between these two positions are not all that clearly delineated" (p. 405). Instead, they posited that in the research process, there is "slippage and fluidity between these two states" (p. 405). Thus, aiming to fully demarcate when my *insider status* ends and my *outsider status* begins may be nearly impossible. Further, an attempt to mitigate the impact of an *insider status* would suggest that I seek objectivity in my research. In fact, to continue in the vein of other DSE-informed inclusive researchers, I am not interested in theory-free inquiry because I do not think such a type of inquiry is possible (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011). To mitigate the unintended objectification of research (Baglieri, Valle et al., 2011), I employed an inclusive approach that highlighted the inherent situatedness of both my own identity and that of my research participants in the research process. To begin the work of inclusive research, below I disclose my assumptions in relation to my research questions.

Teachers as Agentic Political Actors

In elementary school, I held the status of a slow reader. Teacher expectations around reading engendered in me feelings of fear, anxiety, and isolation. I can still recall the weekly expectation to read aloud a poem to my second grade class. Despite my teacher knowing that I was not a strong reader, I had to prepare each week for this daunting task. I have long suspected that my teacher's academic expectations of uniform participation were deeply connected to her beliefs about childhood development and learning. In retrospect, it seems to me that she believed

all children learned to read at roughly the same pace and, therefore, with adequate social pressure should be able to decode and fluently read text. As for me, I would get upset to the point of vomiting every Friday morning outside of the school building before my mom sent me inside with a breakfast in a brown paper bag. I spent most of second grade holding back tears and breaking out into hives on the backs of my hands. Probably because of the disconnect between my behavior and my teacher's beliefs about schooling, I frequently received low marks for both behavior and reading on my report cards. My reading status marked me as less intelligent than my peers, and since the instructional design of my classroom did not allow for multiple means of demonstrating thought outside of reading, I often panicked. In turn, I was seen not only as academically aberrant but also as a behavior problem. My own feelings of isolation as an elementary school student have had a profound impact on how I perceive exclusion in relation to formalized notions of academic success. As I reflect on these experiences, I now see ways in which my teacher could have challenged accepted notions of intelligence and made space for me to feel academically successful in the second grade classroom.

As a special education teacher, I sought to provide all my students with access to academic content and worked with my cooperating teachers to blur the lines between who was labeled as a special education student and who was labeled as a general education student. I often felt that it was a great marker of my success if another adult observed my classroom and could not readily identify which students had IEPs. But my identity as a special education teacher became further complicated when I had to make decisions that might isolate a student or make it clear to that student and others that they may have been labeled in some way. For instance, I labored over how to explain to my class why some students had more time to take tests than others. Although at the time I would not have described it as enacting teacher agency, I did see

myself as a capable of resisting discourses around special education to ensure that all students, regardless of their assigned labels, saw themselves as meaningful members of the academic community.

The fact that I see inclusive education in terms of a teacher's decision making is deeply embedded in both my own elementary school years and my teaching practice. Given my own experiences in school and as a special education teacher, I entered this study with a key assumption that despite the mainstream special education context dictated by laws like IDEA, through the application of an *oppositional consciousness* where teachers commit to, believe in, and enact socially just practice within contradictory contexts, teachers may play an integral role in counteracting the labeling and categorization of students that produce school-based exclusions (Danforth & Naraian, 2015).

Priestley et al. (2017) contended that teacher agency may be concerned with aspirations that lead to the "development and welfare of students," which may "support policy intentions, or…may run counter to them" (p. 32). They argued that these aspirations are deeply rooted in teachers' values and beliefs, but "accountability mechanisms and the culture of performativity" that accountability encourages erodes a teacher's capacity to enact agency (p. 32). With that, I entered this study assuming that a better understanding of the legal and accountability context and teacher beliefs and values lends itself to an improved understanding of the ways teachers enact inclusive practice.

Researcher Role

While I conducted this study as a doctoral student researcher, my other job as a teacher educator impacted the way I conducted the research. As a teacher educator, I work with both preservice and in-service elementary and middle school general education and special education

teachers, as well as literacy specialists. Facilitating university-based courses, supervision feedback sessions, and school-based professional development, I often guide teachers in applying a DSE-informed inclusive lens to analyze their own practice. While my study was not conducted with the teachers I actively teach, there was slippage between my researcher self and my collaborative teacher educator self.

I facilitated interviews with questions and protocols that were similar to the ones I use with student teachers, and collaboratively discussing curriculum artifacts is similar to my teacher coaching. There was the potential to slip into a facilitation role and to behave as a teacher educator by virtue of my work experience. While in some ways I aimed to mitigate this slippage by using an interview protocol with some standardized question prompts, I also acknowledge that my experience in the field largely impacted the way I interviewed participants. Further, because elements of the research collection process invited teacher participants to reflect on curriculum and assessment artifacts of their own creation and use, we purposefully engaged in a dialogic process during interviews. Through the experiences of the interviews and data analysis, I gained an understanding of how participants sustained enactments of inclusivity and also deepened my own understanding of inclusion.

I do carry power as a doctoral researcher from an elite university, and in doing this research, I recognized that teachers-participants may have felt evaluated by me. While I could not remove the power dynamic that existed, as a way to work against this problem, I engaged in the practice of "noticing power, analyz[ing] it and nam[ing] it when it manifests itself" (Bloom, 1998, p. 40). For instance, I worked to mitigate that impact by exposing some of my own stories as an inclusive educator through participation interviews. During interviews, I would share my

own teaching experiences related to a topic of discussion, provide connections to commonly known schools and other city-wide institutions, and answer deep-thinking questions that were posed to me by the participants. Finally, Corbin and Strauss (2008) explained that memos serve not only as a tool for initial data analysis, but also as a place to "try to understand the world from the perspective of participants" (p. 140). Thus, I also incorporated memo writing (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Richards & Morse, 2013) as a tool to consider my power and position continually through the research process. I recorded a researcher memo after each interview and reflected on each memo in preparation for the upcoming interview.

Research Context

While not bounded by a particular time and place, this qualitative study was historically, geographically, and politically positioned in the New York City schools during the 2020-21 academic year. To situate the daily work of the inclusive educators who participated in this study, I next provide context for the New York City schools and refer to Chapter 1 to provide a brief overview of New York City special education reform. I also discuss the Coronavirus pandemic and protests for racial justice that took place in New York City in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. This information provides background on the environments in which research participants engaged in inclusive teaching practices and sustained their commitments at the time of data collection. Additionally, since this study specifically targets participants who attended inclusive education preservice teacher preparation programs before teaching full-time, I provide context on the programs that participants attended. This background is intended to orient the reader to the philosophical grounding participants had when entering the teaching profession.

New York City Public Schools

At the time of data collection, participants in this study were working at NYCDOE schools, NYC public charter schools, and independent special education schools that provide students with disabilities services using public funding. As the largest school system in the United States, the NYC schools, including both NYCDOE schools and charter schools, enroll over 1 million students (DOE data at a glance, 2021). According to the New York City Charter Center (2021a), 145,000 of those students are enrolled in public charter schools. There are over 1,800 public schools in NYC, including over 250 charter schools (DOE data at a glance, 2021). Of these NYC public school students, 20.8% receive special education services (DOE data at a glance, 2021). Providing special education services to roughly 19% of their student population or roughly 28,000 students at the launch of the 2021-22 academic year, public charter schools in NYC enroll students with disabilities, comparable to traditional NYCDOE public schools (NYC Charter Center, 2021b).

The NYCDOE boasts roughly 75,000 teachers each year (Merrill & Kang, 2021). In 2019-20, the NYC charter schools workforce included 10,500 educators (NYC Charter Center, 2021c). In the NYCDOE, educators may teach in a variety of different settings, including general education classrooms (Gen Ed), Integrated Co-Teaching classrooms (ICT), self-contained classrooms (SC),[1] gifted and talented classrooms (G&T),[2] and small group instruction (NYCDOE, 2017a). Table 2 shows the number of classroom settings offered by the NYCDOE during the 2017-18 academic year in Kindergarten through Grade 8.

1 SC classes are listed by their ratio of students to teachers to paraprofessionals. A 12:1:1 class, for instance, indicates that the classroom serves a maximum of 12 students and has 1 teacher and 1 paraprofessional facilitating instruction.

2 The NYCDOE does not report G&T classrooms after Grade 5.

Table 2

NYCDOE Citywide Classroom Setting

Grade Level	Program Type	Number of Classes
K-8	Gen Ed	9,318
K-5	G&T	1,164
K-8	ICT	4,260
K-5	ICT & G&T	24
K-8 SC	SC 12:1	943
K-8 SC	SC 12:1:1	2,545
K-8 SC	SC 15:1	7
K-8 SC	SC 6:1:1	5
K-8 SC	SC 8:1:1	73
Total K-8 Classrooms		18,399

Source: NYCDOE, 2017a

NYC public charter educators may also teach in a variety of program types, including those specifically serving students with disabilities; for instance, 38 NYC public charter schools that offer specialized programming for students with autism (NYC Charter Center, 2021a). However, each individual charter school has its own continuum of services and some schools do not offer all the setting types laid out in Table 2 (NYCDOE, 2019).

In addition to this variety of public school program types, students with disabilities may also attend private schools using public funding. This might happen in the case that a Committee on Special Education (CSE) determines that a non-public school is the appropriate setting for a student with a disability (New York Lawyers for Public Interest, 2009). In addition, families of students with disabilities who qualify for special education services in the NYCDOE and whose rights to an appropriate special education placement have been violated receive a Nickerson Letter (also known as a P-1 Letter) (Madon, 2007). This document serves as a voucher so that

the student can attend a state-approved non-public school which will provide appropriate special education services. Given that context, there are privately employed special education teachers who work in NYC who are providing students with disabilities FAPE, as stipulated under IDEA.

Since in this study inclusivity is seen as a stance on how to teach rather than a type of classroom in which teachers operate, the participants had worked and continued to work in many of these classroom settings, teaching under both a general education or special education license, and working with students both with and without disability classifications. As discussed more in the section labeled "Participants" (later in this dissertation), the teacher-participants in this study had switched school settings, classroom types, and under which license they were teaching from academic year to academic year. Each of their inclusive teaching past histories were shaped by more than one of these teaching roles within the larger context of the NYC schools.

Special Education Reform

The NYCDOE initiated the early stages of a reform of its special education programming in the fall of 2009 (Schlessinger, 2013). By providing teachers with professional development in inclusive practices and shifting the placement of special education-identified students to general education and ICT classrooms, 216 schools took part in a pilot program (Schlessinger, 2013). By 2012, the reform took full effect in all 1,700 NYCDOE schools (NYCDOE, 2012b). The goals of this reform effort included the following:

> Improve access to more challenging academic curricula and to achieve better outcomes for students with disabilities by providing significantly more students with disabilities the opportunity to attend the schools they would attend if they did not have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). (ARISE Coalition, 2012)

As discussed in detail in Chapter 1, since the launch of this reform initiative, the NYCDOE has enacted the following changes: (a) shifting the placement of many students with disabilities to general education classrooms through full mainstreaming and flexible programming options

(NYCDOE, 2017a; Programs, 2018); (b) providing inclusive professional development opportunities for teachers (NYCDOE Department of Multiple Task Award Contracts, 2018); (c) hiring additional special education-certified teachers (New York City Independent Budget Office, 2014); and (d) dedicating districtwide events to disability advocacy (NYCDOE, 2017b).

In line with this reform effort, NYC Public Charter Schools have also been working towards inclusive reform. The Collaborative for Inclusive Education, which was founded in 2011, offers 190 NYC public charter school educators with professional development and technical assistance to meet the following mission:

> We envision a time when all public schools welcome and successfully educate all students, regardless of their abilities or background. In order to achieve this goal, we empower NYC charter schools to develop high quality inclusive educational environments. (Who we are, n.d.)

The efforts of the Collaborative for Inclusive Education include certifying educators in crisis prevention, conducting classroom observations, providing educators with consultations that support inclusion, and bringing educators on visits to schools that demonstrate successful inclusive models (Our evolution, n.d.). In 2019, the collaborative refined its focus to match an intersectional understanding of inclusive education. It launched new programming for educators that included "opportunities for educators to unpack racism, ableism, language discrimination, and identity discrimination and to reflect on how anti-bias education intersects with inclusive education" (Our evolution, n.d.). Participants in this study have taught and continue to teach in NYC after inclusive reform initiatives were launched, and their inclusive teaching thus took place within this inclusive-informed policy context.

Coronavirus Pandemic

At the time of data collection, the participants in this study were teaching amid the context of the Coronavirus (also commonly known as COVID-19) pandemic. In March of 2020,

9 months before data collection for this study began, New York City became the global epicenter for this highly contagious airborne virus. Over the course of the next several months, the city was able to contain the spread of the virus, but it left a deep impact on individual people's lives, broader communities, and social institutions, including schools. According to *The New York Times* (2021), at the time of writing this dissertation, New York City had traced more than one million cases of COVID-19, and 34,355 residents of the city had died of COVID-19. Many of these deaths disproportionately impacted NYC's marginalized communities, including people of color (Renelus et al., 2021). The impact of COVID-19 on NYC schools began on March 15, 2020, when they were shut down by the mayor. A timeline of major events that affected teaching in New York City schools, adapted from Heyward (2021), is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

COVID-19 Impact on NYCDOE (Heyward, 2021)

Date	Event
March 15, 2020	Schools are shut down.
March 23, 2020	Schools begin full remote instruction.
April 11, 2020	Announcement that schools will remain remote for the rest of the academic year.
July 8, 2020	Partial reopening plan introduced.
September 1, 2020	Options for in-person and virtual instruction introduced.
September 11, 2020	Launch of school year delayed due to logistical problems and disputes with teachers' union.
September 21, 2020	School year launches 10 days late.
November 19, 2020	Schools are shut down.
November 29, 2020	Elementary schools are allowed to reopen for students who had opted into in-person instruction.
January, 2020	Teachers' union calls for the closure of elementary schools due to surge in virus.
February 25, 2020	Middle schools are allowed to reopen for students who had opted into in-person instruction.
March 22, 2020	High schools reopen with either partial or fully in-person instruction.
May 24, 2020	Announcement that school will be fully in-person for 2020-21 academic year.

Data collection for this study began in December 2020, just after NYC elementary schools had had their second reopening for optional in-person instruction (see Table 3). The data in this study reflected each teacher-participant's unique of experience navigating inclusion through remote learning, partially in-person instruction, and fully in-person instruction brought on COVID-19-related policies.

Political Unrest

On May 24, 2020, George Floyd, a Black male, was murdered by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during an arrest where Floyd was suspected of having used a counterfeit 20-dollar bill. Protests calling for the end of police brutality towards people of color in the United States quickly erupted in Minneapolis and spread to 140 cities in the United States, including New York (Bryson Taylor, 2021). In New York City, protests led to violent interactions between the police and demonstrators. Protestors were met with pepper spray and arrests, and some officers were injured. At the time of data collection for this study, these events were being discussed across NYC classrooms (Proulx & Schulten, 2020; Together for justice, n.d.). Many NYC teachers, the teacher-participants in this study included, were working towards supporting students and families in discussing violence and systematic racism in our society.

Preservice Inclusive Education Programs

Although this study did not investigate inclusive preservice teacher education programs, the context of the inclusive preservice programs that teacher participants attended prior to their classroom practice played a significant role in participants' understandings of their own inclusive teaching. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, DSE-informed inclusive preservice teacher education programs share common principles about what constitutes inclusive teaching. These programs aim to prepare teachers who believe that all children can and should be afforded access

to rigorous academic and social learning (Ashby, 2009; Oyler, 2011; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). Operating through a social justice framework where teaching is situated at the intersection of "intellectual, moral, theoretical and political work" (Elementary Inclusive Preservice Education Program, 2008, as cited by Oyler, 2011, p. 204), these programs attempt to create educators who are reflective (Ashby, 2010; Oyler, 2011). In this study, participants had previously attended two different preservice teacher education programs with tenets aligned to these.

Verrazano University. Verrazano University is located in a large urban center in the northeast region of the United States. It is an old university that has stood on its property for over 100 years, but the university is even older. While the school's occupancy of its property is not new, its relationship with the larger community has gone through waves of tension. Both historically and more contemporarily, the university has been accused of exerting its political influence to seize land from the largely low-income community of people of color that it borders.

Given its age, Verrazano has a unique organizational structure wherein it is comprised of several smaller colleges, each with its own level of governance. The education school only serves graduate students providing master's and doctoral-level programs of study and was founded just after the school moved to its current location. While there is an undergraduate program of study in education located within the larger umbrella of Verrazano, that program is unaffiliated with the graduate school of education. Within the graduate school of education alone, there are roughly 5,000 students.

Established as an institution for educating teachers to teach home economics and to provide manual arts education to students from low-income backgrounds, over the years the school has remained grounded in its mission to prepare teachers to work with students from

marginalized communities. Understandings of equity pedagogy have evolved at Verrazano, and programs of study include curriculum, teaching, educational psychology, nursing education, conflict resolution, nutrition education, special education, and spirituality and education.

Verrazano offers two master's degrees in inclusive education. One is focused on elementary education and the other on secondary education. The participants in this study who attended Verrazano graduated from the elementary program. Upon completion of this M.A., graduates are eligible to apply for New York State dual certification in Childhood Education and Teaching Students with Disabilities. Graduates also have the option to extend their program of study to apply for certification in Gifted Education. In previous designs of the program, there was an option to complete a signal certification track and graduate from the program ready to apply for a certification in Childhood Education. As discussed further in the "Participants" section below, one teacher-participant in this study, Marisol, completed Verrazano's program obtaining a single New York State teaching certification in Childhood Education.

The sequence of instruction offered in Verrazano's inclusive elementary takes roughly 2 years to complete and includes two semesters of student teaching and two semesters of practicum field experience. According to the program handbook, the inclusive program is child-centered and works to cultivate educators who take an inquiry stance on their practice. The program philosophy conceives of inclusive education as beyond the educational experiences of students labeled with disabilities. It aims to develop educators who take a critical stance on institutionalized schooling practices that negatively impact students and families who come from traditionally marginalized backgrounds.

Hornbeam University. Founded over 150 years ago, Hornbeam University is located on an elevated area in the outskirts of a mid-sized city in the northeast region of the United States. The community surrounding Hornbeam is largely residential and developed because of its proximity to the university. With over 20,000 students, two-thirds of whom study at the undergraduate level, Hornbeam is well known for its undergraduate student experience, including popular athletic events and Greek life. Recently, the school has grappled with issues of antisemitic, racist, homophonic, and ableist language on campus.

Like Verrazano University, Hornbeam houses several smaller colleges, including a school of education. However, the relationship between graduate and undergraduate programming is more closely linked at Hornbeam than at Verrazano. The education school houses undergraduate, master's, and doctoral-level programs of study. According to the school of education home page, all programs of study emphasize the same two underlying principles: (a) technology-integrated teaching, and (b) inclusive, anti-bias education.

Hornbeam offers five different degrees in inclusive education, including two undergraduate options and three master's programs. The undergraduate tracks either focus on early childhood education or childhood education. The master's-level tracks include: (a) childhood, (b) middle/high school, and (c) severe and multiple disabilities. The two participants in this study who attended Hornbeam both attended the undergraduate childhood program.

At Hornbeam University, the undergraduate childhood program in inclusive education is the only program of study at the university that leads to a certification in Childhood Education. This means that all undergraduate students at Hornbeam who seek to teach elementary school must enroll in an inclusive education program of study. Graduates are also qualified for certification in teaching Students with Disabilities upon completion of their program. Since the

program of study is an undergraduate degree, students complete their education coursework as well as a liberal arts concentration. Students are also welcomed, but not required, to design their instruction so that their liberal arts concentration leads to a minor.

The sequence of instruction offered at Hornbeam takes roughly 4 years to complete and includes eight semesters of fieldwork, culminating in two student teaching placements completed in the spring of students' final year of study. Students participate in a cohort model wherein they take their coursework with the same group of peers throughout their program of study. A unique feature of the Hornbeam program is that faculty often co-teach courses, co-assess students, and coordinate assignments across multiple courses which offers the opportunity to model communication and collaboration for students. Students enrolled in the childhood inclusive education program at Hornbeam also have opportunities to study abroad for a semester and/or complete their final semester of study and student teaching in a larger urban area through a program called "The City Pathway." According to the program website, Hornbeam's inclusive program emphasizes that all students have the right to be educated in mainstream classrooms regardless of their background.

Participants

For this study, I used purposeful sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Seidman, 2006) in that I deliberately chose the participants for the study to best contribute to emerging ideas about the phenomenon under study.

Ideal Candidate for Study

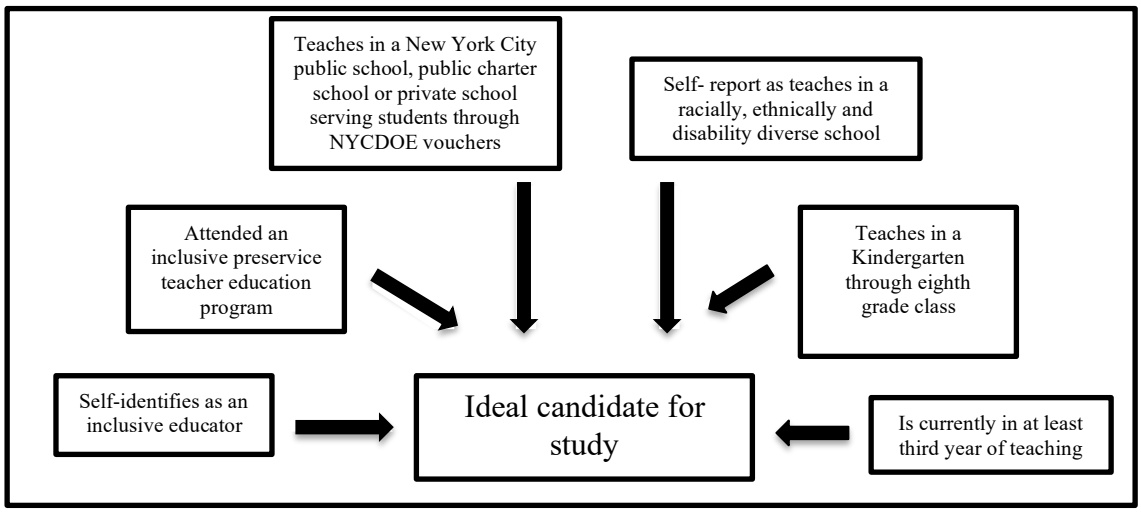
Seidman (2006) has argued that the "major criterion for appropriateness" when selecting participants "is whether the subject of the researcher's study is central to the participant's experience" (p. 48). Criteria for ideal candidates were determined based on Seidman's claim and

the findings of my exploratory interviews. In my exploratory interviews, I met with two teachers who had attended inclusive preservice teacher education programs and were completing their third year of classroom teaching. Both of these interviewees had attended the same inclusive preservice teacher education program but were currently teaching in different contexts within New York City. The first interviewee was working in a private, elite, and parochial elementary school, while the second participant was teaching in a public elementary school in a low-income neighborhood. These interviews informed the selection criteria for my study participants because they helped me determine the type of school setting in which teacher-participants should be working as well as the minimum number of years of teaching each participant in the study should have. First, I realized that while the interview with the teacher who was working in the parochial context was helpful in designing my interview protocol, her points of reflection on inclusive practice were informed in part by her transition into the teacher profession through a 2-year teaching assistant program with a veteran teacher prior to taking a lead teacher role in the classroom. This process of entering the profession added an additional layer of teacher preparation that the public school interview participant did not have. For the purposes of this study, I wanted to investigate teachers who went into classroom teaching after the completion of a preservice teacher education program. Thus, I decided to limit my study to NYC public, charter, and independent special education school teachers who did not participate in a teaching assistant program prior to full-time classroom teaching. Beyond that, through participant responses, I realized that by the end of their third year of teaching, both teachers felt confident in their classroom management and organization and were more likely to be considering some of the tenets of inclusive pedagogy in their practice. My first interviewee, for instance, reported that she was overwhelmed in her first 2 years, but after her third year, she felt more confident in her

practice. With this in mind, I decided that ideal candidates for this study should be in at least their third year of teaching. Figure 2 shows the criteria for participation in this study I used to ensure that each candidate has an experience central to the study.

Figure 2

Candidate for Study



The participants for this study were four Kindergarten through Grade 8 teachers who attended an inclusive preservice teacher education program for their teacher preparation that defined inclusive education as a disability-informed equity-based notion of pedagogy (Slee, 2011). I excluded individuals who attended preservice teacher education programs that included inclusive coursework but did not advertise themselves as an inclusive program, or those that were billed as inclusive but used mainstream special education definitions of inclusion. I determined the definition of inclusive used by each potential participant's preservice teacher education program by having potential participants complete a Screening Survey upon recruitment (see Appendix A), which asked for the name of her/his/their preservice teacher education program. Before finalizing participants, I researched each program and read its

mission statement to ensure alignment between the program and an equity-informed definition of inclusivity. Teacher participants ranged from 3 to 10 years of teaching experience and worked in NYC public schools, public charter schools, and independent special education schools, since those are the schools currently impacted by the NYC SPED Reform 2012.

The teacher-participants were teaching under either a general education or special education teaching license in ICT, Gen Ed and self-contained classrooms at the time of data collection. Participants also had experience working as SETSS providers and in Bilingual classrooms. Table 4 provides an overview of the background of each participant.

Table 4

Study Participants

Name	Pre-Service Institution	Pre-Service Track	Teaching Certifications	Years Teaching	School Type & Setting	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender
Julia	Verrazano	Masters	SWD & CE	4	Public, GenEd	White	Female
Marisol	Verrazano	Masters	CE	10	Public, GenEd	Latina	Female
Hazel	Hornbeam	Bachelors	SWD & CE	3	Public, ICT	White	Female
Cassie	Hornbeam	Bachelors	SWD & CE	3	Special Education Independent School, SC 8:1:1	White	Female

Note. (SWD) Students with Disabilities; (CE) Childhood Education

All four teacher-participants self-identified as "inclusive," using a definition aligned with DSE principles. They also all worked in or had previously worked in schools that they identified as racially, ethnically, and ability-diverse school. I found through my exploratory interviews that the first interviewee noted the lack of diversity in her school setting and worked hard to make the claim that she was indeed doing inclusive work in her largely affluent, Catholic school. From

this finding, I decided to invite participants who worked in institutions that did not require the participants to prove their work was inclusive before the conversation could turn to enactments of that inclusivity.

Recruitment

To recruit teacher participants, I relied on several different methods. I advertised publicly using Internet posts and social media. Because my aim was to recruit participants from different inclusive preservice teacher education programs, I reached out to program coordinators from several of these programs to advertise to their alumni using listservs and blogs. While I reached out to these coordinators for support with recruitment, they did not serve as formal gatekeepers (Seidman, 2006, p. 44) to access to my participants since I was working with participants who had attended multiple inclusive preservice education programs.

In addition, I used my network of teacher colleagues, school administrators, and teacher educators to find potential teacher-participants. Seidman (2006) contended that "building the interviewing relationship begins at the moment the potential participant hears of the study" (p. 46). Therefore, while I used my network to garner the names of potential participants, I personally shared my invitation and consent form (Appendix G) with potential teacher participants who fit the profile of the ideal candidate for this study. I also built my potential participant pool using the following process, as dictated by Seidman: "keep a record of those who seem most suitable, noting their key characteristics that are related to the subject of the study" (p. 48). I used Figure 2 to select candidates who met the profile for the ideal candidate for this study.

Given that I was recruiting participants for this study during the COVID-19 pandemic, I initially had some difficulty securing participants. I had connected with several viable candidates

through social networking platforms, but they were unable commit to the time required to participate in the study. Finally, one participant came to me through a former colleague. I connected with another participant through a social media platform, and the other two participants I previously knew through my personal network.

Data Collection

To understand the phenomenon under study, I collected data using the qualitative methods of demographic surveys (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 70), in-depth interviews, and document review (Bogdan & Biken, 2007). I began the data collection process by conducting an initial in-depth interview with all teacher-participants. Interviews were flexibly timed to allow me to ask participants follow-up questions based on their responses during the initial interview. I ended the data collection process by asking teacher-participants to verbally complete a survey to determine demographic information that "may be underlying individual's perceptions" as well as potential similarities and differences across perceptions of teacher participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 70). This demographic survey (see Appendix F) included questions about participant age, gender identification, racial identification and ethnic identification. In the proposal of this study, I had originally planned to observe teachers in their school sites to contextualize their inclusive teaching; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were not permitting outside researchers into classroom spaces. Additional interview time and a more robust document review were added to the data collection methods to ensure that I drew on multiple sources of information to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Below, I provide additional detail on how I defined each data collection method, how it was designed to support me in answering my research questions, and

why I selected each method. Table 5 shows the alignment of data collection methods to research questions.

