USING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TO EXAMINE THE DISABILITY

DISCOURSES OF

EARLY CHILDHOOD PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION:
Using Children's Literature to Examine the Disability Discourses of Early
Childhood
Pre-service Teachers
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The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the disability discourses of ten pre-service teachers enrolled in a one-semester undergraduate social studies and language arts methods course. This undergraduate course drew on a disability studies approach that advocated a social model rather than a traditional medical approach to disability. During this course, rather than posit disability as a deficit, disability was re-conceptualized within social and cultural frameworks, stressing the examination of policies and practices that hinder the lives of individuals with disabilities. The following research questions guided this study: (1) How do pre-service teachers position disability during class discussions? What are their discourses, omissions and silences? ;(2) How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses; (3) How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lessons designed for early childhood students that incorporate children's literature with a disability topic.

Using a Foucauldian lens, this study analyzed the discourses and actions of the early childhood pre-service teachers as they examined, reflected upon and taught lessons using children's literature with a disability theme. Attention was paid to how the pre-service teachers framed disability, the language they used, and the challenges of planning and teaching lessons that centered on a disability theme. Data collection included a survey, observations, field notes, transcripts of audio-taped class sessions and documents.

Documents included critical literacy worksheets, online reading responses, a lesson plan assignment and student artifacts.

Two major findings result from this study. First, the same powerful discourses that influenced how pre-service teachers perceive and position disabled people are well-established in the schools where they do their practice teaching. These same discourses lead to school actions and non-actions which in turn, present challenges to pre-service teachers who wish to "do disability studies" in schools. Second, using a critical pedagogical approach with children's literature within an inquiry based course has potential for helping pre-service teachers to problematize the issues of disability and in turn, to promote a critical examination of disability with disabled and able-bodied early childhood students.

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I acknowledge the kindness and caring of colleagues, friends and family who contributed to a successful completion of this project. My colleagues at William Paterson University were instrumental in the completion of my degree. A heartfelt thank you goes to my department chair, Linnie (Dr. Linnea Weiland), for her friendship and encouragement during this journey. In addition, I am grateful to good friends for their kindhearted support of me and my family. I don't know that anyone should consider taking on this sort of academic endeavor, without good friends by their side. Thank you to Debbie and Chris and also to their families, who always pitched in whenever help was needed.

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father, Vic was here to see all of my professional accomplishments. At the start of this project, my sons were teenagers; now both are fine young men. Thanks to my son, Sean for lending me his compass. I have found my way to end of this project and I return it with good wishes that he might also be guided to new discoveries. To Colin, I am grateful for who you have become, a fine young man and a leader for disabled people. Both of you have given meaning to my research and professional self and most important, to whom I am today as a mother. And finally, I would like to thank my dearest husband, Al for cheering me on and for always telling me to get back to work. With just the right amount of humor and delicious dinners, I have survived this project, thanks to you, my love.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Fran was an exceptionally bright, articulate teacher candidate, who was always well-prepared and organized. Her storybook selection was *Lucy's Picture* by Nicola Moon. In this story, Lucy is a preschooler who decides to make a collage picture for grandfather who is blind. While preparing for the story reading with a group of preschoolers, Fran breathed a sigh of relief that the story doesn't mention that Lucy's grandfather is blind. Somehow she has missed the passage, "'I've made a picture, Grandpa. Look….' Lucy grabbed her blind grandfather's hand and guided it over her picture" In anticipation of the children's reactions, Fran asks, "Is it okay, to say the word blind?"

Christine has chosen the storybook, *Ian's Walk* by Kathie Lears. In the story, Ian's sister has lost Ian in the park and needs to figure out how to find him. Ian is identified as a young boy with autism. After Christine selected this story she described her familiarity with what happens when a child has autism. Her cousin's son is the source of her knowledge and experiences. On her planning sheet for a lesson with first graders, Christine includes this question "What are some of the things that Ian cannot do because of his mental disorder ?"

From a collection of multicultural books, Betty has selected a storybook, *Howie Helps Himself* by Joe Lasker. In the story, Howie is a young boy with cerebral palsy. When asked why she selected this story, Betty tells the professor, " Someday I want to teach special education. I want to help fix these kids".

As part of the pre-service teacher preparation program at my university, I teach an undergraduate methods course which integrates Social Studies and Language Arts. In this course, candidates in the program are required to plan lessons to use in their practicum classes using various genres of children's literature. The above reflections are the responses of pre-service teachers who selected children's literature with a disability theme for one lesson planning assignment. I propose that these responses characterize a deficit view of disabled people and signify inaccuracies and hesitations as pre-service teachers are introduced to the idea of talking with young children about disability. How to address these interpretations and reluctances in the teacher preparation program is a challenge that fuels my research interests.

Background

In the same year that I opened my private early childhood center in 1977,

regulations were published for Public Law 94-142 (the Education of All Handicapped

Children's Act: EHA), stating a free and appropriate public education would be available

for all "handicapped" children aged 3 to 21. Though preschool aged children were

included in the original EHA, an exception was made for ages 3 through 5, if services

were inconsistent with state law. In 1983 the programs under EHA were amended by PL

98-199 and the federal government encouraged states to expand services to include all

preschool aged "handicapped" children. Therefore, until 1983 there were no public

school services available in my town for disabled preschoolers.

During this time, as a center director, I chose to accept applications from parents

whose children were diagnosed as disabled. In time, my beliefs in inclusive environments

and programming for young children became well known in my community. These early

experiences fueled my master's thesis on accepting "handicapped" children into the

"regular" preschool classroom. I use quotation marks in the preceding sentence to

indicate that some terms are now archaic and to acknowledge my own prior lack of

awareness regarding how language can situate and maintain a group's status.

Soon after I received my master's degree I embarked on another new chapter in

my life and I became a parent. It was within the first twenty-four hours after Colin's

birth, that my husband and I were given the news that "something was wrong" and our

family was labeled a special needs family. The years that followed have been filled with

our own first-hand experiences of how Colin and other disabled children and their

families are positioned within society.

As a doctoral student, I developed an awareness of the importance language plays in constructing and deconstructing how humans are socially situated in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and ability. As I listen to pre-service teachers I am aware when they approach the subject of disability with caution, uncertainty and a lack of knowledge. "Is it okay, to say the word blind?" "What are some of the things that Ian cannot do because of his mental disorder?" In addition, I am conscious of how child development knowledge influences their perception of (dis)ability differences and when they locate the authoritative discourse of disability within the discipline of special education. "Someday I want to teach special education. I want to fix these kids." How to address my students' interpretations and assumptions about disability is a challenge that drives my research interests. In this study, I examined and analyzed the disability discourses of ten early childhood pre-service teachers as they reacted to, reflected upon and used children's literature to plan lessons that included a disability theme.

Problem Statement

Since the nineteenth century, the dominant framework for understanding and responding to disability in the Western world has been the medical or individual model. Knowledge of the medical model typifies disability as a biological, pathological, abnormal condition and focuses on impairment, limitation and deficit. "The role of medical and educational 'experts' is to cure, 'fix' or lessen the 'problem' through treatments and interventions designed by medical and quasi-medical ('special education') experts"(Mccartney,2007, p. 32). Within this framework, the message is that the

individual defect lodged in a person must somehow be cured, or eliminated or fixed if a person is to achieve a full capacity as a human being (Siebers, 2008).

A growing number of disability scholars (Oliver, 1990/ 2009; Ware, 2001) have challenged the medical model of disability. Rather than posit disability as a deficit, disability is instead conceptualized within social and cultural frameworks, stressing the examination of policies and practices that hinder the lives of individuals with a disability. In these cases, the very meanings of "ability" and "disability" are interrogated in terms of "common sense" knowledge (Rice, p. 18).

Within the field of education, discourses in the discipline of special education regulate the "common sense" knowledge of disability. Within this discipline, disability originates within scientific, psychological and medical frameworks. In this context, disability is understood in terms of classifications of deviance and meanings are derived from the everyday discursive practices of teachers and students (Foucault, 1969). The field of Disability Studies aims to disrupt this "common sense" knowledge by examining how the power embedded in these practices contribute to the educational and social positioning of disabled people. Additionally, proponents of a Disability Studies approach seek to shift the gaze from an abelist discourse of disability and relocate our focus on the authentic stories and texts authored by disabled individuals and their families.

Modern scholarship in the contemporary field of Disability Studies assumes a postmodernist and poststructuralist analysis of human difference and sets forth a shift away from the biological and medical status of disability. Instead, "disability is considered through a cultural lens, ability is interrogated in much the same way that gender is interrogated by feminist studies scholars and Whiteness is interrogated by

ethnic studies scholars" (Ware, 2001, p.110). Recent work in Disability Studies has

begun to view disabilities from a critical standpoint, exposing connections between

ability and power, reframing identity and examining how people with disability are

marginalized by the ways that institutions and individuals respond to disability (Rice,

2006; Sleeter, 2010a). Starting in the late 1990's, critical disability studies researchers

began incorporating Michel Foucault's understanding of power/knowledge into their

analyses of the institutional management of disabled people's lives (Erevelles,

2000/2005; Foucault,1988/1995; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Rice, 2006; Tremain,

2005).

Foucault's ideas of power/knowledge are intricately intertwined with what he

describes as "regimes of truth". He proposed that through discourse and established

social mechanisms, each society creates a "regime of truth" that functions to authorize

and represent its beliefs, values, and mores in a particular time and place. Consistent

with Foucault's definition of "regime of truth" , " [a] truth is authoritative". And " [i]t's

authority lies in its claim to be a statement about a phenomenon that is factual, and

therefore, correct" (McNaughton, p. 23). In addition to looking at how certain truths

become viewed as "authoritative" and "correct" within a society, Foucault argued that

truths make existing relations of power appear to be natural.

It is within this feeling of what's natural that "regimes of truth" about disability

produce the special education discourses about what is best for disabled children. In

schools this discourse is played out in special education ideology and legislation and

practices. Therefore, within an appearance of what is correct for disabled students, the

special education discourse has resulted in a perception of deficit, remediated through

one-one direct instruction within a didactic skill based curriculum. This curriculum is designed to take place within tracked classes with restricted course offerings or within segregated self-contained placements that physically and psychologically remove disabled students from the general school community.

According to Foucault (1995), in modern institutions such as schools (and prisons, hospitals, factories, military camps) disciplinary practices are used to turn a "deviant person into a "docile" person who abides by the social norms. This is accomplished through socially accepted practices of surveillance, monitoring and discipline, which in the discipline of special education is authorized by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); consequently, disabled children are viewed less as citizens and more as "remedial projects" (Rice, 2006, p. 24). I would be remiss not to mention my agreement with Ellen Brantlinger's (2005) observation that "one of the most troubling aspects of special education is that among children classified as disabled and educated in restrictive placements (i.e., segregated from peers; little access to the general curriculum), there has been a persistent pattern of overrepresentation of children who are poor or from historically marginalized groups" (p.131). Yet, the power of the special education discourse is endorsed and natural; and within the guise of best educational practices, it is grounded by a highly- acceptable positivist system of accountability. In these ways the "regimes of truth" in regards to disability is built on an individual deficit disability construct, the cornerstone of special education.

Listening carefully to pre-service teachers as they discuss disability, I am conscious of how often their language represents this dominant deficit model of disability. I notice when their conversations are fraught with misconceptions about

disability. I am also conscious of the influence of the principles of developmentally

appropriate practices that seek to construct commonly accepted facts about children's

normal development. Established by the National Association for the Education of Young

Children (NAEYC), the developmental discourses of these principles are built on

universal truths of developmental psychology and provide a normalizing framework that

influences how teachers think about children and development.

These "truths include statements that explain and predict normal child

development, enabling developmental psychologists to identify developmental delay and

abnormal development" (McNaughton, 2005, p. 23-24). These statements define what

constitutes normal and abnormal child development and authorizes a regime of truth for

early childhood educators. Accordingly early childhood educators use these truths to sort

and assign children to different groups according to their stage of development.

Traditional disability discourses are present in the disciplines of early childhood

education and share the goal of remediation, institutionalized by the discipline of special

education. Pre-service teachers first encounter these discourses in the texts and practices

of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), the foundation of early childhood

teacher preparation courses.

At the same time, I am aware that the language of the pre-service teacher are

based on the professional discourses of DAP and special education and therefore they are

also "subjects" acting out this "regime of truth" about disability. As described by

Tremain (2005, p. 6), "for Foucault, to be a subject is, in one sense, to be subject to

someone else by control and dependence and, in another sense, to be tied to one's own

identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both senses of the term imply a form of

power that subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 1982). Without the opportunity to gain new knowledge and develop a consciousness of new ways to reimagine disability, I conceive that general education teachers will remain subjects to the power inherent in the authority of the widely acceptable deficit discourses common in education.

When teachers embrace a discourse that categorizes children with the special education goal to "normalize", a counter perspective which focuses on children's strengths is sacrificed. In addition, when teachers do not recognize the multiple ways students are positioned in their classroom, teachers assume a mainstream ideology that all students are granted equal educational access. Therefore, in the hierarchy of general and special education, educational choices are often limited for disabled students.

In reference to ADHD children, Linda Graham points out how "through the process of objectification, individuals not only come to occupy spaces in the social hierarchy but, through their continual subjugation, come to know and accept their place" (p.10). Within special education , "place" denotes how, as a result of low expectations, disabled students who require special education services are positioned in such a way as to remain "in special education". This is in keeping with the following remarks in the reauthorization of IDEA (2004) , "Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by…[ensuring] that special education can become a service for such children rather than a place where such children are sent" . Likewise, as a reminder that the goal of special education is the same as that in general education, *to prepare children to lead productive lives as citizens and members of the community*, parents often counter these messages of low expectations and the ways their children are consequently positioned within schools

with the proclamation- "Special Education is a Service- Not a Place". There are startling statistics on lack of employment and poverty to support the fact that the low social status that disabled children experience in schools is reproduced within society as they reach adulthood. I recommend the American Psychological Association, Office on Socioeconomic Status fact sheet on Disability and Socioeconomic Status for a comprehensive snapshot of the dismal social inequities in the lives of disabled people (http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/factsheet-disability.aspx).

Additionally, when teacher responses to disability are framed by discourses of deficiencies and misconception, stereotypes, prejudices and fears of disabled students are taught and maintained and classroom interactions and instruction for disabled students are consequently ineffective. The explanation for educational and social failure is then located in the individual as opposed to understood as the result of the actions and non-actions of the school, located within a powerful and privileged ableist society. From an ableist worldview, the able-bodied are deemed the norm in society. "Through a deficit [abelist] lens, the essential response to learning failures is: What's wrong with this student?" (Dudley-Marley & Paugh,2010, p.13). In the end, "the language and practices of special education work to create and maintain the 'disabled subject'" (Rice, p. 19).

To the same extent that these negative responses are detrimental to disabled students, when the curriculum does not embrace disability as a topic of conversation, all students lose out on important educational possibilities. Through this invisible silence, the mainstream disability discourse is not disrupted and disabled children continue to be seen as abnormal. The alternative discourse on which disability studies draws is social justice, based on principles of equity and democracy (Rice, p. 20).

Heydon and Iannacci (2008) define the phenomena of pathologizing as the process by which persons belonging to a particular group are seen by a more powerful group as abnormal. When people's differences are perceived by others through a normative framework , some groups are positioned as less worthy and in need of fixing to meet mainstream (normal) standards. The case for pathologization is especially true for children who are culturally and linguistically diverse and those who are disabled. "Pathologizing can result in the regulation and marginalization of a less powerful group and can have devastating effects not only on a person's academic achievements, life-course options, or identity options, but also on families and communities" (p.4). One fundamental issue of power is whose voice gets heard (Delpit, 2006).

A common assumption is that the teacher is the source of classroom power. In keeping with this notion, schools are organized on a macro-level in ways that support teacher control over student actions and to support prescribed methods of instruction and assessment, a system based on a relationship of teacher power and student acquiescence (Manke, 1997). Sleeter (2010a) suggests, "[w]hile teachers working in classrooms cannot dismantle macro-level power relations, teachers can engage in practice that matters to children and youth" (p. 16). Despite this mainstream discourse of the top-bottom distribution of power within the school institution, there are micro-level examples of classrooms in which participant structures permit learning to occur within a realm of equitable relationships and knowledge sharing. According to Foucault the "regimes of truth" that pervades a society is in constant flux and negotiation. One way to change the power/knowledge that stem from the "regime of truths" about disability is through an acceptance of a new discourse which functions to change what counts as "true" for

disabled people. These possibilities of change can be made possible within an equitable

learning environment in which power/knowledge is shared by teacher and student.

In this study, I proposed that lesson plans that intentionally address

misconceptions and create new understandings of difference is one way to provide *all*

children with an opportunity to dialogue about and challenge the deficit discourses

commonly ascribed to disability. By doing this, the aim was to change the discourse on

disability from one of deficiency (located in the individual) to one of social justice

(located in the society). Furthermore, through the exchange of ideas and construction of

new knowledge I intended to create an opportunity for these future teachers to challenge

the dominant discourses of disability, with the goal to adopt new discursive practices as

their conceptualization of what is true about disability and what counts as "normal"

changed.

Facts about Disability

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2011a), in

Fall 2008, 95 percent of 6- to 21-year-old students with disabilities were served in regular

schools in the United States. In the 2008-2009 school year, 13.2 percent or just over 6.4

million students were served under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, Part B

(NCES, 2011b). In New Jersey where the study discussed here took place, 16. 2 percent

or 223,910 students, aged 3 to 21 years old received special education services in

regular schools, 15,379 of these special education students were 3 to 5 years- old.

It is common knowledge that the U.S. Office of Special Education and

Rehabilitative Programs cited New Jersey for having the highest proportion of students

with disabilities in segregated special education settings. In a report commissioned by the

National School Boards Association, Mari Molenaar and Michael Luciano (2007) report slow progress in New Jersey's mandate toward "least restrictive inclusive environments" with general and special education students in one class. One fresh ingredient in the promise of progress has occurred in the reported success of technical assistance promoting collaboration of both general and special education teachers and community members connected with preschool education in New Jersey (Brillante & Vaughn, 2009).

In spite of the reports of New Jersey's snail pace in shifting toward inclusive practices in every grade, regardless of a school's location, it is likely that all general education teachers will encounter some disabled students in their classrooms. Teacher education programs that are committed to preparing teachers for cultural competence ought to recognize that the implications for teaching general education students and special education students will be complex and involve goals for both educational and social success. One recent example of teacher education programs recognizing the need to be prepared for social issues affecting the success of all students is anti-bullying training.

In 2011, New Jersey Governor Christie signed the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights, requiring all New Jersey schools to establish a system-wide bullying prevention program. In addition, all teacher candidates are required to complete a program on harassment, intimidation and bullying prevention. Disability harassment, identified as a form of both bullying and teasing   that is based on or because of a disability (Education Law Center, 2002), is illegal under Section 504 of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Studies indicate a high incidence (Dawkins, 1996; Holzbauer, 2008; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993;Unnever & Cornell, 2003) and negative effects (Holzbauer, 2008; Hugh-

Jones & Smith, 1999; Yude, Goodman & McConachie, 1998) of bullying among children and youth with disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Education (1999) recognizes that "creating a supportive school climate is the most important step in preventing harassment" (p.8) At the very least, this suggests that teachers ought to develop the dispositions, skills and knowledge to competently facilitate positive relationships between general and special education students. By the same token, the overwhelming number of students with disabilities educated in public schools indicates a necessity for addressing disability as an important category for equality and social justice.

Teacher Education

Like many other scholars in disability studies, I advocate that students with and without disabilities will benefit when the words and actions of the teacher authorizes a critical examination of the topic of disability. Consequently, when an open discourse is present in the classroom students with disabilities are supported and encouraged to become self-advocates, students without disabilities gain new knowledge about disability and their fellow classmates, and the teacher develops a deeper understanding of the backgrounds and knowledge of all the students in the class. It is within this sort of supportive classroom environment that respect for difference is highlighted and harassment can be prevented. Additionally it is within such a context that equitable relationships are formed and opportunities to dialogue about and challenge deficit discourses become possible.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) professional standard on diversity expects that teacher preparation programs will include

curriculum, field work and clinical practice to promote candidate development of

knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions related to diversity (NCATE, 2008). It is

a commonly held belief that all teachers need to develop cultural competence in order to

teach students with backgrounds different from their own (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll,

Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & McDonald, 2005). Gudykunst

and Kim (1984) definition of a person who is considered cross-culturally competent is

[one] who has achieved an advanced level in the process of becoming intercultural and
whose cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics are not limited but are open to
growth beyond the psychological parameters of only one culture ....The intercultural
person possesses an intellectual and emotional commitment to the fundamental unity of
all humans and, at the same time, accepts and appreciates the differences that lie between
people of different cultures" (cited in McAllister & Irvine, 2000, p.4).

Although NCATE frames diversity through a liberal intercultural lens, the

literature on multicultural education is often nested within a variety of theoretical

frameworks, appearing in a spectrum represented by conservative, liberal, and critical

orientations. (Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001). Within any group of pre-service teachers, the

orientation towards addressing diversity falls somewhere within this continuum. On the

one end, there is the conservative belief in success for all that favors cultural

homogeneity within a standardized education, followed by a liberal belief in the value of

celebration or appreciation of cultural groups, followed by an affirming critical political

perspective at the opposite end (Villegas, 2002). The orientation of the teacher education

program can influence and contribute to how pre-service teachers conceptualize culture

and difference.

A critical issue in the specific preparation of early childhood teachers is how four

year institutions prepare early childhood teachers to effectively teach *all* children (Ray,

Bowman, & Robbins, 2006). Despite a reported shift towards inclusive classroom settings, teachers in this study reported little training and experience in teaching students with disabilities (Ray, et al., 2006; Ryan & Lobman, 2008). This supports the findings of a national study of 226 four-year institutions of early childhood teacher preparation programs, which reported that the lack of coursework and fieldwork involving "diversity content" was dismal (Ray, et al., 2006). In addition to a lack of understanding of best practices, teachers reported feeling uncomfortable communicating with students with disabilities and often maintained stereotypical views of what students with disabilities can do and not do (Norman, Caseau,& Stefanich, 1998).

Often my pre-service teachers will make comments that indicate a blindness towards diversity. Assuming the role of the conservative teacher, they believe that all students can succeed in school and life, so long as they work hard. This is reinforced by a teacher preparation approach that establishes a normative curriculum and that trains teachers to identify students who do not fit its developmental framework. Children who do not fit the officially sanctioned consensus of normal development are reduced to remedial projects and are often not seen as fully capable when compared to their normal peers (Heydon & Iannacci,2008; McNaughton, 2005) . Lacking faith in students' abilities to achieve, teachers are then more likely to form low academic expectations and ultimately treat them in ways that stifle their learning (Villegas, 2002). This especially true with disabled students whose "deficits" make it difficult for teachers to assume high expectations and where efforts to fix their deficiencies take the form of segregated pull-out programs and instruction is based on remediation and drill.

In addition, in regards to disabled students, the issue of high expectations may not be enough to counter the discourse of special education. Even in cases of liberal teachers who celebrate difference with the "intent of establishing acceptance, mutual respect and friendships among their members (Jenks, et al, p. 93), talking about disability is not an easy undertaking (Ware, 2001). Furthermore, when teachers are uncomfortable with conversations about children's backgrounds, a safe, respectful environment is unlikely to happen. Yet, it is through dialogue in classroom communities that learners are given the opportunity to engage in meaning making and participants' understandings of each other are broadened (Villegas, 2002).

I propose that teaching pre-service teachers about the importance of intercultural understandings of each other is admirable and worthwhile and meets the liberal intent of the standard on diversity set out by NCATE (2008) and the NAEYC standards for early childhood professional preparation programs (2011). However when a liberal consciousness of difference is contemplated on its own, it does not address teaching as a political activity. Geneva Gay (2005) proposed that when classrooms are deemed safe spaces "genuine interethnic group dialogues, courageous conversations about race and racism, and critical analyses of social injustices to prepare teachers to conduct similar instruction in PreK-12 classrooms" becomes possible. In its standards for four-year teacher preparation programs, NAEYC's (2011) current definition of culture includes: "ethnicity, racial identity, economic class, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs, which profoundly influence each child's development and relationship to the world". Following other scholars who embrace a cultural approach to disability (McDermott & Vareene, 1995; Ware, 2001), I suggest that in the preparation of pre-

service teachers, the topic of disability as a cultural marker needs to also be included.

Within this cultural orientation pre-service teachers might be given opportunities to

become more knowledgeable about social inequity and how power maintains a deficit

discourse about disability. As Gay suggests, with the goal of "similar instruction in

PreK-12 classrooms".

Pre-service teachers committed to deconstructing the dominant discourse of

disability ought to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs to support the

development of students with disabilities. In order to do so, teacher candidates have to

become comfortable with the topic of disability so that they can talk with their own

students. Adding a Disability Studies approach to the teacher education program furthers

the potential of these kinds of promising conversations. As stated earlier, Disability

Studies includes an education research agenda that refocuses disability as an important

subject for critically examining power and equity issues. As a discipline, it proposes a

critical approach, and unpacks and examines the taken for granted assumptions regarding

disability texts, public policies and the lived experiences of people who belong to

categories that define a disability group.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy can be traced back to the work of Paulo Freire and his work with

Brazilian peasants who recognized their oppression and used literacy learning as a means

of empowerment (Freire, 1970/2000). Freire believed that in order to "dream of a new

society against the power now in power" (Shor, 1999, p. 1) it is not enough to be literate,

to "read the word" ; but rather through the formation of a critical consciousness (known

as conscientization) people must also learn to become critically literate, meaning they

"read the world" around them. From this perspective, "[w]hen we become critically literate, we examine our ongoing development, to reveal the subjective positions from which we make sense of the world and act in it" (Shor, 1999, p. 2). For teachers and students, it is this deeper understanding of the world and awareness of subjectivity that leads to action against inequities that are maintained through dominant discourses that are established as natural and true.

Freire (1970) asserted that conscientization could become possible through dialogue with others mediated by reflection and within a problem posing pedagogy. One way for both pre-service teachers and students to begin to pose critical questions about disability is by using children's literature with a disability theme. Pre-service teachers are being educated to view children's literature as valuable tools in the early childhood curriculum. As such, children's books are an easily accessible material and widely available in all early childhood classrooms. Literature can serve many useful purposes: as a jumping off point for content area learning as well as a tool that represents and allows exploration of diversity and equity topics.

By applying critical literacy, children's literature can become a catalyst for opening up discourse in a manner that challenges the deficit perspectives of people with disabilities. According to disability studies scholar Linda Ware (2001), "[t]he cultural analyses emerging from disability studies scholarship offer challenging theoretical insights for educators to examine societal attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and more fundamentally, the lived experiences of disability" (p.111). By way of the stories of disabled people, disability studies advocates have laid the groundwork to support the efforts of educators who opt to take understand disability through a social models lens.

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Applying critical literacy methods to children's literature that includes disabled characters in its texts and illustrations can pose prospective opportunities for pre-service teachers and able-bodied and disabled students to examine their beliefs and assumptions about disability.

In this study, I chose to analyze the disability discourses of ten pre-service teachers in one general education methods course as they prepared lesson plans that included children's literature with a disability theme. As part of this lesson plan assignment, critical literacy was used as a pedagogical tool in the university classroom, and in turn in the early childhood classroom by the pre-service teachers.

Purpose and Research Questions

My own early experiences thinking about how to include "handicapped" children in the "regular" preschool classroom was often focused on how to include all children and often ran counter to the mainstream notion of a segregated, specialized programming for disabled children. When my own son was born, our family's immersion with disability authorities only focused on solutions to his limitations and human incapacity. The dominant discourse of these authorities embraced a medical perspective and rarely saw his differences as variations of what it means to be human. As a doctoral student I developed a critical perspective and began to understand how through language and actions, teachers can choose either to become agents of change or can perpetuate the discourses maintained by the status quo of the dominant culture. As one way to encourage conversations about difference and equity and support pre-service teachers towards social action, I began to integrate a critical literacy approach in my lessons.

As stated earlier, children's literature is a commodity that can be readily available in the early childhood classroom. In her reference to multicultural literature, Ching (2005) categorizes literature by "differentiating between works that focus primarily on pluralism and works that embody both pluralism and power" (p.132). While those that focus on pluralism encourage a warm, fuzzy human relations approach, those that embody pluralism and power "foreground the ways in which power, race, and culture produce equity and inequity in society" (p.132). The latter sanctions a critical literacy approach and challenges the reader to explore and act upon issues of power at the root of social inequities.

It is proposed that by applying critical literacy to children's literature, pre-service teachers can be given an opportunity to move beyond "mere awareness of, and respect for, and general recognition of the fact that different groups have different values or express values in various ways" (Gay, 2002, p. 107). Through critical readings of children's literature, reflection and discussion, pre-service teachers may gain new knowledge, develop a conscious awareness of their own stereotypes and assumptions and begin to recognize the social mechanisms that limit possibilities for diverse groups including the disabled. In turn, critical literacy is a tool that teachers can use to examine texts and welcome conversations about disability with young children.

Drawing from the works of Michel Foucault, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe the disability discourses of ten pre-service teachers in one general education methods course. This study resulted in rich descriptions of disability discourses through the conversations and writings of these pre-service teachers as they prepared, taught and reflected upon lessons with a disability theme. The central concept of

disability discourse was explicated through the words and actions of the pre-service

teachers. My exploration included how the pre-service teachers framed disability, the

language they used, and how classroom conversations and assignments influenced their

feelings of confidence and their ability to incorporate the disability literature into their

lesson planning. Based on this purpose and utilizing a critical stance, the following

questions guided this study:

1.   How do pre-service teachers position disability during classroom discussions ?

What are their discourses, omissions and silences ?

2.   How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-

semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional

disability discourses ?

3.   How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lessons

designed for early childhood students that incorporate children's literature with a

disability topic?

Significance of the Study

Louise Derman-Sparks (1989; 2010) can be credited for her seminal work, *The*

Anti-Bias Curriculum, a popular text in early childhood programs. Early on, in this 1989

text she touted the need for an activist approach to teaching.

> An active/activist approach to challenge prejudice, stereotyping, biases, and the "isms" in a society in which institutional structures create and maintain sexism, racism, and handicappism, it is not sufficient to be non-biased (and also highly unlikely), nor is it sufficient to be an observer. It is necessary for each individual to intervene, to challenge and to counter the personal and institutional behaviors that perpetuate oppression…People in the United States are still grappling with racism, sexism, homophobia, and handicappism (pp.3-4).

While the language in her newly edited 2010 edition replaces the word "handicappism" with more current language and definitions, such as abelism, abelist and disability, I believe the circumstances regarding her message remain the same. Teachers are still among the people who grapple with "handicappism".

In reviewing the literature for early childhood education, I found a shift how disability has been addressed. Overall, disability as a topic of diversity has been included in the text and illustrations of more textbooks and recognized early childhood publications over time (DEC/NAEYC, 2009; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; NAEYC, 2010). These texts have included disability as a matter of pluralism or viewed disability through a critical lens. Despite the shift in the industry to include disability as a diversity topic in early childhood teacher preparation texts, general education pre-service teachers still report a lack of knowledge about how to teach children with disabilities and are uncomfortable about having conversations about disability (Ray & Robbins, 2006; Mutua &Smith, 2006). With respect to these problems, this study is significant as it explored one approach to address this lack of knowledge and discomfort in order to better prepare pre service teachers to teach disabled students and to include disability topics in their lesson plans.

In general, I found there is a lack of early childhood education literature that focused specifically on addressing the topic of disability as a cultural issue with teachers. Disability studies activist, Linda Ware (2001) has done recent research in the field of disability studies, though her work focuses on high school teachers and their students. In the early childhood curriculum, I did find teacher-researcher studies of exploring other equity issues such as race and homelessness with young children (Leland,

Harste, & Huber ,2005; Lewison, Flint, &Van Sluys, 2002; Rogers & Mosley ,2006).