Table 5

Alignment of Data Collection Methods to Research Questions

Research Questions	S	T1	T2	T3	D
1. What are the beliefs and commitments to inclusive education of in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs?	X	X	X	X	X
1a. How have these beliefs evolved over time?	X	X	X	X	
2. How do in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs, experience enactments of inclusion?			X		
2a. What dilemmas/challenges do they experience?		X	X	X	
2b. In what ways do they experience support in enacting inclusive practices?		X	X	X	
2c. What rationales do they use to negotiate everyday classroom demands with their commitments to inclusivity?			X	X	X
3. What connections and disconnections do in in-service teachers, who attended preservice inclusive education programs, describe between their current practice and the goals of their preservice education programs?		X	X	X	

Note. (S) Demographic Survey; (T) Teacher Interviews; (D) Documents

In-depth Interviews

Data collection for this study began with a 90-minute in-depth interview. According to Seidman (2006), the purpose of in-depth interviewing is to "understand the experience of those who are interviewed" (p. 51) and the meaning they make of those experiences. In-depth interviewers employ open-ended questioning and then "build upon and explore their participants' responses" to those initial open-ended questions (p. 15). Seidman proposed a "three-interview series" for in-depth interview studies that "allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon

their experience within the context of their lives" (p. 21). A modified version of this interview protocol was well suited to answering research questions that employed a teacher agency conceptual framework (Biesta et al., 2015). While in practice the process did not take a fully linear path, the initial phase of this interview series helped illuminate the iterational dimension, the second phase of the interview was used to discuss the practical-evaluative, and the final phase of the interview series aligned well with the projective dimension. The use of in-depth interviewing, as Seidman (2006) outlined it, allowed participants in this study to reconstruct their life histories in relation to inclusivity and past preservice inclusive teacher education experiences. They then reflected on these experiences in light of their current beliefs, commitments, and efforts to implement inclusion. Below, I demonstrate how each phase of data collection was designed in connection to each element of Biesta et al.'s (2015) teacher agency framework.

Initial In-depth Interviews. For the purposes of this study, I used a modified version of Seidman's (2006) "three-interview series" (p. 21). The "three-interview series" is premised on the idea that individuals' "behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them" (p. 17). As such, the first interview in the series explores an individual's life history as it leads up to the present time and with consideration of the topic of study (Seidman, 2006). Rather than asking questions about why an individual made a decision or believed something, the interviewer focuses on how something came to be so that the participant may reconstruct the events and experiences that led an individual to a particular place (p. 17). This type of questioning helped me identify the life and professional histories of the iterational dimension of participant enactments of teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015).

The initial in-depth interviews with teacher-participants lasted 90 minutes or more and explored relevant previous experiences, including those in their own educational histories, inclusive preservice teacher education, and classroom teaching (see Appendix B). The first interview aimed to have teacher-participants reconstruct their experiences as inclusive educators. Similar to my researcher positionality explored earlier in this chapter, teacher-participants were asked to reconstruct the experiences that led them to believe in and commit to inclusive schooling. Having participants engage in this reconstructing work was key for answering the third research question because it laid the groundwork for having participants consider connections and disconnections between their preservice teacher education experiences and current practice.

In my exploratory interviews, I used a draft of my interview protocols for the first and second interviews, based on Seidman's (2006) model, my research questions, and the literature. After both interviews, I read each pilot participant my research questions and asked them to respond to the following prompts in a freely flowing conversation.

- Were any of the questions confusing? Hard to answer?
- Do you think the questions that I asked help answer the research questions? Which questions do they answer?
- Are there any questions that you would modify? Add? Remove?

Using the Comment function on my word processing software, I marked up the interview protocol at this time, noting suggested questions/prompts and reasons for the suggestions. These reflections and the exploratory interviews themselves informed the design of the interview protocol (Appendix B) that I used. From this process, I learned that I needed more specific

prompts to help participants reflect on their own schooling experiences as well as their preservice teacher education programs.

In these exploratory interviews, I did not set the interviews at a specific period of time. My first interview lasted 66 minutes and my second interview lasted 30 minutes due to the participants' time constraints. Using this information, I found that the second interview, while extremely helpful in the design of the protocol, was too short, while the first interview provided time to have the participant reflect on the interview questions. In my proposal, I set a time of 60 minutes per interview, which I adjusted to 90 minutes for the final study. In conducting the interviews, I found that all participants spoke for 90 minutes or more.

Interview Two. Seidman (2006) explained that the second interview in this series is designed to "concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of study" (p. 18). In my study, this interview invited participants to reconstruct what they did in their jobs or during their day-to-day life. This interview was designed to elicit the stories about a participant's experience and allow for space to elicit information about the cultural, structural, and material elements that foster or inhibit inclusive educator agency (Biesta et al., 2015). While topics for the second interview were, in part, iteratively produced through the analysis of initial interview data and discussion (Richards & Morse, 2013), Appendix C shows the semi-structured interview protocol that I used. This protocol reflects revisions made after exploratory interviews conducted in May 2018 using the process discussed above. As a result of these exploratory interviews, the protocol included more specific prompts for teachers to focus on in describing their inclusive practices. To support participants in describing the "concrete details" of their practice (Seidman, 2006), participants were asked to bring two documents for discussion: (a) a piece of curriculum they believed reflected inclusivity in their work, and (b) a

classroom-based assessment they believed reflected inclusivity in their work. The interview focused on the participants' discussion of these documents as well as their current practice in general.

Interview Three. The final individual interview in Seidman's (2006) model has participants "reflect on the meaning of their experience" (p. 18). While all interviews in the process are forms of a meaning making since the very process of selecting events to speak about and using language to communicate that information is meaning making (p. 19), this final interview was specifically designed to have participants look at the factors that have led them to their current situation to make sense of how they are currently working and living (Seidman, 2006). In my study, I oriented participants to the future (p. 18) by asking them to name goals for their inclusive teaching practice in relation to the content discussed in Interviews One and Two (see Appendix D for the interview protocol). Goal setting as a part of the interviewing process can support participants in part of the sense-making process because it has them fully reconstruct the contents of previously discussed topics (p. 18). This final interview developed understanding of my research questions around the projective dimension of Biesta et al.'s (2015) framework for teacher agency, which theorized short- and long-term potential futures of teacher agency enactments.

In addition, Interview Three invited participants to reflect on what they said about their inclusive preservice teacher education and their efforts at inclusive teaching. They used this reflection to then describe what they believed about inclusive education and consider how those beliefs and experiences might connect or disconnect with their studies in their preservice education.

Documents

In addition to the curriculum and assessment documents that I asked participants to share with me during the second interview, I also included a review of official documents as part of my data collection. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined external communication as a form of official documentation which is "produced by an organization for public consumption" (p. 137). They argued that these types of materials are "useful in understanding official perspectives on programs" (p. 137). In this study, I mined official documentation from the Verrazano and Hornbeam University websites. I specifically collected data from the mission statements of each school of education, the inclusive program webpages, the inclusive program course sequences, and the mission statements for each inclusive program. These data were used to provide me with additional context on each participant's past histories that I could analyze alongside their descriptions of their experiences.

Demographic Surveys

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) defined personal data sheets as a tool to determine demographic information about participants that may inform perceptual data that a researcher collects at other points. They argued that a data point collected through this type of questionnaire may inform findings that emerge in other aspects of the study. Since I was interested in how teacher participants described their beliefs and commitments to inclusive education, I gathered information about participant background that may inform how they described their beliefs and commitments. These factors included years of teaching and types of classroom settings and schools where participants have worked. Further, I was interested in the connections and disconnections that participants described between their current practice and their preservice teacher education programs. Experiences as a preservice teacher varied by participant, so I used the personal data sheet to confirm my understandings of their pathways in their preservice

inclusive education (e.g., undergraduate schooling, graduate schooling, part-time status, full-time status).

The use of personal data collection was also an important tool as qualitative research is concerned with the contextual background of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Seidman, 2006). While all candidates for this study shared some commonalities, such as taking an inclusive stance on their teaching practice, other past experiences and the ways that participants identified affected how they described their beliefs and commitments. Given this perspective on qualitative research, I used the data that I collected from this questionnaire to inform my understanding of the participants.

Timeline for Data Collection

As Seidman (2006) urged that interviews be closely connected to one another so participants may reflect from one to the next with ease, he also urged a rapid interview timeline of no more than a week between interviews (p. 21). In addition, Seidman suggested that more closely spaced interviews promote relationship building between the interviewer and the participants. I considered participants' work schedules aligned with my hope to conduct interviews as closely together as possible in scheduling interviews. I conducted interviews largely during each participant's free time, which included afternoons, weekends, and school vacations. Table 6 displays the timeline for the data collection process that I used. Data were collected from Participants 1, 3, and 4 over the course of 3 weeks each. More time elapsed between interviews with Participant 2 to accommodate a job transition that she made in January of 2020. In fact, she had to move one of our interviews to a new date so that she could use the time we had scheduled to write an IEP for a student with whom she had just begun working.

Table 6

Data Collection Methods Timeline

Data Collection	December 2020	January 2021	February 2021	June 2021	October 2021
Participant Recruitment	X	X	X		
Participant 1 Data Collection	X	X			
Participant 2 Data Collection		X	X		
Participant 3 Data Collection		X	X		
Participant 4 Data Collection			X		
Document Review				X	
Optional Member Check					X

Data Analysis

Richards and Morse (2013) contended that data analysis should be an ongoing process that informs data collection (p. 169). As such, I began data analysis through the use of memoing. All interview sessions were audio-recorded and followed up by analytic memos, in which I noted my initial reactions and hunches about potential emerging themes and my positionality as a researcher (p. 153). Interviews were then transcribed and re-read. On this re-read of the interview, I underlined and circled key ideas as well as marked the text for initial descriptive codes related to inclusive teaching such as "Universal Design for Learning" or "Whole Child." I used these initial descriptive codes to elaborate on my initial hunches recorded in each memo. Richards and Morse argued that the use of this memo-writing process allows the researcher to begin the process of abstraction early in the data collection process so that plans for data collection can be informed by previously collected data (p. 169). I also used my memos to help me formulate questions that were used in later interviews.

In addition to writing analytic memos, I used a more formal three-phase coding process to analyze data. Richards and Morse (2013) described coding as a process of linking collected pieces of data to identify "patterns and surprises with new meanings" (p. 154). It allows the researcher to move away from the data to a place of abstraction (Richards & Morse, 2013). As outlined in Table 7, the three phases of coding in this study included a more formal layer of descriptive coding, inductive analytic open coding, and closed coding using pre-existing codes from teacher agency literature. In the following sections, I describe the purpose of each type of coding, why I selected this coding process, and how I employed each form of coding.

Table 7

Data Analysis Process

Data Analysis Phase	Description
First Phase	Descriptive Coding
Second Phase	Analytic Open Coding, Informed by Theoretical Framework
Third Phase	Closed Coding, Informed by Teacher Agency Conceptual Framework

Phase One

According to Richards and Morse (2013), descriptive coding is "used to store things *known about* data items" and is a form of data analysis that results in a "fracturing" or "breaking data up, and disaggregating records" (p. 154). Creating descriptive codes can enhance knowledge of the context from which particular descriptions are coming, including "people, sites, settings" (p. 155). In this study, descriptive coding also served to support me in data management so that I could readily retrieve the data that I needed.

Since much of the data in this study were collected from interviews, I used descriptive coding to organize data into low-inference categories such as "Hornbeam Fieldwork," "Verrazano Fieldwork," "Hornbeam Coursework," and "Verrazano Coursework." I completed this more formal set of descriptive codes after concluding the collection of all the data. Interview transcripts, participant-provided curricular artifacts, and documents collected from preservice teacher education program websites were included in this round of coding. Once my data were organized into these descriptive codes, I color-coded each category and changed the font into each associated color so that I could inductively open-code the data and keep each data chunk associated with its descriptive code.

Phase Two

The second type of coding I employed was open coding which, according to Richards and Morse (2013), is a form of analytic coding aimed at "opening up data" to identify ideas and concepts (p. 159). This form of coding supports researchers in identifying themes in data and seeing how those themes are connected to theory. In open coding, a researcher might code by line of text, paragraph, or whole artifact (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In open coding, the researcher is abstracted from the data and uses her/his own words to create a category. During this phase of data analysis, I used my DSE theoretical lens more specifically by coding with an orientation towards inclusivity. I created codes by attending to the frequency of a code, intensity of a code, duration of a code, or extent of a code, which helped me make meaning of what was going on in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Some of the codes I identified in the data included: creating access, centering literacy, centering human difference, reconciling conflicting ideas, and resisting institutional ideas (see Appendix E for open-coding excerpts).

While I had initially organized my data by each participant, once my coding was complete, I sorted my data by preservice teacher education program because I was interested to see common themes across participants' past teaching histories. The process of indexing the data in this was essential to my own organization. For each preservice program, I created a table and included codes on the left side of the table and the data chunks associated with each code on the right side of the table. In creating these tables, I retained the descriptive color coding from Phase One of my data analysis. Data chunks were open-coded more than once, as needed, and the same pieces of data were often split up in different ways.

Phase Three

The final form of data analysis I used was closed coding. Closed coding is a process wherein a researcher uses a pre-existing coding scheme to identify examples in data (Bogdan & Biken, 2007). While this method of qualitative data analysis has been critiqued for "forcing data" into categories (Richards & Morse, 2013), using it alongside open coding can offer a tool to support researchers in making connections between pre-existing literature and their own analysis.

I used closed coding to connect my findings to pre-existing literature on teacher agency for inclusive education. As discussed in the conceptual framework for this study, after conducting a literature review of studies that focused on teacher agency for inclusive education, Li and Ruppar (2021) contended that there were common aspects of teacher agency for inclusive education that appeared across the empirical literature. They argued that the common elements they found might serve as "units of analysis that can guide empirical studies in designing tools for…data analysis" (p. 53). To understand how the participants in the current study were enacting teacher agency, I closed-coded the data using selected codes from the framework developed by Li and Ruppar (2021). I used these codes to determine examples of agentic actions

of inclusive pedagogical practice that presented themselves in the data. The list of "units of analysis" that Li and Ruppar identified was longer than the number of codes I used; I focused on agentic actions related to reflexivity, autonomy, and professional competence. The other two types of actions that Li and Ruppar laid out, inclusive teacher identity and professional philosophy, were prerequisites for participation in the current study, so I did not use those categories to support the coding of my data. Table 8 adapted from Li and Ruppar displays the closed codes that I used in this study.

Table 8

Teacher Agency Closed Coding Scheme

Teacher Agency Action	Code
Reflexivity	• Reflecting on own practices and environments to accommodate learners • Monitoring own actions with respect to commitments • Managing discursive dissonance • Articulating professional knowledge to justify actions • Making sense of the structures and cultures in school
Autonomy	• Constructing a supportive ecology within schools • Collaborating with neighboring schools, communities, and families • Co-planning and deciding curricula • Building trustworthy relationships with students and colleagues • Willingness to enter collision with others • Demonstrating confidence, control, and resilience • Challenging problematic school culture and the principal's leadership • Challenging problematic broader education policy and sociocultural contexts
Professional Competence	• Actively developing knowledge about inclusive pedagogy • Desiring and seeking more knowledge and training • Adapting their prerequisite pedagogy for inclusive practice • Intersectional understanding of ability/difference within inclusive pedagogy • Modeling a disposition to social justice • Creating extracurricular space for relationship building with students • Creating mutual supporting space among students to foster a sense of belonging • Tailoring curricula but still ensuring students' competence in mandated content

Adapted from Li & Ruppar (2021), p. 48

Throughout the process of memoing and conducting these three phases of coding, I worked to identify themes that ran "through the data" (Richards & Morse, 2013). I also worked to condense codes into broader categories (Richards & Morse, 2013) and then notice which categories of codes could be condensed into themes. This process was iterative, and I refined and collapsed codes as needed. Finally, I selected the most prominent thematic threads for interpretation.

Validity in Interpretivist Research

It is argued that in qualitative research, there are no fixed or overarching meanings because the perspectives of research participants are products of their time, place, and identity when presenting their story (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Scott, 1990). As Ritchie and Lewis (2003) explained, the social science researcher "cannot capture the social world of another, or give an authoritative account of his or her findings, because there are no fixed meanings to be captured" (p. 9). Thus, while in this study I aimed to represent the perspectives of my research participants accurately, I make no claims that their perspectives were definitive truth about the phenomenon under study. Instead, I grounded my work in their words to capture the enactments on inclusion, not to represent what inclusion looks and sounds like authoritatively. Further, my work sought to provide voice to an often-marginalized population—teachers. Because the perspectives of teachers are often not shared in the literature, I aimed to foreground their experience as part of my research process through interpretative validity.

Interpretivist qualitative research is concerned with the research participants' perspectives; it is aimed at determining what "objects, events, and behaviors *mean* to the people engaged in and with them" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 288). Within this type of research, I sought validity by ensuring the accuracy of the descriptions and concepts that participants shared during

data collection (p. 289). Thus, interpretative validity was achieved when the "interpretative accounts are grounded in the language of the people studied and rely as much as possible on their own words and concepts" (p. 289). Since interpretative validity relies on ensuring that inferences are drawn from what individuals said or did, my researcher role was especially significant. Richards and Morse (2013) contended that entering a study with a "mind empty of knowledge about the topic" is a myth in the research process (p. 176). In fact, they argued that this approach to research can hinder the process because the researcher will enter a study with unspoken assumptions and then fail to acknowledge how they are impacting their research (p. 176). To ensure my own trustworthiness, I outlined in an earlier part of this chapter the assumptions that I made in entering this study and how they related to the research project.

To further strengthen my credibility, I designed several different opportunities to collect data rather than a single interview with each participant. The use of multiple opportunities for participants to share their descriptions provided more data from which to draw inferences and allowed me to "compare participant's consistency of responses" (Gay & Airasion, 2003, p. 215). I also used "verbatim…interviews by collecting and recording data with tape recordings" (p. 215) to ensure the trustworthiness of my data. Next, I used the memo-creation process to document a history of the study and create a log trial of the data collection and analysis process (p. 158). This allows others to ensure that I collected data multiple times and from multiple sources. Finally, I employed a member-checking process. I shared relevant sections of the discussion chapters with the participants so they could confirm if my interpretations accurately represented what they intended to convey (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This member-checking process also allowed participants the opportunity to ensure that their representations in the data provided adequate anonymity.

That said, I did intend to enact some power in this process by identifying themes and patterns in how the research participants talked about their enactments of inclusion. But, by grounding those patterns in the language of the participants, I aimed to center the teacher voices by incorporating their own words into the discussion.

Presentation of Findings

I present the findings from this study in two discussion chapters. Chapter 4 presents participant understandings of their preservice inclusive education programs; I also drew on publicly available descriptions of preservice inclusive programs that participants attended to contextualize their understandings within programmatic orientations to inclusion. Chapter 5 builds on these findings to illustrate participants' current efforts towards implementing inclusivity. Utilizing the teacher agency conceptual framework, the analysis found in this chapter paid attention to the factors that participants described as shaping their work and their descriptions of their own knowledge and skills. This chapter explores how the "practical-evaluative elements" (i.e., "structural, cultural," and "material" factors) of the participants' contexts influenced the types of decisions they made and how they made decisions (Priestley et al., 2017, p. 131). It also highlighted the connections and disconnections between the agentic maneuverings that participants described in their current ecological contexts and what they believed were the intentions of their teacher education experiences. In the final chapter, I present the significance of these findings and implications for inclusive preservice teacher education programs as well as for professional development programming for school districts that are committed to inclusive education.

Chapter 4

PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF PRESERVICE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The purpose of this study was to explore how a sample of in-service teachers who attended preservice inclusive education programs described their beliefs and commitments to inclusivity, their efforts towards implementing inclusivity, and their prior experience in inclusive teacher education programs. Through a better understanding of the challenges of practice that in-service inclusive educators described, more informed decisions can be made about the following: (a) ways to design preservice inclusive education programs in order to better prepare them to sustain inclusive practices; (b) kinds of professional development that can be provided in schools to support in-service inclusive educators in sustaining their practices; and (c) types of resources that can be made available to support in-service inclusive educators in doing this work. This chapter presents participants' understandings of their preservice inclusive education programs obtained from a total of 12 in-depth interviews and 10 artifacts. In presenting these findings, I also drew on publicly available descriptions of preservice inclusive programs that participants attended to contextualize their understandings within programmatic orientations to inclusion. Chapter 5 builds on these findings to illustrate participants' current efforts towards implementing inclusivity.

The analysis of data suggested that the understandings participants had of their preservice inclusive education programs aligned with a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) orientation to inclusivity. The coursework, field experiences, and assignments that participants described from their preservice programs demonstrated that the programs they attended used the pre-existing literature on inclusive education to design instruction. While there were overlapping themes

across the reflections of participants who had attended both Verrazano and Hornbeam Universities, participants shared understandings that also reflected differences in the emphasis across the two preservice programs. A notable difference across the two programs was how particpants who had attended Verrazano University (a graduate school located in a large urban center) oriented their understandings of their preservice inclusive education program largely around urban teaching, which led to a heavy emphasis on intersectional understandings of identity. On the other hand, the graduates of Hornbeam University's undergraduate program in inclusive education (located in a smaller city) described their understandings of inclusive edcuation from their preservice programs as less focused on one type of geographic area. This orientation led to a greater emphasis on the connections between socioeconomics, disability, and inclusion rather than a focus on cultural pluralism, such as that found at Verrazano University.

The following is a discussion of how the in-service teachers in this study described what they learned and experienced in their inclusive teacher education programs. First, I present a discussion of each preservice program, separately highlighting themes raised by participants within each program. In doing this, I drew on the literature to unpack participant descriptions as well as demonstrate new insights into their programmatic understandings. Then, I summarize the themes that arose across participants' descriptions of both programs.

Verrazano University's Intersectional Inclusive Philosophy

The findings below highlight how the participants who attended Verrazano University's Inclusive Education Program (a) learned about identity, (b) experienced conflicting ideologies, and (c) developed their understanding of inclusivity through field placements. Interview data suggested that participants deepened their understanding of an inclusive teaching orientation through their coursework (Gao & Mager, 2011; Hamre & Oyler, 2004; Titone, 2005), but at

times they felt unresolved tension between their own beliefs and programmatic orientations. The ways that participants made sense of these unresolved tensions may have played a role in preparing them for negotiating similar philosophical tensions as practicing teachers. Participants also developed skills aligned with teaching inclusively, such as collaborating with colleagues (Allday et al., 2013; Harvey et al., 2010; Titone, 2005; Voltz, 2003), advocating for families (Allday et al., 2013; Harvey et al., 2010; Titone, 2005; Voltz, 2003), and teaching joyfully. Having a strong relationship with a particular cooperating teacher or faculty mentor played a significant role in how participants experienced their development of an inclusive mindset and attendant teaching practices.

Intersectional Understandings of Identity

The alumni of Verrazano University described learning about elements of the pre-existing special education system as part of their program of study (Allday et al., 2013), while also explaining that the way inclusion was taught had a focus beyond disability integration (Kozleski et al., 2013; Wolfberg et al., 2009). Their descriptions were reflective of the position statement for Verrazano University's Inclusive Education Program, which names the interrogation of how students and their families experience school-based exclusions based on a variety of intersectional group identities, including race, ethnicity, social class, dis/ability, gender, nationality, sexuality, language, religious [non]affiliation, and so on.

For both Julia and Marisol, coursework and course discussions served to illuminate this idea of inclusion. For example, Julia described an identity project that she completed as follows:

> Every week we focused on different identity marker. And it started off by creating…a voice-memo; two minutes just talking about yourself. So, anything you wanted to share about yourself. And every week, whether we would read about race, we would read about gender, we'd read about sexuality, and then we'd revisit our voice notes and note, is that something we really spoke about ourselves?… Why would we include it? Why would we not include it?... It really started to bring out the intersectionality. How do all these play a

> role together? What are the things that have been most prominent in ourselves, or what are the things we haven't thought about as much?... I felt like it was just really eye-opening, especially doing it while I was in my first classroom.

In this example, Julia highlighted how a course assignment supported her in building an understanding that the intersection of different social identity categories such as race, gender, and sexuality inform an individual's sense of self. This understanding of identity reflects the literature on inclusion, which has suggested that an intersectional study should foreground actual experiences of individuals who exist at the intersection of multiple identity categories and examine "the structural conditions within which these social categories are constructed by, and intermeshed with each other in specific historical contexts" (Erevelles & Minear, 2010, p. 131). However, notably absent from Julia's description of this identity assignment is a mention of disability as an identity, which begs the question of whether in completing this project she foregrounded a social construction stance on disability.

In noting that this project was significant to complete while she was participating in her first student teaching placement, Julia demonstrated how she saw the connection between learning about intersectional identities and how an understanding of her own identity might inform how she teaches. Further, Julia pointed out how the assignment encouraged her to consider elements of her identity that she might not readily talk about, which suggested the assignment supported her in considering how identity-based privileges may inform her position as a classroom teacher.

Similarly, Marisol described a required Social Studies course where the preservice educators discussed the role that "students' identity played in the classroom" and how the "traditional" education system could be "oppressive" to students. She explained, "We had discussions on who we were as individuals and how the biases that we had and how our

identities may play a role in student access and opportunity." Marisol continued by saying that in this course, students viewed education as a "political act," which she found "empowering." She underscored the fact that she came away from this course with an understanding that inclusion requires political consciousness (Baglieri, 2017; Danforth & Naraian, 2015). Marisol highlighted how in course discussions she was able to develop an inclusive teaching stance where she saw herself as someone with agency who was emboldened to act on her beliefs.

Encountering and Recognizing Conflicting Ideas

Despite having an opportunity to develop a conceptual understanding of inclusion as grounded in political activism for students who experience marginalization based on their group identities, the graduates of Verrazano University described tension around being able to push back on or frame ideas for themselves. The literature suggested that to fully develop an inclusive teaching stance, educators should be afforded opportunity to inquire about and struggle with their beliefs (Titone, 2005). Marisol emphasized a "weird dichotomy" where she felt like at times she was "really inspired" and "really motivated," but at other times she felt "stifled and frustrated." More specifically, she described not always having an opportunity for discourse, which she contrasted with her undergraduate schooling at a liberal arts college where she had felt there was significant opportunity for debate. By describing feedback she received on an identity project, she elucidated this point:

> [It] almost felt like hypocritical in that the whole project was just like "get to know yourself better" as like a student and learner: in order to become a better teacher, and…I focused on…having a speech disability as a child and…how that kind of affected, elementary school and middle school for me…. The feedback was like "Well, we didn't want you to talk about that, and actually we want you to reflect, just through this lens, and, actually we didn't want you to be that creative with the project and "It should have looked like this," and it almost felt like…"We want you to be like really creative, and really innovative but actually just in the way that we want you to be."

Marisol's reflection highlighted how even though instructor feedback said she should take a creative stance, she perceived this faculty member as privileging agreement with the programmatic view of inclusion over allowing space for the inquiry that might facilitate her internal development of that stance. She described, "There was a certain way of being a teacher…and…that was kind of the model that you had to go with if you wanted to be successful in the program."

Julia highlighted how she had a friend in the program who shared a similar tension. In describing the identity project referenced earlier, she explained:

> I had a friend…who was a career-changer, who had a child a lot older than I was at the time…. She was really frustrated with…[the identity project]. She was like "I know myself; I don't need to be doing this. I'm here to learn about kids. I don't need to do this project for myself."

Julia's reflection demonstrated how she experienced a belief about inclusion that stood in opposition with the inclusive thinking that informed course assignments. In this example, she described encountering contrast between the following two beliefs: (a) inclusive educators should continuously interrogate their own positionality, and (b) inclusive educators should engage in interrogation of their own positionality, but that this type of interrogation is fixed and does not need to evolve over time. Rather than adopt the programmatic view which aligns with the former belief, Julia used the ideology of her peer to frame her understanding of when to interrogate her own positionality. She explained, "Whereas I had the opposite experience [as my friend], I felt like you know going straight form high school to undergrad to grad school, I never really took the time to do this." In this explanation, Julia showed how she valued interrogating her positionality in relation to her students' identities. However, by connecting the value in this process to the stage in her life when she was engaging in the work (i.e., post college), her sense-making also suggested that she might not see the work of understanding one's own positionality

as a continuous process, but rather as one that can happen at one point in time and remain relevant throughout one's teaching career. What this example highlighted is how in encountering an idea that conflicts with a programmatic orientation to inclusion, Julia was influenced by her peer's critique of a course assignment and did not bring this critique up in a course discussion.