Though not situated in the disability studies literature, Marianna Souto-Mannings's

(2009) teacher-action research of first graders who problematize segregation is one of

very few exceptions of research in early childhood education. In her study, young

students pose what is fair when students must attend a pull-out program with special

education services. In my review of the literature, I was unable to find any studies that

examined using a disability studies or critical literacy approach to address disability

issues in the early childhood classroom. This research study of the disability discourses

of pre-service teachers as they engaged in one critical literacy assignment fills an

important gap in disability studies scholarship.

By designing this case study to examine the disability language and discourses of

pre-service teachers as they explored children's literature with a disability theme, I

analyzed their assumptions and understandings of disability, and studied the development

of their consciousness around the topic of disability. My intention, as an instructor was to

create a classroom environment that opened up conversations about disability and to

engage pre-service teachers in disability studies activities that presented opportunities to

examine how disabled persons are positioned, with the goal of disrupting a mainstream

deficit disability discourse. The application of critical literacy to children's literature with

a disability theme was identified as one way for pre-service teachers to become more

conscious about their knowledge and feelings about disability. In turn, children's

literature provided a viable tool for designing lessons and having important conversations

with young children about disability. Researchers, teacher educators, as well as teachers

interested in a disability studies orientation within the context of early childhood

education will find this study of interest.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

> There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think
> differently than one thinks and perceive differently than one sees is
> absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all
> (Foucault, 1985, pp. 8-9).

The topic of disability permeates every day public discourse, from recent

linguistic adjustments to current legislation, to inclusive and non-inclusive practices in

public schools. Within the field of education, a great majority of the conversations on

disability involve children, especially those who have been "classified" and therefore

deemed "eligible" for special education services. Although much of the discussion has

centered on disabled children and their families, disability discourse covers a wider

umbrella of social meanings for all children.

This literature review will establish theoretical, empirical, and practical contexts

for my study. The first section of this literature review explores two prominent disability

models: the medical model and the social model and gives a brief overview of prominent

literature in the discussion of disability equity issues. In the second section, I included

Foucault's explanation of   knowledge and power, that I chose as a guide to explain

disability discourses within these two models in public schools and teacher education.

How the discipline of special education and the principles of developmentally appropriate

practices (DAP) contribute to a medical perspective of disability is examined. Next, I

provide empirical evidence and practical examples of how with the application of

disability studies in public school classrooms and within teacher education can present

possibilities to understand disability within a social model perspective. Tied to these

possibilities to reimagine disability is a commitment to a critical pedagogy. In the final

section of this review, literature related to a critical pedagogy, including the utilization of

a critical literacy approach with pre-service teachers and students is included. The review

of literature presented here provides the foundation for understanding disability from

social and medical model perspectives, with disability studies and teacher education as

central points in my research. I begin with a brief overview of the two predominant

models of disability- the medical model and the social model and an overview of well-

known equity issues of disabled people.

Medical Model of Disability

For purposes of nondiscrimination laws, a person with a disability is generally
defined as someone who (1) has a physical or medical impairment that
substantially limits one or more "major life activities", (2) has a record of such an
impairment, or (3) is regarded as having an impairment. (Americans with
Disabilities Act, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Section 188 of
the Workforce Investment Act).

Also referred to as the functional limitations model or rehabilitative model, the

medical model of disability depends on the biology of the individual and focuses on

impairment. In contrast to the ideal of what is normal, "disability is used to refer to

limitations resulting from dysfunction in individual bodies and minds" (Ingstad & Whyte,

1995, p. 3). Basically, the medical model "frames disability as a condition of biophysical

essence and origin that renders an individual unable to perform expected, valued, or

typical human activities" (Danforth, 2001, p. 349). As such, disability, viewed as an

individual phenomenon of psychological, physical, or behavioral deficit, is the dominant

discourse within special education law, research, teacher preparation and day-to-day

school activities. (Danforth, 2001).

In the United States, PL 94-142, the original 1975 Education of All Handicapped

Children Act is one example of the medical model of disability. Renamed the Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, IDEA is a federal law that for the

purposes of special education programs groups disabled children (from birth to age 21)

according to 14 categories of physical, mental and social impairment that represent the

eligibility requirements for federal and state rehabilitative services. Within this

framework the message is that the identified defects lodged in a person must somehow be

cured, or eliminated, or fixed if the person is to achieve a full capacity as a human being

(Siebers, 2008). With emphasis on a clinical diagnosis of dysfunction, the medical model

is the dominant discourse in university textbooks and classrooms that prepare American

special education teachers. Along these lines, "the socialization of a teacher into the

special education profession begins with the introduction to, induction into and

acquisition of the special education language", often managed "by taking a special

education introductory course, often a 'disability-a-week' type course" where students

learn the disability language and terminology, that is "the labels with which to describe

[future] disabled students" (Mutua & Smith, 2006, p.125).

Another example of the medical model of disability is found in general teacher

preparation programs designed for early childhood education. Composed by the National

Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the leading professional

organization for early childhood education and teacher preparation, the principles of DAP

have become an established professional truth for thinking about children and their

development (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997/2009) . This truth is

authorized by the scientific knowledge of the field of developmental psychology that

provides a systematic lifetime perspective of the growth and development of human

beings. When applied in concert with special education, developmental principles

authorize the acts of labeling and sorting of early childhood children according to universal truths that constitute normal development. DAP principles are widely-disseminated in early childhood teacher preparation programs, and left unexamined sanction a medical model perspective of disabled children (Lubeck, 1998; McNaughton, 2005).

Social Model of Disability

Disability: The loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others, due to physical or social barriers (Disabled Peoples' International, 2010).

The social model of disability is informed by a socio-political approach and has been referred to as the minority model of disability. This model does not view impairment or disability as something to be cured or avoided. Rather social meanings, symbols, and stigma attached to disability identity and enforced by systems of exclusion and oppression are questioned and interrogated. Mike Oliver, a disabled scholar and activist is credited for naming the social model of disability. Oliver (1990) argues that when disabled people are observed through the lens of a "personal tragedy theory of disability" they are perceived as unfortunate, wretched victims. Instead, he reasons that disability should be defined in terms of social oppression; and advocates should demand remedies and public policies to counteract barriers created by prejudice and an unjust built environment.

In my review of the literature, there were countless examples of how the medical model of disability operates in public schools and teacher education. Few examples illustrated the social model in action; Linda Ware (2001) and Mutua and Smith (2006) exemplify the exceptions in their application of a disability studies approach. Linda

Ware's (2001) teacher action research is a good example of "doing disability studies". Later in this review, I will provide more details on her partnership with a high school language arts teacher and the curriculum unit they created for a humanities-based disability-studies curriculum, named *Writing, Identity and the Other*. Special education researchers, Mutua and Smith's studies inform teacher education of the practical concerns of pre-service and in-service teachers.

Realizing the difficulties encountered by special education teachers who "are still employed as agents of an oppressive system of institutionalized ableism", Mutua and Smith (2006) advocate that "more and more teachers and policy makers must be willing and able to subvert (as opposed to reform) the system" (Mutua & Smith, 2006, pp. 129-130). They offer the following examples of what can happen within the context of a social model of disability in schools. A typical idea in inclusion in public schools is the advocacy of reciprocal relationships among disabled and non-disabled people. One common example is the helper –helpee relationship with the disabled student as the "tutee or receiver of support". Though this buddy system is a familiar event, its effect is often an uneven power relationship that maintains a mainstream discourse of the disabled student as useless. Disrupting this typical power relationship, by creating situations with reciprocal value added for both is recommended.

Another significant special education issue is how to "deal with behaviors". Mutua and Smith advocate that teachers subvert established rigid behavior techniques rooted in behaviorism, such as point systems and filling the jar with marbles to indicate "good behavior", and instead, to relate to student as human beings. With a radical shift towards a humanistic disabilities approach in mind, Mutua and Smith (2006) claim

"instances of subversion are few and far between" and propose " marrying special

education and disability studies" as a solution to disrupt the "well-known and well-

adhered to procedures and traditions" (p. 131).

Historical Context of Equity Issues

In spite of the official public statements of full inclusion of disabled people, the

systematic exclusion of disabled people is a stark reality. Exclusion follows a long history

of stigma, an unexamined consequence of sorting and labeling disabled people. Public

schools reproduce these acts of exclusion and perpetuate a discourse of categorization

and abnormality from the standpoint of a medical model. These medical discourses are

powerful and the inequities associated with disability issues remain unchallenged in

public schools. In this next section, I review the literature related to stigma and labeling

theory, in order to provide a historical context of disability, a key aspect of this study.

Visible and Invisible

In the past four decades, many legislative initiatives in the United States have

been put into practice, with the apparent goal of social equality and full participation for

disabled people in all aspects of society. The results of these legislative efforts have been

an increased visibility, with attention directed to "equal rights" for the disabled.

Irrespective of disability legislation, there still exists a significant gap between the

official public statements on full participation and inclusion of disabled people and the

reality faced by disabled people. Articulating the benefits of a social model of disability,

early on, activist McMurtrie (1919) asserts that "the greatest handicap is not a loss of a

limb or other disability but the weight of public opinion" (p. 26), which include

encounters with disconcerted non-disabled people, low expectations, limited employment

options, housing discrimination, lack of financial or personal assistance, an inaccessible

environment, or limited educational opportunities, to name the most obvious.

Although disability has become a contemporary topic in legislation and the

media- for example, the removal of the "R word" campaign, retarded being considered a

derogatory term and other selected media reports of charity such as television shows like

Extreme Makeover-Home Edition that aim to help others overcome disability by way of a

new home (Roney, 2007), the authentic lived stories of the disabled are essentially

invisible from mainstream society. Ware (2001) argues that, "[a]t large, policies and

practices that have a direct impact on the material reality of living with a disability are

rarely examined by society as many believe that disabled people already won their rights"

(p.108) In the case of special education law, though created in response to the civil rights

advocacy efforts of disabled people, federal and state classifications equated to

impairment and disabled bodies prove to be a powerful structure in the positioning of

disabled people. In public schools, the policies and practices of special education,

designed to include disabled students have in fact created an unequal and inequitable

system that positions students through the lens of a medical model. According to Kelly

Oliver (2001), "many contemporary theorists of society and culture talk about power in

terms of visibility. To be empowered is to be visible, to be disempowered is to be

rendered invisible. To be recognized is to be visible, to be misrecognized or not

recognized is to be rendered invisible" (p. 11). The sociological theories of labeling and

stigma provide a key to understanding how disabled people, are rendered as both visible

and invisible to society.

Labeling theory

Focusing attention on labeling theory allows us to notice how society creates "outsiders" by labeling certain people as "deviants". Labeling theory emphasizes the linguistic tendency of the masses to negatively label those who deviate from the norm. According to this theory, the self-identity and behavior of individuals is self-determined or influenced according to the terms used to describe or classify them. As Becker (1963) wrote:

> …social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act a person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label. (cited in Taylor, 2006, p. xiv).

Labeling theory is often applied to disabled people. Bogdan and Bilken (1977) coined the term "handicapism" to describe the widespread prejudice and discrimination against people with disabilities based on their labels. In Taylor's (2006) study of the historical roots of disability studies in education, the role of labeling and stigma in the construction of disability in schools is well recognized. In 1969, the President's Committee on Mental Retardation and the U.S. Bureau of the Handicapped sponsored a conference, resulting in a report titled *The Six-Hour Retarded Child*. The report showed that many children, especially those from minority groups, were only "retarded" during school hours and functioned perfectly well at home and in their communities (Taylor, p. xvii). In the 1970's Hobbs published a major two volume edited series titled *Issues in the Classification of Children*, examining the labeling of children by schools and other social institutions. (Taylor, p. xviii).

There is a long history of evidence that minority and low-income children are being classified as disabled and placed in segregated special education classes at a greater rate than White, middle class children. Mercer's (1973) seminal work, *Labeling the Mentally Retarded* is highly regarded for bringing attention to this phenomenon. Mercer found that African American children, who performed competently in their homes and neighborhoods, still had IQ scores low enough to be labeled and treated as mentally retarded. Reinforcing earlier works on the "six-hour-a- day retarded child", Mercer's work challenged the use of psychological and academic achievement tests in public schools and questioned the validity and fairness of IQ tests.

Sleeter's (1987, 2010) critical analysis of the category of learning disabilities makes a significant contribution to understanding why more minority and low-income children are placed in segregated special education classrooms. In *Why Is There Learning Disabilities?: A Critical Analysis of the Birth of the Field In Its Social Context*, Sleeter (1987) explains:

> The category was created by white middle class parents in an effort to differentiate their children from low-achieving, low-income and minority children. The category offered their children a degree of protection from probable consequences of low achievement because it upheld their intellectual normalcy and the normalcy of their home backgrounds, and it suggested hope for a cure and for their ability eventually to attain higher status occupations than other low achievers (p. 210).

Therefore, defined as an organically based disorder that interferes with their ability to learn to read and write normally, Sleeter proposed that learning disabilities emerged in opposition to the label of mentally retarded. Thus, in time, the categories of eligibility in special education became finely differentiated and ranked, such that a hierarchy of "deviance" was established.

Within this hierarchy, the label of mentally retarded placed at the bottom level. When a child's difficulties were attributed to mental retardation, it meant that a child had a known organic disorder, an IQ of 70 or below or fit into the category of "cultural-familial retardates". Mostly represented by low- income and minority families, "cultural retardates" were believed to be the unfortunate results of physical and cultural deprivation and malnourishment, fueled by familial apathy or the lack of understanding of how schools work. Given this definition, it soon became "apparent" to educators, that contained in the category of mentally retarded were the unfortunate victims of "underprivileged" environments. It was believed that by providing "diagnosis and treatment for the ailments that "cause; widespread economic and social failure" (Danforth, 2006, p. 86), some children could be "fixed", but the outcomes for other retardates held little potential in the marketplace. This distinction generated definitions of "children's needs" based on more labels: educable, trainable, or profoundly mentally retarded. On the basis of these labels, children were segregated to self-contained classes and schools, according to their predicted capacity. This is just one of many examples of how the profession of special education perpetuates a positivist discourse, contrary to a social approach.

"By framing itself through a medicalized language and clinical purpose, the [special education] profession has generally avoided a substantial critique of the broader social conditions and political arrangements that create and maintain the 'disabled' students and their families". (Ware, 2001 cited in Danforth, 2006, p.86). Using an analytical approach that is similar to that of critical race theorists, disability scholars have brought attention to how special education has failed to examine the underlying social

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structures and processes that contribute to the failure of disabled students. In the 1960's , after Sputnik, more positivist approaches to education were pursued as the United States focused on raising standards in reading and math, and tests were revised to reflect the standards considered important to global competition. Consequently, "[a]bility grouping and tracking were implemented with vigor, and the raised standards were used to assign[all] students to groups" (Sleeter, 1987, p.214). Popular magazines informed and worried parents that "low group children were destined for unskilled labor, and might be deprived of the better teachers" (Sleeter, 1987, p. 219). An example of the contemporary story of testing and diagnosis continues to be carried on by the No Child Left Behind Act, which carries on the plot of blame for failure in the individual stories of teachers, students, and parents.

Stigma

Erving Goffman is credited for his work on the "spoiled identity" of which stigma is socially constructed. Goffman (1963) explains "[s]ociety establishes the means of categorizing people and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories". Accordingly when a stranger enters our presence, we lean on certain "anticipations" which are transformed into "normative expectations, into righteously presented demands" (p.2). According to Goffman,

> Typically, we do not become aware that we have made these demands or aware of what they are until an active question arises as to whether or not they will be fulfilled. It is then that we are likely to realize that along the way we had been making certain assumptions as to what the individual before us ought to be…While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind- in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a

stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes this is also called a failure, a shortcoming, a handicap. It constitutes a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity (Goffman, 1963, p. 2)

In his edited collection, *Stigma: The Experiences of Disability*, activist and writer

Paul Hunt (1966) challenges the ways that an able- bodied society systematically

devalues disabled individuals. Hunt observes how the happiness of disabled people is

perceived by "ordinary society" as acts of "exceptional courage" (p. 3). According to

Abberly (1992) when industrialized societies associate impairments with "abnormality",

disabled people are further prevented from being valued as potentially productive

workers. Understood as useless within a market economy, it is believed that disabled

people place an unfair drain on society's resources. Hunt (1966) questions the value of

disabled people and the position of disabled people as useless.