Julia's and Marisol's reflections suggested that they were encountering challenges to programmatic approaches to developing an inclusive teaching stance outside of formal class discussions. Course discussion may not have made sufficient room to negotiate this philosophical tension, but Julia cultivated relationships with peers in her program where she could safely discuss challenges to an inclusive ideology. This discussion informed the development of her belief system, which led to some perspectives that may have veered away from programmatic views. Similarly, Marisol shared that she and her peers had "conversations with each other" to process assignment feedback that they felt conflicted with their understandings. These two examples suggested that during their graduate studies, the participants who attended Verrazano University developed a community of like-minded allies whom they could "rely on in pursuit of inclusive educational goal[s]" and who supported them in discussing when their beliefs conflicted with those of an educational institution (Broderick et al., 2012, p. 837). However, in relying on informal discussions with peers to consider conflicting beliefs rather than course discussions, they may have developed some understandings of inclusion that differed from Verrazano's programmatic intentions.

Encountering Conflicting Ideas in Graduate School-wide Content Area Coursework

A subcategory that further illuminated the ways that the graduates of Verrazano University experienced ideological tensions emerged in the data. Participants identified ideological differences between *program-specific* and *graduate school-wide content area*

coursework. In this case, for Marisol, faculty mentorship in one content area course supported her in developing an inclusive orientation across this tension.

Programmatic guides for Verrazano University outlined that the inclusive preservice teachers complete their science, math, and health courses outside of their specific program of study; they take these courses within other departments in the graduate school. Participant descriptions of these STEM courses suggested that there were discrepancies in the way that concepts of developmentalism, disability, and academic struggle were presented when compared to how those ideas were discussed in their inclusive-specific coursework. For instance, Julia explained:

> In the math class…, we were being told these are the standards that kids need to reach by this age, and this is how you do it. Versus in one of our…[ESSENTIALS]…classes we were talking about how you meet kids where they are, support them in their development, which, when you have a struggling student or at least when I've felt as I've entered teaching is when you have a student who's really struggling, those two ideas don't always mesh. Like if I'm going meet a student where they are, and support them fully and holistically, then I can't really be focusing on what the standard is.

Julia described how she was making sense of conflicting ideas across coursework; she showed how she tried to reconcile a key tenet of inclusive schooling—providing individualized instruction (Allday et al., 2013; Titone, 2005)—over an emphasis on standards-based content area instruction. For Julia, it seemed like there was a possible lost opportunity to discuss this tension in her math course and, instead, she considered the tension outside of formal class time.

In contrast, Marisol's most "memorable" course, Social Studies, which was taught within the program, seemed to offer an opportunity to make sense of what inclusive teaching practices might look like in a content area. She described the course as "break[ing] outside…of the mold of the program" and filled with "passionate" discussions that pushed students to "experiment" with "instructional practices." Further, this course offered Marisol the opportunity to experience

"fun," which for both graduates of Verrazano University was a key component of their understanding of inclusive education. Marisol's experience in the Social Studies course suggested that reconciling the tensions between content area coverage and individualized instruction has the potential to be a passionate, collaborative experience when experimentation and open critique of how "traditional content" could be "damaging and traumatizing to students" is fostered.

In Marisol's example, a faculty member teaching the Social Studies course served an important role in supporting her in making sense of competing philosophical orientations. She described this faculty member as a "mentor" for her during the program and afterwards; "she was someone that I went to and a lot of the other preservice teachers…all…look to her…like a big sister kind of figure." For Marisol, having a strong relationship with this faculty member played a role in ensuring that her voice was heard in class. She explained that this doctoral student was "willing to really talk about the stuff that we actually wanted to talk about." This suggested that part of Marisol's understanding of inclusive schooling in content area instruction developed through her ability to speak freely with peers in an environment facilitated by a trusted mentor. While Julia's example demonstrated a missed opportunity for content area coursework to reconcile conflicting ideas, the safety for students to discuss challenges cultivated by the instructor in Marisol's Social Studies methods course as well as the faculty member's programmatic alignment demonstrated how content area coursework had the potential to be an environment ripe for making sense of conflicting ideas.

Field Placements as the Main Site for Learning Inclusivity

Defining itself as "clinically rich," Verrazano University's Inclusive Education Program includes two semesters of student teaching guided by a practicum course. For both Julia and

Marisol, this year-long fieldwork was central to their graduate school experiences. Both participants became animated when they discussed field placements. Julia described student teaching as "the most critical experience" of graduate school and the reason why she began her first-year teaching with "big ideas" and "wanting to do things." Notably, Julia and Marisol each had a preferred student teaching placement and a less preferred student teaching placement, both of which seemed to shape how they came to understand inclusion. By reflecting across more and less preferred placements, student teaching offered Julia and Marisol the opportunity to develop skills in what Li and Ruppar (2021) defined as a key agentic action of inclusion—the ability to reflect "on their own practices and environments in seeking to accommodate all learners" (p. 48). Julia and Marisol experienced classrooms whose practices illustrated *inclusion in-action,* classrooms *doing curriculum the traditional way*, and schools where they did and did not *bond with the teachers.* Through these varied experiences, Julia and Marisol developed skills in determining which teaching practices and types of relationship building best served their goals as inclusive educators and which did not align with their inclusive philosophical orientations. Participant ability to reflect positively on the learning that came from experiences they viewed as more "traditional" suggested their skills in making sense of conflicting ideology, developed not only in encountering conflicting ideas in graduate coursework but also through guided work in the field. For both Julia and Marisol, having both exemplar and non-exemplar student teaching experiences contributed to their understanding of how they could structure an inclusive learning community. Below is a discussion of how they identified and learned from what they viewed as exemplar inclusive teaching and how they reflected on and learned from what they identified as less ideal teaching practices.

Reflecting on Practices and Environments to Identify Inclusion in-Action. Julia's second student teaching semester took place at a progressive public elementary school in a fourth grade ICT classroom. Explaining that she has since tried to "mimic" elements of this classroom in her own school, Julia said this classroom "felt good," a place where she wanted to wake up and be every day. Similarly, in speaking about her first student teaching placement, an ICT classroom at "a neighborhood" K-2 school that had a "community-feel," like the elementary school that Marisol had attended as a child, Marisol explained: "I was only supposed to teach three and a half days a week and I ended up just teaching all five." By attending her student teaching placement beyond required times, Marisol demonstrated how much she enjoyed and felt comfortable in the classroom. She continued, "There was a super-low teacher turnover rate, everyone had been there for years." These data suggested that early in their development as inclusive educators, Julia and Marisol linked inclusive teaching to teacher happiness and retention in the field. This confirmed other findings which have suggested that DSE-oriented educators considered leaving the profession when experiencing negative emotions such as seclusion and isolation (Rood, 2018; Rood & Ashby, 2020).

Marisol connected inclusion to a broad "sense of community" in describing her first student teaching placement: "the families were super-connected to the school and really involved and I think that I just really love that energy." By highlighting the value of the relationship between families and the school community, Marisol emphasized the importance of collaborating with families (Broderick et al., 2012; Titone, 2005) as a component of her understanding of inclusive teaching. For Julia, these good feelings came from the classroom community rather than the broader school community. She described how the five adults in the space, "two teachers, two parents and myself," encouraged the "29 kids" to take "responsibility

over different areas of their day" and "they worked really well together." An example of how this responsibility was fostered is as follows:

> They really emphasized morning meetings; it was a really big part of the day. They took a full period; all students were sharing. They had one student whose job it was to write down some of what other students were sharing. They had sign-up sheets so you know some kids might choose like, "I want to share on Friday versus Monday, so I have more time to think about it."

Julia highlighted how in the structure of morning meetings, her cooperating teachers created space for students to take ownership over their own participation by choosing when and what to share as well as by taking on a classroom job. Her reflections highlighted a key tenet of a DSE-orientation in-action, "presuming competence" or the expectation of "student agency, where the participation of the student in the heart of the classroom is a given" (Biklen & Burke, 2006, p. 172). Notwithstanding the fact that five adults were available in this ICT classroom to make instruction accessible to students, Julia described a practice where each student could manage their own participation. Furthermore, by offering student choice and creating space for community collaboration, the morning meeting structure that Julia described provided her with a working model of UDL's principle of multiple means of engagement (Center for Applied Special Technology [CAST], 2018).

In Julia's first student teaching placement, a first grade general education class, she found an example of curricular practices which she named "more on the edge of…traditional." Julia observed students that "never were playing; they were just sitting and working." This contrasted with the curricular practices in Julia's second placement, which she described as "different, exciting and cool lessons, integrating different subject areas." She described how in her second placement, her cooperating teachers designed "projects where kids would rotate around stations and sign up by randomly picking up sticks…and…take on different roles." For Julia, comparing

the curricular practices across her two student teaching placements allowed her to clarify when inclusive practices were taking place and how they influenced the engagement or how "exciting" and "cool" lessons were. She named elements of Friend's (2015) co-teaching models (i.e., "stations") and project-based learning in her second placement, which she contrasted with "traditional" seatwork in her first placement. By highlighting co-teaching as a non-traditional teaching practice, Julia's reflection demonstrated how her fieldwork experiences supported her to plan for the purposeful use of multiple adults in an inclusive classroom. Unlike in Waitoller and Kozleski's (2013) findings where preservice inclusive educators in their student teaching placements appropriated co-teaching to support "segregating students into ability profiles" (p. 42), Julia described the use of "choice sticks"—a process for randomizing students into groups rather using fixed ability-level grouping. By experiencing both a "traditional" and inclusive field placement, Julia was able to differentiate which practices more closely aligned with an inclusive orientation.

For Marisol, having a strong connection with her cooperating teachers was a priority over seeing inclusive teaching practices in-action. In this way, she identified the agentic act of "committing to building trustworthy relationships with colleagues" (Li & Ruppar, 2021, p. 48) as a priority skill that she developed through her fieldwork. Interestingly, Marisol's less preferred student teaching placement was the school where Julia had her more positive experience. She agreed that the placement was in a "very untraditional school setting" and it was a "cool experience" where she developed "good relationships with the students." But she did not feel a "bond" with the school. For Marisol, it was the "chemistry" she had with her cooperating teachers in her first placement that made it a positive environment for developing her inclusive teaching. She explained that the same mentor instructor at Verrazano who taught her Social

Studies class also served as the "student teaching coordinator" and had picked her first placement: "I think that's like just a testament to like how well she knew me and how well she got to know [the cooperating teachers]." Rather than emphasizing what she learned in a particular type of classroom or school, or even from cooperating teachers who are skilled in modeling inclusive practices, Marisol emphasized the role of a student teaching coordinator, who has strong relationships and knowledge of both cooperating teachers and preservice teachers, played in facilitating her field placements. Marisol's bond with her cooperating teachers in her first placement led to her becoming "super close friends" with her cooperating teachers with whom she is still "in touch…to this day and" have… "been there for like every like milestone." Marisol continued these bonds by working at this school for her first 5 years in the field. For Marisol, building relationships with her cooperating teachers served to support her transition into becoming an inclusive classroom teacher.

Julia's and Marisol's reflections on student teaching suggested that joyful field experiences—where they had positive relationships with cooperating teachers, students, and the school community—supported their development of a repertoire of inclusive teaching practices. While each semester did not fully offer all opportunities to cultivate every practice, they developed skills in reflecting on their environments (Li & Ruppar, 2021) that helped them to determine which teaching practices and types of relationship-building more closely aligned with an inclusive philosophical orientation.

Hornbeam University: Inclusion Across Contexts

The analysis below brings to light how the participants who attended Hornbeam University's Undergraduate Inclusive Education Program (a) developed their understandings of inclusion across different locations, (b) incrementally developed different inclusive teaching

skills through a sequenced trajectory of field placements, and (c) experienced disagreement with programmatic ideas about inclusion. The data suggested that the graduates of Hornbeam developed an understanding of inclusion grounded in place and space through their field experiences. Their understandings underscored how inclusion differed across suburban, urban, and international contexts as well as across field placements in a variety of classroom settings (e.g., self-contained, general education, integrated co-teaching, etc.). Participants also stressed how field placements supported them in developing emergent skills in delivering individualized literacy instruction and experimenting with whole class inquiry-based content-area teaching practices. Like the participants who attended Verrazano, the alumni of Hornbeam University had experienced dissonance between their own beliefs and those to which they were exposed in their program. At Hornbeam, course faculty played a significant role in naming these tensions and discussing them with students. Having respect for the content knowledge expertise and pedagogical practices of university faculty who taught their courses led to participants being open to taking in new ideas or being willing to try out new teaching practices. Participants also stressed having developed an understanding of the traditional special education system (Allday et al., 2013; Li & Ruppar, 2021).

Making Sense of Inclusion Across Varied Settings

Hornbeam University's Undergraduate Inclusive Education Program emphasizes field placements in a "diverse range of settings." Culminating in two full-time student teaching experiences in the spring of students' senior year, students complete eight field placements throughout their undergraduate experience in both urban and suburban schools. The undergraduate experience also includes optional field experiences through study abroad and an opportunity to complete a semester of student teaching living off-campus in a larger metropolitan

area, which the program calls the "City Pathway." According to Hornbeam's website, if students choose to complete a semester of their senior year through the "City Pathway" Program, which takes place in the largest city in the state, preservice teachers at Hornbeam will "sharpen…skills" and "broaden…perspectives on cultures, families, and professional practices."

Analysis of Hazel's and Cassie's descriptions of their undergraduate experiences suggested that the variety of fieldwork opportunities in which they took part influenced the types of inclusive teaching skills they developed, as well as how prepared they felt when entering their first teaching jobs in New York City. Hazel's depth and range of classroom observations and practical teaching experiences led her to a deepened sense of how geographies influence inclusive educational opportunities and offered her preparation to teach inclusively in a large urban school district, even though Hornbeam is situated in small city. On the other hand, Cassie, who chose a path with less variety in her field experiences, graduated from Hornbeam's Undergraduate Inclusive Education program with what she described as a "lack of knowledge of how…[to]…support and communicate with families from different backgrounds." Below is a discussion of how the preservice teachers made sense of inclusion across field placements in multiple geographical environments and classrooms.

Geography and Inclusion

The graduates from Hornbeam made sense of inclusive teaching by comparing what they had observed in multiple field placements or by comparing their experience in one placement with the experiences of a peer. These comparisons caused them to connect geographic context and socioeconomics with their vision for the possibilities of inclusive education. For instance, Hazel described discussion in her student teaching practicum as follows:

> If I was placed in like a suburban school and a friend of mine was placed in a city school, our experiences were very different in that I had a much smaller class size, they had a much bigger class size, and it also depended on…our host teachers. For example, I may have been able to jump right in and start teaching or having small groups or interacting with the kids. Whereas maybe my peer was not able to do that yet,… [she]…was doing more on the opposite side of helping the teacher prep, in terms of making copies and like things like that.

Hazel explained that at her suburban school placement, it was easier to start actively student teaching. She connected the ease of being able to gain teaching experiences quickly with the reduced class size found in the wealthier suburban school districts where she student taught. Hazel continued, "For those of us that had the experience of not being able to jump right in, those philosophies were slower to develop, if that makes sense. Because they weren't actively engaging in the classroom setting." Here, Hazel described how she noticed that the student teachers who had urban placements earlier in their programs of study developed an inclusive teaching philosophy at a slower pace than those who student taught in a suburban context. For Hazel, the socioeconomic background of a school community played a mitigating role in her opportunity to experience inclusion in action. She explained:

> There are less resources. For example, when I was teaching in a suburban school, you know, I had access to a lot of different curriculums…that I can choose from. I had a lot of access to manipulatives and things that I was easily able to use and integrate into my lessons whereas that wasn't always the case when…I was working in the city school. I didn't have a lot of those different resources and the structure of the day was very different. For example, it was very structured, and the kids have different expectations.

Hazel outlined how being able to complete student teaching in an environment with flexible scheduling and varied curricular resources afforded her the opportunity to plan and try out inclusive teaching practices. She found that in her urban student teaching placement where the classroom schedule was more rigid and she had fewer materials to use, it was harder to experiment with her lesson planning.

Hazel recognized some of the barriers towards inclusion found in the urban context; her practicum course served as a location to make sense of these distinctions and reframe her experiences in urban teaching. She noted, "We definitely had conversations about the types of resources that are available in classrooms and how as teachers…, we can work towards giving the best instruction to our kids, regardless of where we're teaching." Being able to compare the experiences across different contexts offered Hazel the opportunity to envision what inclusive lesson planning could look like in a more structured, less-resourced classroom like the urban student teaching placements she had experienced.

By contrast, Cassie had fewer urban teaching placements than Hazel because she chose not to attend the optional "City Pathway" Program. She found that her experiences in her undergraduate program offered her opportunities to consider disability-specific ideas about inclusion critically, such as ways to foster "intrinsic motivation" or to "help kids with communicating." But there were limitations on access to learning about working with students from different races. Cassie described this drawback in student teaching in a suburban context as follows: "It was a public school in Burkesville. So predominantly white, yes, I think, you know, it's ninety percent white. So, culturally it definitely lacked diversity, which is hard. The cultural and linguistic diversity factors are—I'm still learning about that postgrad." Cassie identified not having experienced racial and linguistic diversity in her student teaching as a weakness in her development as an inclusive educator; she explained, "The multicultural piece and culturally relevant, responsive teaching, even if we did talk about it in our undergrad, it didn't seem as relevant in all of my placements." Cassie's experience is echoed in Hornbeam's description of inclusion. According to its website, Hornbeam does define inclusion beyond disability identity integration as the literature suggests (Kozleski et al., 2013; Wolfberg et al., 2009). However,

notably absent from the list of named identities are race, ethnicity, and culture. While offering a diversity of student teaching placement types supported Hazel in the development of a stance on inclusion that bridged across the needs of a diverse range of learners, the absence of explicit connections between discussions of culturally relevant practices in course work and experiences working with students from a variety of different racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds led to gaps in skills for Cassie. Without the wide range of placements to observe educators working with students of color, Cassie was not able to fully develop the skills that she believed she needed to work with students who come from marginalized racial backgrounds. Furthermore, while Hazel felt prepared to work with students from racial and cultural backgrounds differing from her own, the discussions she described having at Hornbeam during her "City Pathways" placement focused on students' social class without explicitly considering how their racial and cultural backgrounds were influential to their learning.

Grade Level, Least Restrictive Environment and Inclusion

Field experiences in multiple settings offered the Hornbeam alumni an opportunity to envision inclusion at different grade levels and in range of environments including least restrictive and more restrictive ones. Participants described opportunities in preschool settings, lower elementary school, and upper elementary school as well as general education, self-contained, and integrated co-teaching classrooms. The range of these experiences, however, were limited for Cassie who did not attend the "City Pathway" Program. Both participants described how through the "City Pathway" Program, there were more opportunities to do fieldwork in Integrated Co-teaching environments. Hazel explained that "there are ICT models in…[the Hornbeam area]…, but there's a lot less of them. So, you're not as likely to be placed in an ICT room as often." For Hazel in particular, comparing experiences across different types of settings

offered the opportunity to form her own vision for inclusion. She described this process as follows:

> You might be also placed in maybe a self-contained classroom, or you might be placed in a general education classroom, but in each of those experiences you're kind of drawing on what you're observing and how you're interacting with the kids and then you're kind of learning from those experiences to help you shape your own.

Observation of multiple classroom settings and the ability to see herself as able to pick and choose practices from the different settings was a part of Hazel's process of developing her own inclusive teaching practice. Embedded in this approach to development was Hazel's understanding that she has decision-making power around picking, choosing, and implementing curricular practices (Li & Ruppar, 2021).

For Cassie, having a variety of field experiences was instrumental in her development of a positive attitude about inclusive education and for challenging some of her deficit perspectives (Li & Ruppar, 2021). She described how when she first started to learn about inclusion, she questioned it by thinking, "What in the world? How would it be possible for kids to be nice and for teachers to be nice…. I feel like I…was…being very ignorant…. I was like there's no way that this stuff is relevant, like I didn't understand." As she explained, Cassie entered the Hornbeam inclusion program without a philosophical orientation towards inclusion and, despite coursework on inclusion, it was not until seeing an "authentic" example in the field that she began to develop an inclusive stance and ideas for aligned practices: "I didn't understand…until, I was in, I was practicing it, that it is possible to care and…establish your community within your classroom."

For Cassie, an early practice she developed towards inclusion which she labeled as "surface-level understanding" was building a classroom community where "students with special needs are welcome." She described earlier field placements where she "didn't have opportunities

like everyone else did to interact with the kids" and where she was not advocating for those opportunities with her host teacher. Further, Cassie explained that her earlier field placements were general education settings. She stated, "I don't know what the rationale is in terms of like when we do each placement 'cause, you know, I needed the special ed placement before I could really get inclusion, or I think about inclusion."

Having several experiences in the field led to Cassie "connect[ing] with…[a]…host teacher" who was a special educator. This opportunity afforded her the ability to shift her perspective. She described the transformational host teacher that she had in the following way: "She would push in to support and pull kids to support…it just worked for me and I was doing what she was doing within that week. The kids just loved Miss Kopake and she was really just being herself." The opportunity to observe an example of special education service provision (i.e., "push-in/pull-out") that felt "authentic" supported Cassie in "developing confidence" that inclusion could work and she could facilitate inclusive teaching. She described feeling like "this is what I'm supposed to be doing," for the first time in her experience learning how to teach. For Cassie, the opportunity to compare multiple host teachers and types of service provision afforded her an opportunity to develop a vision for the role of an inclusive educator which, in turn, helped her to shift her philosophical orientation towards inclusion. Without having a pre-existing orientation towards inclusion, seeing a special educator who was effectively modeling inclusive practices was essential to Cassie developing an inclusive teaching stance and feeling confident enough to try out inclusive teaching practices.

Fieldwork to Incrementally Develop Inclusive Teaching Skills

Fieldwork was central to Hazel's and Cassie's experiences not only in the learning that happened by reflecting across different locations of experiences, but also because field

experiences were connected to one another in a developmental sequence. Participants described how each field experience was used to incrementally build their knowledge and skill in a particular aspect of inclusive teaching. Cassie's earliest field experience at Hornbeam was tutoring "one-to-one with a struggling reader." The field experiences developed by increasing the amount of responsibility that Hazel and Cassie took on in the classroom as well as offered new teaching content to focus on. So, while the first field experience focused on individual literacy, the second field experience focused on using UDL to design and implement whole class instruction. According to Cassie, the following field placement focused on project-based learning. The final experience was a semester of student teaching split between general education and special education placements. Alongside these practical experiences, participants attended a seminar course where they focused on making sense of what they were seeing in the field in relation to their inclusive coursework. The trajectory of these field experiences supported the development of an understanding of inclusion. It allowed participants to focus on discrete inclusive teaching skills and consider inclusive approaches to mainstream special education practices in isolation before they tried using multiple skills in tandem in their final student teaching opportunity.

Developing Alternatives to Mainstream Special Education Practice

The literature has suggested that developing an understanding of the special education system that inclusive educators are operating within is essential to inclusive teacher education (Allday et al., 2013; Li & Ruppar, 2021). At Hornbeam, field experiences, the aligned coursework, relationships with fieldwork supervisors, and relationships with cooperating teachers served to develop this knowledge as well as to consider how inclusion may serve as a theoretical tool to challenge some of these practices (Li & Ruppar, 2021). While IEP writing and

interpretation, for instance, were skills that Hazel said she learned about in her undergraduate coursework, an inclusive approach was made actionable through interactions with a host teacher. She described how she believes in "positively framing…observations of the student while also making sure…[to be]…clear about what the student needs to achieve and be successful." She has used this approach to both craft the Present Levels of Performance (PLOP) page on an IEP when writing her own or to avoid biasing herself about a student from a deficit-oriented IEP that she was given. Hazel described learning this approach to a PLOP from her host teacher in the "City Pathway" Program in the following way:

> My host teacher, that was a special ed teacher, told me that that's something that she does. And I was like, "that's actually such a good idea. I never thought about it that way."… She told me, "Yeah, a lot of times I read IEPs and I'm like literally what is this, this is garbage,' and so I was like "That's really smart actually." She told me about an example of a story that happened where she met a child, and…her experience of the child was so different than what was written in the IEP. So, she was like 'it's always important for you like to make your own like observations about a student before you read the IEP.'

Hazel's example demonstrated how she learned to appropriate a tool of the special education system (i.e., IEPs) to serve a more inclusive approach to teaching (i.e., positive framing) through her relationship with a cooperating teacher.

For Cassie, the relationship that she developed with her field supervisor supported her ability to critique artifacts of the special education system that had a deficit approach to working with students with disabilities. This relationship also supported her in identifying alternative practices that can be used in lieu of mainstream special education ones. For example, she described her first encounter with Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) as follows:

> When I was applying for a job, I was really close with my supervisor from Hornbeam who got me connected with the school. I didn't know what ABA was and this…[was a]… particular practice that the school I was interviewing at utilized. I asked his opinion on it, and…he compared it to training a dog and like that's what it does to children. And he…connected this for me to…my undergrad experience… like we focused a lot on intrinsic motivation and how to develop that.

In mainstream special education practice, ABA plays a role in supporting the behavior of students with Autism; inclusive educators often take the stance that it focused on eliminating students' behaviors rather than embracing behavioral differences (for more information on these critiques, see Milton, 2018). As can be seen in the quote above, with the help of a discussion with her fieldwork supervisor, Cassie adopted this inclusive, critical stance on ABA which she said was a practice of "encouraging children to assimilate" and is a "brainwashing approach." By equating the mainstream special education practice of ABA to training a pet, Cassie suggested that it is dehumanizing for students with autism. In fact, she further explained that in her own research on the history of ABA, she has found that its origins are tied to the deeply problematic practice of gay conversion therapy: "the history of it was to conform gay people, to make gay people stop acting gay. That's the history of it." While ABA was not directly taught in Cassie's undergraduate coursework at Hornbeam, through Hornbeam's approach, she developed an awareness to question mainstream special education practices when she encountered them. Her relationship with her fieldwork supervisor served as a sounding board to discuss potential critiques of deficit-oriented practices as they arose. Further, her fieldwork supervisor helped her to make connections to alternative practices that she did learn at Hornbeam so that she could approach working with her students with Autism from a strengths-based perspective. She explained how in discussing ABA with her fieldwork supervisor, he contrasted ABA with what she had learned about "intrinsic motivation and how to develop that, and how to help kids with communicating." In this way, Cassie's relationship with a mentor from fieldwork supported her ability to critically analyze an artifact of mainstream special education, ABA, and support her in envisioning alternatives to its use based on her previous academic coursework at Hornbeam. The examples provided by Hazel and Cassie demonstrated how relationships with mentors in the

field supported the graduates of Hornbeam in challenging problematic elements of the pre-existing special education system and connecting content that they had learned in their courses to teaching practice.

Developing Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Skills in Content Area Instruction

Another set of skills that were incrementally developed during students' field experiences were content area knowledge and content area pedagogical practices. Both participants described how their initial field experience included tutoring a child one-to-one in literacy using the instructional program *Road to Reading* (Blachman & Tangel, 2008). This field experience went alongside coursework in children's literature and literacy methods in what Hazel defined as "teaching certain reading concepts." Supporting a student one-to-one as the earliest fieldwork experience seemed to build each participant's skills in observation and comfort in leading instruction. However, both participants felt that this early entry into literacy instruction left them underprepared to provide individualized reading instruction to emergent readers in their current practice. They both explained that they came away with an underdeveloped understanding of methods for teaching emergent reading as well as a lack of knowledge on how to sequence emergent reading instruction (Clark et al., 2017). While they developed many significant literacy pedagogical practices such as how to support students in reading authentic children's literature, choosing children's literature that represents students' own identities, and teaching reading comprehension strategies, they felt they lacked an understanding of phonological awareness and how it connects to phonics instruction as well as in what order a child might benefit from developing skills in both of these pillars of balanced literacy.[1]

[1] The National Reading Panel identified five pillars of elementary school reading instruction: phonemic awareness (the ability to identify individual speech sounds), phonics (the ability to match speech sounds to letters), fluency (the ability to read with expression at the rate of speech), vocabulary (the ability to understand and use words based on their meanings), and comprehension (the ability to understand written text) (Armbruster et al.,

Hazel explained, "I didn't really know how…[to teach aspects of reading]. For example, the phonics…[and]…explicit instruction in reading was missing. Or, lacking…it was touched upon but it wasn't in-step." Hazel's reflection demonstrated how there may have been a disconnect between the intention of the literacy tutoring in which she took part and the literacy pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) she took away from the experience. She identified how she did not learn how to design a scope and sequence for phonics instruction or how to use an "explicit" approach, which she believed were important to her current work supporting students with reading and language-based disabilities. Further, she described having little memory of the content and approach to the teaching of reading that was used in the *Road to Reading* (Blachman & Tangel, 2008) instructional program. She said:

> To be quite honest, I do not remember a lot of it. The *Road to Reading* book…I remember very vaguely doing a lot of like vocabulary work. I feel like we did some flashcards. I believe they would read. I would give them a sentence and they would read the sentence back to me. What else? I like really don't remember.