An "aspect of our special position in society is that we are often useless, unable to contribute to the economic good of the community. As such, again we cannot help posting questions of values, about what a person is, what he is for, about whether his work is the ultimate criteria of his worth, whether work in everyday sense of the word is the most important or the only contribution anyone can make to society (p. 6).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that educational institutions have used the

concepts of intelligence and ability to legitimate racial, gendered, and class inequalities in

both schools as well as society at large. Nirmala Erevelles (2000) suggests this implies

there is a relationship between the category of disability and other categories of social

difference such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. Extending Bowles and Gintis'

(1976) critique of capitalist education to include disability, Erevelles argues that it is this

materialist analysis of the projected economic success or failure of students' inclusion in

a market economy that fueled the creation of two separate and unequal educational

systems- general education and special education. In the everyday functioning of public

schools students are sorted into general education and special education categories, with vigilant attention paid to placement and designation of disabled students to defined special education locations. This sorting and positioning of students is carried out through "the institutionalization of a complex array of evaluation strategies used to predict the productive capacity of future workers" (Erevelles, 2005b, p. 433). Erevelles concludes the following outcomes, "[d]epending on the severity of their disability, the skills learned in these segregated special education classes have allowed a few disabled people to be employed in jobs located at the lowest rungs of the social division of labor, while many more swell the ranks of the permanently unemployed, dependent on the welfare state for their daily survival" (p.444)

Bowles and Gintis portray "school culture" as a static space within the hierarchies embedded in public school, and depict both teachers and students as passive participants in the reproduction process. (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). According to Erevelles (2000), "critical theorists of education have recently (re)understood culture as a discursive space that involves asymmetrical relations of power where both dominant and subordinate groups are engaged in struggles over the production, legitimation, and circulation of certain forms of meaning and experience"(p. 15). Contemporary critical theorists have begun to explore how through everyday actions, marginalized students and teachers have opposed hegemonic dictates of class, gender, and sexuality and have become critical agents of change around equity issues. Noticeably deficient in the literature are the stories of teachers and students as oppositional subjects or agents of change around equity issues of disability.

As an emerging field, (DSE) sets as one of its goals to promote understandings of disability as a function of ordinary human variation and the meanings attributed to these variations, while shifting the focus of attention from the individual to the interaction between individual and society (Reid & Valle ,2005, p. 152). Although DSE holds promise to teachers and students who recognize the inequities assigned to the practices and dialogue of disability in public schools, there are concerns about the "lack of conversations between theory and practice" (Gabel, 2005, p. 16). In *Disability Studies and Education*, Gabel (2005) notes that disability studies is " too focused on theory and too unconcerned about practice" . Further, she identifies the need " to observe and learn from teachers who are practicing liberatory pedagogy and who can work together to translate social interpretations into practice" (p. 16). In the next section, I chose to use Foucault's explanation of knowledge and power as a guide to explore how disability practices and discourses actually play out in public schools. This is followed by empirical evidence and practical examples of the application of disability studies with students and teachers and within teacher education.

Disability Discourse

Foucault (1972) understood discourse as a body of thinking and writing that used shared language for talking about a topic, shared concepts for understanding it and shared methods for examining it. The shared language, concepts and methods are found in everyday practices and decision-making procedures and in diverse institutional texts, practices and decision-making processes in different societies and different times (cited in McNaughton, 2005, p. 20).

Recent disability studies scholarship and research has scrutinized disability through a cultural lens. Within a socio-cultural framework, "ability" and "disability", "normal" and "abnormal" are not formed by objective facts, but are constructed through

existing socio-cultural interactions and their discourses (Peter, Klein, & Shadwick, 1998).

Ingstad and Whyte (1995) bring attention to the paradox constructed by Western

discourses on disability. Existing in- and created by- a framework of state, legal,

economic and biomedical institutions, disability is therefore defined and ordered

according to criteria and severity. As a result, people are marked as "infirmates" for the

seemingly political purpose of fair distribution of entitlements (i.e. financial and

educational supports) necessary to foster equality in society. This assumption of

equality-understood as sameness or similarity- is a fundamental theme in the

contemporary Western discourse on disability (Ingstad & Whyte, 1995, p. 8).

Foucault

To grapple with the construction of disability discourse, I turn to the works of the

French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault's analysis of how human beings were

defined began with the categorization of people into "normal" and "abnormal". In the

late 1970s and early 1980s , Foucault elaborated the links among the production of

knowledge, the exercise of power and their effects in everyday life (McNaughton, 2005,

p. 22). Foucault believed that knowledge was power, but doubted there was any

knowledge of absolute truth. Instead, all knowledge is "culturally prejudiced" (Danaher,

Schirato, & Webb, 2000, p. 2) and is therefore partial, situated and local. For instance, if

disability is partial, situated, local knowledge, then it cannot be applied to all disabled

people at all times. For Foucault, power was seen as

> a battle to authorize the truth, because truths don't just happen, they are produced
> in our struggle to decide the meanings of our actions, thoughts and feelings. More
> specifically, power is a relationship of struggle over how we use truths and build
> discourses about normality to produce and regulate ourselves (e.g. our bodies,

desires, and texts), our relationships and our institutions, especially our production of normality (Alvesson,,2002, cited in McNaughton, 2005, p. 27).

This struggle plays out in bodies of knowledge, organized by specialists who work together to establish their fields and their dominant ideas and discourses. In time, Foucault observed that these technical fields had increasing power over people, and these discourses shaped the structure of society (Fillingham, 2007, p. 101). Predominantly these discourses attempted to define, categorize, classify and organize people and generated a set of truths about what is normal and what is not (McNaughton, 2005, p. 27).

Foucault analyzed genealogies of discursive knowledge as an avenue to critically examine phenonmena that many of us regard as expected and inevitable. By examining how power/knowledge operates within the context of time and place, the forces that shape discourses become more clearly defined. In his studies on madhouses and prisons, Foucault went on to study the historical and social conditions of the emergence of discourses and their relationship to institutional powers (Kenway, p. 173). Foucault's discussions of how discourses are enacted via the institutional systems of power/knowledge relations have extended to include the practices of schools, hospitals and armed forces.

Traditional disability discourses in schools

In public schools the technical field of special education parcels the dominant set of truths about disability and the subsequent "rules", carrying out Becker's argument (mentioned earlier) concerning the creation of "deviance" and "the rules whose infractions constitute deviance". Foucault's genealogical work brought to light how discourses come from two sites of "subjugated knowledge", from above" (institutional

discourses, "expert" knowledge produced *about* rather than *by* people labeled as disabled) and by means of people who have been disqualified and marginalized "subjugated knowledge" (a particular, local knowledge of disabled people) (Carlson, 2005, p.133). As disabled disability scholars, Mutua and Smith bring to our attention, "[t]oday, there are few "experts" who are themselves disabled and therefore the knowledge that permeates, informs and regulates special education practice is based upon etic or outsider conceptions of what is best for disabled students" (Mutua & Smith, 2006, p. 129).

Foucault suggests that in modern society the behavior of individuals and groups is pervasively controlled through standards of normality that are disseminated by a range of assessing, diagnostic, prognostic and normative knowledges. It is within the knowledge and power of the field of special education, shaped by the medical model of disability and operationalized through testing, diagnosing, labeling and the writing and execution of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that truths are formed, the rules applied and the discursive practices and discourses of teachers and students are shaped. It is within this highly specialized field of special education that the unacknowledged imposition of institutional power over people categorized as abnormal has been appropriately applied to disability and the institution of schools.

While under the guise of creating an equitable and just education for all its students, including students who fit the category of "spoiled self", through labeling and defining the conditions and environment of their education (often a restrictive framed within the legal framework of "least restrictive" (Mutua & Smith, 2005, p.127), stigma is attached. As many schools assume the posture of serving many students from diverse backgrounds, it is through this highly acceptable act of sorting, ranking and categorizing

based on psychological and standardized testing that schools are able to systematically and legally segregate students, thus subjugating them to authoritative and behaviorist modes of teaching and learning.

Foucault's studies are founded on a historical investigation of how the discourses of abnormality change over time. These provide a good model for considering the historical philosophical underpinnings of disability studies in education which uncovers how, over time, multiple discourses operationalize in public schools. In education, the "common sense" ideas about disability are founded on cultural knowledge and attitudes transmitted through cultural practices. According to Foucault, such "common sense" notions develop in response to discursive "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). In the case of disability discourse in public schools, the language and practices of special education, functions to create and maintain the "disabled subject" (Rice, 2006, p. 19).

As the system of special education became more sophisticated in the methods for sorting disabled subjects through classification, disability became increasingly "visible". According to Foucault (2007), this visibility led to power on an increasingly individual level. For example, in the everyday behaviors and words of teachers and specialists, we have come to understand the "acceptable" mainstream language and meanings attached to a child who is positioned as "very autistic" or if he is more fortunate, a child located on the "lower spectrum of autism". Yet as Jean Wong (2010) points out, [l]abels, which in essence name students' inabilities, offer little guidance for educators, in fact, they may influence teachers to unintentionally or inadvertently set limits on the learning opportunities for these students (p.13).

Additionally teachers are socialized in specialized fields of education, wherein their roles are defined. Major educational issues, such as accountability and low test scores, are prominent in the socialization of both special education and general education teachers. Efforts initiated by the No Child Left Behind legislation have brought to the foreground concerns about the low-achievement of working class and poor students of all races or ethnicities. While these concerns involve complicated social and educational issues involving race/ethnicity, social class, nationality, language, gender, and schooling practices (Danforth, 2006, p. 79), the scientific discourse of education (Cannella, 1999)and the deficit notion of disability has reduced these concerns into a single problem for both general and special education teachers.

In the training of general education teachers, rather than recognize the multiple ways that students are positioned in the classroom, a singular solution of professional special education treatment is advocated. In the field of education, this solution emerges from a scientific discourse of education, following what constitutes the "normal" child. The notion of teaching within a scientific discourse takes two paths with early childhood teachers following developmental theories (Gesell & Ilg, 1943; Piaget & Inhelder, 1958) and abiding the professional texts of developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997/2009) and special education teachers following the theories of behaviorist theory (Skinner, 1972; Watson, 1930). While there is no one "teacher identity", prospective teachers are therefore indoctrinated into conservative tendencies according to the technologies of their fields.

Following Kincheloe (1993), prospective teachers "encounter few experiences that challenge the status quo in schools" (p. 14). Additionally, prospective teachers

encounter few experiences that allow them to challenge their teacher education program, which act as its own disciplinary technology to produces the docile bodies of special education and general education teachers, as objects to be molded. The hierarchy of observation by supervisors, cooperating teachers and teacher educators act to surveillance prospective teachers, in a manner that create teachers as subjects in the well-defined roles of general education teacher and special education teachers.

Here the special education "teacher as expert is placed in an unchallenged position that allows them to regulate what and where students can learn and participate while in the school" (Mutua & Smith, 2005, p.127). Surveillance (Foucault, 1995) of the disabled student is accomplished through writing and participation in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which is meant to elaborate and regulate the supports and services the student needs (Mutua & Smith, 2006,p. 127). A question of great concern is whether the space of the general education classroom is an "appropriate placement" for all children- spaces presumably designed for "normal children" acting out a "normal curriculum. These concerns are reinforced by the day to day dialogue and positioning of disabled student as struggling learners. "He has no clue". He is "behind" the other students in the class. (Erevelles, 2000, p.13).

Consequently through every day dominant discourses and actions sanctioned by the power and "disciplines" of special education, disabled students become both "subjects" (as observers) and "objects" (as a thing to be observed). In addition, as the disabled subject appear farther from the normative division (and is in more need of medical and technical assistance), it is also more likely the disabled subject will be objectified. Unfortunately, objectified through a medical and technical lens, disabled

students are then posited as incapable others by teachers and peers who speculate they can contribute little to their classroom communities.

"Disability, constructed as an individual deficit, precludes teachers and the school from noticing socially constructed causes and other factors that inform how the students experience the challenges of disability" (Mutua & Smith,2006, p. 127). Disabled students are then left to struggle between two identities—one based on their lived experiences and the other, based on the "disabled subject-object" constructed by the "discipline" of special education.

Nancy Rice (2006) explains that "Foucault eschewed the notion of a clear binary of dominant/non dominant discourses but supported the existence of the 'polyvalence of discourse'-many discourses exist simultaneously". (p. 20). Furthermore, the effect of a particular group of discourses is neither 'uniform nor stable' and 'can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hinderance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and starting point for an opposing strategy. (Foucault, 1980, p. 100). "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, 1980, p. 101). Subsequently, each person will develop multiple disability discourses   within the ontext of their own prior knowledge and expectation. These discourses will be influenced by the way things actually happen in the real world and will collectively and individually change over time.

The struggle of disability studies scholars between the two main models of disability-the social model and the medical model is a good example of the complexity of understanding disability discourses. Though the mainstay of disability studies lies in a

social model framework there is resistance to an outright rejection of a medical model.

Gabel and Peters (2004) suggest that scientific advances, for example in medical

therapies and technology have advanced the image and agency of disabled people. In this

next section I provide empirical evidence and practical examples of the application of

disability studies, exposing the complexity of disability discourse of students and teachers

and within teacher education.

Disability Studies

In the mid-1980's a group of disability scholars began to rethink disability and a

new interdisciplinary field called Disability Studies was formed. Taking a critical

perspective and promoting a social model of disability, Disability Studies advocates use a

cultural lens to contemplate the social construction of disability (Taylor,2006, p. xiii) and

to scrutinize how the cumulative effects of stigma, oppression and environmental factors

act upon and position disabled people in society. Central to social model principles,

instead of an isolated medical pathology focused on impairment, disability is viewed as a

social category on par with other minority identities such as race, class and gender. As

such, Disability Studies draws on multiple sites and contexts for its analysis of disability.

The development of a curriculum focused on considering disability within the

context of education in the United States advanced in 1999 with the formation of a new

Special Interest Group (SIG) in the American Educational Research Association

(AERA), called Disability Studies in Education (DSE). Danforth and Gabel (2006) claim

DSE's membership increased over 400 percent in the first five years, and attribute this

dramatic interest to several contemporary issues: a strong sense of "disenchantment with

the kind of disability research which has become status quo in education", an awareness

that disability has been left out of critical education research and the accounts of teachers and professionals who "witness first-hand the many ways that disability has become synonymous with second-hand citizenship, exclusion, derision, and a lesser form of provision" (p. 3-4).

Discourse of Disability Studies

Dudley-Marling and Paugh's (2010) discussion of a year-long inquiry project with four novice urban teachers, each of whom worked with students who had a special education label, confirms the presence of a "polyvalence of discourse" about disability in public schools. The project was intended to "challenge teachers to shift their gaze from what students who struggle academically cannot do to *what makes them smart*?, that is, what conditions of learning, including teacher moves, enabled children to express the native intelligence that ALL children possess?" (p. 5). Over the year, the authors discovered that during group discussions in response to videos, readings and presentations about disability, these teachers took up a positive, social constructivist approach. However, as they discussed their own students, they readily defaulted to a deficit discourse laden with behaviorist beliefs.

One problem of this kind of deficit discourse is that it situates learning and failure in the heads of individual students. Although on occasion, these teachers acknowledged disabled students' strengths, these discourses reinforced "students' positionality as outsiders beyond the boundaries of *normal* teachers' knowledge and training" and maintained the viewpoint that behaviorist tactics were warranted as the best approach for teaching disabled students. Consequently the reliance on other specialists to authorize the truth and make decisions regarding disabled students became a prominent discourse.

While these teachers clearly demonstrated knowledge regarding their students, the power to act on this knowledge was superseded by the dominant deficit discourse of schooling, which empowered other specialists to make decisions and threatened their status as teachers. This same theme of authority was evident in Ware's disability study with a ninth grade teacher Tom. "Among his colleagues, he was known to be an inclusive practitioner; yet disability-related topics were nowhere to be found in his curriculum. He explained this in an interview after we completed the unit: "I felt that I lacked the authority to talk about disability; that was someone else's job" (Ware. 2001,p.120). Mutua and Smith (2006) suggest a shift in thinking towards empowerment for disabled students may "require a dismantling of 'the special education expert' who currently produces and controls the knowledge" (p. 129).