Hazel's reflection suggested that while she developed an understanding that one-to-one reading instruction was an essential skill for an inclusive educator, the approach that Hornbeam used to teach the skill did not have a lasting impact. When asked whether she used strategies from the program currently, she said, "I would remember it more if I had, if I had been using it more consistently. But I can't even remember what we did." Her reflection suggested that the approach to teaching individualized literacy instruction at Hornbeam did not translate into a lasting knowledge of how to teach phonological awareness and phonics as well as how to design explicit

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2006). In my analysis, I name phonological awareness (the ability to identify and understand the sound structure of spoken language) rather than phonemic awareness as a pillar of reading instruction since it is the larger category of language development in which phonemic awareness falls as a subcategory. While all five of these pillars should not be equally weighted in each lesson or classroom or for each student, and they are not an all-inclusive list of what should be taught in an elementary school reading classroom, research has found that when elementary educators have an understanding of how these pillars of reading develop and which methods for teaching go into each of these pillars, students have greater reading comprehension over time (Armbruster et al., 2006).

reading instruction. In fact, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, after graduating from Hornbeam, both Hazel and Cassie chose to continue their studies by obtaining Master's degrees in literacy instruction. Li and Ruppar (2021) labeled this inclusive educator disposition as the "professional competence" needed to seek "professional development" and to have an "insatiable desire for more knowledge and training." Their decision to study literacy more deeply post-undergraduate schooling in inclusive education suggested that Hazel and Cassie developed the deeper professional competence of being able to self-assess where they needed to grow as educators.

Developing Progressive Content Area Pedagogical Knowledge. Unlike literacy instruction where Hornbeam's fieldwork experiences did not fully support the development of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), content area pedagogical knowledge in math, science, and social studies was an area in which both Hazel and Cassie gained confidence after their fieldwork. Cassie discussed the lasting impact of learning about, and then practicing, inquiry-based approaches to teaching all three of these subject areas. She explained how learning to teach using "inquiry-based, hands-on-science" contrasted with her own experience in science classes in school: "I was like, no wonder I hated science and I love this! I remember really hating it. It was like memorizing facts." During her fieldwork, Cassie developed an understanding that as an inclusive educator, she could engage students in student-centered science instruction. She described how her students responded to a series of lessons that she facilitated using a science topic and approach she learned in a seminar at Hornbeam.

> Oh, they loved it. They were so engaged. It's how my professor asked it, "How do big rocks break down into small rocks?" And just taking that vocabulary piece, which I feel was emphasized when I was into science…. You know, we took that out because it's the concept that we want kids to grasp, and I think it really simplified—not simplified it, but it made it accessible and how science should be…. The kids, they bought the hands-on…. It was not about being right or wrong…. They were constructing their own

> understanding, which I think…felt empowering for me when I was doing it, and it was empowering to them. It's equity, it's, you know to be in a role of like recorder and just being able to use what you know about the students to inform the group dynamics, so it's more about…how students could work well together, rather than being intentional about this science.

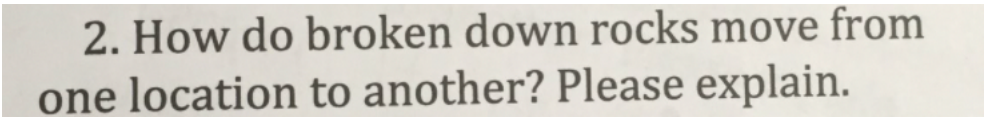
As her reflection demonstrated, this fieldwork experience allowed Cassie to practice making complex concepts accessible to students by modifying the vocabulary in use. Figures 3 and 4 below show examples of materials that Cassie saved from this fieldwork experience. In these artifacts, she made vocabulary accessible through her anchor charts and student tasks. On the anchor chart found in Figure 3, the word "weathered" is written in a different color from the rest of the guiding question, and a definition for "weathered" was placed directly above it. Cassie reinforced this definition of "weathered" by also providing it in a pre-assessment question (see Figure 4) so that students were familiar with the concept before the terminology was introduced.

Figure 3

Cassie's Science Anchor Charts in Field Placements

Figure 4

Cassie's Accessible Science Pre-Assessment Question in Field Placements



In the interview data excerpted above, Cassie also explained how she was able to embed an emphasis on social skills by assigning students roles in their science group.

A key element of what made this experience successful for Cassie was that she participated in the inquiry-based pedagogical practice as a student in her seminar before she facilitated it in the classroom with students. She explained:

> Our cohort, we were put into groups and…we did projects…[like on]…erosion through project-based learning, and then we used our own evidence and findings to inform…[our thinking]. It was the first time ever for us, like "oh my goodness," we are teachers ourselves.

Cassie highlighted how her instructor taught the pedagogical practice of facilitating inquiry-based science by modeling. The students in Cassie's Hornbeam cohort participated in the science pedagogical practice as students, which allowed Cassie to re-envision her understandings of science instruction. Since she had never experienced an empowering science class as a student herself, the opportunity to participate in an inquiry-based science lesson shifted her thinking about what science instruction could be. Further, she was able to develop the science content knowledge that she needed to teach about erosion by participating as a student.

Experiencing an example of inclusive, inquiry-based science instruction in a course at Hornbeam provided her with a vision of what this instruction could look like in the classroom, in addition to the science content knowledge needed to teach about erosion, thus making it more accessible for Cassie to teach inquiry-based science on her own. Cassie's experience serves as a

counterexample to the findings Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) identified. In their study, student teachers faced tension in their field placements when trying out inclusive practices learned in their coursework. Participants in that study appropriated practices from their coursework in their clinical experience in ways that no longer retained their inclusive, accessible nature. While it is unknown if Cassie's placement may have been more open to inclusive practices than the field placements in the study Waitoller and Kozleski conducted, Cassie's experience suggested that through modeling an example of an inquiry-based science instruction at Hornbeam, she was able to directly transfer several inclusive teaching practices into the field.

Hazel described how in her student teaching, she was also able to observe examples of hands-on project-based learning in action with students. She observed a social studies and science integrated unit on the Maya as a student teacher during the "City Pathway" Program:

> We were learning about two different areas, Palenque and Chichén Itzá.... The children were learning about how those two areas have very different types of land and how one area gets a lot of excess water and how one area gets very little water. They were thinking about…how they would deal with the water situation in both places. So, they…out of mud and like PVC pipes and dirt and…sand, they created their own water systems for each of…the two different areas. It was just like really really really cool, just to see the kids working together to create this version. Then, at the end of the unit we watched a video about how the Maya actually created their water system and what it was really like and it was cool to see some of the students have very very close ideas. It was real incredible.

Similar to Cassie's practice science lab in her seminar at Hornbeam, Hazel's field experience in the "City Pathway" program offered her an example of how interdisciplinary project-based learning could be implemented in the field. By seeing an example of how students were able to engage with complex questions, Hazel learned that students could work together successfully, use multiple materials, and solve interdisciplinary problems. These real-world experiences with content-area instruction aligned with an inclusive orientation seemed to serve as models that Hazel and Cassie could follow in their own classroom. These experiences also appeared to offer

them confidence that content-area instruction aligned with an inclusive belief system could be successful which, in turn, informed their philosophies of inclusive teaching. Student-centered, inquiry-based content area instruction was central to both Hazel's and Cassie's descriptions of their understandings of inclusive teaching.

Experiences Disagreeing with Programmatic Notions of Inclusion

Similar to the alumni of Verrazano University, the participants who attended Hornbeam University experienced tensions between their own beliefs and programmatic ideas about inclusion. However, unlike at Verrazano University where disagreements between participants and programmatic views of inclusion were discussed with peers, faculty at Hornbeam University often brought up disagreements directly with participants. Findings suggested that when a tension in beliefs was surfaced by either a faculty member or student and discussed between the two, it became a central element of the learning experience. In particular, Cassie described how her own teaching philosophy evolved through professor guidance in resolving tensions between her own thinking about individuals with disabilities and the beliefs being espoused programmatically. She explained:

> I was learning about teaching social studies, and this was my first taste of everything you know about social studies is wrong. It's about perspective, and we had to create this twenty-two-page lesson plan, and all I did was think about it as a twenty-two page assignment…. I had to create a universally designed social studies unit and I couldn't do it because…[something]…was holding me back. I thought I was working hard…and my professor was like…"I can't pass you for this…. It's not clicking for you." Essentially, like, "You want it to click?" I got hit with the whole…halfway through School of Ed…being called out and saying, I'm not taking it seriously enough…. In my brain, I'm participating so much. But I think it was more getting pushback…bring[ing] it back to like the implicit biases…. [It]…requires like unpacking, and that's what I had to do, like really thinking about what I believed, and my thinking changed.

In the experience that Cassie described, a social studies curricular artifact she produced for a course assignment demonstrated a lack of alignment with the principles of UDL. The grading of

this assignment and the deliberate conversation of the professor teaching the course served to trigger Cassie's recognition that her belief system was in tension with an inclusive orientation to teaching. Cassie's reflection highlighted how the faculty member who taught her social studies course played a role in making explicit how the implicit bias she held about individuals with disabilities was impacting her unit planning. Cassie described her biases as stemming from her own elementary school experiences: "my understanding of individuals with disabilities…[was] …based on…where I grew up…. There…[was]…no way to not see difference…[at home]. I thought, 'Oh, inclusion, I could fake actually thinking that.'" Cassie's experience reflected how attempting to create inclusive curriculum without an authentic inclusive orientation can create dissonance. Her experience reflected Day et al.'s (2005) finding that even though educators may "mobilise 'occasional identities'" in response to certain circumstances, beliefs about teaching often formed at an early life stage are difficult to change (p. 575). Her attempts at "faking" a belief in inclusion stemmed from more deeply held beliefs about individuals with disabilities formed from childhood.

Cassie initially read the role of this course instructor in identifying her deficit-oriented beliefs as difficult, but reframed his feedback as more supportive as time passed. She explained, "I didn't expect [the professor] to say that." She believed, at first, "he doesn't like me." But over time she began to "credit him." Cassie explained that after this discussion, she went home for a school vacation and was asked to decide whether she wanted to continue in Hornbeam's Undergraduate Inclusive Education Program. She explained that she then began to take "accountability" for the "preconceived ideas" she had about individuals with disabilities from "not being exposed to inclusion as a child." For Cassie, feeling like "it was a choice" to be an inclusive educator because she was opting into staying in the program helped her to open her

"heart and mind to the work that…[she]…was studying." Being challenged to change her thinking or to leave her program of study served to produce an actual shift in her thinking about children with disabilities.

Cassie's reflection emphasized the challenges that truly adopting an inclusive philosophy of education may pose and the role that faculty facilitation may play in supporting the development of new ways of thinking. Earlier in her program, she had faced dissonance with another faculty member; she "stopped caring for" that faculty member and felt as though the faculty member "didn't think highly of" her. The overt and transparent nature of the dissonance that arose from her social studies curriculum as well as the ability to reflect and make a choice to adopt a new belief system eventually proved transformative for Cassie—an experience she deemed as "euphoric."

Respect for Content Knowledge Expertise and Pedagogical Practices of University Faculty

Cassie highlighted how respect for the expertise of the university faculty played a role in her choice to shift her philosophical orientation. She explained that she decided she should "listen" to the perspectives of her professors since "they're experts"—a measure that she calculated by saying they were "teaching from their own books." For Cassie, the professors supported a strong theory-to-practice connection through their expertise as well as provided her with a social-emotional learning experience. She explained that she felt as if she was "learning how to be a better person."

Hazel demonstrated a similar respect for the expertise of a favored faculty member. Hazel shared, "She's so knowledgeable…she just knows so much…. The whole class was just like a way for us to learn without…PowerPoints and a talk or a discussion or a presentation. I really feel like it's very hands-on." For Hazel, the expertise of this faculty member served as a model

for what inclusive learning should look like. She also highlighted how the instruction was designed to "prepare" someone by giving "hands-on experiences you'll need to be able to be doing when you go back in the classroom." Trust in this faculty member was built through her ability to connect what was taught in coursework at Hornbeam with inclusive teaching practice.

By contrast, Cassie described a professor for whom that trust did not exist. She described her feelings towards this professor as follows: "You're preaching this, but it's hard…. When was the last time you were in the classroom?" Cassie's reflection on her relationship with this other professor suggested that having a strong connection between theory and practice and authentically modeling inclusive teaching helped to demonstrate faculty expertise in inclusive education, and the absence of these factors resulted in disbelief that inclusion could be actualized in the classroom. For both Cassie and Hazel, authentic examples of inclusive courses at Hornbeam supported them in reconciling new beliefs about inclusion with their pre-existing philosophical orientations.

Themes Across Both Preservice Inclusive Programs

There are several common themes among participants' reflections on their experiences as preservice educators in inclusive teacher education programs. For all four educators, faculty presence, presentation of academic content area teaching practices, and multiple fieldwork experiences played a role in the development of their philosophical orientation towards inclusion. Through these opportunities, participants began to view themselves as political actors who could enact several agentic actions of inclusion, including reconciling differences (Li & Ruppar, 2021), autonomously planning curriculum (Li & Ruppar, 2021), actively making decisions (Naraian, 2014) about which teaching practices to use and why, and adopting inclusive teaching moves regardless of structural barriers (Naraian, 2014; Thorius, 2016).

In both programs, participants experienced disagreements between their own beliefs and programmatic views of inclusion. All four participants had outlets to discuss and reconcile these tensions, offering practice in what Li and Ruppar (2021) described as developing a "sophisticated repertoire for reconciling dissonance" (p. 56). At Verrazano, back-channel discussions with peers or a trusted relationship with a faculty mentor supported Marisol and Julia in the development of these reconciliation skills. At Hornbeam, faculty explicitly named and discussed points of tension with students. Hazel and Cassie relied on their trust in faculty expertise to support how they navigated these differences in beliefs. Trust in faculty was built through modeling of inclusive teaching practice and making strong connections between inclusive theory taught in coursework and inclusive teaching practices observed in the field. It is also likely that since Hazel and Cassie were enrolled in a 4-year undergraduate program, Hornbeam faculty had several years to develop relationships with students which led to high levels of trust.

At both Verrazano and Hornbeam, content area teaching served as a vehicle for developing an actionable inclusive teaching practice. For the Verrazano alumni, being able to develop an inclusive teaching stance in the context of their social studies methods course offered an opportunity to develop a belief that inclusive teaching practice was a political act. At Hornbeam, social studies, science, and math content area teaching practices were all developed using an inclusive stance. Inclusive teaching tools such as UDL were taught within the context of these content areas. Through this intentional integration, the Hornbeam students experienced transformations in their understandings of how content could be taught. Both Cassie and Hazel were able to reframe their understandings of content area instruction to include inquiry and interdisciplinary projects. By contrast, for Julia and Marisol who attended Verrazano

University's program, STEM teaching methods were taught outside of their inclusive coursework, which left them to rely on their ability to reconcile dissonance to develop their inclusive teaching skills in STEM content.

The finding that the participants in the current study developed a view of content area teaching as a vehicle for actionable inclusive teaching practice supported Naraian's (2010) research, which suggested that an inclusive teacher's identity may be built, in part, around their leadership in designing and implementing academic content instruction. In Naraian's study, the special education teacher on record in an ICT classroom felt more empowered when she had opportunities to design and implement content area curriculum. Preservice opportunities to practice content area teaching methods integrated with inclusive methods left the participants in this study feeling equipped to take the lead in facilitating content area instruction integrated with inclusive teaching practices, thus shaping their identity as inclusive educators. Unlike Naraian's participant who felt subordinated by colleagues on a grade team by virtue of her role in designing curriculum, the participants in the current study graduated from their preservice programs seeing themselves as inclusive content area curriculum designers.

Multiple fieldwork opportunities offered through both preservice programs offered participants the chance to view a variety of teaching practices. Through guidance from cooperating teachers, faculty mentors, student teaching supervisors, and group discussions in aligned seminar courses, participants developed the ability to make decisions about which practices they believed aligned with an inclusive stance. They also developed skill in recognizing how to negotiate structural barriers that may seem like limitations to inclusion, including deficit-oriented practices typically found in mainstream special education settings. Previous research (Naraian, 2014; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013) has found that teacher enactments of inclusive

schooling may be inhibited by the underlying ideologies of the school system in which they teach, regardless of their mindsets about working inclusively. Reflections of participants in this study demonstrated that they graduated from their preservice inclusive teacher education programs, having developed an awareness of structural tensions that may arise and skills in how to negotiate those differences. For instance, Hazel described how her student teaching seminar served as a location to discuss how the inflexible school day structure in her urban student teaching placement did not have to prevent her implementation of inclusive teaching practices.

The findings presented in this chapter also highlighted how the type of higher education program (i.e., undergraduate versus graduate school) in which participants were enrolled played a role in the kinds of experiences they had prior to entering the field as professional educators. Cassie and Hazel, who studied inclusive schooling as undergraduates, took part in inclusive preservice education over the course of 4 years, which allowed for several years of fieldwork placements prior to their student teaching, a significant amount of inclusive education coursework, and opportunities to study inclusive education in locations off-campus and abroad. Given the limited number of credit hours required for the master's degree in inclusive education, Verrazano's graduate program took place over a shorter span of time. This led to Marisol and Julia having fewer field placements and less coursework in inclusion prior to entering the field as in-service inclusive educators.

Given this context, the understandings of inclusion that all four participants developed through their prior experience in inclusive teacher education programs informed the ways that they currently negotiate inclusion as New York City educators. In Chapter 5, I build on the findings presented here to illustrate the participants' current efforts towards implementing inclusivity. I highlight the connections and disconnections that participants surfaced between

their understandings of inclusion developed through preservice education and their descriptions of their current teaching practices. Using the reflections of their preservice experiences analyzed in this chapter as a backdrop for understanding their current experiences allows for clarity on how the thinking of these four inclusive educators has continued to develop within the context of the New York City Special Education Reform and the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 5

ACHIEVEMENTS OF INCLUSIVITY

The research questions that guide this chapter are as follows: How have the beliefs and commitments of in-service inclusive educators who attended preservice inclusive education programs evolved over time? How do these in-service inclusive educators experience enactments of inclusion? and What connections and disconnections do research participants describe between their understandings of their current practice and their understandings of the goals of their preservice education programs of in-service inclusive teachers? To answer these questions, I drew on the work of Priestley et al. (2017), who defined agency as teachers' "active contribution to shaping their work and its conditions" (p. 1). Priestley et al. contended that teacher agency is not a "capacity of individuals" that can be had or "possessed," but is "something that individuals and groups can manage to *achieve*—or not" (p. 3). In utilizing this conceptualization of teacher agency, the analysis found in this chapter paid attention to the factors that participants described as shaping their work in addition to their descriptions of their own knowledge and skills. I also drew on the work of Li and Ruppar (2021) who adapted the framework for teacher agency developed by Pantic and Florian (2015) and drew on the work of Priestley et al. Li and Ruppar conceptualized teacher agency by identifying four elements (i.e., "professional competence," "inclusive professional philosophy," "autonomy," and "reflexivity") and "context-bounded actions" of inclusive pedagogical practice aligned to those elements of agency (p. 48). I explored how the "practical-evaluative elements" (i.e., "structural, cultural," and "material" factors) of the participants' contexts influenced the types of decisions they made and how they made decisions (Priestley et al., 2017, p. 131). I also highlighted the connections and disconnections between the agentic maneuverings that participants described in their current

ecological contexts and what they believed were the intentions of their teacher education experiences. Analysis of data from this study revealed that participants achieved inclusive decision making within their curricular practices, within their relationships with other professionals in their teaching context, and within the career moves they made. They did so by drawing on a repertoire of inclusive teaching curricular tools and practices that they developed in their preservice teacher education as well as their skills in reflection and evaluating risk.

Findings suggested that the participants' inclusive decision making prioritized positive relationships with other adults, including school administrators. Common among participants was an approach to inclusive decision making that, at times, kept beliefs about inclusion under wraps, as a tool to facilitate curricular practices that are aligned with inclusive beliefs rather than engaging in debate or risking having a diminished reputation. Participants also demonstrated a capacity to "mediate" between perceived "structural" and "material" (Priestley et al., 2017, p. 131) barriers to inclusive curriculum and their own beliefs about how curriculum should be designed to serve the interests of individual children. For example, rather than seeing structural shifts in teaching during COVID-19 as a barrier to inclusive practice, participants saw themselves as able to capitalize on this moment to rethink ways to group students, provide individualized instruction, use technology, and structure time.

Below is a discussion of how the inclusive educators in this study described the types of decisions they made in their everyday teaching contexts. First, I present a discussion of how they worked towards inclusion by achieving agency in the curricular aspects of their work. In this section, I define curriculum broadly to include the formal content they teach and how they organize their instruction as well as the structures of their school day, the organization of their physical and digital classroom spaces, and the curricular materials available to them. In this

section, special attention is paid to the review of curricular artifacts that participants shared and their interpretations of those artifacts. Next, I discuss participants' relationships with other adults focusing on how they evaluate when to engage in challenge with theoretically misaligned colleagues and supervisors. After that is a discussion of how participants made decisions about what schools and settings they taught in and which grades they taught. This section also explores the constraints on practice and perceived limitations on enacting agency that have led the participants to make decisions to shift their professional roles. To illuminate the ways that the "iterational dimension of teacher agency" (Priestley et al., 2017, p. 130) influences how participants have evolved their inclusive practice over time in real-world situations, I highlight connections and disconnections that the participants described between their understandings of their preservice inclusive education programs and their understandings of the goals of their in-service inclusive teaching practice.

Inclusive Curriculum Making as an Iterative Process

The findings below highlight how the inclusive educators in this study viewed themselves as curriculum designers. For the four participants in this study, curriculum was not a fixed entity that could be created and implemented; rather, curriculum designing was an ongoing cycle of creating, implementing, reflecting, and recreating instruction, materials, time, and space tailored to the individual students present in one's classroom. These findings confirmed Li and Ruppar's (2021) assertion that inclusive educators engage in the agentic pedagogical practice of "co-planning and deciding curricula" (p. 48). Previous research has found that special educators who see themselves as diagnosticians and remediators for disabled students rather than curriculum designers who provide accessible instruction to all students experience marginalization within their schools (Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016). Having a marginalized professional role may

impact the self-efficacy of special educators to actualize inclusive practice (Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016). Findings from the current study suggested that all four inclusive educators, regardless of whether they were the general educator or special educator on record for a classroom (at the time of data collection, Hazel and Cassie were working as special educators and Julia and Marisol as general educators), viewed themselves as lead instructors who planned instruction, implemented units of instruction, and took ownership over the structure and organization of classroom time and space. Furthermore, Marisol was a grade-level lead teacher who organized the development of curriculum for her colleagues and had in previous academic years served as a model teacher, where peers observed and learned from her curricular practices. The sections that follow discuss the ways participants made decisions about curriculum and are categorized into the following four subthemes: (a) social justice as a content area curricular concern, (b) individual student access as a curricular concern, (c) content area curricular knowledge as a professional development goal, and (d) response to crisis as a stimulus to rethink curriculum.

Embedding Social Justice into Curriculum

Participants described and shared examples of how they modified required or recommended curricular resources to include a social justice approach. For example, Cassie, who felt like one of the charter schools where she had previously worked did not offer her "control over the curriculum which was very standardized testing-based," sought out smaller moments in the day for opportunities to modify curriculum. "Morning Meeting" became a time when she would foster discussion of "current events" from students' lives to connect to students' "communities." While the writing curriculum she used at that school was heavily structured, she still found "space" for students to "use language" of how they "speak at home" in their writing.

Cassie's ability to embed small moments for students to discuss their own identity and use their own linguistic repertories during instructional time that was meant to be geared towards standardized tests, demonstrated flexible thinking to tailor curriculum to students while still attending to school-based requirements for "high-stakes exams" (Li & Ruppar, 2021, p. 48). She responded to the culture of her school that demanded she ensure her students were prepared for state exams by maintaining the pacing and sequence of a mandated writing curriculum, but she was also able to achieve agency by finding time outside of her formal writing instruction for students' identities to be present in their language usage.

Hazel described taking even greater ownership over modifying curriculum. She explained how the packaged literacy curriculum at the charter school where she previously worked did not include "a lot of diverse stories," and that the "diverse stories in the book were just not very relevant" or "didn't feel authentic." She continued by saying that the stories in the curriculum often "feature white characters with very stereotypical middle-class, upper-middle-class lives. There are very little stories about other cultures…[or]…characters that are disabled." For Hazel, who at the time of using this literacy curriculum was working as a special education teacher predominantly with low-income students of color, the lack of representation of her own students in the stories they were reading was only a part of why the texts in her curriculum needed to be modified. She also described how the stories that students were being exposed to did not focus on "important issues" in the country. For example, she explained how the pre-made curriculum included a story about a "white police officer who's trying to get kids to pay attention and…[has a]…doll…[that's]…doing tricks and it's silly." For Hazel, this story was inauthentic to her students' background knowledge and lived experiences. She explained:

> Obviously there's a lot going on in…the country now about policemen, white policemen…. Reading a story like that,…what is that actually telling kids?... Never…

> while I've read that story has…conversations about policemen and police brutality and the protests or anything like that. But it's also like reading that story is sending this one message. And…[the students are]…receiving another message from watching the news or having conversations with families or even experiencing it themselves.

Hazel's ability to critique the pre-packaged literacy curriculum that she worked with suggested that her decision making was informed by multiple facets of inclusive teaching practice at the same time. To redesign her literacy instruction, she was considering her beliefs about the multidimensional nature of student identity (i.e., culture, race, and disability) and the belief that young children already are engaged in politics in their daily lives.

Hazel described that while in the beginning of her first-year teaching, she began critiquing representations in her pre-packaged literacy curriculum, it was towards the middle of that academic year that coincided with her first semester of graduate school in literacy when she began to develop the courage to "start picking…[her]…own children's literature books." She described how new texts she has used in her teaching of "character traits" included "*My Brother Martin*…which is written by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s sister" (King Farris, 2006) and "*Sofia Valdez, Future Prez*" (Beaty, 2019). Both books feature characters of color and take on relevant political topics. Hazel clarified that these text selections were "great…because…[her students] had a big conversation about the impact kids can have on their communities." Like McKay's (2016) findings that first-year inclusive educators began their work using more traditional teaching practices as a survival mechanism before shifting to more inclusive practice, Hazel's description of her comfort with redesigning literacy curriculum later in her first-year teaching, after she had begun a new graduate program in the field of literacy, followed a similar trajectory. She described feeling more comfortable enacting these curricular revisions once she had further studied how to design literacy curriculum in graduate school. Hazel's learning curve reflected

McKay's (2016) findings that having additional support while in the first year of teaching benefits inclusive educators' ability to enact inclusive practice.

Rather than seeing mandated pre-existing curriculum in her school as a barrier to inclusion, Hazel described a decision-making process that allowed her to continue to teach required literacy "skills" while also infusing a social justice orientation to her instruction. Her iterative process of curricular designing involves thinking "about texts that…match the skill," but also considering "who's being represented in the books," "who's not," and "who wrote the book." She also considered how her students would "respond to the book." By re-designing mandated curriculum, Hazel acted on the "culture of performativity" within her school that has tied student academic success with proficiency in the given literacy curriculum.

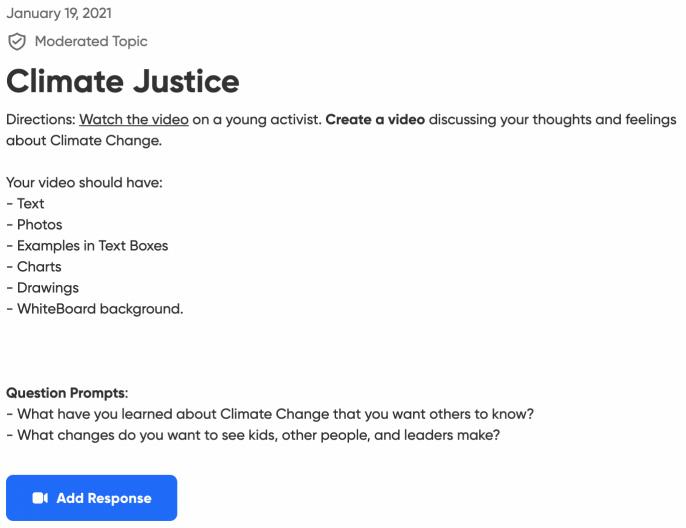
Like Hazel, Marisol described an approach to embedding social justice into her pre-existing literacy units of study that mediated the requirement to teach to learning standards dictated by the audit culture present at her school and her own beliefs about curriculum. She re-designed literacy curriculum to emphasize "priority learning standards" such as identifying "central idea" and "details" in informational text and offer students the opportunity to focus on a "social issue."

Marisol was not teaching a pre-scripted curriculum like the one described by Hazel, but she still worked to modify pre-existing literacy units that were used by the rest of her grade team. Reflective of the politically framed curricular work that Marisol described in her social studies methods course at Verrazano University, she described an "environmental activism and climate justice"-focused informational reading and writing unit she had taught, while her grade-level colleagues taught the same literacy skills by focusing student research and writing on "favorite animals." The presentation for the final project for this literacy unit (see Figure 5) was completed

via the digital platform "Flipgrid," which Marisol viewed as a method to give her students a "platform to…use for their own activism on this issue." Her use of Flipgrid as a tool for students to represent their own thinking demonstrated how she emphasized a social justice approach not only in the content of what the students were studying, but also through the way that students represented their learning. While more traditional literacy curriculum positions students as receivers of information from published text, by using an online platform with a publishing feature, Marisol provided her students with the opportunity to view themselves as social activists. The use of technology positions students as having ideas worthy of public consumption that may influence how "decision makers get information" and "justify their decisions" (McNutt, 2018, p. 2).

Figure 5

Marisol's Climate Justice Literacy Final Project Flipgrid

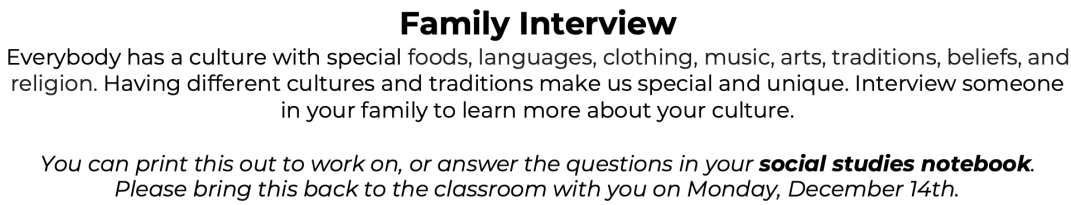


By swapping in new informational reading and writing content, Marisol's example showed how she decided to teach the same literacy skills as her colleagues while maintaining her own beliefs in inclusive pedagogy. She also demonstrated an ability to stay true to her commitments, despite the different approach to teaching taken by her grade-level colleagues.

Not only did participants describe embedding a social justice approach into pre-existing instructional materials, but they also provided examples of how they created their own projects that utilize a social justice orientation. Julia shared an identity-focused project which she had students complete. Figure 6 shows the directions where students were instructed to interview a family member to create a nonfiction writing piece about their own culture.

Figure 6

Julia's Family Interview Project Planning Worksheet



Family Interview

Everybody has a culture with special foods, languages, clothing, music, arts, traditions, beliefs, and religion. Having different cultures and traditions make us special and unique. Interview someone in your family to learn more about your culture.

*You can print this out to work on, or answer the questions in your **social studies notebook**.*
Please bring this back to the classroom with you on Monday, December 14th.

The incorporation of this interview project into Julia's social studies instruction demonstrated a belief that the knowledge families possess holds value. By having students rely on an interview with a family member as a data source, Julia emphasized an approach to teaching which decentered traditional texts as the sole sources that students use to gain knowledge. Further, by drawing on family expertise, her project worked to "build an alliance" with families in pursuit of educational goal[s]" (Broderick et al., 2012), which research has argued can help educators sustain inclusive teaching practices. Julia's decision to design her own social justice-infused writing assignment demonstrated that she was able to achieve agency in terms of curriculum design.

All four participants in this study demonstrated examples of when they infused social justice into their literacy and social studies instruction. However, they each experienced varying constraints that influenced the degree to which they were able to achieve agency. Cassie

experienced constraints tied to the audit culture present in her school, but she found time to insert small moments centered on curricular practices oriented towards social justice. Julia, on the other hand, worked in a context that supported her creation of her own units. (Later in this chapter, I discuss the career shifts the participants made because of constraints on practice.) The findings in this section suggested that while all participants teach in and have taught in New York City schools, varying degrees of control over curriculum enacted by individual school leaders resulted in constraints on the participants' ability to infuse a social justice orientation into their curricular practices.

Another point of note is that, despite all these rich examples of social justice-infused curricular modifications, the participants provided examples where they primarily infused social justice into literacy and social studies instruction. While Marisol did have a science content connection to her literacy unit, the primary goal of her instruction was informational reading and writing rather than developing science content knowledge. The other participants provided no examples of social justice-integrated STEM instruction.

Accessible Curricular Practices

The decisions that participants made about curriculum are not exclusive to re-orienting instruction to include a social justice approach. They also re-designed and created curriculum so that it was accessible to students with a variety of interests, learning strengths, and needs. Participants discussed how they designed student projects and unit pacing, and both re-designed and wrote original lesson plans to engage the individual students in their classrooms. Embedded in the accessible curriculum writing practices they described was a belief that inclusive educators should forefront learner variability at the onset of lesson planning. For instance, Marisol described how she considered "multiple ways" to "reach…different students." For Marisol,

different students did not exclusively mean students with disabilities. She explained that she might support her English as a New Language (ENL)[1] students, students with "some sort of speech disability," students who are "performing above grade level," "students who respond well to visuals," students who "respond well to videos," or students who "like to write a lot." Through highlighting these different learner categories, Marisol understood learner variability as a universal way to think about all students.

To support curriculum planning for this multifaceted understanding of learner variability, participants explained processes that relied on an understanding of tools associated with inclusive curriculum design, including UDL (Thorius, 2016) and differentiation (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). They also demonstrated skill in rethinking how instructional units were laid out over time to connect individualized goal-based learning to general education sequences of instruction. This resequencing of pre-existing units of study demonstrated how participants were achieving agency in their use of school-based "resources" (Priestley et al., 2017).

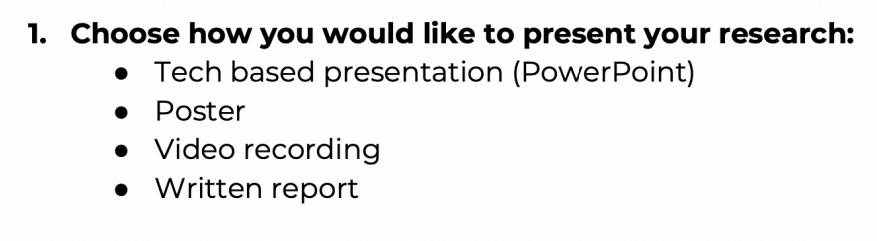
UDL as a Framework for Curriculum Design

Evidence of understanding of and ability to apply UDL (CAST, 2018) was evident in participants' descriptions of project designs. Participants provided examples of how they re-design pre-existing end-of-unit projects to support all three components of UDL: (a) "multiple means of engagement," (b) "multiple means of representation," and (c) "multiple means of action and expression" (CAST, 2018). For example, Julia shared the directions for a research project that her third graders had just completed at the time of data collection (see Figure 7).

[1] In New York State, ENL classes have replaced instruction that was formally known as English as a Second Language (ESL). According to the New York State Education Department (NYSED, 2019), in ENL instruction, "language arts and content-area instruction are taught in English using specific ENL instructional strategies."

Figure 7

Julia's Research Unit Final Project Directions



In her pre-made literacy curriculum, Julia's assignment had originally required all students to write a written report. However, in her directions, she "optimize[d] individual choice and autonomy" by allowing students to determine how they present their findings and varied "methods of response" by allowing students to share their findings in multiple modalities (CAST, 2018). These findings contrasted with Waitoller and Kozleski's (2013) research wherein novice educators mistranslated the use of UDL when operating in a real-world context. Rather than utilizing UDL as a tool to create accessible instruction as they had studied in their preservice teacher education program, the novice educators appropriated it as tool to maintain the use of more traditional curriculum practices of low, medium, and high leveling that were in use at the professional development school where they were student teaching. Julia's ability to modify her unit project using the UDL framework suggested that UDL supported her achievement of agency, despite the boundaries of her prewritten curriculum. Julia attributed her skills in creating UDL-infused accessible curricular practices to her graduate education at Verrazano University, which she believed gave her a "strong understanding" of "kids' needs" and instilled a mindset to think about student "interests," "strengths," and "weaknesses" when designing a "lesson" or "curriculum." Her reliance on knowledge of designing accessible instruction acquired in her preservice education program afforded her ideas for what sort of

inclusive curricular practices might be possible to enact, given the curricular resources she had in her current teaching context.

Participants described how they designed for learner variability, not only in their end-of-unit projects but also in individual lesson plans. Rather than re-designing lesson plans, Cassie reported that the inquiry methods she learned for teaching math at Hornbeam were inherently infused with elements of UDL. She described how she has used "three-act"[2] math tasks which she believed allow for connections to "real-world concepts" and are inherently accessible because students are not required to use a "standard algorithm"; instead, they "can think about math in any way that makes sense to them." In highlighting this example, Cassie was drawing on her knowledge of UDL, including how it calls for "optimiz[ing] relevance, value, and authenticity." Cassie demonstrated an ability to name access points for learning variability in pre-existing content area instructional methods, which served as a decision-making approach to align her teaching practices with her inclusive teaching philosophy. Like Julia, she drew on her inclusive preservice teacher education to support her in making decisions about how to design inclusive instruction.

Hazel provided an example of a reading lesson where she planned accommodations throughout each section of the plan. Figure 8 shows the opening of the lesson where access points such as the use of strategic reading partnerships are planned for in advance.

[2] Three-act math tasks are math lessons modeled on a three-part sequence for writing inquiry-based math lesson plans that include the following components: getting started, working, and consolidation (Van de Walle et al., 2013).

Figure 8

Hazel's Accessible Literacy Lesson Opening

Description of Lesson	**Accommodations:**
Opening: • Explain to students that we will be working on Story structure today. On a pre-organized anchor chart (will be filled in throughout the lesson) review the meaning of characters and setting. • Explain why it is important to understand a story's structure- *that it helps readers understand the story better* • Go over expectations for the lesson - while reading the story we will be filling out this anchor chart together. Tell students while I read, be thinking about the characters, the setting, and what is going on in the story. • Introduce the book *Bone Dog.* Ask students what they notice about the cover and what wonderings they may have.	• Preferential seating for students who have difficulty sustaining attention or need frequent reminders • Frequently review/ ask questions about the story to guide struggling students through comprehension of the story • Leave anchor chart up for students to reference as a model while completing their own organizer • Have students read with a partner if they are not able to access a chosen halloween text on their own

For Hazel, this was an example of an inclusive lesson plan because it was crafted "for…[her]…specific class and…[her]…specific set of kids." She was careful to note that the accommodations in the plan were "not necessarily" for "every single class of every single set of kids." By making this statement, Hazel signaled an understanding that the practice of using generic methods of differentiation was not aligned with her inclusive teaching practice.

Hazel explained how in her class "there were no children that had any physical disabilities," so the accommodations did not include suggestions of that nature. Instead, she named specific examples of student needs in her class and how she designed accommodations for those students. For instance, she said her class included "two students that really struggled with…the physical act of writing." To support those students, she had them each work with a partner to complete a graphic organizer so that "one student can scribe and the other can…talk through their ideas verbally." Hazel's discussion of the rationale behind different accommodations in her lesson plan demonstrated an ability to connect her lesson planning decisions directly to individual learner needs. She also noted how the text she had selected, *Bone*

Dog (Rohmann, 2009), was geared towards her students' interests and "they were excited to read…[a]… Halloween story" near the upcoming holiday. This example demonstrated how Hazel considered not only student needs, but also their interests in designing her own accessible lesson plans. By either designing lessons that are inherently accessible (e.g., Cassie's use of "three-act" math tasks) or embedding student-specific accommodations into lessons (e.g., Hazel's two-column reading lesson plan), these participants demonstrated competency in connecting their theoretical knowledge in inclusion with their current lesson planning practices (Pantic & Florian, 2015).

Adjusting Pacing Calendars

As discussed in Chapter 2, Naraian (2014) found there was an incompatibility between how time is understood in general education versus special education contexts. She argued that the general education system assumes student academic readiness can be determined by chronological age. By contrast, special education uses time as a tool of accountability to provide individualized education. According to Naraian (2014), the structure of the general education school day and pacing of academic content throughout the year does not fully meet the needs of students with disabilities because individualized goal-based instruction does not always have a place in general education instructional sequences. The findings in the current study suggested that inclusive educators may engage in negotiations with time when they are working across these two different approaches to pacing instruction. Participants in this study discussed how they adjusted the pacing of units of instruction to provide more opportunities for small group and individualized instruction, while still prioritizing general education content found in school-mandated instructional sequences.

For Julia in particular, the concept of restructuring the general education pace of instruction is a key component of her curricular work. She explained how she re-paced the math calendar that she was provided by her school administration by "cutting out" lessons and using the newfound time to add in "guided math or small group math." Her revised pacing process included removing "repetitive lessons" that failed to deepen understanding for "kids that have already grasped the concept." For example, she described how she chose to remove a lesson on arrays from her pacing calendar in the following way:

> It had the kids essentially cutting out arrays from paper. There was like ten pieces of paper where they cut out these arrays and then just on the back of each card wrote the array represented…. I'm always excited about lessons like that where kids are cutting or doing in ways that they might not usually in a typical lesson. But that lesson took so long just to get them to cut them all out and then scraps and then writing them up. I don't know what they really took out of it.

Julia continued by explaining that her students "had studied arrays in the previous few lessons," so it was not helpful for the students who already knew how to identify and label arrays, and for "kids who were struggling with it," she did not "think that cutting out those cards was what was going to do it for them."

Julia's process for negotiating time relied on her ample background knowledge of the general education math curriculum and scope and sequence, which she attributed to her school having worked with a consultant to develop their own "stronger curriculum." Julia described how in math instruction she had "clear ideas of what a student needs by the end [of the year]." She was able to determine which standards were the priorities based on her knowledge of the given curriculum which she co-developed. She explained how she

> doesn't cover every standard…like I know by the end of third grade, my kids need to have a strong understanding of place value to the hundreds place. I know that they need to understand multiplication, division, addition, and subtraction, and that they start learning fractions.

Julia's knowledge of the math content area priorities helped her to determine what content was redundant, less relevant, or too heavily focused on unrelated material (i.e., cutting in the aforementioned example) or recall and basic application. Previous research has suggested that when special educators who are relegated to viewing themselves as remediators (Thorius, 2016) or specialists in social-emotional learning (Naraian, 2010) rather than knowledgeable of curriculum, they feel disempowered to modify academic content. Julia, who developed confidence with curriculum in general in her preservice inclusive education program and math curriculum specifically through workplace professional development, demonstrated a decision-making process where she contested how time was structured in her school's general education curriculum by making time for individualized and small group instruction. Her revisions of the school's math pacing guide not only supported students who needed additional support, but by emphasizing priority standards, she also aimed to deepen math conceptual understanding for more proficient math students. In this way, her inclusive decision making was challenging the efficacy of general education time for all students, not solely those with disabilities. Designing accessible instruction seemed to be a well-developed decision-making process for all four participants in this study. Their curricular decision-making processes demonstrated consideration of tools to support accessible instruction such as UDL and differentiation.

Seeking Out Professional Development to Improve Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Pantic and Florian (2015) have argued that an element of inclusive teacher agency includes the ability to enact "reflexivity" or "a capacity to systematically evaluate" one's "own practices" (p. 347). The findings from the current study suggested that the participants demonstrated this self-awareness as it pertained to their pedagogical content knowledge, which Shulman (1987) defined as the complex and varied interaction of subject matter knowledge and

knowledge of how to teach that content to a child. Participants highlighted how their insufficient pedagogical content knowledge of elements of emergent literacy (i.e., phonological awareness, phonics, explicit instructional techniques, and sequencing of emergent literacy instruction) influenced their perceived lack of ability to provide students with individualized instruction in literacy. For instance, Julia shared that she had learned about the "big debate" on phonics instruction in her studies at Verrazano University. However, how to teach phonics, or pedagogical knowledge, was "one of those things that I was never really taught, and don't really have that much experience teaching." She explained that the literacy coursework she completed at Verrazano "was less about, like, targeting skills that students needed." In her current teaching practice, she named "small group literacy" for "kids who are really struggling in reading" as "one of the areas" she has the "most of…[her]…goals." Furthermore, Julia's self-awareness of her insufficient pedagogical content knowledge of phonics led her to rely on a scripted phonics instructional program used by the second grade teachers to "pull from things that…[she]…think[s] would helpful" to teach her students. Such self-reflexivity led to participants not only relying on scripted phonics curricula, but also pursuing school-based coaching and support from colleagues and seeking additional higher education in literacy (at the time of data collection, both Cassie and Hazel were enrolled in master's degree programs in literacy education).

For Hazel, too, reading instruction was a "weakness" in her first-year teaching. She said she "didn't really know how to be the most effective reading teacher" in teaching pillars of literacy content more common in "earlier grades." Moreover, she noticed that her "gaps" in knowledge were making her feel "lost" when she "could tell that there were certain children that had gaps in…reading." She elucidated, "I wasn't sure how or where I should start or what kind

of intervention would be helpful." Significant in this example was how Hazel connected her own lack of content knowledge in the teaching of reading with how it was impacting her ability to enact individualized instruction. She took responsibility for identifying a student's individual needs and providing well-researched, targeted instruction. This led to Hazel asking her co-teacher to model guided reading for her. She continued, "Then the dean of the school talked to me through the structure of the guided reading lesson…and I observed a teacher in a different room." In requesting assistance in reading instruction, Hazel demonstrated the capacity to reflect on and develop her practice in the pursuit of her students' needs.

Cassie shared how her reflective practice in literacy instruction caused her to seek a graduate degree. She discussed how she had "learned about reading intervention in smaller groups" during literacy courses at Hornbeam, but said that the coursework focused on learning phonics content (but not how to teach phonics), how to design a UDL-infused unit, and how to design social studies and literacy co-curricular instruction. She felt as though she still needed support in learning teaching methods to develop student skills in the pillars of literacy commonly associated with more emergent readers. She described how in her first job, the other educators with whom she worked demonstrated expertise in teaching guided reading and she was "hard" on herself" for not knowing how to teach reading since it is "so critical." This understanding of the critical nature of reading and awareness of her lack of knowledge of teaching methods led Cassie to apply for a master's degree in literacy.

The gaps participants identified in their emergent literacy content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Clark et al., 2017) provided insights into how they reflected on their own teaching practice. These findings suggested that the participants had an awareness that an inclusive educator needs to possess deep content knowledge to know how to provide sufficiently

differentiated instruction in literacy. While their preservice inclusive education programs may not have fully prepared them to teach all emergent literacy skills, the programs cultivated in them a self-awareness of when they needed to reflect on their own knowledge as well as how to act in accordance with that thinking. In fact, after Hazel began additional teacher education in literacy, she described feeling more confident to modify her curriculum, saying it became something that she "really enjoy[ed] doing."

Curricular Practices in Response to Crisis

A final theme that appeared across participants' curricular decision-making processes related to their ability to see substantial challenge as a stimulus for social transformation. At the time of data collection, all four participants were teaching under unusual circumstances because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. While Marisol was teaching a fully remote class, Julia, Hazel, and Cassie were all teaching in person but providing different services than what was typically mandated by the concept of least restrictive environment. For example, Hazel was teaching a mixed-grade special education class with a cooperating teacher, but she and her co-teacher were never in the classroom at the same time. The class was split in two "pods," and the co-teachers swapped which half of the class they taught at a midway point in the day.

While all participants expressed the difficulty they faced under their unfamiliar teaching circumstances, they also shared what they had learned about inclusive teaching practice because of the required shifts in the structure of their classrooms. Teaching in New York City during the COVID-19 Pandemic offered the participants new ideas for how to use technology effectively to make instruction accessible, group students, design their classroom spaces, and schedule their daily instruction. For example, Marisol explained how she had "always been interested" in trying out a "flipped learning" model which she explained as follows:

> [Students complete]…the lesson the day before…[for homework]…so that when they…come into class…[they]…can really focus on having a discussion about what we learned and what questions we have, and they can share with their classmates what they wrote and what they're thinking about.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Marisol's students "lacked the technology to do it." She described that she had "tried playing around with it here and there, but…[could]…never get it off the ground." Marisol saw the fact that New York City had provided her students with access to "one-to-one devices" because COVID-19 was an opportunity to purposefully "structure things differently."

For Marisol, the "flipped classroom" offered her an opportunity to incorporate more "student-centered" instructional time that provided students with "autonomy and agency to really guide the conversation and choose the things that they want to work on and…follow their interest." She also explained that she believed this restructuring of her time could help her to "target students more specifically and also giv[e] students more time to like really engage with the work…in a more meaningful way." Marisol's choice of how to use newfound technology resulting from an unusual teaching circumstance was directly connected to her inclusive belief system. She demonstrated an ability to choose a technology-based teaching practice that could offer her more opportunity to provide individualized instruction and center students' interests. Her ability to think about the use of technology in a remote teaching context in this way suggested that she was able to negotiate between what Priestley et al. (2017) defined as the "structural" elements of her work context (i.e., remote teaching necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic), the "materials" that she was afforded (i.e., one-to-one devices), and her professional knowledge (i.e., flipped classroom as an instructional model) to actualize an inclusive pedagogical process. Furthermore, her restructuring of when students did independent work and when they engaged with teacher modeling served as an example of how the participants in this

study achieved alternatives to general education methods of structuring time (Naraian, 2014). By using the "flipped classroom" model, Marisol carved out additional time for teacher-facilitated individualized instruction while also maintaining the use of direct teacher modeling. Notably, through "flipped classroom," she utilized a method of structuring time in her general education classroom that is more traditionally associated with special education spaces.

Julia demonstrated a similar negotiation process between materials, structure, and professional knowledge in the way she responded to her reduced class (i.e., two learning "pods" of 15 total students), unique classroom space (i.e., hybrid learning and the school's music room), unique special education service delivery model (i.e., three students with IEPs integrated into her class with a special education teacher providing part-time supports), and a free-form daily schedule all brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Julia described how "in the past" her school had "required instructional minutes." For instance, she used to be required to teach "75 minutes of math a day, 45 minutes of reading...[and]…45 minutes of writing" and had to submit a plan for that instructional allocation on a "formal schedule." By contrast, during the academic year of data collection, Julia had been teaching her class using a hybrid model wherein students were split into two "pods" of seven to eight students. The "pods" rotated between attending in-person instruction and asynchronous remote learning. At the time of data collection, Julia's school had just combined her "pods" into one class that she had begun teaching fully in-person.

The flexibility of scheduling that this alternative learning model offered proved beneficial to Julia's ability to provide individualized math instruction. She said, "Because we've had so much less time, it's pushed teachers to get a lot more creative and I think that's something that we've always needed and we're seeing that it's working." This creativity included focusing on priority learning standards and providing more "guided math instruction" rather than whole class

lessons. Julia described how the switches in scheduling and class size were offering more time for individualized learning: “I can’t ignore a big part of it is that, even though kids are in school less days, there’s a lot less kids in the room, so maybe they’re getting a lot more support that way.” Julia explained that the increase in individualized instruction and more creative approaches to teaching math resulted in similar math scores at the mid-year point when compared with her third graders the year prior, even though her students had significantly fewer days of instruction. She said, “I really think that at this point in the year…when I look at their math work, I wouldn’t say that they’re further behind from my class last year. So, clearly they’re still getting things out of it in a different approach even with less days.” Julia’s decision making about how tailoring her math instruction to the larger shifts in her teaching structure brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with her ability to stay committed to her beliefs about inclusion, provided her with ideas for how she might continue to teach math moving forward. She rationalized, “I think this degree of flexibility, I’d love to keep up in the future…. I think this practice of being a little bit more reflective and student-centered, I hope remains.” For Julia, the shifts in her planning process brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic enhanced her ability to reflect and plan for the individual learning needs of her students.

Participants in this study described curricular decision-making processes wherein they viewed themselves as inclusive curriculum designers (Li & Ruppar, 2021; Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016) who engaged in ongoing processes to infuse instruction with a social justice orientation and multiple access points. To varying degrees, though, their perspectives demonstrated that they felt confident to modify school resources or create their own curriculum when they had a deep knowledge of the content and the teaching methods associated with that content. In cases where they were less knowledgeable, participants described reflective processes

(Li & Ruppar, 2021; Pantic & Florian, 2015) where they sought out additional professional education in content area teaching methods. In moments of substantial challenge, participants in this study described processes for curricular decision making that were informed by inclusive teaching practices, specifically staying committed to student-centered, individualized instruction. Given that the actualization of these inclusive curricular practices does not happen in isolation, the upcoming section builds on these findings by highlighting participants' relationship-building processes with other professionals in their ecological contexts.

Enacting Inclusive Practices in and Through Interactions with Colleagues

Collective efficacy and collaboration with others are key aspects of inclusive educator agency (Li & Ruppar, 2021, p. 347; Pantic & Florian, 2015). In fact, Pantic and Florian (2015) argued that agency is "always collective" since the way an individual actor "shape[s] the structures and cultures" of an institution is always the "result of interactions" (p. 338). Consequently, the "efficacy" of educators enacting "agency for change" depends on "the opportunities they recognise for transformative practice" within their relationships with others (p. 338). In essence, the choices an inclusive educator makes about when and how to interact with other adult agents in their school environment has the potential to be "transformative" or to "maintain the status quo" (p. 338).

Given this focus on collective efficacy, Li and Ruppar (2021) contended that the "context-bounded" action of "committing to building trustworthy relationships with colleagues" is essential to enacting inclusion. However, it may be difficult to enact because it often stands in direct opposition to other activities of inclusion such as "challenging…the principal's leadership" or "challenging deficit views of fixed ability" (p. 348). Findings from the current study suggested that participants were aware that they might maintain the "status quo" if they

colluded with others who held "deficit views of fixed ability." But they also recognized that they could not challenge a principal's leadership or colleague's beliefs without first having built a "trustworthy relationship" (p. 348). Participants shifted their priorities to enacting trust building or, at the very least, keeping peace over engaging in overt challenge when they encountered a colleague who espoused an opposing belief system. Participants described a process in which they chose optimal times or methods for when they decided to challenge the perspective of a school administrator or colleague. At times, they relied on their rapport with other like-minded colleagues or confidence built from a collective vision of inclusion with others to support their navigation of relationships with colleagues and administrators who aim to replicate the status quo. The findings that follow discuss how the participants in this study balanced the agentic actions related to collaboration with those related to challenging deficit perspectives of others.

Conditions for Cultivating Collective Efficacy Through Collegial Relationships

Previous research has found that DSE-informed educators who "actively resist the dominant discourses of school" feel isolated in their work (Rood & Ashby, 2020, p. 143). Rood and Ashby (2020) found that educators name "pressure from colleagues" to teach towards the goals of standardized assessments or to advocate for more restrictive placements for students with disabilities as factors that restrained their ability to stay true to an inclusive belief system in a public schooling context. By contrast, participants in the current study identified other adults in each of their New York City-based schools who had ideologies that supported their beliefs in inclusivity. Overarching goals of New York City's Special Education Reform may have contributed to elements of philosophical alignment between participants and colleagues. For example, given the more widespread provision of special education services through an ICT model in use in New York City since the onset of the reform, even when participants perceived

that their colleagues did not adopt a belief system fully in line with a DSE orientation, there appeared to be a shared understanding between participants and their colleagues around the goals and practices of co-teaching.

Having colleagues whose philosophies partially aligned with their own provided a support system that allowed participants to feel collectively engaged in enacting inclusion. For instance, Hazel described how for the first two and half years of her teaching career, the charter school where she worked had no self-contained classrooms; she explained, "So my entire school does ICT." Interestingly, the very same school that supported the use of scripted, mandated curriculum which constrained her enactment of an inclusive approach to curriculum (see discussion above) also fostered a structural environment ripe for enacting actions of inclusion by exclusively providing ICT special education service delivery.

According to Hazel, her first general education co-teacher had "been at the school for five years before…[Hazel]…came, and so she had plenty of experience with co-teaching." The result was that Hazel and her co-teacher "shared a lot of the same philosophies" about an "ICT room." Hazel elucidated how she and her first co-teacher believed that the role of both educators in an ICT class should be "equal." According to Hazel, they shared other common values such as "being flexible," "being communicative," and being experimental. The alignment of this shared thinking on co-teaching facilitated the building of a strong relationship with her co-teacher whom she described as a "best friend" and "family"-like. Hazel contrasted her experience with this co-teacher with the experiences of friends with whom she graduated from Hornbeam. She explained that she has friends who were not treated as "equal" when they were "starting their careers" and that they were "sometimes…looked down upon." Unlike her friends who experienced marginalization within their schools (Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016), having a shared

understanding of the roles of both teachers in a co-taught classroom allowed Hazel to build a collaborative relationship with her co-teacher, which facilitated her ability to "try things out" in her beginning years as an inclusive educator.