Conversely, Wong's (2010) study presents examples of the benefits of a constructivist teaching approach in debunking the dominant truths of ability/disability. Through demonstration of the positive outcomes when disabled students are positioned by general education teachers as capable and competent readers and writers, Wong reestablishes the status of the general education teacher as knowledgeable. Nevertheless, when disability is understood as an innate condition, it is difficult for general education teachers to overcome the desires to rely on the technical assistance of special education experts and to adopt authoritative, behaviorist orientations towards disabled students. As Allan (2006) proposes, "Much of the work required in teacher education is an unraveling of the existing special education knowledge base and opening students up to difference as complex and interesting rather than as something to be managed. They need to be veered away from knowledge about students' pathologies" (p.355).

Broderick, Reid, and Valle (2006) bring attention to the complex work of those teacher candidates, teachers, and teacher educators who have a firm belief in an alternative disability discourse and have therefore declared a commitment to the principles of disability studies. Resisting the notion of a single definition of "teacher", they found that within the various sites of disability studies work, "teachers…become positioned and operate in complex ways, within multiple, often conflicting discourses". Central to their findings is that "less privileged and racially-ethnically teacher candidates engage with DS by drawing upon their lived experiences within a culture where race, class, gender, and ability intersect in ways that privilege some groups over others" (Broderick, et al., 2006, p.136). It is suggested that these intersecting positions influence and shape the practical concerns of implementing a disability studies approach.

Important work in education has been achieved by remote pockets of scholars of disability studies, however reports indicate "how difficult and painful/ isolating/ exhausting/ draining/ discouraging/ disheartening resistance [to mainstream disability discourses] can be" (Broderick, et. al., 2005, p. 157). Furthermore, Ware (2001) is adamant that " disability is a long overdue conversation among critical theorists, pedagogues, and educationalists who fail to recognize disability as a cultural signifier; nor do they include disability as a meaningful category of oppression" (p.112).

Discourse of Resistance

Is it conceivable for teachers and students to resist the taken for granted notions of disability, that are deeply seated in the powerful discourse of special education ? This study is based on the presumption that because the cultural perceptions of disabled people are in constant flux, it might be possible for students and teachers to resist dominant

mainstream disability discourse for the purpose of acting against the principles of a medical model of disability. This resistance can be realized within the groundwork of the field of DSE which places its trust in the direction of a potential "reverse discourse". (Foucault, 1980, p. 101).

Critical Pedagogy

Central to resistance of the dominant discourse and engaging in transformative actions within education is the process put forth by Brazilian-born educator, Paulo Freire, of conscientization (or critical consciousness) , which he defines as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1993, p. 19). Like many other critical scholars (Shor, 1999), I propose that the works of Foucault and Freire complement each other in terms of attention to cultural and historical contexts and the ways their theories open the reader to viewing the relationship between power and knowledge in the everyday contexts of life. In his work with illiterate peasants in Brazil, Freire proposed a pedagogical approach known as critical pedagogy. A key purpose of critical pedagogy is to bring out the voices of disenfranchised and disempowered members of a community, including a community of learners, by conscientization. (Thousands, Diaz-Greenberg, Nevin,, Cardelle-Elawar, Beckett, & Reese, 1999, p. 324). In particular, like Foucault, the scholarship of Freire makes available a foundation for a much needed paradigmatic shift in discourses about disability.

Central to Freire's pedagogy of literacy education is not only reading the word, but also reading the world. Freire believed that the formation of critical consciousness allows people to question the nature of their historical and social situation-to read their

world-with the goal of acting as subjects in the creation of a democratic society. Freire supposed that for education to carry out its democratic intentions, a dialogic exchange between teachers and student, where both learn, both question, both reflect and both participate in meaning-making, was crucial.

The connection between literacy and liberation forms the foundation of critical literacy. In a classroom application of a Freirian approach to literacy instruction, the world of oppression is unveiled to students who then commit to social transformation. Many critical scholars (Shor, 1999) have referred to Freire's desire for a liberatory pedagogy in regard to issues of race, class and sexuality. Within disability studies, the search for the liberatory education suggested by Freire is evident. Yet Ware provokes and rouses us to pay heed to how this search for liberation within a dual system of general and special education differs for the disabled. According to Ware (2001) , "critical theorists avert their gaze from both the disabled subject and the dual system of education, as if to suggest that liberatory praxis would naturally exclude the disabled" (p. 113). One of the goals of this study is to focus the gaze on disability using the critical lenses of Foucault and Freire, by taking a critical literacy approach to children's literature in an early childhood pre-service classroom. In the next section, I will discuss practical and empirical examples of how critical literacy and disability studies can be used in classrooms and within teacher education, as pedagogical tools to examine disability.

Critical literacy
"Nancy's story" of her journey as a novice teacher, offering fifth graders opportunities to reflect on equity issues of race, class, poverty, and gender is one of many good examples of critical literacy in action (Lewinson, Flint, & Sluys, 2002). Other

researchers have also used critical literacy to focus on various equity topics, for example a first grade discussion of issues of poverty in Leland, et.al. (2005) using the text, *Lady in the Box*, 1999 as a starting point; Chafel, Flint, Hammel, and Pomeroy's (2007) research project with 8-year olds, using the text, *Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen,* 1991 to examine homelessness; Rogers and Mosley's (2006) study with second graders, examining texts, *The Bus Ride,* 2001 and *Martin Luther King Jr. and the March on Washington*, 2000 to discuss racism. Mendoza and Reese's 2001 contribution, *Examining Multicultural Picture Books for the Early Childhood Classroom: Possibilities and Pitfalls,* offers a thorough contemporary guide for teachers wishing to include picture books for use with young children that depict a variety of ethnic, racial and cultural groups, however, like many others, it does not mention disability. The quantity of studies involved with pre- and in-service teachers and students in the early childhood years is bounded by the amount of children's literature with a disability theme and the contemporaneous nature of both the field of critical literacy and the field of Disability Studies in Education.

After a review of literature, Stribling (2008) provides a handy framework for examining the many approaches to critical literacy. She concludes that critical literacy can be enacted in many ways and suggests a combination and intersection of these approaches : 1) critically examining texts for voice and perspective, 2) using texts as a vehicle through which one can examine larger social issues, 3) using students' lives and experiences as the text and incorporating literacy practices (p.34). Using these three main ideas as a guide, when used in the classroom, critical literacy would allow the following student- teacher actions to occur: the examination and questioning of text-

embedded perspectives; use of texts as a basis for analysis and critical conversations and actions around past and current, local and global social issues; and use teachers and students' lives and experiences as textual opportunities for teachers and students to gain a deeper understanding of social justice and promote the agency of both in change..

The literature on critical literacy offers suggestions to both prospective and current teachers on how to engage students in the critical examination of texts for voice and perspective. Advice on selecting genres of children's literature that includes race and gender issues, such as *Checklist for Analyzing Bias in Children's Books* first proposed by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (1979) is a fairly common tool in teacher education, but less emphasis has been placed on how to include and critically examine literature within the disability genre. According to Kathy Saunders who is known for her critical review of disability literature for children, there is "an apparent lack of engagement between scholars of disability studies and those of children's literature".

Although it does appear true that there is increasing evidence of including disability as a genre in children's literature, the "gauge of disability bias…does not reflect social values as much as it represents the expertise, focus, and philosophy of the critic" (Salem, 2000, p.70). Upon a close examination of the available bibliographies that critique and summarize children's literature with a disability theme, the reader will find that some are written from a critical disability perspective and outline the historic roles society has cast for disabled people, (for example, Baskin & Harris, 1977,1984), while others claim sensitivity, however are organized by "problems" according to disability categories and labels (for example, Friedberg, Mullins, and Sukiennik's bibliography, *Accept me as I am*, 1985). Along these lines, Salem (2000) warns the reader to take a

critical perspective, noting that a "careful reading of the method and presentation used by the bibliographer is important" (p. 71).

Saunders suggests "an examination of texts in terms of whether a story presents a medical or social portrayal of disability offers a basis for critical interrogation, which reaches closer to the disability experience" (Saunders, 2004). This complements what Stribling (2008) identified as one of the purposes of critical literacy, " using texts as a vehicle through which one can examine larger social issues" (p.34). However, the acceptability of writers using medical conditions to generate conflict and emotion is not without controversy, with disability scholars arguing those conditions form part of the persona of some disabled people, and others pointing to the potential gains of bringing attention onto the wider social issues (Saunders, 2004).

Using critical literacy to serve the purpose of critically examining texts for voice and perspective, Shor (1999) notes that "when we are critically literate, we examine our ongoing development, to reveal the subjective positions from which we make sense of the world and act in it". In the case of reading, evaluating and understanding children's literature, it can be assumed that only a few students, teachers and prospective teachers may have insider positions of disability. It is therefore, important to provide opportunities for the development of critical literacy skills towards the examination of disability texts for voice and perspective (as well as the examination of intersecting factors of age, race/ethnicity, social class, etc.) early on, in students' and teachers' development. Accordingly, as Stribling (2008) advises, "[t]eachers need opportunities to become critically literate themselves so that they can scaffold this development in their student; this, of course, is a process" (p. 37).

Stribling (2008) argues that the critical approach of critical literacy, using students' lives and experiences as the text and incorporating literacy practices, "can have a profound impact on students' understanding of social justice and [can] support them in being agents of change" (p. 37). Ira Shor (1999) advocates his "Freirean preference to situate critical literacy in student discourse and perceptions as the starting points" (p.17). Unfortunately, disability scholars proclaim that despite the move to inclusive practices in the United States, "at many colleges, students [pre-service teachers] may have little exposure to disability issues" (Vidali, Price, & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2008, p.2). Because of this lack of contact and knowledge, sometimes texts are immediately interpreted as authorized and representative of the disabled, further perpetuating a medical model of disability discourse.

Children's literature

In an examination of multicultural literature focused on race and social class, Ching (2005) argues that the evaluation criteria, typically used to select "appropriate" children's literature, often focuses on a pluralist view of cultural awareness and "overlook[s] inequitable management of power" (p. 129). As is true of the analyses of many other educational scholars, although Ching's work does not specify disability, her examination of the intersection of race, culture and power in children's literature can clearly be extended to include disability.

As indicated earlier, not all bibliography texts are the same. In *Using Children's Literature to Learn about Disabilities and Illness*, Blaska (1996) advises teachers on how to talk about autism with children (who we guess are the other ones, without autism). To discuss "unusual behaviors", " [A]nswer simply and honestly such as: 'He likes that

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movement of his hands as they flap, but he's working on remembering no to do that'" (p.

35). Consequently, I suppose if autistic children had better memories the "unacceptable"

activity of hand flapping would disappear. In *Claiming Disability,* Linton (1998) writes

that the purpose of disability studies is to consider "not simply the variations that exist in

human behavior, appearance, functioning, sensory acuity, and cognitive processing but,

more crucially, the meaning we make of those variations" (p.2). Consequently when

knowledgeable students and teachers take a critical stance by "doing DS,",there is

evidence that students become more critical thinkers and readers and these teachers are

more apt to create and support student efforts towards positive change.

The case study presented here is focused on early childhood pre-service teachers.

Only looking at the amount of available early childhood children's literature that includes

disabled characters, according to Saunders (2004), "[a]necdotal evidence suggests that

the rate of inclusion of disabled characters in fiction is weighted towards books for the

older reader and that for younger readers, when disability is portrayed it is mainly in

"explanatory" texts which concentrate on biological/medical details" (p. 4). In addition, a

recent 2011 study on representation of disability in Newbery Award-winning books from

1975 to 2009 found that white disabled characters were overrepresented (83 percent),

black and Hispanic characters were underrepresented (17 percent); and disabled

Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaskan Natives were nowhere to be found.

(Whelan, 2011). Therefore, compared to what is available for older readers, the selection

of disability literature for younger readers is less and the selection of quality literature

with authentic representation of all locations of diversity is more limited. Furthermore,

during my review of the literature, I found numerous examples of pre-service teachers

and teachers who used a variety of critical literacy approaches with children's literature, primarily with the intent to explore race , social class, and gender but only a limited number of studies focused on disability (Souto-Manning, 2009; Struthers Walker, Mileski, Greaves, & Patterson, 2008).

Disability Studies pedagogy

Teacher-researcher, Linda Ware (2001) asks the question, what does it look like when teachers "dare [to] do disability studies" ? Drawing from her partnership with a secondary language arts teacher wherein they created and co-taught a humanities-based disability study, *Writing, Identity and the Other*, Ware describes how unintentionally students placed in inclusive settings remain excluded in other ways. Aimed to promote understanding of disability studies literature and first-person accounts of living with disability, ninth graders were instructed to write an essay about a first experience with disability. This is a widely used technique used to open the doors to conversations about the definitions and contexts surrounding disability. One student with physical disabilities, titled her essay "*Telling About Disability, Telling About Me*" and left her teacher with new doubts about his teaching.

About this teacher's practice, Ware explains, "[h]e was unable to recall a single student in all his years teaching who had ever written about disability. He wondered if he had somehow failed to create a place in which it was safe to examine this issue."… "In addition, he was discomforted by the fact that he had not previously considered disability an identity category". (Ware, 2001, p. 118). In her analysis of this teacher's comments, Ware was "provided the opportunity to discuss how schools silence particular discourses", bringing attention to the finding that "[s]pecifically race, class, and sexuality

are often cited in the educational literature as silenced discourses, but rarely is disability considered among the inequities resulting from the normalizing discourses of schooling" . It was concluded that one of the silenced discourses in this teacher's classroom was "what it might mean to live with a disability…" (Ware, 2001, p.118).

In my review of the literature, I located only one study that involved young students' exploration of disability as an equity issue. Though not situated in the disability studies literature, Souto-Mannings's (2009) teacher-action research of first graders who problematize segregation and pose what is fair when students must attend a pull-out program with special education services is this example.

In one of a handful of studies using a disability studies pedagogy to critically examine literature, Struthers, Mileski, Greaves & Patterson (2008) report on what happens during a reader response activity in which undergraduates in an *Issues of Diversity in Children's and Adolescent Literature* course examined and analyzed popular adolescent novels with a disability theme. Using a problem posing pedagogy, students unpacked multiple interpretations of texts and then directed small group discussions to consider the questions that they posed. As the course instructor, Valerie Struthers Walker explains the first time the course was taught "students' responses to representations of disability focused exclusively on their evaluation of the medical accuracy of the representation…mentioned in the text". Using the adolescent literature as a starting point, Walker encouraged students to draw on personal experiences and provided outside reading sources such that students were introduced to "new ways of thinking about how disability" and were provided with "alternative and potential critiques of dominant medical discourses with which they were most familiar".

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Critical literacy challenges

Research shows that teachers and pre-service teachers who use literature with potential for addressing power, social justice and equity are often resistant when it comes to engaging children in critical conversations. Schmidt, Armstrong and Everett (2007) examined how 15 practicing teachers and 30 pre-service teachers regard, think about and describe the decisions they make regarding books they share with children; in particular they investigated children's critical responses to the literature. This work pointed to participant's resistance, in order to avoid controversy. For example, in forming questions to engage elementary children in book discussions that contained opportunities for discussions about privilege and power in the world, "pre-service teachers avoided asking important questions about class and family violence prevalent in the book" (Schmidt et al., 2007,p. 51). In a similar manner, Van Sluys, Laman, Legan and Lewinson's (2005) exploration of the discourse of pre-service teachers as they read children's literature found that their comments were also "text-based". In their efforts to get the meaning of the text "right", these pre-service teachers struggled to move the conversation to a "critical" level. However, when encouraged by the in-service teacher to participate in a more critical manner, there was evidence that pre-service teachers confronted "their own feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment when probing deeper world issues with both children and themselves" (Van Sluys et al., 2007,p.52).