Both Julia and Cassie described how in their first year of teaching, they had colleagues and supervisors with fully aligned or partially aligned philosophies. Julia had several colleagues with aligned beliefs that helped "make" her transition to teaching in her own classroom "easier." She explained how two other teachers at her school attended Verrazano's Inclusive Education Program and, as a result she "didn't feel like…[she]…was alone." She also highlighted how she developed a relationship with an instructional coach at the school who had "come from a very inclusive background and shared a lot of beliefs." For Julia, colleagues who held similar beliefs offered an opportunity to share "bigger picture ideas." She described how having a philosophically aligned instructional coach served as a "bridge" to the school administration. From this relationship with the coach, Julia developed an understanding that her principal was managing "the DOE stressors," but that "deep down" her principal "believed" in similar ideas. Julia's opportunity to work with philosophically aligned colleagues and supervisors, including individuals who had attended the same inclusive preservice program, provided her with collegial relationships that supported her ability to envision inclusive possibilities within the context of demands set by the NYCDOE.

Cassie's first teaching job was at a charter school where one of the school's founding administrators was also a graduate of her preservice inclusive education program. She explained that since the school's co-director was a Hornbeam alumna, the school consisted of "like-minded" faculty from whom she felt she could learn. In fact, she had been "connected" with the school co-director by her student teaching supervisor from Hornbeam. For Cassie, however,

working with philosophically aligned colleagues at-large did not provide adequate support to ensure her ability to enact inclusive teaching practices in her own classroom.

Cassie joined the teaching faculty at this charter school as a permanent substitute in an ICT classroom where "classroom expectations" were set "with the kids without…[her]." She described how her co-teacher had led "crucial morning meetings to really establish expectations with students" when she was not yet working in the classroom. Not having participated in setting the expectations with the rest of the classroom community resulted in power imbalances; "For co-teaching to really work," she explained, "you need to be on the same…[page], you need to maintain the same expectations for students and not undermine each other, but…[we undermined each other]…by accident." Cassie saw herself as a "weakling" in her first-year teaching because she was not "calm" when directing student behavior. She also attributed some of her challenges with "classroom management" to a "cultural disconnect" between herself and the students. She described how she had not yet done the work to integrate her "whiteness" and how that lack of racial self-awareness was impacting her "relationship[s]" with students. For Cassie, while common educational background in inclusive education may have served her ability to learn from her colleagues, not having fully aligned inclusive teaching practices between herself and co-teacher around establishing and holding up classroom expectations inhibited her ability to enact inclusion. Cassie's example demonstrates how having philosophically aligned colleagues may not sufficiently support a newer educator in enacting inclusion.

Challenging Problematic Principal Leadership

Having school-based allies supported participants' evaluations of risks in enacting challenges to the belief systems of school leaders and provided ideas for actions to enact challenge. Hazel described how she and her school principal disagreed on the purpose and use of

a reading leveling system that assigned students to the letters of the alphabet (i.e., level "A" readers are what the system considers a middle of Kindergarten level, and level "Z" readers read at what the system considers an eighth grade level). According to Hazel, her principal believed in assessing individual readers using pre-made informal reading inventories (IRIs), identifying a student according to a level corresponding to the aforementioned scale, reporting that level out to families, and using those levels to organize a classroom library. By contrast, Hazel emphatically highlighted an opposing, inclusive philosophical orientation to assessment: "I don't believe in a child being specified by their level. There's just so much more about a child than their reading, than just the letter; that's for teachers to use to inform their instruction, not necessarily for anybody else to know." In her first-year teaching, Hazel did not feel like she could "go against the grain," but in her second year, she decided to challenge the use of reading levels in the school.

One of the ways that Hazel challenged her principal's belief system was to reorganize her classroom library such that books were arranged by genre rather than level. She described that to make this shift in her classroom design, she did not ask her principal for permission. Instead, she relied on how a like-minded colleague had set up her classroom library as a model. She explained:

> I had been inside one of my friend's classrooms in third grade, and I noticed that they had not leveled their library and I was like, "Are we allowed to do that?" and she's like "Yeah, like I think you can, we've done it, we've never had an issue with it." And I was like "Okay." So, then I started doing it…. I actually don't even think I asked permission, I just kind of did it, and then I was like, "Hopefully I don't get in trouble for it."

In this example, Hazel engaged in what Priestley et al. (2017) described as a process of using her inclusive beliefs to respond to her practical considerations (in this case, the possibilities for setting up her classroom library) and evaluating the risks associated with setting up the library in

a way that misaligned with her principal's beliefs about reading. Following the lead of another teacher who had an aligned belief about classroom libraries and had previously acted on that belief helped to support Hazel in determining that she could take a risk in setting up her classroom library in a way that she believed was "best for…[her]…kids." Hazel described this style of challenge to her principal's leadership as "abid[ing] by the 'don't ask for permission, ask for forgiveness' type of philosophy." She thought that she might "get into trouble" for doing what she believed was "right by" her "students," but she had developed an approach for how to resolve tension with an administrator if her risk-taking was challenged. She said that she would play the part of ignorance by "pretend[ing] that she didn't know." Hazel's description of this approach suggested she might believe that in enacting a challenge to problematic school leadership, it is best to avoid true conflict. The process that she described relied on pre-existing stereotypes about young, female teachers as "ignorant" to avoid pursuing an overt challenge to a school leader.

Interestingly, however, when Hazel described what happened when she did not include reading levels on her report cards, she revealed that rather than demonstrate ignorance, she did, in fact, "express her opinions" to her principal. She relied on the expertise about reading levels presented by an outside consultant paid for by the school who had "explicitly…stated" to the faculty "how levels are only for teachers to know." Hazel explained that after her school administrators emailed asking her to include reading levels on her report cards, she met with the administrative team to discuss the professional development that their literacy consultant had provided. She described what she said as follows: "'Oh like, you know, based on the PD, I thought this was the kind of trajectory we were moving towards. I really feel strongly about, not identifying a child as a reader based on their level." While this challenge to principal leadership

failed and she acquiesced by including reading levels on her written reports, Hazel demonstrated how she, again, relied on a relationship with another adult in the school, a literacy consultant, to support her efforts towards enacting inclusion.

Leading to Support Incremental Shifts in the Mindsets of Colleagues

In addition to describing how they approached challenging the beliefs of school administrators, participants also shared processes for how they worked to shift the beliefs of colleagues who maintained more traditional approaches to curricular practices. Dotger and Ashby (2010) studied novice inclusive educators' interactions with colleagues who reflected more mainstream views of special education and had more advanced years of classroom-based experience. The researchers concluded that despite professional preparation in inclusive theory, novice inclusive educators were likely during these interactions to modify their views to reflect more mainstream ones. The findings of the current study illuminated the rationale behind why inclusive educators might align more closely with the status quo in their encounters with colleagues when, in fact, their beliefs were more inclusive. Participants in this study described how they worked to build trust with colleagues before they incrementally worked to shift colleague practices. For example, Marisol described how when she first started teaching at her current elementary school, she was joining a faculty with low "teacher turnover" so the school was staffed by a "close-knit…community" of experienced educators. She explained that "it was hard…to really get along with people" because they were mostly "senior teachers" and she "skewed younger than most of the staff," even though she had been teaching for over 6 years when she joined the faculty. As a result, when she took on a leadership role as a grade-level lead teacher and served as a "model teacher" through a city-wide program, she felt as though the other educators at the school questioned what she had to "offer."

Given her leadership roles in the school, Marisol described enacting several practices that worked to build trust with colleagues before she encouraged them to consider more inclusive approaches to teaching. She shared how in her first year at the school, she "tried to be vocal" by "being more helpful." She shared ideas or resources to demonstrate that she was "actually good" at being a teacher leader. When she began leading team meetings, she made "sure that…[she]… had done research. "I came well prepared to any meeting," she elaborated, explaining that her preparedness allowed her to speak to her "harshest critics" confidently without getting "flustered." According to Marisol, over time her confidence, coupled with the respect that she had built from colleagues through her helpfulness and preparedness, had created a pathway for her to encourage her colleagues to "slowly" and "super incremental[ly]" try out inclusive instructional practices. While Marisol described this approach as "little bit frustrating," she also had a great deal of respect for how hard her colleagues worked and an understanding that they might be afraid to try out new ideas since they have been effective with their old methods for so long.

Marisol explained how to encourage her colleagues, she will make the same suggestion using different phrasings such as "Why don't you try this book…or…use this story instead…. Or…how about you try this type of assessment or try this instructional practice?" She continued, "I can't just say it once. I'll have to kind of repeat it and bring it up, and then they may come to my classroom and see me do it and then we'll meet about it again." Marisol described how in modeling inclusive teaching practices for her colleagues, she has encouraged them to try out new instructional practices, which she named as the "easiest" type of change for her to encourage her colleagues to "make."

In Rood's (2018) research, administrative backing supported DSE-informed educators' maintenance of their identities. In Marisol's example, being named a teacher leader by administrators not only supported her in maintaining her inclusive identity, but it also allowed her to enact transformation through her relationships with colleagues. While Marisol admitted she often felt that when her colleagues did "get on board," they often still adopted practices in ways that were different than what she had intended, but she was still able to make small shifts in their practices. Furthermore, Marisol's perspective on how to shift her colleagues' instructional practices highlighted how she prioritized relationship building with colleagues and gaining respect before challenging some of their approaches to teaching. By spending her whole first-year teaching with these new colleagues focused on being "helpful" rather than presenting conflicting ideas, Marisol prioritized relationship building over challenging deficit orientations to practice.

Perspectives on Shifting Between Teaching Settings and Contexts

Three of the four participants in this study have worked at more than one school since the beginning of their teaching career, and all four participants have made shifts in their grade-level focus or classroom setting. Table 8 provides an overview of the career moves that the participants have made since they were employed as full-time teachers. The discussion that follows explores participants' perspectives on the variety of teaching positions and settings that they have shifted through as well as their rationale for those shifts.

Table 9

Shifts in Teaching Settings

Participant	Years Teaching	Number of Schools	School Types	Grades Taught	Settings Taught
Julia	4	1	Public School	5th, 2nd, 3rd	ICT, GenEd
Hazel	3	2	Charter School, Public School	2nd, 3rd/4th Bridge	ICT
Marisol	10	3	Public School	K, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th	ICT, Gen Ed
Cassie	3	4	Charter School, Religious Independent School, Special Education Independent School	1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th	ICT, SETTS, 8:1:1 Self-Contained

Findings suggested that regardless of the workplace relationships that participants cultivated in support of their enactments of inclusion, school-based cultural and structural mediating factors have resulted in these educators maneuvering themselves into teaching positions where they felt a broader range of possibilities for inclusive practice was available to them. Priestley et al.'s (2017) research found that "heavy-duty accountability mechanisms" tied to the "audit culture" in public schools inhibited educators' ability to achieve agency in reforming their curriculum (p. 118). Both Julia's and Hazel's teaching histories offered examples of how different manifestations of the audit culture played a role in limiting their perception of their ability to achieve agency. The findings of this study suggested that rather than remaining constrained in their practice, Julia and Hazel achieved agency by evaluating different public teaching settings within the same city or school and self-advocated to work in these settings.

In Julia's case, she was able to maneuver between grade levels in the same public school. After her first-year teaching, Julia made a request to her principal to switch from teaching fifth

grade to second grade to "avoid the question of testing." She described rationalizing this decision to herself. She wanted to take time to work on "some deeper social-emotional learning." For Julia, administrative pressure to teach to the test was not affording her that opportunity as a fifth grade teacher. She explained how when she attempted to embed social-emotional learning into her schedule in her first-year teaching, her principal "would just come back with like, 'But testing is coming up and they can't be behind in this, and they need to do this, and they should do this.'" Julia connected the administrative pressure to forego social-emotional learning with the school's "historically…low test scores" and how the institution had previously been "labeled persistently dangerous." While she was critical of these politics, she understood that her principal had "gotten the school off of that persistently dangerous list" and, therefore, understood why the principal seemed "overwhelmed" at times about testing.

Julia explained that she experienced a level of "guilt" associated with avoiding teaching in a testing grade. However, she also shared how shifting her teaching placement allowed her time to practice inclusive teaching skills outside of the pressure of the standardized assessments. Importantly, after 2 years teaching second grade, a non-testing grade, Julia felt confident returning to a grade level where she needed to attend to the testing culture. As a current third grade teacher, she described how she now felt like she could focus on "making sure everything is taught before that test…making sure…[to]…hit on all those standards" and making room for "other lessons." Julia's process of advocating for her own shifts between grade-level placements suggested a level of reflexivity around the constraints she needed to circumvent as she developed her skills as an inclusive educator. In her first year of teaching, the mediating structural factor of standardized assessments inhibited her ability to teach social-emotional learning, and she had not yet developed the skills to maneuver around the widespread audit culture. Her reflections

suggested that by temporarily removing this barrier, she was able eventually to return to a testing grade as a more skillful inclusive educator who could better maneuver between the audit culture and her own convictions about social-emotional learning. Julia's agency in this example suggested an ability to self-scaffold her utilization of previously taught inclusive teaching practices on-the-ground.

Hazel's story offered up another example of how maneuvering within the New York City schools supported her achievement of inclusive teaching practices. In Hazel's first two and half years as an in-service inclusive educator, she worked at a charter school which she felt espoused a teaching mission only partially aligned with her beliefs. While she valued her school's use of an ICT model, emphasis on fieldtrips and integration of student choice-based instruction, the administration's lack of trust in her professional competence became a mediating factor that resulted in her leaving the school midway through her third-year teaching (just before data collection for this study began). Hazel described that "more freedom" to be able to choose the "structure" of the teaching day and to "develop" her "own curriculum" were decisive factors that caused her to switch from charter to public school teaching. She also named better "communication and support from admin" as "huge" issues. Hazel described that in her charter school teaching position, she did not feel like the administrators "trust[ed]" her; instead, they often practiced surveillance under the guise of support. She explained:

> Support was the word that was used so much at my…[charter]…school when it felt like it wasn't support,…it was more checking in. It was more observations. It was more feedback…. It felt like more on my plate than it did support.

The lack of authentic support caused Hazel to seek out a public school teaching position, which she believed offered increased transparency around administrative decision making. She described asking questions about this topic during the interview: "I asked about how much or

how little do you share with your staff." Hazel's rationale behind switching her teaching position suggested that being able to have her own vision for her professional work around inclusion also required having the flexibility to act. Administrative acts of surveillance, which caused a burden on her time and constrained her achievement of agency over curriculum, became a mediating factor from which she maneuvered away.

What is significant to note in Hazel's professional history is that the charter school where she originally worked was primarily servicing low-income students of color. The public school teaching position that she shifted into while still a special educator role was in a high-income community and her students were predominantly white. Despite seeing herself as a successful inclusive educator for students from a traditionally disenfranchised population, the limitations on her agency in the charter school position brought on by the audit culture, rather than the complexities of supporting her students, were what caused her to shift her teaching context.

In their research, Rood and Ashby (2020) found that transferring between schools was a "common practice" amongst the DSE-informed educators (p. 137). The findings from Rood and Ashby's study suggested that an increased focus on "accountability" and "pressures associated with preparing students for the test…positioned many educators with less time and/or opportunity to teach toward their identities" (p. 139). The current study confirmed their analysis. However, the public school teachers in the current study did not identify the same feelings of seclusion and alienation that Rood and Ashby found. The participants in that study also described scenarios where they faced school administrators who held overtly deficit views about students with disabilities. Participants in the current study did not cite this as a reason for leaving a teaching position.

Cassie, who at the time of data collection was working in an independent school that solely educated students who had been previously classified as having autism, did describe contending with the deficit orientations of the administration and her colleagues. However, these views did not leave her feeling completely isolated. For instance, she explained how a student in her class had recently begun receiving ABA services to "fix" how he was "acting." Cassie believed that the student's behaviors might be related to "delay[s] in receptive and expressive language" that were identified by his Speech and Language evaluation. She explained how this student was, in her opinion, demonstrating "frustration" when "he's not understood." For Cassie, ABA, which she had learned about in conversations with her student teaching supervisor at Hornbeam, was not going to address his language needs properly. But, unlike what Rood and Ashby (2020) found, even in contending with conflicting views of children as in this example, Cassie was not completely alone. She described how the schools' counselor had "similar philosophies" so she could bring ideas to her to see if "she agrees."

The ability to work with like-minded colleagues, some of whom had attended the same preservice teacher education programs, as well as a more universally understood definition of co-teaching developed through New York City's Special Education Reform, may have been structural factors that preserved elements of the participants' identities. While participants did still seek out shifts in their teaching placements, these shifts were largely related to pressures from the "audit culture" and how that inhibited inclusive practice rather than deficit attitudes about students with disabilities.

Conclusion

The findings from this chapter addressed three areas: (a) *enactments of inclusivity in curriculum design and implementation*, (b) *enactments of relationship building to stimulate and*

sustain other enactments of inclusivity, and (c) *enactments of career shifts to sustain inclusive identities*. The participants in this study achieved agency in the ways that they inclusively designed their own curricular materials and retrofit pre-made school-mandated materials. In particular, participants described and provided lesson plans, projects, units, and instructional pacing guides designed to be accessible to the wide range of learners present in their individual classrooms and infused with social justice. These examples suggested that participants were able to maneuver around mediating factors (Priestley et al., 2017), such as mandated instructional programs, mandated instructional pacing guides, colleague cultures of "doing" curriculum as "usual," standardized assessments, and reconfigured teaching brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The descriptions of their maneuverings suggested that they used their beliefs in individualized instruction and social justice as guideposts when making curricular decisions. Furthermore, participants' feelings of agency over curriculum led them to enact the inclusive disposition of "professional competence" (Li & Ruppar, 2021, p. 48). They acted reflexively by identifying elements of emergent reading instruction as an area where they wanted further professional development and then took action to pursue that development.

Collaborative relationships with like-minded colleagues served to sustain participants' beliefs when building rapport with less philosophically aligned colleagues, enhance participants' inclusive curricular designing practices, and support participants in enacting "challenges to problematic principal leadership" (Li & Ruppar, 2017, p.48). Participants' ability to build collective efficacy was, in part, facilitated by workplace relationships with other educators who had attended the same preservice inclusive education programs.

Despite all four participants describing their ability to enact agency to inclusively design and implement curriculum and providing examples of collegial relationships that supported those

actions, there were still constraints on practice that caused them to enact shifts in their teaching placements. Participants were most likely to leave a teaching position when experiencing acts of surveillance on their practice brought on by the audit culture (Priestley et al., 2017). In these circumstances, participants described feeling constrained in their ability to enact professional judgments, so they sought out other locations to do their work. Notably, however, was Julia who initially shifted away from a teaching position that required her to maneuver around standardized assessments, but over time had returned to a similar teaching position. Julia's example suggested that given additional time to develop skills in maneuvering around the audit culture in a setting outside of it, an inclusive educator may be able to return to the work more prepared.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I established that although inclusive practices demonstrate positive academic and social outcomes for all students (Hehir et al., 2016; Newman, 2006) and are necessitated by an increasingly diverse student body in U.S. schools (NCES, 2017), teachers who have graduated from inclusive teacher preparation programs frequently find themselves teaching within contexts that make it challenging for them to sustain their inclusive commitments over several years of teaching practice (Rood, 2018; Rood & Ashby, 2020). The context for this study further highlighted how, in order to further develop the quality of inclusive preservice teacher education, there is a need for an improved understanding of how in-service inclusive teachers who attended preservice inclusive teacher education programs maintain their engagement in inclusive practice, sustain their beliefs over the early years of their teaching practice, and identify certain challenges or supports. This study responded to this research problem by seeking to understand how current inclusive educators who had previously attended inclusive preservice teacher education programs conceptualize inclusive education, what they believe it means to enact inclusive education in their everyday teaching contexts, and how they perceive sustaining their inclusive commitments in light of local school circumstances.

In Chapter 4, I examined how faculty presence, presentation of academic content area teaching practices, and multiple fieldwork experiences played a role in how study participants had developed their philosophical orientation towards inclusion during their preservice teacher education programs. Reflections on their preservice teacher education programs suggested that participants began to view themselves as political actors who could enact several agentic actions of inclusion. They described experiences in their preservice teacher education programs that

supported them in developing the following actions: (a) reconciling differences (Li & Ruppar, 2021), (b) autonomously planning curriculum (Li & Ruppar, 2021), (c) actively making decisions (Naraian, 2014) about which teaching practices to use and why, and (d) adopting inclusive teaching moves regardless of structural barriers (Naraian, 2014; Thorius, 2016). In Chapter 5, I demonstrated that the participants in this study achieved agency by inclusively designing their own curricular materials and retrofitting school-mandated materials. Findings also suggested that collaborative relationships with like-minded colleagues served to sustain participants' inclusive beliefs when they were attempting to build rapport with less philosophically aligned colleagues or enacting "challenges to problematic principal leadership" (Li & Ruppar, 2017, p. 48). Additionally, Chapter 5 established that participants were most likely to leave a teaching position when experiencing acts of surveillance brought on by the audit culture (Priestley et al., 2017).

In this chapter, I demonstrate the significance of these findings by showing how having attended inclusive preservice education programs provided participants with methods for maneuvering around constraints on inclusive teaching practice. Their achievements of reflexivity focused on student potential rather than deficit views of students with disabilities and led them to make transformations of curricular materials, teaching contexts, and their own pedagogical content knowledge. Despite the ability to presume competence in their students, participants' reflections included examples of negative self-talk (e.g., "weakling," "guilty," and "hard on myself"), which led to moments of deficit thinking about themselves as educators. A potential unintended consequence of their achievements of reflexivity was that in removing blame for student academic failure from the students, participants described believing that their lack of ability to achieve certain inclusive practices was their own fault as the educators. In taking on

this responsibility, participants seemed to be in tension with their other understandings of how systems and structures were constraining their inclusive practice. After discussing these points of significance, the chapter continues with a presentation of the limitations of the research. Drawing on the findings from Chapters 4 and 5, the discussion below, and the limitations, I then provide a series of implications of this research for various stakeholders including teacher educators, policymakers, and other researchers. The chapter concludes with a final reflection on the research conducted.

Conceptualizing Teacher Agency for Inclusive Schooling

In Chapter 2, I outlined the literature on how teachers achieve inclusive practice and what is known about how/whether inclusive educators stay committed to these beliefs over time. The research has shown that when teachers are able to sustain progressive teaching in diverse settings, their work is often "messy" and reflects a teacher's need to make sense of contradictory obligations, at times resulting in the adoption of practices that may only conditionally or opportunistically support inclusivity (D'Amant, 2012; Naraian, 2010, 2014; Thorius, 2016). Three major themes emerged in the literature that explained the types of complications teachers face in achieving inclusive practices: (a) colleague and school staff mindsets (Broderick et al., 2012; Dotger & Ashby, 2010; McKay, 2016; Rood, 2018; Rood & Ashby, 2018; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013); (b) accountability culture (Buchanan, 2015; Day et al., 2005; Naraian, 2014); and (c) marginalized teaching position (D'Amant, 2012; Howes et al., 2011; Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016). Research has shown that enacting inclusive teaching is contingent on factors internal to the individual teacher, such as their belief system, and the external environment, such as the policies of the school where he/she works (Dotger & Ashby, 2010; Howes et al., 2011; Naraian, 2010; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). While teacher education programs may play a role

in how novice teachers formulate inclusive belief systems, early teaching experiences (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013), colleague beliefs (Dotger & Ashby, 2010), school policies (Naraian, 2010), and teachers' entrenched beliefs about ability (D'Amant, 2012) heavily influence whether or not teachers perceive their ability to practice inclusively. As a precondition for identifying candidates for this his study, participants identified as having an inclusive belief system aligned with DSE. Therefore, the findings from this study provided understandings of how inclusive educators who have maintained DSE-aligned beliefs have been able to do so. The findings provide understandings into what circumstances have supported inclusive eduactors in maintaining DSE-aligned beliefs irrespective of contraints on their achievements of agency.

Achievements of Agency in Inclusive Curriculum

The data collected in this study adds to the body of literature on teacher agency in inclusive schooling by demonstrating that the educators who attended the inclusive preservice programs at Hornbeam University and Verrazano University were able to sustain and even grow their commitments to inclusivity as full-time classroom teachers. Findings suggested that achieving a sense of self-efficacy in curriculum planning and developing beliefs about how inclusive curriculum should be constructed during their inclusive preservice education supported participants as practicing teachers in achieving ownership over curriculum. Participants demonstrated how in making inclusive curricular adaptations, they redesigned the pacing, structure, and content of curricula to reflect a commitment to their previously developed inclusive beliefs about accessible instruction. Their curricular adaptations also demonstrated a commitment to social justice pedagogy by designing literacy and social studies instruction that serves as mirrors into students' lives (Sims Bishop, 1990) and encourages students to see themselves as activists.

Previous research has found that inclusively minded educators often serve as the special educator of record in a classroom and, in turn, are marginalized in their teaching position by school cultural beliefs about mainstream special education (D'Amant, 2012; Howes et al., 2011; Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016). In this previous research, inclusive educators who were special education-certified were less likely to take ownership over curriculum because of their marginalized role (Naraian, 2010). Teachers in this study did not express marginalization within the larger school communities where they worked. Because three of the four participants were dual-certified by New York State to teach both students with and without disabilities, they moved fluidly between general education and special education roles from school year to school year. For instance, Julia was teaching third grade general education at the time of data collection, but had taught second grade special education the year prior. Moving fluidly between special educator and general educator roles may also have contributed to achievements in curriculum decision making.

Scholars have argued that conceiving of inclusive schooling as the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms, while well-intentioned, fails to disrupt deficit discourses because it reifies the belief that there is a normal type of schooling practice in which students with disabilities should be included (Naraian, 2010; Oyler & Hamre, 2006). Therefore, we might want to conceive of the inclusive educator as a unique identity that aligns with neither general educator nor mainstream special educator identities. However, as Naraian (2010) argued, the "lived path" of inclusive educators is that they teach within the traditional discourses of schooling where the bifurcation of special and general education exists (p. 1684). The work of the inclusive educator, then, is to navigate the messiness of the pre-existing system to envision a third space for their inclusive practice. Practically speaking, to do this work and to create

widespread change, the voices of inclusive educators must be heard by colleagues, administrators, and families. Given that special educators are often marginalized within a school community (D'Amant, 2012; Howes et al., 2011; Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016), the re-making of the special educator role into the role of inclusive educator is complicated when they are seen as insufficiently prepared to teach curriculum (Naraian, 2010). A practical reality is that the general educator role is already imbued with the responsibilities of curriculum making, interpretation, and execution, that might not be afforded to special educators. As the findings in this study showed, having dual certification might make the curricular ideas of educators who espouse inclusive beliefs more palatable for colleagues, families, and school administrators who hold mainstream special education beliefs about how to design instruction.

Relationship Building to Achieve Inclusion

Participants described relying on their relationships with like-minded colleagues to support how they maneuvered around structural barriers (e.g., a school's organizational set-up of teacher observation) and cultural barriers (e.g., the culture of performativity based on high-stakes testing) to enacting inclusivity (Priestley et al., 2017). The ability to cultivate collective efficacy and rely on relationships to support inclusive action reflected the relationship-building practices that participants described developing in their preservice programs. Participants believed that having attended inclusive preservice education programs provided them with foundational skills, knowledge, and decision-making dispositions and practices that supported their ability to maneuver around constraints on practice to enact inclusive teaching while in the field.

Previous research has found that novice inclusive educators transition into more conditional talk about inclusivity, at times espousing approval for elements of segregated teaching practice in light of the advanced years of experience and contrasting philosophy of a

colleague (Dotger & Ashby, 2010). The current study shed light on why this shift in talk might be happening. Findings from the current study suggested that inclusive educators prioritize building rapport with less philosophically aligned colleagues. To build that rapport, they focused conversations with less philosophically aligned colleagues on providing support or on the goal of understanding the origins of those beliefs. It follows that shifts in their talk align more closely with mainstream special education when they are prioritizing the inclusive action of building collaborative relationships (Li & Ruppar, 2021), rather than signaling that their beliefs in inclusion are conditional, as Dotger and Ashby (2010) argued. This was illustrated, for instance, when Marisol described enacting several practices that worked to build trust with colleagues before she encouraged them to consider more inclusive approaches to teaching. She shared how in her first-year teaching at her current school, she "tried to be vocal" by "being more helpful" rather than providing an opposing perspective.