Another common response to literature among in-service and pre-service teachers is the act of distancing, accomplished by finding ways to remove themselves from sensitive topics. According to Schmidt, et al (2007), "[b]oth in-service and pre-service teachers are hesitant to bring sensitive issues into classroom discussions and disclose or

examine personal responses with children. Some reasons for this hesitation include: "this would 'infringe' on the rights of parents" and claiming the "teacher's role in protecting the innocence of children in the classroom" (p.56). Reflected in the latter is "a justification for what makes a classroom 'safe' and the notion that classrooms are neutral spaces and ignoring tough societal issues will protect and keep students from harm" (p.53). Despite these efforts to exclude sensitive issues from the curriculum, "[c]ultural 'knowledge' and attitudes about disability are learned by young children- often indirectly but quite unmistakably. The very meanings of 'ability' and 'disability' are created via language, representation and practices…" (Rice, 2006, p.17).

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Despite these stories of resistance, there are a limited number of researchers who support a critical pedagogy and provide empirical examples of using a blend of critical literacy and disability studies approaches. As mentioned earlier in this report, Linda Ware's (2001) work on "doing disability studies" in an ninth grade creative writing class, entitled *Writing, Identity and the Other* with typical students and those with learning, emotional and physical disabilities is one good example of a critical literacy pedagogy that drew from disability studies literature and first-person accounts of living with disability. In my review of the literature, while I was able to locate several studies that supported a critical pedagogy with early childhood learner around equity issues such as race and homelessness (Leland, et.al. (2005); Lewison, et.al., 2002; Meller, Richardson, & Hatch, 2009; Rogers & Mosley (2006) , I located only one study that involved young students exploration of disability as an equity issue. Though not situated in the disability studies literature, Souto-Mannings's (2009) teacher-action research of first graders who

problematize segregation and pose what is fair when students must attend a pull-out program with special education services is this example. In my review of the literature, I was unable to find any studies that examined the use of disability studies and critical literacy approaches to address disability issues in the early childhood classroom. This research study which examines the disability discourses of ten early childhood pre-service teachers and their engagement in one critical literacy assignment fills an important gap in disability studies scholarship.

The purpose of this case study is to analyze the discourse and actions of pre-service teachers as they examine, reflect upon and teach lessons using children's literature with a disability theme. I want to explore how the pre-service teachers frame disability, the language they use, and how classroom conversations and assignments influence their feelings of confidence and ability to incorporate the disability literature into their lesson planning. Based on this purpose and utilizing a critical stance, the following questions will guide this study:

1. How do pre-service teachers position disability during classroom discussions ? What are their discourses, omissions and silences ?
2. How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses ?
3. How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lessons designed for early childhood students that incorporate children's literature with a disability topic?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study was to analyze the discourse and actions of ten early childhood pre-service teachers as they examined, reflected upon and taught lessons using children's literature with a disability related theme within the context of a one semester social studies and language arts methods course. In this study I explored how the pre-service teachers framed disability, the language they used, and how classroom conversations and assignments influenced their feelings of confidence and ability to incorporate the disability literature into their lesson planning. Based on these purposes and utilizing a /critical stance, the following questions guided this study:

1. How do pre-service teachers position disability during classroom discussions ? What are their discourses, omissions and silences ?
2. How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses ?
3. How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lessons designed for early childhood students that incorporate children's literature with a disability topic?

Chapter 1 introduced this study, presenting the problem, purpose, research questions and significance. In Chapter 2, the review of literature provided the reader with the necessary background knowledge and theoretical foundation for understanding this study. This review draws on the theories of Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault and incorporates literature in the fields of disability studies, critical literacy and teacher preparation. In this chapter, Chapter 3: Methodology, I provided the rationale for my methodological choices and included a detailed description of the methods utilized throughout the study, including the context of the study, a description of the participants, data collection methods and data analysis procedures. This chapter begins with a brief description of the undergraduate methods course in which this study took place.

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The Social Studies and Language Arts methods course

The study took place during a 15 week, semester-long Social Studies and Language Arts methods course. During this study, in keeping with the traditions of a constructivist classroom, I was a teacher and a learner, an observer and a participant, as I explored how one cohort of pre-service teachers examined, reflected upon and designed lessons using children's literature with a disability-related theme. As stated earlier, the main purpose of this study was to examine and analyze how ten early childhood pre-service teachers framed disability, the language they used and how classroom conversations and assignments influenced their ability and sense of confidence to incorporate the disability literature into their lesson planning. First I offer a brief description of this methods course in order to guide the reader in understanding the overall content and pedagogical decisions that I have made as the instructor in this course. Then I will expand on those aspects of the course that relate to this study.

The *Social Studies and Language Arts Integration and Assessment* course is an undergraduate requirement within the early childhood teaching program at a mid-sized university in New Jersey. As the instructor of this course I have adopted a critical stance to teaching and learning. Over time I have made modifications to the course design to integrate the examination of diversity issues within the context of teaching social studies and language arts to early childhood learners in preschool through grade three.

As a teacher educator, I have grappled with the use of a critical pedagogy to prepare pre-service teachers, and as a tool for their own use in the field. I have found Paulo Freire's pedagogy of critical literacy to be especially useful for exploring social studies topics. One of the goals of the course is to develop pre-service teachers'

awareness (conscientization) of diversity and equity issues and to model good teaching

practices for their future lessons with early childhood learners. During the course of the

semester, history, geography and economics and the integration of diversity topics related

to race, class, sexual orientation, gender and disability are explored using a critical

literacy approach. By means of critical literacy, pre-service teachers in this course are

given opportunities to examine their own feelings, assumptions and biases about diversity

and equity topics.

Background of the course

I have been the instructor for this course for a total of six years. In past semesters,

in one critical literacy assignment, the students (pre-service teachers) in this class

planned a lesson using a storybook from a collection of literature that focused on a

variety of diversity topics, such as race, class, sexual orientation, gender and disability.

As part of the assignment, upon selecting the literature, the students filled out a critical

literacy sheet which required them to describe the characters and the text, to explain what

prior knowledge would help the reader to understand the story, and to tell what questions

they anticipated children might have about the text. It was during this assignment that I

began to pay attention to the responses of those students who had selected a storybook

with a disability theme. I became interested in how these students framed disability in

their responses on the critical literacy sheets and in the lesson plans designed for early

childhood classrooms. During this time, I noticed that students' dialogues and written

responses often represented a medical view of disability. To deepen my understandings

of this phenomena, I conducted a pilot study investigating how pre-service teachers

prepared for and interacted with preschoolers during a read-aloud using the children's literature with a disability theme.

Pilot study

  The pilot study involved two early childhood pre-service teachers and four preschool children who attended the child development center located on the campus where I am an instructor. In this study I found that the pre-service teachers were uncertain about what aspects of the story would be appropriate for preschoolers and they questioned the role of the teacher when talking with children with disability. Yet, the children in the study were curious about disability as portrayed in the storybooks and made several meaningful connections to the text.

  The pilot study helped me to think about the methodology for this present larger study. In the pilot study, interviews provided rich descriptions of the pre-service teachers' first experiences with disability. Learners' prior knowledge and experiences is a central feature of a constructivist classroom and during the study, I wondered how these first experiences contributed to pre-service teachers' present dispositions and understandings of disability. The use of the critical literacy sheets was an effective way to gain the participants' initial thoughts on disability. Conversations (before and after reading the storybooks) and written reflections also provided useful data of the pre-service teachers' thinking about disability. Data from transcriptions of audio-taped read loud sessions helped me to realize that the actual story reading event had potential for nurturing the consciousness of disability with pre-service teachers and children. After reading their reflections, I began to notice how through the actual experience of these read-aloud sessions pre-service teachers began to recognize children's curiosity about disability.

Changes to the course

In the semester following the pilot study, the syllabus for the methods course was adjusted. Instead of choosing from a selection of books that focused on a variety of diversity issues, the critical literacy assignment was changed to include only storybooks that focused on disability. In addition, the assignment now required pre-service teachers to teach the lessons about disability in their early childhood practicum classrooms. Journal articles and book chapters from critical literacy and disability studies literatures were added to the syllabus. The film-documentary, *Including Samuel*, (Habib, 2009) which illustrates how the social and medical models of disability operate in schools and communities, as well as the intersection of disability with other identity markers, was also added to the course materials.

Another factor that I began to pay closer attention to was the children's literature. Prior to the pilot study, I was a guest speaker in a creative arts and children's literature undergraduate course. I gave a presentation about critical literacy and students met in small groups to discuss storybooks from a variety of diversity topics. While listening to the responses of students in this class, I came to understand that certain literature was more suited to a critical examination of diversity topics. As explained by Ching (2005), "selection criteria for multicultural literature typically promote cultural awareness and sensitivity, and often overlook the control, deployment, and management of power" (p.129). When I analyzed the disability literature for this study, I selected those books that had the potential to promote conversations about disability in order to create a space to examine how disability is viewed through both social and model lenses. An annotated list of these books is included in Appendix A.

Methodological theory

The research standpoint I chose to direct this study is based on qualitative case study methodology. Using a qualitative approach, the case study design will allow me to investigate the ways that pre-service teachers engage with disability discourses within the context of a critical literacy assignment. Because this study will be based on a detailed and in-depth data collection from multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007, p.73), a case study approach is appropriate.

As advocated by the field of Disability Studies in Education, a significant aspect of this study relates to post-structural critical theory and an analysis of equity issues tied to disability and the educational practices of pre-service teachers. I've chosen critical theory as the major methodological basis for this study approach based on my own inclinations and inspired by the proposition that "knowledge generated through this mode of research is an ideological critique of power, privilege and oppression in areas of educational practice" (Merriam, 1998, p.4). A key aspect of this study is the disability discourses of pre-service teachers. The analysis required examining the language and actions of the pre-service teachers through a post-structural lens that utilized the definition of discourse proposed in the archeological and genealogical works of Michel Foucault.

In this study, discourse is understood as follows:

Foucault (1972) understood discourse as a body of thinking and writing that used shared language for talking about a topic, shared concepts for understanding it and shared methods for examining it. The shared language, concepts and methods are found in everyday practices and decision-making procedures and in diverse institutional texts, practices and decision-making societies and different times (McNaughton, 2005, p.20).

In his early archeological work, Foucault seeks to make clear the structures, rules and procedures that determine the different forms of knowledge (Kenway, 1990, p. 173). In his later genealogical work, Foucault went on study the relationship of discourse to institutional powers. In the design of this study, I followed other disability scholars (Erevelles, 2000/2005; Graham, 2005; Kenway, 1990; Rice, 2006; Tremain, 2005) who situated their studies of disability in Foucault's theories of power/knowledge and how "disciplinary technologies" operate to classify, distribute, contain, manipulate, control and therefore objectify certain groups of people (Kenway, 1990, p. 174).

Hatch (2002) identifies "political analysis" as most suitable for those researchers who are "up-front about their own political positioning". Utilizing a framework built on this kind of analysis "builds in analytic integrity so that findings are grounded in data while acknowledging the political nature of the real world and the research act" (p. 191). Following the model of "political analysis" explained by Hatch (2002), I understood that a self- reflexive statement of how this research is politically positioned was a necessary first step.

The methods course in which this study took place was guided by a critical pedagogy grounded in critical literacy and disability studies. As a pedagogical choices, critical literacy and disability studies were well-suited to the social activism orientation of the course which drew its purposes from Paulo Freire's belief of "reading the word and the world". Freire's (1970) asserts that critical consciousness (conscientization) is made possible when students and teachers' dialogue and reflect upon critical issues. Further, "a critical consciousness makes it more likely that an individual will be able to consciously shift her identify in relation to new discourses that become necessary (Rice, 2006, p.26).

From a critical pedagogy point of view, the pre-service teachers and I reflected upon our in and out of school experiences, became more knowledgeable of the principles of DS, and examined our pre-conceived notions about disability. The intention of the course was to model and engage the pre-service teachers in a critical pedagogy that utilized critical literacy and DS with the hope that they might do the same as they used the children's literature and dialogued and reflected upon disability with their own early childhood students.

Methodological approach

The methodological approach for this study adhered to a framework for "political analysis" (Hatch, 2002) and the design for qualitative case study, following a critical research stance. This case is intrinsically bounded by the context of a single one-semester social studies and language arts methods course that took place during one academic semester. My unit of analysis for this in-depth case study was one cohort of ten early childhood pre-service teachers. Data collection included a survey, field notes, transcriptions of audio-taped class sessions, written on-line reading responses and documents from a critical literacy lesson assignment. The critical literacy lesson assignment included drafts and final submissions of lesson plans, written reflection pieces and artifacts of students' work.   These are the main data sources of the study and are described in greater detail further below.

Self-reflexive statement

Hatch (2002) emphasizes the important to get "ideological issues and your position related to them out on the table before systematic analysis begins" (p. 194) I agree that my critical orientation and beliefs about disability guided my methodological

decisions and shaped what I was looking for in this study. My work is positioned in a disability studies perspective. Therefore, I reject the perception of disabled people as "less human" or "not normal" and instead see disability as another variation of the human experience. From my experiences as the mother of a disabled child (now adult) and as a teacher educator, I have insider knowledge of how the practices of education, medicine and law have created and maintained a deficit discourse of disability. Therefore, I am committed to advocacy work that focuses on changing the perception of disabled people as a first step towards social integration and recognition of disabled people rights as citizens.

My orientation towards a disability studies perspective is evident in the pedagogical decisions and within the analysis of the data from this study. I acknowledge that in the methods course, I wished to "orient students to map the world" (Shor, 1999) from the standpoint of a disability studies and critical literacy perspective. I understand that my active involvement as a teacher educator-researcher influenced the learning outcomes of the course as well as the final analysis of this study.

Foucault's notion of "docile bodies" focuses on the body as the sight of institutional surveillance and regulation (to the point of "docility") in ways that are often subtle and therefore invisible. My experiences of how the policies and every day actions of school control the "docile bodies" of disabled students and lessen opportunities for agency and activism, influenced how I began the initial coding and analysis of the data set. I am self-reflexive that given the way I "map the world, the data analysis was both inductive and deductive. Deductively, I analyzed the disability discourses of the pre-service teachers within the principles that establish the frameworks for a social model and

a medical model of disability. Using these models as a guide, I looked for how disabled people were positioned in the conversations and the written work of the pre-service teachers' conversations and written responses with these two models. Disability literature revealed limited empirical evidence and practical guidance on how these models can be applied to teacher education. In addition, there is little evidence of what it looks like when teachers and pre-service teachers do disability studies in the early childhood classroom. For this reason, an inductive analysis process was also used.

Case study

   This qualitative case study is an approach to research the disability discourses of pre-service teachers within the context of one social studies methods course as they participate in one critical literacy assignment. In keeping with case study design, this phenomena was explored and data collected in a natural setting, the university teaching classroom. Given there is limited empirical work done in the area of pre-service teachers using critical literacy to explore and teach about disability, this research was exploratory in nature.

   Stake (1995) bases his approach to case study on a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality and promotes the close collaboration of researcher and participants. As the pre-service teachers and I co-constructed knowledge of disability, I was able to study the process of the emerging text of the course. Through their stories the pre-service teachers were able to describe their views of reality as it related to disability. Consequently I was better able to understand their actions during the lesson planning process (Lather, 1992 as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.545). According to Merriam (1998) "[c]ase study is a particularly

suitable design if you are interested in process" (p.33). Stake uses the term intrinsic to describe a case study approach where the researcher has a vested interest to better understand the case. (Baxter and Jack, p. 548); this approach matched the purpose of this research. For these reasons a case study approach was most suitable for this study.

The course in which this study took place was designed to support critical inquiry within safe spaces in order to encourage critical dialogue and actions (Gay, 2005). As the instructor of this course I refer to Freire's (1970) ethical stance that teachers learn *with* students as the latter are encouraged to develop their own independent reading of the world. In the methodological design that follows, I describe the class assignments that were designed to encourage this sort of problem-posing perspective during the social studies methods course in which this study takes place.

Methodological design

In this study I observed, recorded and examined the discourses that early childhood pre-service teachers used in response to assignments and in less formal classroom conversations about disability. In this next section I will explain how this qualitative study is designed. Then I will explain the steps taken in the analysis of the pre-service teacher's discourses in light of class conversations and written assignments and while engaged in the lesson planning process.

Setting

The study primarily took place during a one-semester methods course in a university classroom, located in northwest New Jersey in a building that houses the College of Education. In the Fall 2010 semester the overall demographics of the university for first-time, first year students is listed on the university website as follows:

51% female, 14.7% African American, 22.9% Hispanic, 8.4% Asian

(http://www.wpunj.edu/dotAsset/232342.pdf). As anticipated, there was no information

available on the university website or any of the literature generated for public use

describing the number of students who identified as disabled.

Permission for conducting this research study in the university setting was

obtained from the chair of the Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education.

I was fortune to have easy access to the research site because of my status as a full time

faculty member of this department and as the instructor of the course in which the study

took place. Upon investigation, I found out that since the study took place within a course

that I teach, IRB approval was not required from the university in which the study took

place. Once permission to conduct the study was granted, I sought and was granted

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the university responsible for my

doctoral studies. The social studies and language arts methods course met one day each

week for two hours and forty minutes. The room assignment of a small conference room

was conducive to group discussions and was suitable for audio-taping class sessions.

During small group sessions, groups sometimes broke up and met in other nearby

classrooms. In these instances, individual audio-tape recorders were assigned to each

group.

Part of the study was based on reports from participants as they prepared and

taught the lessons in the public school classrooms where they were assigned for their

practicum assignments. The breakdown of these classroom assignments is as follows: two

placements in kindergarten (one urban; one suburban); three placements in second grade

(all suburban); and four placements in third grade (one urban; three suburban).

Participants attended a practicum orientation and then started in schools, twice a week for eleven weeks followed by two full time weeks of attendance at the end of the semester.

Participants

All of the participants in this study belonged to the same teaching cohort and therefore were selected on the basis of a convenience sampling, meaning they are chosen based on availability and convenience. However, given the exploratory nature of looking more deeply at the disability discourses of pre-service teachers, the convenience sample did represent a random, real-life medley of pre-service teachers.

After the study was explained, participants were given informed consent and agreed to be part of the study. Although no predetermined characteristics were used for the selection of participants, they all did meet specific criteria in order to qualify for their attendance in the course.

All participants had senior status in the university and were enrolled as early childhood education majors. All had completed the majority of a major in liberal arts and were entering the third semester of courses in the education major; the following semester all anticipated moving on to the final student teaching semester. As education majors all of the participants were pursuing one of two initial teaching certifications, either in preschool through grade three or preschool through grade five. To arrive at this point in the program, all of the participants had a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75 (on a 4 point scale) and have successfully completed a one day per week first field experience and seminar.

The social studies and language arts methods course was a requirement in the early childhood major. The purpose of this course was to give pre-service teachers

opportunities to explore and develop early childhood lessons utilizing the disciplines of language arts and social studies in an interdisciplinary and process-oriented fashion. In regards to the topics of disability and literacy, at the time of the study, all of the participants have completed a course entitled, *Emergent Literacy in Early Childhood*, and a methods course entitled, *Inclusion, Differentiated Instruction and English Language Learners*. I reviewed the syllabi for these courses and neither included activities or readings related to critical literacy or disability studies.

A relationship between the participants and I had been established during the semester before this study in a seminar course for the first field experience. During this seminar, participants were required to keep a field journal and write a philosophy of education statement. In addition, each participants completed an online assignment where they connected their field experiences and posed questions related to the principles of their textbook, *Developmentally Appropriate Practices* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997/2009) . During seminar, and through these assignments, participants and I began to form impressions of each other's knowledge and perceptions of teaching and learning.

Prior to the first week of the social studies and language arts methods class, participants were required to complete an online survey that I designed and posted via the electronic course management system. I decided it was best to ask participants to do this electronically before we formally began the course, less I might sway their answers upon our first class meeting. In addition to information about first-experiences with disability, participants supplied me with personal information about themselves in this survey.

As is typical in my teaching classes, all of the participants were women. When asked to describe their ethnicity, one participant answered Hispanic/American, one

answered Puerto Rican and the remaining said either White or Caucasian. The age range

of the participants was 22 through 27 years. In addition to the education major,

participants were completing a variety of liberal studies majors. The best way to display

this information is in a chart (*Figure 1)* along with the pseudonym that participants

selected for this study.

When sorting through the data, I realized that I did not request information about

whether or not participants identified as able-bodied or disabled. Since this identity

marker is an important aspect of participants' understanding of disability, in hindsight, I

felt this was an error that revealed how I am sometimes conflicted by my own able-

bodied perspective on the world. At the start of this course (and in a previous course

where I was the instructor for these participants) I did make a request for participants to

either write me or make an appointment to discuss any course accommodations due to

disability. This course was no exception, and none of the participants came forward to

discuss their disabilities. Yet, I still wonder how I missed putting it on the initial survey, a

mistake I am now aware of for future research.

Figure 1: **Participant Information**

Pseudonym	Age	Major	Ethnicity	Grade/ School setting
Ariel	26	History	Hispanic-American	K/suburban
June	25	English Literature	White	K/ urban
Mary	22	History	Caucasian	3rd/suburban
KiKi	22	History	White	2nd/suburban
Jill	27	Psychology	Caucasian	3rd/suburban
Mackenzie	23	Psychology	Caucasian	3rd/suburban
Sofia	24	Liberal Studies:	Puerto Rican	3rd/urban

		Psychology/ Women's Studies		
Whitney	22	Liberal Studies: History/ Psychology	Caucasian	2nd/suburban
Malena	22	Psychology	White	2nd/suburban
Giada	27	Sociology	Caucasian	3rd/suburban

Course events

The *Social Studies & Language Arts Integration & Assessment* course syllabus

emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach to an in-depth study of social studies themes

established by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Content integration

and teaching methods for the early childhood classroom are central components of the

course. One goal related to the integration of social studies and language arts is to

familiarize pre-service teachers with children's literature for the purpose of teaching

social studies integrated with a diversity perspective. As the instructor, in this course I

chose to apply a critical lens to social studies themes such as history, geography and

economics and to deepen their examination of equity issues related to gender, race,

ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and disability topics.

The course study outline for this methods course does not specify an orientation

towards a critical approach. As a result of a certain amount of freedom for determining

course content and delivery, the course syllabus has evolved to reflect my own emerging

critical understandings of diversity issues. Therefore I chose to apply disability studies to

this social studies and language arts teaching curriculum.

Here I describe the eleven course events that occurred in this study. Later in this

report, quotations will be cited using the Event number, subscript and date of occurrence

when applicable. Each of the events is summarized in *Figure 2*, a chronological outline of the course events and data collection that was relevant to the study.

    event 1. September 8: Participants were given the syllabus outlining the course requirements. I spoke briefly about the research study and at length about the critical literacy assignment using the children's literature with a disability theme. Then, participants were introduced to my collection of children's literature. The books were displayed and participants spent time reading and discussing what they noticed about the content, illustrations and messages of the literature. The collection was chosen based on their potential for having critical discussions about disability in the early childhood classroom.

    Participants were given time to talk among themselves about the literature and to ask questions of myself as the instructor of the course. From this collection of books, participants chose one storybook for the purpose of designing and teaching a lesson appropriate for their practicum grade level placement. Appendix A includes a brief annotation of the storybooks that the participants chose for the lesson plan assignment. Here I include the book selections of the participants, including notations of any changes that occurred during the semester (Figure 3). In one case, a participant brought back a book because her cooperating teacher claimed she had read it already and the children were done with it. In the other, the participant desired a book more suitable for a third grade class. In addition, one participant selected a book by Patricia Polacco and her cooperating teacher suggested adding another by the same author, as part of her lesson.

Figure 3: **Book Selections**

Pseudonym	Book selected	Notes

Ariel	*Rolling Along with Goldilocks and the Three Bears* by Cindy Meyers	Changed book to *Little Critter* by Mercer Mayer
June	*Lucy's Picture* by Nicola Moon	
Mary	*Katy No Pocket* by Emmy Payne	Changed book to *Ian's Walk* by Elizabeth Kennedy
KiKi	*Arnie and the New Kid* by Nancy Carlson	
Jill	*Arnie and the New Kid* by Nancy Carlson	
Mackenzie	*Imagine Me on a Sit-Ski* by George Moran	
Sofia	*Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair* by Jamee Riggio Heelan	
Whitney	*Way to Go Alex!* By Robin Pulver	
Malena	*My Buddy* by Audrey Osofsky	
Giada	*The Junkyard Wonders* by Patricia Polacco	Added *Mr. Falkner* by Patricia Polacco, on her own

To capture and summarize first reactions to the literature, during the first class, participants completed a critical literacy worksheet that I had developed. Appendix B contains a sample of this worksheet. In this worksheet participants described the story in one sentence and wrote down all of the adjectives that described the main literary elements, including the main characters, the setting, and the plot of the story. Participants identified prior knowledge for understanding the text and possible questions they thought children might ask about the text. In the earlier pilot study, this worksheet was an effective tool for capturing their initial thoughts about reading the disability stories to

children. Also the language they used to describe the story often provided insight into how they thought about and positioned disabled people.

event 2. Due September 14: Prior to the second day of class participants were required to fill out a survey describing personal information on each participant: age, ethnicity, academic majors, certification program and field placement including grade and location. The survey then asked to describe their personal experiences with disability; to define the role of the teacher when there are disabled students in the class; to express what they believe children think or know about disabilities and what the role of the teacher was when speaking to children about disability. There was also a spot to ask questions about the research study. Appendix C contains a copy of this survey assignment. Participants submitted their responses electronically using the university's online course management system, known as Blackboard (Bb).

event 3.September 14: In advance of the next class session on September 15th, participants were required to read and respond to two articles: Meller, Richardson, & Hatch (2009). Using read-alouds with critical literacy in K-3 classrooms, *Young Children, 64* (6), 76-78 and Fox (2006) Using author studies in children's literature to explore social justice issues. *The Social Studies*, November/December 2006. Both these articles contain examples of teachers applying a critical literacy approach to children's literature with the purpose of young children's exploration of race, gender, family structure, ethnicity and social class. The day before the September 15th class, participants responded to the reading by posting an online response to the reading prompt on Bb. Figure 4 contains an excerpt of the assignment as it appeared on Bb.

Figure 4: September 14: Bb Reading response assignment

Read: Meller, Richardson, & Hatch, (2009). Using read alouds with critical literacy literature in K-3 classrooms, *Young Children* and Fox (2007). Using author studies in children's literature to explore social justice issues, *The Social Studies*.
Respond to these Qs:
Do you believe that teachers should help children to understand themselves, others and the world around them? Give at least one example to support your answer.
How likely are you to try using a critical literacy approach in your lessons? What might facilitate your willingness to try?

The responses to this Bb assignment framed the discussion for the class on critical literacy that is described in event 4.

event 4. September 15: In their reading responses, some participants remarked about their hesitation for using a critical literacy approach. Therefore the class discussion was structured around the required readings and with the purpose of addressing the concerns displayed in these responses. I employed an interactive lecture approach with the goal to present information and stimulate dialogue about the critical literacy process. Then I read aloud the storybook *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson (2001) while I modeled a critical literacy approach using the techniques suggested in the Meller, et al (2009) article.

event 5. September 21: For the following class session, participants were assigned to read the first three chapters in the text, *Rethinking disability* (Valle & Connor, 2011). The titles of these chapters are: Chapter 1: Making Sense of Public School and Context; Chapter 2: Contemplating the (In)visibility of Disability; Chapter 3: Examining Beliefs and Expanding Notions of Normalcy. These readings are focused on the construction of disability in schools and give examples and explanations for how disability is situated within the contexts of the social and medical models of disability. After reading these

chapters, participants responded online to the following questions posted on Bb, as shown

in Figure 5.

Figure 5: September 21: Bb Reading Response

Read: Rethinking Disability, chapters 1-3
I attached three chapters from a new 2011 book, titled *Rethinking Disability*. Taken
together, these chapters will give you a good picture of multiple perspectives of
disability, as seen through the lenses of a social and medical model of disability. I realize
it is ALOT of reading. Therefore, please read AT LEAST the following passages:
In Chapter 2, read: page 18-19 of Chapter 2: sections titled Assumptions versus Realities
of Life for People with Disabilities and Challenging Cultural Assumptions and
Widespread Misperceptions
AND all of Chapter 3

Then answer ONE of these Qs.
What practices have you noticed in public schools that reinforce the expectations for
homogeneous classrooms? In other words, have you noticed times when some forms of
diversity (e.g. ethnicity, socioeconomic class, family configuration, religion, culture,
race, linguistic tradition, background knowledge, gender life experiences, and ability)
were not viewed as fitting the mold of public school? Give one example of a public
school practice or event (not an individual classroom practice or event unless it represents
what a taken for granted practice within the school).

Do you think it is important to consider disability as another aspect of diversity (like race,
class, gender)? Why or why not?

Participants were given a choice of reading response questions and each question

served a different purpose in the data collection. In the first question, I wanted to find out

what participants were noticing in terms of how schools position certain groups in

schools. The second question was much more directed towards disability and served to

give me a deeper understanding of how participants fit disability into the diversity of

being human. In hindsight, I would have chosen one question for this response

assignment, that way I would have had a more complete set of responses to integrate into

the class session, as well as for data purposes for this study.

event 6. September 22: For this class, I facilitated a class discussion on disability

models and we discussed how the disciplines of education, medicine and law situate

disabled people in society. We watched the beginning of the film, *Including Samuel* (Habib, 2009); a documentary that told the story of four disabled people and demonstrated the systematic social barriers to inclusion.

event 7. September 29: Participants completed watching *Including Samuel* and debriefed about the film. Participants were required to post to Bb, a paragraph describing the intent of the lesson plan on disability. This paragraph served as a benchmark, to remind participants of the assignment, to address any concerns and to offer initial feedback to their lesson plan ideas.

event 8. October 13 & 20: In the next two class sessions, participants organized and met in small groups to read aloud their chosen storybooks with the disability theme. I believed that by reading the stories to their peers, participants would become more comfortable with the literature and therefore would become more confident when the literature was used with the children. I developed a protocol to outline the sequence of activities that took place in the small group meetings. Appendix D contains a copy of this protocol. For each storybook read, peers were asked to fill out the same critical literacy worksheet used earlier in the semester. I believed that the data collected from these additional critical literacy worksheets would help me to understand more than one pre-service teachers' impression of each piece of disability literature. After the lead participant read her storybook and others in the group have filled in the graphic organizer, the next part of the presentation addressed the lesson plan design. A discussion of the storybook and peer suggestions for the lesson plan followed. Appendix E shows the group assignments of each participant.

event 9. In this event, participants submitted their lesson plans. A copy of the lesson plan assignment is contained in Appendix F. In the lesson plan assignment participants incorporated the disability themed literature and follow an established mini-lesson plan format that is included in the syllabus. Using this format, the lessons were required to connect to NJ Core curriculum standards in social studies and Common core standards in language arts, and include the following elements: key ideas and main concepts of the lesson, a set of higher-order questions, and at least one activity to either introduce or further extend the key ideas of the lesson. Lesson plans were submitted via Bb and scored, using a rubric; the rubric elements were reviewed in advance. After this submission, I offered initial feedback about the content and methods of the lesson.

event 10. After reviewing my feedback, the participants had the option to revise and resubmit their work for higher score.

event 11. November 17: Finally, participants implemented their lessons in their practicum placements. Afterwards, the whole class debriefed about their experiences and reflected upon what happened during the lesson plan implementation. Participants passed in artifacts from the activities with the students. If not already submitted with their final lesson plan submissions, participants were advised to post their reflections about teaching the lesson on Bb. The following prompt shown in Figure 6 was used to guide these final reflections of the lesson plan process.

Figure 6: Prompt for lesson plan reflections

Reflection prompt: due by November 17
Write a reflection on how the lesson went today, including what Qs children asked or comments they made, or how they answered your Qs. What did the children said or do that surprised you? And overall, how do you think the lesson

> went and what might you have done differently next time? Include your feelings and impression of using the children's literature with a disability theme.