Marisol described this process as a "slow" and "incremental" pathway towards encouraging her colleagues to try out inclusive instructional practices similar to a feminist approach of "working the cracks" or a form of resistance where outsiders who are situated within the margins of an institution but familiar with its system are able to see and advocate for change from within (Heijstra & Pétursdóttir, 2021, para. 2). This approach serves as a form of resistance, method to cope, and source of empowerment (Heijstra & Pétursdóttir, 2021). Marisol's approach contrasts with the one advocated for by scholars of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education such as Ladson-Billings (2003) who has argued that relying on incrementalism to promote social change aligns with liberalism. For Ladson-Billings liberalism enables racism to persist by failing to recognize the limits of the existing system. Ladson-Billings explains that antiracism requires "cataclysmic" or "sweeping change" (p. 9). While Marisol's approach may contrast with some

advocates of color in the field, ultimately, Ladson-Billings calls the incorporation of the stories of teacher of color in the profession (p. 10). Therefore, Marisol's perspective, as a woman of color who uses an incremental approach to shifting the beliefs of her colleagues, is one that should be heard and valued in the study of teacher agency in inclusive education.

Past Histories and Achievements of Inclusion

The findings presented in Chapter 4 demonstrated how the type of higher education program (i.e., undergraduate versus graduate school) from which participants graduated played a role in the kinds of experiences they had prior to entering the field as professional educators. Cassie and Hazel, who studied inclusive schooling as undergraduates, took part in inclusive preservice education over the course of 4 years, which allowed for several years of fieldwork placements prior to their student teaching, a significant amount of inclusive education coursework, and opportunities to study inclusive education in locations off-campus and abroad. Given the limited number of credit hours required for the master's degree in inclusive education, Verrazano's graduate program took place over a shorter span of time. This led to Marisol and Julia having fewer field placements and less coursework in inclusion prior to entering the field as in-service inclusive educators. Furthermore, as required by the New York State certification process, the graduates of Hornbeam University continued their studies in education through graduate schooling. Given this context, both Cassie and Hazel studied teaching in a higher education context for 6 years each at the time of data collection. This contrasted with Julia's and Marisol's 2 years of study (Marisol was also enrolled in a master's program during data collection in a related field, but not in teaching).

While these facts merely reflect the different paths that each participant took to becoming an educator, findings did suggest there may be a relationship between the depth and breadth of

the higher education experiences and shifts in belief systems. At Hornbeam, Hazel shared how multiple fieldwork opportunities allowed her to see inclusive practices in-action which, in turn, made her more likely to be able to actualize inclusive teaching. She described how she needed to see inclusion in action at a school with resources and flexible scheduling supportive of inclusive practice, to be able to achieve inclusion in her own practice. The ability to develop relationships with faculty at Hornbeam over a sustained period as well as the breadth of fieldwork experiences supported Hazel and Cassie in their ability to maneuver around constraints on their practice. Cassie's story of how she transformed her belief system throughout the course of her undergraduate studies suggested that sustained relationships with faculty over time as well as seeing examples of inclusion in the field supported a drastic shift in her belief system. The length of time of her preservice inclusive education, as well as the relationships she was able to develop with faculty through a cohort model, allowed for challenging conversations that produced what she identified as real shifts in what she believed about individuals with disabilities. Early on in her program, Cassie read dissonance with a faculty member as a professor who "didn't think highly" of her; later in her program, she was able to recognize that dissonance with a faculty member as a stimulus for taking "accountability" for her beliefs about individuals with disabilities.

The condensed amount of time that Julia and Marisol had, on the other hand, to study inclusive education may have led to reduced opportunities for real shifts in their beliefs. They reported feeling the need to have back-channel conversations rather than directly interacting with faculty when they encountered beliefs that were misaligned with Verrazano's programmatic perspectives. This may have been, in part, the result of the length of their programs; their relationships with faculty were developed over a much shorter period. This finding is significant

because it suggested that in studying preservice inclusive education, researchers should be attending to not only the philosophical orientations of the program or the skills taught, but also length of program of study, time in an educator's life when they attend the program, and where the program is situated within an educator's larger schooling experiences. Since previous research has found that beliefs internal to an individual influence their inclusive teaching (D'Amant, 2012) and these beliefs can be engrained during early teaching experiences (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013), more exposure to inclusive teaching over a longer space of time and earlier in one's career (as in the case of undergraduate schooling) may support more sustained inclusive practices over time.

Data from this study also suggested that extended opportunity to develop agentic actions for inclusion alone may not sufficiently support inclusive educators to teach in classrooms with learners from a wide range of cultural, ethnic, or racial backgrounds, nor will it prepare them to work in settings where the dominant racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds of students in a class differ from their own identifications. Cassie described how her own belief system constrained her inclusive teaching practices when the dominant racial backgrounds of the students differed from her own. Cassie, who identified as white, attributed challenges that she had in her first teaching position to a "cultural disconnect" between herself and her students; she described how she needed to integrate her "whiteness." While seeing inclusion in-action during her Hornbeam fieldwork served to shift Cassie's beliefs around students with disabilities, she did not have analogous fieldwork opportunities to teach students of color. She graduated from Hornbeam without adequate opportunity to challenge her implicit bias about students from traditionally marginalized racial backgrounds. Cassie's experience contrasted with the undergraduate experiences of both Hazel and Julia, white-identifying women. Despite attending different

preservice inclusive education programs (Hazel attended Hornbeam like Cassie and Julia attended Verrazano), both had opportunities to teach students of color as part of their preservice inclusive education. They reported having developed skills in communicating with families from racial backgrounds other than their own as well the ability to avoid making assumptions about a student of color who has behavior challenges.

These findings suggested that fieldwork opportunities in preservice inclusive teacher education programs may be preparing white educators differentially and that the differential preparation is not necessarily specific to the higher education institution attended. Instead, it is dependent on the specific fieldwork opportunities that a program offers a student. Julia and Hazel, who attended different inclusive education preservice programs, each had fieldwork that supported them, as white educators, to make sense of an intersectional definition of identity inclusive of disability and race (Annamma et al., 2016; Erevelles & Minear, 2010) through authentic classroom contexts. Cassie's preparation, on the other hand, suggested that while she learned about culturally relevant teaching in her coursework, her fieldwork opportunities did not offer her opportunities to try out this pedagogical approach in a classroom that included students of color. In other words, Hazel and Cassie were prepared in the same inclusive preservice teacher education program, but their different fieldwork opportunities led to different preparation to teach students who come from traditionally marginalized racial backgrounds. Researchers in the DisCrit field have shown there are consequences for students of color when educators are not taught to see disability as an intersectional identity. The perceived fixed nature of disability is often used to justify discrimination against people of color through the attribution of a disability label (Annamma et al., 2016; Baynton, 2001; Davila, 2014; Ferri & Connor, 2010). The overrepresentation of Black students in special education classes suggests that special education

may be an insidious tool to re-segregate schools based on race (Annamma et al., 2016; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Harry & Klingner, 2006). Without an awareness of how race and disability intersect, educators like Cassie, who in her first-year teaching was struggling to recognize how her whiteness influenced her perception of the behaviors of Black and brown students, might internalize a sense of failure when they do not perceive themselves as able to achieve an inclusive approach when teaching students of color. Ultimately, Cassie's disposition towards reflexivity, as well as her ability to listen to the perspectives of inclusively aligned colleagues, helped her to pursue further development wherein she challenged her racial bias. While a disposition towards reflexivity served to sustain Cassie's inclusive beliefs, entering her first-year teaching having already developed inclusive teaching practices specific to supporting her in working with students of color might have allowed her to believe that she could be a successful inclusive educator for students of color—a concept I explore further down in the chapter.

Neither the experience that Cassie had nor the similar experience that Julia and Hazel had, attend to the specific teacher preparation moves that should be taken to support a novice inclusive educator of color in navigating their teaching in a profession largely dominated by white educators (NCES, 2021). Marisol, a woman of color, described one of her fieldwork placements at Verrazano in a very different way than Julia, Hazel, and Cassie did. In reflecting on her second student teaching placement at a progressive elementary school that enrolls a largely white student population, Marisol, who identified as Latina, described feeling like she did not build relationships with her cooperating teacher, nor did she develop a "bond" with the school, while Julia, who identified as white, had the opposite experience in this same school and has since used what she learned in that classroom as a model for her current teaching. Conversely, Marisol described feeling deeply connected with her other student teaching

placement that was in an elementary school in a community of color, much like the one she had attended as a child (in fact, Marisol now works at the very same elementary school she attended growing up). Marisol attributed the bonds that she formed with the educators at her preferred student teaching placement to how well the fieldwork coordinator at Verrazano University knew her. Marisol's prioritization of developing a bond with other educators during her student teaching suggests that for Marisol, as a woman of color, having close relationships with colleagues is likely a priority above other actions of inclusion. Marisol has been able to find teaching positions in communities where she has developed strong relationships with people who have a background similar to her own, and she described how she built connections with faculty of color at Verrazano who have supported her professional development beyond her graduate coursework. However, research has shown that 79% of teachers in the United States are white women (NCES, 2021), suggesting that inclusive educators of color likely navigate working across racial differences when building trustworthy relationships with colleagues (Li & Ruppar, 2021). Marisol has benefited from trustworthy relationships with colleagues of color; her prioritization of these relationships suggests that while inclusive educators should commit to building trustworthy relationships with colleagues, the maneuvering that this requires for inclusive educators of color may be complicated by experiencing racial marginalization on a teaching faculty.

Achieving Inclusion Through Reflexivity

Previous research has found that reflexivity, or "constant reflection, monitoring, and regulation of one's own actions and social contexts," is a core aspect of inclusive educator agency (Li & Ruppar, 2021, p. 48). What differentiates reflexivity from reflection is how a reflexive individual uses reflection to bring about transformation collaboratively (Pantic &

Florian, 2015, p. 338). Li and Ruppar (2021) explained how in their review of literature on inclusive teacher agency, a pattern in the research is that inclusive educators "constantly reflect on what works and what does not work, what underlying powers play a role, and how to take advantage of available resources and supports to privilege the potential of students" (p. 51). They described how these actions of reflexivity have been found to support inclusive educators in becoming "aware of their own limitations and implicit bias" (p. 51).

In the current study, participants described the use of reflexivity to support the academic and social development of learners. Rather than aiming to fix individual children, their actions addressed environmental factors to provide students with access to instruction. They transformed curriculum as well as developed their own professional knowledge as methods to provide students with increased access to content. Howes et al. (2011) found that teachers were able to implement successful inclusive practice as a result of the sense of ownership they had over their practice. The current study reflected this work in that the reflexive practices participants took up focused on transforming elements of teacher practice over which the participants felt a sense of ownership—their own professional development, settings in which they chose to teach and curriculum. Reflexivity was not largely geared towards larger institutional changes. There were some moments when reflexivity was coupled with collaboration to challenge institutional ideas, as when Hazel followed the lead of a colleague and reorganized her classroom library into genres, thus removing the pre-existing leveling system. But this action did not lead to larger school-wide transformations. Only Marisol, who has been teaching the longest and has a leadership role in her school, was engaged in larger school-wide transformation. This finding suggested there may be a growth trajectory for employing reflexivity for larger transformation, and inclusive educators may begin their reflexive transformations within a smaller sphere of

influence which broadens outside of the scope of their classrooms as they continue to develop their inclusive practices.

Deficit Orientations of Self

The literature suggested that fundamental to inclusive teacher agency is a professional philosophy grounded in challenging deficit views of fixed ability (Li & Ruppar, 2021; Pantic & Florian, 2015). This philosophical commitment is built on the presumption that all students are competent; inclusive educators commit to the assumption that all "students can and will change and, that through engagement with the world, will demonstrate complexities of thought and action that could not necessarily be anticipated" (Biklen & Burke, 2006, p. 168). Scholars have argued that to realize this professional philosophical commitment, inclusive educators should decenter problems from a child with a disability and, instead, identify structures and institutions that are creating barriers to access for a child with disability or are resulting in stigmatizing a child with a disability (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017; Slee, 2011).

Findings from this study suggested that while participants demonstrated how they utilized reflexivity in presuming student competence, their acts of reflexivity, at times, led them to view themselves with a deficit orientation. For instance, Cassie described how in her first full-time teaching position, the other educators with whom she worked demonstrated expertise in teaching reading, and she was "hard" on herself for not knowing how to teach reading since it is "so critical." Her ability to reflect on her own teaching of reading and compare it to her colleagues led her to pursue additional development in literacy instruction rather than blaming her students for their lack of reading success. Her course of action suggested she was able to presume that her students could and would succeed in reading and that the source of their lack of reading success to that point situated her own insufficient literacy pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman,

1987). By recognizing her own need for additional development, Cassie did shift some of the "problem" into the sphere of teacher education rather than viewing herself as the sole source of the problem. However, the negative self-talk of being "hard" on herself suggested that she viewed her lack of pedagogical content knowledge in reading as a personal failing. Julia similarly demonstrated this deficit orientation of her own teaching skills. In describing how she advocated for herself in her interactions with the principal to avoid teaching in a testing grade, Julia explained feeling "guilt" around making that decision.

This pattern of deficit-oriented self-talk across multiple participants suggested that at times, they viewed their lack of ability to support all learners as personal failings. These deficit views of self especially manifested when the participants described situations where they believed that their own teaching practice was the reason they were unable to achieve acts of inclusion. These scenarios demonstrated their commitments to inclusive education, such as presuming competence (Biklen & Burke, 2006) in all learners or valuing social-emotional growth (Li & Ruppar, 2021). However, participants' deficit views of self also suggested that inclusive educators may not always be able to situate their personal beliefs about their inclusive teaching skills within the larger ecological contexts that are constraining their practice. This finding was significant since other research has found that negative self-perception, including devaluing one's own teaching, is associated with teacher burnout (Zhu et al., 2017, p. 789). The findings from the current study suggested that it would be beneficial to support inclusive educators in presuming not only the competence of their students, but also of themselves so that they can avoid burnout.

Liberal Thinking About Disability and Deficit Orientations of Self

In their study of preservice educators' thinking about "dis/ability," Broderick and Lalvani (2017) drew on King's (1990) outline to offer the conceptual device of dysconscious ableism. According to this conceptual framing, there are three thematic categories for interpreting educator thinking about "dis/ability": "Category I (conservative)," "Category II (liberal)," and "Category III (radical)" (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017, p. 897). Conservative thinking is analogous to the mainstream special education perspective on disability. Conservative thinkers hold the belief that "disability…[is a]…deficit, beginning and ending with individual impairment" (p. 898). Liberal thinking situates disability outside of the individual. Liberal thinkers espouse a belief that disability is an "aspect of human variation (natural, neutral, and/or valued)" and/or conceptualize disability as a "sociocultural phenomenon (e.g. labelling, etc.)" (p. 898). Individuals who hold liberal points of view would argue that the educational segregation of individuals with disabilities is "related to disability discrimination, fear…of individual agents—due to individual people acting in a discriminatory manner" (p. 898). Radical thinkers offer up a structural explanation for disability, which they see as "disablement" or "systemic discrimination" (p. 898). For radical thinkers, the segregation of students with disabilities in schools is "a central structural mechanism of traditional schooling practices, grounded in institutionalised and intersecting forms of racism, classism, and ableism" (p. 898). A big distinction between liberal and radical thinkers is how radical thinkers identify larger systems rather than individuals as the source of disablement. As King (1991) explained, liberal thinkers "fail to call into question the basic structural inequity of the social order" (p. 139). Radical thinking aligns with the programmatic orientations towards disability found in DSE-aligned inclusive schooling in preservice teacher education programs.

While the findings suggested that participants on balance recognized contextual structures that were producing disabling experiences for students (e.g., audit culture), they still viewed themselves as "weaklings" or "guilty" rather than understanding themselves as also constrained by those larger systems. Deficit beliefs that participants held about themselves suggested that they may conditionally hold liberal ideas about disability. They demonstrated moments of disjuncture in their thinking wherein their high levels of responsibility towards their students inhibited them from applying a structural argument to reflections on their own teaching practice. While not consistently, at times, they believed that elements of context that were disabling to students were their own fault. This analysis was significant because it suggested that by engaging in the inclusive actions of reflexivity without adopting a fully radical belief system (i.e., one that aligns fully with DSE), teachers may internalize structural problems as personal failings. The devaluing of one's own teaching that can lead from feelings of failure causes teacher burnout.

Several studies have found that having like-minded colleagues (Broderick et al., 2012; Dotger & Ashby, 2010), supportive mentors (McKay, 2016), or empathetic school leaders (Rood, 2018; Rood & Ashby, 2020) can support inclusive educators in sustaining their work as in-service teachers. Much of this research suggested that these relationships stave off feelings of isolation. Findings from the current study suggested that having like-minded colleagues may not provide sufficient support for a novice inclusive educator. This was the case for Cassie, who viewed herself as a "weakling" when she believed that her more experienced, like-minded colleagues were more successful than she was when working with students who identified with different racial groups than her own. Analysis of participants' reflections suggested that without presuming one's own competence, like-minded colleagues may serve to reinforce deficit views

of one's own inclusive practice. Hazel served as a counter-example of this; she spoke about herself with confidence, identifying her first-year teaching as easier than she had anticipated it to be. This presumption of her own competence led Hazel to seek out a new teaching position, where she felt she would be better supported by administration; she did not internalize feedback from administrators brought on by the audit culture, but instead recognized that the external structures were constraining her practice. These findings suggested that while like-minded colleagues may play a role in supporting sustained inclusive practice, those relationships must be coupled with and support the presumption of one's own teaching competence and radical thinking about disability. This suggested that in conceptualizing teacher agency, the agentic action of developing relationships with colleagues can undermine inclusive teacher agency even if that colleague demonstrates some beliefs aligned with DSE notions of inclusion. If the belief system of a colleague does not include the presumption that a novice inclusive educator is competent, then that relationship will not be able to sustain the inclusive practice of the novice colleague. It follows that a core aspect of inclusive teacher identity must include the presumption of inclusive educator competence.

Limitations of This Study

I used in-depth interviews (Seidman, 2006) and participant self-selected artifacts of practice to collect data for this study because I believe in the value of learning from teachers' perspectives to understand the rationale behind their actions. Both the DSE theoretical stance and the teacher agency conceptual framework undergirding this study lent themselves well to these data collection methods because of how they promote teacher voices, which are often deprioritized in research on preservice teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2004). However, in the original design of the study, I had intended to visit participants' classrooms to

contextualize what they thought about their enactments of inclusion within observations of their specific ecological contexts. But, because of limitations on access to New York City classroom spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not able to complete classroom observations. Indeed, conducting research at this pivotal moment in history garnered rich data on how teachers were maneuvering in and around rapid changes in their teaching contexts related to the pandemic, but one clear limitation of this study was that I was not able observe participant teaching practices and contexts in connection with their perspectives. Had I had access to their classrooms, I would have been able to see what some of their decision making looked like on the ground and to contextualize how they were enacting the curricular practices they described.

Another limitation of this study was that participants reflected on their preservice programs rather than spoke about them as current students. While this afforded me access to the enduring understandings that participants had from their inclusive preservice education programs, for participants who were several years removed from their preservice teacher education such as Marisol, there may have been limitations on what they recalled from their preservice programs of study. Longitudinal research which traces the experiences of inclusive educators over several years, beginning during their preservice programs and continuing into their practice, would add depth of understanding to the evolution of inclusive educator decision making over time.

Finally, the scope of the study served as a limitation. While I purposefully chose to conduct in-depth interviews with a small number of participants to develop a deep understanding of how they made decisions, speaking to a larger sample of educators could support an understanding of the variety of decision-making processes inclusive educators engage in and how they differ across schools in the same city. Ultimately, this study would benefit from being

read alongside a larger body of research on the decision-making processes of educators who attended inclusive preservice teacher education programs. This study has lessons about the benefits of inclusive preservice programs in preparing inclusive educators to maneuver the constraints on practice found in large urban schooling systems that could be even more fully understood through research that addresses some of these named limitations.

Implications for Future Research

Given the limitations of this study, the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 and the discussion presented earlier in this chapter, there are several implications for future research. As discussed in Chapter 2, the current literature that traces inclusive educators beyond their experiences in their preservice programs often only investigates the first year of teaching (Broderick et al., 2012; McKay, 2016; Naraian, 2020; Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018). With this current study, I sought to build on to this pre-existing literature by investigating the experiences of early and mid-career inclusive educators who had attended preservice inclusive education programs. Future research should further expand on what is known about alumni of inclusive preservice teacher education programs by using longitudinal methodological designs that investigate beyond the first year of teaching. Conducting research during participants' preservice inclusive education and then following up several years into their careers will further illuminate the evolution of an inclusive educator's work over time. Longitudinal research is especially important since pre-existing literature has found that inclusive educators use survival mechanisms in their first-year teaching (McKay, 2016), suggesting that insights into inclusive practice during an educator's first year might not fully shed light how they maneuver around constraints on inclusive practice. To understand whether inclusive teacher education programs are preparing educators for sustained practice, more research on their experiences in teacher

education programs and how those experiences are connected or disconnected from their current teaching practices throughout their careers is needed.

The current study provided insights into how inclusive educators navigated a specific teaching context, New York City schools. This provides a valuable understanding of how in-service inclusive educators experience the culture and structure of New York City's educational system and its associated special education reform (NYCDOE, 2012b; Perry & Associates, 2013). Research in other contexts across the United States that are more (or less) informed by inclusive reform might allow for a better understanding of how the policies of different school districts differently constrain or enable inclusive teacher practices. Furthermore, studies in different contexts can provide insights into how the structures of those districts such as size, type of community, and amount of cultural, racial, linguistic, and ethnic diversity influence inclusive educators' decision making. For instance, Rood and Ashby's (2020) study which found that colleague deficit beliefs about disabled students constrained inclusive educator practice was not situated in New York City. In the current study participants did not report the same issue frequently. This suggests that geography, population density, and local polices (e.g. NYC SPED Reform 2012) may influence the prevailing belief system of the educators with whom inclusive educators have relationships.

While additional research in other contexts and using longitudinal methods is needed, studies that conceptualize inclusive practices through a teacher agency framework add an approach that honors the perspectives of teachers. This study drew on a growing body of research that conceptualizes inclusive practice through a teacher agency lens (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018; Pantic & Florian, 2015). In so doing, the current study aimed to understand the types of decisions that inclusive educators make without passing judgment on whether their

actions were aligned with inclusion. Rather, it sought to understand how inclusive educators navigated their work, given a philosophical commitment. In this way, the professional judgments of inclusive educators are honored. More research aiming to understand how in-service teachers do inclusion that avoids evaluative judgements on their decision making is needed. Given that inclusive educators are already working up against a deficit-oriented system, future research should take a counter-narrative approach that "discloses[s] the complexities of teacher enactments of inclusion" (Naraian, 2020, p. 1).

Although the racial identifications of the participants in this study were considered in the analysis, more examination of the experiences of these inclusive educators from a lens that positions their race as a frame for analysis is needed. For example, more examination of how Marisol's identity, as Latina, sustained her work as an inclusive educator in the same community where she grew up could provide insights into how inclusive educators navigate relationships with families, students, and colleagues. Exploring how participants' racial identities influenced the ways they experienced inclusion and in what settings they thrived in doing the work could add insights into how to support inclusive educators when working in settings where they do and do not have the same racial identifications as their students. Implications for further research are to continue expanding inclusive education research to explore not only the racial identity characteristics of the students with whom educators work, but also to consider how the raced positions of the educators influence their enactments of inclusion.

Implications for Preservice Inclusive Teacher Education

The findings from this study lead to several actionable next steps for preservice inclusive teacher education programs. As explored in context for the current study, there is a distribution of meanings of inclusion such as the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education

spaces, the inclusion of all students specifically attending to those who come from traditionally marginalized backgrounds, and the design of individualized instruction that can meet the needs of a diverse range of learners (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018). The way that a teacher education program defines inclusion has implications for the beliefs of inclusive educators who attended that program as well as how they carry out inclusive enactments.

The findings from this study suggested that the participants who attended both Verrazano and Hornbeam Universities graduated with an understanding of inclusion that emphasized the inclusion of all students, specifically attending to those who come from traditionally marginalized backgrounds, comprehensive of, but not limited to, students with disabilities. However, Cassie's descriptions suggested that she experienced an absence of explicit discussion of her own identity as a raced individual as well as an absence of application of culturally relevant practices to field placements. As she explained:

> I have to admit that…[cultivating relationships with students and families from different backgrounds from my own]…was something that is still hard for me… The multicultural piece and culturally relevant responsive teaching, even if we did talk about it in our undergrad, it didn't seem as relevant in all of my placements.

Despite cultivating an understanding inclusivity, premised on the inclusion of students from a variety of identity groups in one classroom, without fieldwork experiences that allowed for observation of and practice in enacting inclusive teaching in context, Cassie graduated from her preservice inclusive education program not yet having developed the skill to apply these understandings to her teaching practice. The other three participants, who had those opportunities in fieldwork to work with students who identify with several different races, described more skill in taking their own raced positionality and those of their students into consideration when they enacted inclusive practice. As analysis of Cassie's perspective suggested, to prepare inclusive educators to teach in urban public schools such as those found in New York City—which was

67% comprised of Black and Hispanic students during the 2018-19 school year ("School diversity in New York City," n.d.)—inclusive teacher education programs should provide fieldwork opportunities where educators are teaching students with these racial identifications. Inclusive teacher education programs in areas where the population of students is predominantly white should require field placements in different locations, so students can have the opportunity to teach a more racially diverse student body prior to in-service teaching. These field placements could include summer experiences or semester-long opportunities, like Hazel's experience in the "City Pathway" Program.

Findings from this study also lead to implications for the organization of content area teaching methods courses. As analysis of Julia's perspectives on her math and science methods courses suggested, having taken these courses outside of her inclusive education program at Verrazano University left her to make sense of inclusive enactments in STEM teaching on her own. There is a need to integrate inclusive ideas directly into content area courses so that novice educators see the connections between STEM thinking and reasoning and an inclusive orientation to teaching (Greenstein & Baglieri, 2018).

Since inclusive faculty may not have the content knowledge to teach STEM coursework and duplicating courses can place a financial burden on institutions, creating inclusive-specific math and science methods courses on top of pre-existing STEM methods courses at the same teacher education institution may not be possible. Research has found that co-taught courses in higher education have the benefit of modeling collaborative teaching for preservice educators and providing students with a diversity of perspectives in one course (Bacharach & Heck, 2007). Preservice inclusive education programs might explore using a co-teaching model for STEM

coursework, where faculty members from math and science programs partner with faculty members who teach in inclusive programs to design and teach a course.

In cases where co-teaching is not possible, co-assignments or co-readings can be used across multiple courses. For instance, Tondreau et al. (2021) crafted a joint key assessment through the pairing of a writing methods course with an inclusion course. In this project, students were asked to design a lesson plan that included elements of Writers Workshop and culturally relevant approaches to literacy that they had been taught in their writing methods course with co-teaching models and UDL principles taught in their course that focuses on teaching methods for co-teaching. The joint assessment allowed students to make connections between their literacy content area methods instruction and concepts of inclusion, without the additional financial cost associated with having two professors teach a single course. Furthermore, co-assignments such as this support students in building skills at enacting inclusion in their content area teaching without requiring a preservice program to fully redesign a programmatic sequence of instruction.

Given that during the 2019-20 school year, 33% of students aged 3-21 served under IDEIA were classified with a Specific Learning Disability and another 19% were classified as having a Speech and Language Impairment—both classifications often indicating that a student needs support in reading—understanding how to prepare inclusive educators to instruct emerging readers is essential (NCES, 2021). Previous research on this topic has found that inclusive educators in urban contexts may engage in a reconciliation process, in which they use both explicit and constructivist approaches to teaching literacy to foster student outcomes in reading (Naraian, 2016). In the current study, analysis of the participants' descriptions of their experiences of teaching emergent reading skills related to phonological awareness, phonics, and

concepts about print suggested that they used reflexivity to deepen their emergent reading pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). Participants also described how applying newly learned emergent reading pedagogical content knowledge directly with students as in-service educators supported them in being able to apply what they learned to other groups of students.

Inclusive preservice teacher education should better prepare inclusive educators for teaching emergent readers by incorporating more emphasis on emergent reading pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) in pre-existing coursework and fieldwork. As part of their supervised fieldwork, preservice inclusive educators should be required to teach reading one-to-one or to a small group of readers who are still emerging in their skills. The participants who had attended Hornbeam University did describe engaging in literacy tutoring which may have had the intention of preparing them to teach reading to a student who has emergent skills. However, this tutoring fieldwork placement was early on in their programs of study, leaving them with little recollection of the experience. The newness of teaching for the first time that they experienced during this field placement may have taken precedence over their ability to focus on the literacy content they were teaching. Furthermore, their reflections suggested that reliance on a pre-scripted literacy instructional program did not support them in retaining emergent reading content knowledge or methods. These findings suggested that fieldwork-based emergent reading tutoring should happen towards the end of a program of study and should emphasize preservice educators' emergent reading lesson planning and application, avoiding a reliance on pre-existing materials.

One major finding from this study was that, unlike other research on in-service inclusive educators (Rood, 2020; Rood & Ashby, 2018), participants were less inclined to identify

isolation or seclusion as a constraint on their enactments of inclusion. In fact, several participants described how the institutions where they were teaching at the time of data collection or had previously taught had connections with their preservice inclusive education programs. Julia and Cassie had had opportunities to teach directly with alumni of their same preservice programs, and Marisol's first job was at a school which hosted student teachers from the same program that she had attended. Moreover, over time, Marisol had taken on the role of hosting student teachers from Verrazano University's Inclusive Education Program in her own classroom, further strengthening the ties between her preservice program and her current teaching practice. While other scholars have suggested that inclusive preservice teacher education programs host ongoing professional learning communities to support in-service inclusive educators in cultivating and maintaining collective efficacy in their early years of classroom practice (Broderick et al., 2012; Schlessinger & Oyler, 2015), the findings from the current research showed there are ways that preservice education programs can support their alumni in maintaining relationships with like-minded colleagues using pre-existing elements of programs rather than adding on an inquiry group after graduation that might be challenging to attend given limitations on a novice educator's time. University-based career services offices may play a role in helping alumni search for jobs at schools where alumni of their same programs work. Similarly, student teaching coordinators and fieldwork placement officers should work to maintain consistent relationships with the schools so that inclusive education programs can serve as pipelines for new teaching faculty. They might also draw on their own alumni to serve as cooperating teachers, thereby keeping alumni connected to their preservice inclusive programs without creating additional out-of-work meetings for them to attend. Strengthening these pre-existing structural elements of inclusive teacher education programs to have them support the goal of building collective

efficacy may facilitate reduced seclusion of inclusive educators without adding a burden on programs to create ongoing communities of practice; it can be hard to keep in-service educators involved during the "survival mode" years of teaching (McKay, 2016).

Implications for In-Service Teacher Professional Development

In this study, relationships with like-minded school-based coaches served a role in sustaining inclusive educator practices. Similarly, participants relied on the expertise of outside professional development consultants to defend challenges to problematic principal leadership. Like other research on the value of third-space intellectual learning communities for inclusive educators (Broderick et al., 2012; Naraian & Schlessinger, 2018; Schlessinger, 2013), the findings in this study suggested that on-the-job professional development providers—whether staffed by a school or hired from an outside organization—have the potential to play a role in sustaining an inclusive educator's practice. In the current study, the perspectives of professional development providers empowered participants to engage in inclusive literacy curricular redesigning and to support participants in understanding why school leaders were placing emphasis on standardized assessments. An implication from these findings is that schools might deliberately contract work with or directly hire inclusively minded professional development providers to support educators in sustaining inclusive practice. As in Julia's example discussed in Chapter 5, having a relationship with an inclusively minded coach or outside consultant who is not directly connected to the audit culture present in most public schools may help inclusive educators maneuver the audit culture while also still "ensuring students' competence in taking high-stakes exams" (Li & Ruppar, 2017, p. 48). For Julia, her philosophically aligned coach helped her to see that her principal was managing "the DOE stressors," but that "deep down," her principal "believed" in similar ideas. This supported Julia in seeing how her principal similarly

maneuvered in and around the audit culture. A school administrator, on the other hand, may be less suited to help inclusive educators to maneuver around standardized assessments, given their district-mandated obligations for teacher evaluation.

In the current study, the participants' descriptions of their decision making brought to light several areas where they needed professional development beyond the education that was provided through their preservice inclusive education programs. As a result, topics that future inclusively minded professional development might focus on include emergent reading teaching methods, emergent reading content, social justice-infused STEM instruction, and integration of a co-teacher into a classroom once the classroom culture has already been established. Indeed, these topics are not an exhaustive list since inclusive teaching is individualized. A final important implication for school-based professional learning might be to have educators engage in self-reflective practices to identify where they need additional study, so that coaches can support those areas directly. This would support inclusive educators in building their professional competence in "reflecting on their own practice" (Li & Ruppar, 2021, p. 48), while also providing direct content knowledge building so that inclusive educators may engage in the inclusive action of continued knowledge and skill development (Li & Ruppar, 2021).

Implications for Policy

In an era of increased need for inclusive teaching practices in the country at large (IDEIA, 2004; NCES, 2017) and in New York City specifically (NYCDOE, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), and when we are facing significant special education teacher shortages (Diament, 2021; Westfall, 2021), decisions about how to staff schools with teachers prepared to enact inclusion is essential. For the past 25 years, alternative certification routes such as Teach for America (TFA) and The New Teacher Project (TNTP) have played a role in training educators to work with

students with disabilities in low-staffed districts. TNTP alone has trained and staffed over 37,000 teachers for high-needs positions, including special education in high-needs districts (Our impact, 2021). In New York City, one-fifth of current math, science, and special education teachers were trained through TNTP's New York City Teaching Fellows program (Case Study: New York, 2021). However, many of the universities with which these programs partner for "subsidized university-based training" (The Fellowship Experience, 2021) use more mainstream special education approaches to prepare teachers. Given how large the population of teachers that are certified through these alternative routes is, policies that more strategically link alternative certifications with inclusive education preservice programs might strengthen pipelines to place more inclusive educators in high-needs classrooms. As I found in this dissertation, by having like-minded colleagues, the inclusive educators in this study were able to work collectively to challenge problematic school leadership and enact inclusive curriculum design. Policies that partner urban school district alternative certification programs with inclusive education preservice programs may serve to enlarge the pool of inclusive educators working collectively and, in turn, reduce the isolation and seclusion of inclusive educators that constrain their practice (Rood, 2018; Rood & Ashby, 2020).

While laws in eight U.S. states are currently working at odds with inclusive practices by constraining how and if educators can talk about race and other identity categories with students (Cineas, 2021; Kruesi, 2021), other states, like New York, have begun to lead the way in crafting policies that promote inclusively aligned practices. During the 2018-19 school year, the New York State Education Department (NYSED, 2019) worked with community stakeholders, including teachers, students, families, academics, and community leaders, to craft a framework for Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CS-RE). The CS-RE Framework was designed

to incorporate an "inclusion lens in every facet" of the agency's work, so that all children can be educated "effectively and equitably" (pp. 6-7). Embedded in this framework is the concept that all layers of a student's learning environment should "affirm and value the various aspects of students' cultural identities;" according to NYSED, identities to affirm include disability among race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic background (p. 8). This state-supported set of recommended school practices is a step forward in ensuring that school administrators cultivate learning environments that create possibilities for inclusions rather than constraints. For the participants in this study who work in New York State, elements of NYSED's CS-RE Framework may have shaped the classrooms where they work and, in turn, supported their efforts towards inclusion. Other state departments of education might follow in New York's lead to craft similar documents that treat disability as an identity category worthy of inclusion.

Finally, although the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare many of the inequities that American K-12 students face, such as unequal access to technology or clean learning environments (Simon, 2021), the pandemic has also caused drastic and sudden shifts in state-level school policies that may inform how states better craft ecologies ripe for doing inclusion when moving forward. For instance, COVID-19 has forced a restructuring of student-to-teacher ratios in public school classrooms (WABC, 2021), which for the participants in this study resulted in allowing them more opportunity to provide students with individualized instruction. At the time of data collection, as a dually certified general and special education teacher, Julia found herself teaching a class of 15 students, three of whom had disability classifications. This model for teaching allowed her to provide individualized instruction to the students with disabilities, confer positive academic benefit on all her learners, and foster a learning

environment where students with and without disabilities were educated alongside one another. Policymakers might use examples like Julia's as a model to reconsider LRE. The configuration of Julia's class make-up during COVID-19 and attendant inclusive practices demonstrated that there are other options for providing students with a reduced teacher-to-student ratio that does not require the segregated learning environment of self-contained teaching.

Implications for Teachers

The implications above offer ways that researchers, teacher educators, school administrators, professional development providers and policymakers may support inclusive educators in their achievements of agency. However, this study centers the voices of four educators in describing their achievements of inclusivity rather than the stakeholders named above. Table 10 offers a reframing of the same implications as action items for inclusive educators. This table aims to provide takeaways that current and future inclusive educators, like Julia, Marisol, Hazel and Cassie, may use to further achieve inclusive teaching practices.

Table 10

Implications for Teachers

	Practice	Relationships	Policy
Implications for Teachers	Pursue professional development in content areas where current students are not demonstrating growth. Presume own professional competence. Advocate for school-based support that will scaffold professional learning (e.g. switching out of a testing grade to learn a new teaching practice).	Actively participate in job search processes by asking hiring teams questions about the beliefs of colleagues and administrators around inclusivity. Seek out teaching positions where graduates of aligned inclusive pre-service programs currently work.	Identify policy documents that connect with inclusive theory and approaches. Use inclusively aligned policy documents to justify decision-making. Participate in teacher policy think tanks.

	Listen to the perspectives of colleagues who have identities that differ from the white, middle-class worldview. Work to identify the larger context that may be constraining the practices of school administrators and separate that context from administrators' beliefs about students, families, and learning. Use knowledge of administrators' constraints to build alliances with school leaders.	Serve as cooperating teachers for new inclusive educators as they enter the field. Collaborate with colleagues who have deep content knowledge in the STEM fields. Volunteer to discuss teaching practice with current pre-service inclusive educators by visiting undergraduate and graduate courses.	Partner with state departments of education to serve as stakeholders in the creation of new policy. Collaborate with policy advocates to ensure inclusive approaches are embedded in policy.

Chapter Conclusion

This study shed light on the rationales for actions of four educators who attended inclusive preservice teacher education programs. Their respective preservice teacher educations at Verrazano and Hornbeam Universities laid a foundation in inclusive thinking and decision making that their descriptions suggested informs how they sustain their commitments today. Their work is also sustained by their ability to work alongside like-minded colleagues, many of whom had previously attended or worked for their preservice teacher education programs. While the ecologies that participants worked in contained constraints that limited their capacity to achieve elements of inclusive practice, they demonstrated how they have maneuvered across contexts to find settings more suitable for their work. Unfortunately, for Hazel, this maneuvering left her in a position where she was no longer working in a community of students of color from a low-income background, which left her engaging in inclusion in ways that differed from her first teaching position. To maintain inclusive educators in more high-needs settings such as the

one that Hazel shifted out of, an educational climate in all schools—especially schools serving low-income students of color—that provides educators with freedom to make professional judgments is needed.

Even with improvements in state and district policies that cultivate ecologies more suitable for the achievement of inclusions, given the individualized nature of inclusive teaching practice, it will likely remain a complex decision-making process that requires educators to make judgments where they weigh their own beliefs, alongside the practical-evaluative dimensions of their everyday teaching contexts. More educators who are prepared to demonstrate reflexivity in their own teaching practice within a present-day context, such as the participants in this study, are needed. As Cassie and Marisol described below (respectively), ultimately, inclusive educators benefit all students, including those with disabilities classifications.

> How I define inclusive education? A heavy question. Inclusive education is…a natural way of ensuring that each child in the class has access to the school environment, the curriculum, and it's student-centered. So instructional decisions and the climate that is cultivated is reflective of the students…The norm that's established is one that doesn't exclude anyone. I'm like shaking with this response…I don't want to leave anything out.

> I think that my view on…[inclusive education]…has changed now that I've actually been teaching for some time…. I think originally when I started graduate school,…[it]…meant having a classroom that was accepting of all learners and I think more focused on students with disabilities, students who were English language learners…. Now when I think of inclusive education, I think more of the students and their identities and how they see themselves in creating a classroom that's like welcoming and nurturing to that.

It is incumbent on various stakeholders, including teacher educators, school administrators, policymakers, professional development providers, and other educators, to prepare novice educators for and support sustained commitment to inclusive education.

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Appendix A

Screening Survey

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study Perspectives of In-Service Educators Prepared in Inclusive Teacher Education Programs on Enactments of Inclusion. Please fill out the brief survey below to confirm your eligibility. I will follow-up with you after completion.

1) Name:

2) Email Address:

2) What grade(s) do you teach?

3) Where do you teach?

4) How many years have you been teaching?

5) Where did you do your preservice teacher education?

6) Are you an inclusive educator?

7) What does being an inclusive educator mean to you?

Thank you for your time. Feel free to reach out with questions to Laurie Rabinowitz, **LR2167@tc.columbia.edu**.

Appendix B

Protocol for Interview 1

Definition of Inclusive Education

1. How do you define inclusive education?

Iterational Dimension: Inclusivity Outside of Teacher Education and Teaching

2. What spaces in your life have been inclusive/exclusive?

3. What has the role of inclusive education been in your life? Played in your own schooling experience as a student?

- Have the schooling experiences that you have had been inclusive in nature? What makes you say that? Can you give an example?
- Tell me about your schooling experience growing up. Tell me about what school was like for you.

4. Tell me about why you decided to study inclusive schooling in your pre-service teacher education program.

Iterational Dimension: PreService Inclusive Teacher Education Experiences

5. Where did you study inclusive education?

- Describe the program that you attended to someone who knows nothing about it.
- Tell me about the other students in your preservice program.

6. Describe a course that you found most memorable.

- What things did you learn?
- What were the readings like?
- What were the activities like?

7. Describe a project/paper that you found most useful.

- What did you learn?
- What did you create?

8. Describe your student teaching experiences.

- Where did they take place?
- What was your role in the classroom?
- What do you remember most about it?
- What did or did not happen in your student teaching placement to foster an inclusive environment?

9. Can you describe what inclusion meant in your pre-service teacher education program? How do you know?

10. How do you connect with your former program?

- Have you maintained relationships with anyone? Who? Why?
- Are you in touch with faculty? In what ways?

11. What were your expectations of inclusive education before entering the classroom? Did teaching in the classroom meet those expectations?

12. What, if anything, surprised you when you first started teaching?

13. Can you describe where you have taught (if any where else) prior to here?

14. Tell me about a colleague that you met when you first started teaching. Was he/she different from your colleagues from your pre-service teacher education program?

15. When things were difficult when you first started teaching, how did you seek support?

Appendix C

Protocol for Interview 2

Questions that Follow Up from Interview 1

Practical-Evaluative Dimension: Teaching Experiences

1. Where do you teach? What is a day like in your school? Classroom?

2. Describe what inclusivity looks like in your classroom. Can you give an example?

3. What type of school-based supports/resources do you rely on? Out-of-classroom teachers? Coaches? Supplies? Professional development?

4. Tell me about teacher evaluation at your school. What is it like? How does it interact with how you teach?

5. Tell me about how you assess student learning.

- What are the school-wide systems?
- What are you classroom systems?
- Are they the same? Different? What are you preferences? Why?

6. Tell me about your colleagues. Are they similar or different from you? In what ways?

7. Tell me about your school administration. How do you interact with them?

8. Tell me about the families of your students. How do you interact with them?

Curriculum Analysis Activity

9. Describe the piece of curriculum you have brought to share.

- What do you like about this curriculum artifact?
- What do you dislike about this curriculum artifact?

10. Why did you choose to share this artifact today?

- In what ways do you see this curriculum artifact as demonstrative of inclusivity?

11. Did you design this curriculum artifact yourself?

- How did you design it? Modify it?

12. How have you used this curriculum artifact in the past?

- This school year?

13. If you wanted to make this curriculum artifact better, what would you do differently? Why?

Analysis of Inclusive Assessment

14. Describe the assessment that you brought to share with me today.

- Why do you see it as inclusive?
- How does it collect data?
- Why did you use it to collect data?
- When did you last use this assessment?
- What are some patterns/trends that noticed about the data you collected from this assessment?
- What do you do with that data?
- Did anything surprise you about using this assessment?

15. Why did you choose to share this assessment today?

- What do you believe is the relationship between the data you have collected with this assessment and inclusivity?

16. What next steps did you take with the data you most recently collected with this assessment? Why?

- Will you use this assessment in the design of a piece of curriculum?
- Will you use in for the whole school? Your classroom?
- How will it impact students? Families?

Appendix D

Protocol for Interview 3

Questions that Follow Up from School Visits and Interview 2

Iterational Dimension:

Projective Dimension: Future Goals

2. What has teaching with an inclusive mindset done for you?

- For your students?
- For families?
- For the school community?

3. What do you see yourself doing professionally in five years?

- Ten years?
- Where do you see yourself heading professionally?

4. What professional goals do you have for yourself in the next year? Five years?

5. How do you plan on meeting your professional goals?

- What types of resources will you seek out?
- Which individuals will you need to support you? In what ways?

Appendix E

Data Analysis Phase Two Code Book Example Excerpts

Open Code	Data Excerpt Example
Inclusion as Community-Oriented	I part of like some morning meeting. greetings and activities. They were really emphasized morning meetings, it was a really big part of the day. They took a full period, all students were sharing. They had one student whose job it was to write down some of what other students were sharing. They had sign-up sheets so you know some kids might choose like I wanna share on Friday versus Monday so I have more time to think about it. Different ways to greet with different hand movements and I just think a lot of those I've tried to replicate.- Julia, Interview 1
Resisting Institutional Ideas	I think kinda just I guess a better term than misinformation is conflicting ideas. So in some classes. Like in the math class for example, we were being told these are the standards that kids need to reach by this age, and this is how you do it. Versus in one of our core classes we were talking about how you meet kids where they are, support them in their development, which, when you have a struggling student or at least when I've felt as I've entered teaching is when you have a student who's really struggling, those two ideas don't always mesh. Like if I'm gonna meet a student where they are, and support them fully and holistically, then I can't really be focusing on what the standard is. That's where they should be in some hypothetical world. Julia, Interview 1
Centering Human Difference	Throughout graduate school I think this idea of like inclusive education is like essentially like creating a classroom where like it doesn't matter who the student is like everyone's gonna be in that classroom and like whatever their like achievement level is or like whatever their like disability is or race or like language, it like, everyone's gonna be there and everyone's gonna be embraced and accepted, but then at the same time I felt like. And. So. I think that that, that idea was basically like repeated over and over again just throughout all the coursework. And, and like the type of materials that we read but also more so just like the way that like the type of courses that we had to take, and it just seemed to be like this, like this philosophy that like really was like, built the framework around the program itself. Marisol, Interview 1
Inclusive Educators as Political Activists	When I applied to my graduate school program like I definitely was attracted to like this idea of inclusive education and like thinking about like how like that tied in with like social justice work and activism- Marisol, Interview 1
Reconciling Conflicting Ideas	I remember kids in my district 75 placement that were siblings. And I, it really left me uneasy at first, and I remember coming into class and

	always thinking about them because, you know, disabilities are not like, I think you know, one was diagnosed with autism, one like, one with a learning disability. I don't, I don't remember exactly what the 3rd one was. But what are the chances that in one family all 3 kids have ended up in district 75? It just didn't sit right, it didn't feel right, and I started thinking, you know, a lot about like how, how do families play a role in this, and how does like a lack of resources and education on the parent level, possibly lead now to kids probably first being evaluated, and then, you know, going through the system and eventually ending up in like our most exclusive setting? And, and for this project, that's something I wanted to look into so I (inaudible) I ended up researching the, like how to work with diverse parents, I think was like the overarching idea, but eventually what I was looking into was that our idea of parent involvement or family involvement is really critical in schools, yet we're not really doing much to support it and our idea is a very like white, middle class type of engagement, you know, families that respond to us when we call them right away or families that show up to school when we need them to and come to parent-teacher conferences and all of these different things that for some families might not be possible, they might not really know what, how to do it. -Julia, Interview 2
Centering Access	In one of our classes we were talking about how you meet kids where they are, support them in their development, which, when you have a struggling student or at least when I've felt as I've entered teaching is when you have a student who's really struggling, those two ideas don't always mesh. Like if I'm gonna meet a student where they are, and support them fully and holistically, then I can't really be focusing on what the standard is. That's where they should be in some hypothetical world. – Julia, Interview 1
Centering Literacy	I think it was threaded throughout, yeah, we definitely had, we had a class about children's literature, and like picking and like sorting through children's literature, and thinking about like what, who the story's about and like what that would like mean in your teaching and like thinking about like who you are as a person and how it impacts like your identity, and how that impacts your teaching and like how you teach and what you teach so. -Hazel, Interview 1
Joy	There was a course that we had on social studies that I found really really memorable that was taught by a doctoral student that, that ended up becoming like a mentor of mine when I was in the program and then even afterwards, and and yeah, and that was, that was really cool. And then she ended up leaving the school because after she got her PhD, because she just I think felt like, I think she was kind of done, she wanted to move on, but then, she was pretty happy like. But it was but she was definitely someone that like I went to and a lot of the other preservice teachers like

	and student teachers like we all kind of like look to her like as like a mentor and like a big sister kind of figure, and her class which was only like a semester which is like super super memorable, and it really like and I think she really like was willing to kind of break outside kind of like the mold of the program and like was willing to really like talk about the, the stuff that we actually wanted to talk about and like have really interesting and like fun and passionate kind of discussions, and, and really push us like experiments, and think about like our like our instructional practices, and that was really cool.- Marisol, Interview 1
Inclusion Across Different Geographies	If I was placed in like a suburban school and a friend of mine was placed in a city school, our experiences were very different in that I had a much smaller class size, they had a much bigger class size, and it also depended on the teachers like our host teachers, like for example I may have been able to like jump right in and like start teaching or like ho- having small groups, or like interacting with the kids whereas maybe my, my peer was like, was not able to do that yet, was kind of being, was doing more on the opposite side of like helping the teacher prep, in terms of like making copies and like things like that. And so, for, for those of us that had the experience of not being able to, I guess, jump right in, those philosophies like, were slower to develop, if that makes sense. Because they weren't actively engaging in, in the classroom setting. – Hazel, Interview 1
Inclusion as Classroom Space	Yeah, so I think, kinda before I was in undergrad, I'd really only known the experience of teachers working, teachers who work in special education settings having I guess more of like a self-contained experience, self-contained classroom experience, and that's not something that I like ever really wanted for myself just because I, just kind of believe strongly, you know, in educating all students together in one room, so when I went through the program I kinda realized how, how teachers are able to do that, and how much the students can benefit from being in that type of environment versus being in a self-contained environment. -Hazel, Interview 2
Inclusion as Collaborative Work	Yes, so I had one experience my junior year. And I also had an experience my senior year where I was in, one was just a general education classroom and one was a, or I think it was an, I think it was an inclusive classroom, but there was only one teacher, so I guess it's not, it wouldn't be technically ICT. I think. I can't remember off the top of my head. But, in both of those experiences that I didn't think it was the strongest model, there were clear, I guess, things that I learned from those experiences that I would like take into my own teaching that I knew that I didn't want, so like for example there was a lot of like communication things that like weren't working between the 2 teachers in the sense that one, you know, kind of seemed like they held a little bit more pow- not power but there's, there was one teacher where the kids knew was like

	the main teacher, and then there was a teacher that kind of didn't seem like the main teacher but was- was also there, and in that sense it didn't seem like a true inclusive classroom because the dynamics between the teachers were not equal, where I think that's an important part of an inclusion classroom-classroom is that both teachers are, have an equal sense of ownership of the classroom.- Hazel, Interview 1
Reflective Practitioner	I think that's what I meant but yeah because also, yeah, I mean it goes both ways for those of us that were, you know, working, were trying to get experience in the classroom, but also, you know, observing teachers not having enough ownership in their own classrooms. So it's another thing that would kind of, you know, develop your philosophy for, for some people. I mean I can't speak for other people, I can only speak for myself, but for some, for some people, you know, seeing that, seeing two teachers having different ownership in the classroom, you might think 'oh, that's the way it's supposed to be, ok great, that's like how, that's what I'm supposed to be doing.' Whereas for others, that might be like 'oh, you know I don't know if this is something like right to me, I feel like this isn't necessarily what I want to be doing or how I want my classroom to be.' So I guess it depends on the person, of course, but yeah, there was a little bit of, of that. But for the most part I think most of us agreed. That, I mean, I don't know I can't speak for everyone, but I would say most of us would probably agree that that we would want to have equal, an equal partnership in, in a, in a coteaching team.- Hazel, Interview 1

Appendix F

Demographic Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please complete the questionnaire below and return it to the Principal Investigator. Please note that the information collected in this questionnaire is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study.

1. My gender is: _____

2. My age is: _____

3. My race/ethnicity is: _____

4. I current teaching in the following classroom setting:

A. _____General Education	B. _____Integrated Co-Teaching
B. _____Self-Contained	D. _____Self-Contained in District 75
E. _____SETSS	F. _____Gifted and Talented

5. I currently have _____ number of students enrolled in my class.

6. I am certified to teach: _____

7. I attended my preservice teacher education program: part-time / full-time

8. I attended my preservice teacher education program as a: graduate student/ undergraduate student.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire! Your time and participation are appreciated and will contribute to a growing knowledge base on the experiences of inclusive educators.

Appendix G

Consent Form

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000

INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: Perspectives of In-Service Educators Prepared in Inclusive Teacher Education Programs on Enactments of Inclusion
Principal Investigator: Laurie Rabinowitz, Doctoral Student
Teachers College
973-477-0656, LR2167@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in this research study called "Perspectives of In-Service Educators Prepared in Inclusive Teacher Education Programs on Enactments of Inclusion." You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are a Kindergarten through eighth grade teacher, have taught for a minimum of 3 years and have pre-service teacher education in inclusive schooling**.** Approximately five people will participate in this study and it will take 6 hours of your time to complete.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

This study is being done to determine the perspectives of teachers who attended inclusive pre-service teacher education programs on their teaching today.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

After completing a 5-minute pre-screening survey using a digital software called Qualtrics sent to you via a recruitment email, you will be contacted to invite you to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed three times by the principal investigator over the course of two months. During the interviews you will be asked to discuss your pre-service education experiences and your experience as a classroom teacher. These interviews will be audio-recorded. The researcher will note when audio recording starts and stops during interviews. After the audio recording is written down (transcribed) the audio recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. There will be three interviews each of which will take approximately ninety minutes. You will be given a pseudonym or false name/de-identified code in order to keep your identity confidential.

Finally, you will be asked to fill out a demographic survey. This will take about five minutes.

All interviews will take place on the telephone at a time that is convenient to you. The questionnaire will be filled out at the end of the final interview using a digital software called Qualtrics.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel embarrassed to discuss problems that you experienced in your pre-service teacher education or while working in your school. **However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.** You might feel concerned that things you say might get back to your principal.

The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected laptop.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of teacher education to better understand the best way to prepare teacher educators.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed the interviews and filled out the demographic survey. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven't finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

The investigator will keep all handwritten materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored in password-protected laptop. What is on the audio-recording will be written down and the audio-recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym.

For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

_____I give my consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

_____I **do not** consent to be recorded

_____

Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

The audio-recorded materials for this study will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.

___I consent to allow written and/or audio recorded materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College

_____

Signature

___I **do not** consent to allow written and/or audio recorded materials viewed outside of Teachers College Columbia University

_____

Signature

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes _____ Initial No_____ Initial

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

Yes _____ Initial No_____ Initial

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Laurie Rabinowitz, at 973-477-0656 or at LR2167@tc.columbia.edu**.**

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion under the condition that I am no longer able to commit the needed time to data collection activities.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

- Identifiers may be removed from the data. De-identified data may be used for future research studies without additional informed consent from you (the research participant or the research participant's representative).
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print name: _____

Date: _____

Signature:

_____

Appendix H

Participant Recruitment Script

Recruitment Email/Social Media Post

Dear Colleague(s) / Dear Title Surname / Dear First Name/Hello All,

I am seeking educators to participate in a research study that I am conducting on the perspectives of teachers who attended inclusive preservice teacher education programs on their teaching today. I am interested in interviewing inclusive educators about their current practices. Participation would include three, 90-minute interviews.

I am looking for participants who are Kindergarten through eighth grade teachers, have taught for a minimum of 3 years and have preservice teacher education in inclusive schooling**.**

If you are interested and identify as a good fit, kindly fill out this 5-minute survey found at this link. I will follow-up with you to indicate if you are selected to participate in interviews.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm Regards,

Laurie Rabinowitz
LR2167@tc.columbia.edu

IRB of Record: *Teachers College, Columbia University, IRB # 19-211*
LR2167@tc.columbia.edu