Data collection methods

In keeping with the traditions of case study research, a wide array of data will be collected in order to "build an in-depth picture of the case" (Creswell, 2007, p.132). The data collection included: a survey, observations, field notes, written reading responses, transcriptions of audio-taped class sessions and documents. Documents included reading responses, critical literacy worksheets, drafts and final submissions of the lesson plan assignment, lesson plan reflections and student artifacts. Gathering data from the authentic real-life activities of the social studies and language arts course was considered the best method for capturing the disability discourses of the participants during this one semester course.

During the data collection and analysis phases of this study, I recorded my reflections and documented my decisions in a notebook designated for this purpose. (Miles & Huberman, 1984). To organize the data, each of the pieces of data was numbered according to its chronological sequence in the course. This numbering by events helped organize the data collection. Figure 2 outlines the key events that were related to this study and identifies the data sources within these events. The data collection was also coded as C meaning the event occurred in class and H meaning participation from H, or outside the university (such as the reading responses). Where to find more information about the data source in this report is listed under location.

Figure 2: Chronological outline of course events and data collection

Event: Date	C=Class H=Home	Event	Data Collection		Location
Event 1: 9/8/11	C	1a. Examination & selection of children's literature	i.	List of participants, pseudonyms and books selected	Figure 3
		Annotated list of books			Appendix A
	C	1c. Informal class discussion about disability	i.	Transcription of audio-taped 9/8 class	
			ii.	Field notes	
	C	1d. Initial critical literacy organizer for book selected	i.	Initial CL worksheets	Appendix B
Event 2: 9/14/11	H	2a. Online Bb survey	i.	Surveys submitted to Bb	Appendix C
	H	Survey includes demographic information			Figure 1
Event 3 9/14/11	H	3a. Read & Respond to *Meller, Richardson, & Hatch* (2009) and *Fox* (2006) articles	i.	Bb reading response	Figure 4
Event 4 9/15/11	C	4a. Class session on critical literacy	i.	Field notes	
Event 5 9/21/11	H	5a.Read Chapters 1 through 3, Rethinking Disability	i.	Bb reading response	Figure 5
Event 6 9/22/11	C	6a. View and discuss documentary film, Including Samuel	i.	Transcription of audio-taped 9/22class	

			ii. Field Notes	
Event 7 9/29/11	C	7a. Continue viewing of Including Samuel	i. Transcription of audio-taped 9/29 class	
			ii. Field Notes	
	C	7b. Paragraph about intent of LP.	i. Paragraph submissions	
Event 8 10/13/11	C	8a. Peer groups read story books and discuss LP design	Transcription of audio-taped i. peer group 1 ii. peer group 2 iii. peer group 3	
			i. Protocol for small group meeting	Appendix D
		List of participants in each small group		Appendix E
			ii. Field notes	
	C	8b. Critical Literacy (CL) sheets on each other's work	i. CL sheets for each storybook	
10/20/11	C	8c. Continuation of small group meetings	Transcription of audiotaped: i. peer group 1 ii. peer group 2 iii. peer group 3	
			i. Field notes	
		8d. CL sheets on each other's books	i. CL sheets	
Event 9 Date varied	H	9a. Lesson plan (LP) submission	i. Lesson plan (LP)	
		9b. LP submission & feedback	i. LP with feedback	
		Lesson plan assignment		Appendix F

Event 10 Date varied		10a. LP revised resubmissions	i.	Final LP resubmissions	
Event 11 11/17/11	C	11a. Whole group debrief of lesson plan implementation & reflections	i.	Transcription of 11/17 class	
			ii.	Field notes	
		11b. Final LP Artifacts	i.	Artifacts of P-3 student learning	
		11c. LP reflections	i.	Final reflections	
		Prompt for reflection			Figure 6

Survey

Before the course began, participants were given an electronic Bb assignment that was due before the second class day. From this survey I gathered demographic information about each participant including their age, academic major, teaching certification program and number of years at the university. Also they were instructed to select a pseudonym; to be used for confidential identification of documents and in the final report of the study.

In the original pilot study, I conducted person to person interviews with the participants, asking them about their first experiences with disability. Although person to person interviews is an effective method for gathering information, interviews might have appeared to put forward an agenda that interfered with the student-teacher relationship and the safe space I wished to create for the rest of the semester. Instead, the electronic survey allowed me to gather information confidentially and still achieved my goal of gathering information about the participants' experiences and initial thoughts about disability. In addition, it fit well with the course design which required other electronic

submissions, therefore adding to the authentic gathering of information throughout the course.

The survey asked participants to describe their first experiences with disabled people and asked questions about: the role of the teacher when there were children with disabilities in the classroom; beliefs about what children may know or think about people with disabilities; what the role of the teacher was when talking to children about disability; how comfortable you are talking about disabilities. In addition, there was a section asking participants if they had any question about any aspect of the research study. Data from the survey focused on how pre-service teachers positioned disability and assisted in identifying how pre-service teachers' discourses of disability changed during the semester, key components in two of the research questions.

Observations

During each class and occasionally as participants followed me to my office I conducted observations , assuming the roles of observer and participant. There are several noteworthy reasons for using observations as a data source for this case study. To fully understand the actions and nuances of the participants, data from observations was gathered in an authentic manner, within the actual "real-life" context that it occured. Firsthand accounts of classroom experiences allowed me to use an inductive approach and to gather direct information and personal knowledge about events and actions that would be difficult to ascertain through interviews or other data collection methods (Patton, 1987). After each class session, I wrote notes about events that were relevant to the study. In this way, I documented key points raised by participants. These field notes were descriptive and reflective and were hand written in a notebook and then summarized

on research memos. This was perhaps the most challenging part of the research process. Because I was both the researcher and the teacher, multiple demands sometimes meant that it was difficult to follow through with this note taking activity. While I wrote field notes after each class session, I also relied on the audio-taped sessions of each class as the primary data source.

In order to accurately capture everyone's talk, a portion of seven class sessions were recorded using an Olympus, model WS-331M digital audio recorder. The recorder(s) was placed in the center of the table for both whole group and small peer group sessions; and with few exceptions was successful. In the room where the class took place, participants sat around a conference table, a good layout for interactions among participants as well as for the recording task. During the times that participants met in small peer groups, groups were either located at opposite ends of the classroom or in a separate classroom, to avoid any distractions or distortions to the audio-recording.

In two class sessions, three recorders were used to individually audio-tape small peer groups. Sometimes the conversations in the class focused on issues in the syllabus concerning other assignments. This was generally at the start or finish of class. These portions of the class were not audio-taped because they were not related to the study. After the study was completed, I met with the participants for a group session in order to do member checks about my preliminary findings. This session was also audio- taped. In all there was 15 hours and 38 minutes of audio-taped sessions.

Transcriptions of class meetings

Transcribing class meetings as part of the data collection provided a manageable method for a close examination of the disability discourses and the changes in discourses

of each participant and of the group as a whole, central questions of this study. On the

day of the recordings, the audio-tapes were uploaded to a laptop and renamed so they

could be identified by the date and name of event (e.g. October 20 small group 1). After

they were uploaded, the original digital copies on the audio-recorder were erased. After

each session I listened back to each recording, making descriptive notes and jotted down

which sections were most relevant to my research questions. After listening back, I wrote

a brief summary identifying the relevance to the study and the section that required

transcription.

Transcribing is a daunting task. After my first attempt at transcription, I decided

to obtain the services of a professional transcriber. The service was reliable and able to

return the transcript within a week or two. This service transcribed the longer portions of

the classes that I identified as most relevant to the study, including the small peer group

meetings (10/13/ and 10/20/11) and the whole class debriefing session (11/17/11). The

remaining portions of the audio-tapes that I identified as relevant, I transcribed on my

own. After the transcriptions were sent to me from the professional service, I went back

and listened to the tapes again, so that I could add in the participants' names, indicating

who said what on the tapes. Then all of the transcriptions were relabeled to match the

data collection chart, indicating the event and date (i.e. E6i Sept 22 Transcription).

Instead of just focusing on the sessions focused on disability, I made a decision to

audio-tape most of the class session. I wondered if the participants would begin to make

connections to how disability intersects with other identities and the other topics we

explored. In addition, I was curious about how participants were becoming more

critically literate when exploring all of the social studies topics. Although this did not

directly relate to the research questions, their overall professional growth and a developing commitment towards a social justice stance was relevant to the kinds of teachers they would become.

Documents

Documents included a critical literacy organizer, online reading responses and the lesson plan assignment. The lesson plan assignment included the paragraph of intent, the original lesson plan, feedback on the original and revised lesson plans, reflection upon implementation, artifacts of student learning and the rubric. Each participant in the study was assigned a number and a paper folder. Then each document was labeled using the participants' number and the event number and subscript described earlier in this report. Each participants' folder contained their related document piece. Doing this helped with the analysis process, making it easy to sort and examine the data collection by event and by participant.

The purpose of the critical literacy worksheet responses was to capture participant's initial descriptive language and thoughts about the disability theme in each of the storybooks. From the data collected from the critical literacy worksheets on the first day of class, in addition to my field notes of participant questions about the literature and about the lesson plan assignment, I was able to examine early on how pre-service teachers positioned disability.

Online reading responses were an authentic way to record information, thoughts, questions, reactions and reflections. Guided by probing questions related to the readings, the reading responses served as a reflective tool for participants and help me gain an accurate and authentic sense of the feelings, understandings and meanings they attributed

to disability. Questions encouraged participants to read carefully and think critically in order to respond to the required reading material. The language the participants used to describe and talk about disability in their reading responses, the transcriptions of classroom conversations and the lesson plans were analyzed and compared. Artifacts of children's work provided a beginning picture of children's responses to the lessons taught.

Examining lesson plan documents helped me to answer my last research question, what happens when participants planned, implemented and reflected on the lesson plans using the children's literature. As participants wrote the lesson plan draft, participated in review discussions in peer groups, revised, taught and reflected, I was able to observe the challenges and processes of creating a lesson about disability.

Data analysis

In this study the unit of analysis was ten pre-service teachers (participants) whose disability discourses. Data collection addressed the conversations and writings during class sessions and the preparation of lessons for an early childhood classroom, using children's literature with a disability theme. I entered this study as teacher educator-researcher- participant. This study was designed to fit the context of a Disability Studies approach. DS advocates favor the kinds of activities that bring teachers and students to question and reflect upon the unspoken assumptions that underlie dominant discourses and discursive practices. The lesson plan assignment that uses the children's literature with a disability theme is a potential example of one such activity.

Therefore, given how my political stance may influence the data analysis, I followed the advice of Hatch (2002), when doing this kind of political work; self-

reflexivity provides a strong starting place for developing the analysis (p.195). Being reflexive of my own historical construction of disability and how this has shaped my beliefs and behaviors during this study is significant. My intentions are consistent with the position proposed by Sandra Harding (1987), in which "the researcher appears in these analyses not as invisible, anonymous, disembodied voice of authority, but as a real historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests- and ones that are sometimes in tension with each other" (p. 32).

Analytic process

The analytic process for this study is both deductive and inductive. As recommended by Merriam (1998) data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection (p.162). In my role as teacher educator, as I was collecting data during our classroom activities and reading and commenting on the lesson plan assignment, I was informally analyzing the data as it emerged through the semester. Data collection concluded near the end of the semester in November 2011.

Before I began the formal analysis, I deduced that several issues related to disability framed the disability discourses of the participants. Identifying "the best guesses about the ideological issues that are salient to the context" (Hatch, 2002, p.194) of the study led to first assignment of categories in the data analysis. Since the course was aimed at disrupting mainstream discourses based on a medical model, the frameworks of the social model of disability and the medical model of disability were a logical starting point. In addition, from the start I examined if participants approached the lesson plan assignment with an empowering sense of social change and positive messages about

disability or if their discourses were fraught with medical terms and an emphasis on deficit and the helplessness of disabled people.

In some regards this analysis began when the participants' submitted the lesson plan assignment for its first review. Before doing formal analysis, I had jotted notes to begin the examination of data using these themes: disability discourse through a social model; disability discourse through a medical model; the discourse of sorting (meaning the "normal" and "abnormal" categorizations and labeling of able-bodied and disabled people); and expert knowledge.

While I presumed that the initial analytic categories would relate to the disability models , the analysis was also inductive. While examining the data through the lenses of a social model and medical model did provide a place to begin, there is limited empirical evidence on how these models apply to teacher education. Finding out the practical teacher education implications when pre-service teachers' discourses are situated in these models drove the inductive analysis of this study. I anticipated that in this inductive process, new issues related to disability discourses of pre-service teachers would emerge from the analysis.

Deductive analysis

Disability discourse is the primary focus of the data analysis. To begin the inductive process, I read and listened to all of the data pieces-the field notes, research memos, documents, surveys, lesson plan, transcripts and audio-tapes. Essentially, I arranged the data in chronological order and reviewed the entire collection. Even though I had transcripts of the class sessions I listened again to the actual audio-tapes. This way I was able to get a more authentic feel of the data. As I went through the data collection

from start to finish, I also created electronic files of all of the documents in the study. To do this, I typed the documents (except for the lesson plans) into word files and printed hard copies of each. During this initial analysis, I entered memos in the margins, marked sections of the transcripts and documents and bracketed spots that were related to my initial deductive categories related to: social and medical models of disability, and participants' hesitation or discomfort with the disability topic. During this time, as I reviewed each piece of data, I added more notes to my initial summary memos about each of the events in the study.

Next in the analysis I planned to look across all of the data and pull together all of the data related to each of the issues that I had deduced at the start of the analysis. Because the data collection related to the medical and social model was too broad, I went back to the data and started to read through everything again, this time creating sub-codes that addressed discrete features of these models. In particular, I looked at the language participants used to describe disabled people and their use of teacher language. For example, I coded the participants' use of language about special education such as the use of words like accommodation or differentiation, and then I looked carefully at how these words were used by the participants when referencing disabled students. I underlined passages that seemed significant to the research questions (that I constantly referred to) and continued to develop codes related to the two models. As codes emerge within the broad categories, a summary description of each will be written. In all thirty new codes were developed.

Inductive Analysis

I realized early on that the entire data collection addressed the first two research questions (1) How do pre-service teachers position disability during classroom discussions? What are their discourses, omissions and silences; and (2) How do pre-service teachers' discourses change during a one-semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses? This was not true with the third research question: How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lesson designed for early childhood students that incorporate children's literature with a disability theme? For this question, the specific documents related to the lesson plans were the primary data sources. Since these were the final pieces added to the data collection, I went back and reorganized and summarized these lessons.

I returned to the documents related to lesson planning and read each one again. I paid careful attention to how the disability discourses were enacted in the lesson plans and in the reflections. I looked at the feedback I had offered on the initial lesson plan submission. Often these were review comments to help the participants to see how they had positioned disability in the lesson and to offer alternative suggestions. In addition, I looked at the suggestions that peers had made in regards to the lesson plans during the small group meetings. I wanted to see if any of the suggestions were implemented, and if there was a shift in how disability was positioned as a result of the feedback. The reflection of the lesson plans was the last piece that I read over again. This time, I wanted to see if after teaching the lesson, the participants noticed a change in the way that children viewed disability. I created a summary outline for each lesson plan, so that it was easier to access the main theme, standards, main concept, essential Qs for each

lesson plan. Then I created a memo summarizing what I interpreted as the intent of the lesson based on the lesson design. From this I began to notice that participants had set a variety of lesson plan goals and planned questions during the lesson accordingly; this led to new codes in the data analysis.

As I did this initial coding, I continued to read Foucault and literature about Disability Studies. My intent was to explain the analysis of the participants' disability discourses using Foucault's archeological and genealogical work as a lens. In particular, I found his work on "disciplinary technologies" and "docile bodies" meaningful to my analysis. In addition, I returned often to the Disability Studies literature to help me create better definitions for the codes I had identified. For example, from the broad theme of medical models, one of the sub-codes I created was "labeling". Looking at the places that the code of special education labeling appeared in the data, taking a DS perspective I decided that - How power embedded in these discourses/practices contribute to the educational and social positioning of disabled people- was part of the definition for this code.

In the next phase of the analysis, I returned to my research questions. One small change was made to the third question, the word "implemented" was added. In addition to what happened when pre-service teachers planned and reflected upon the lessons, I also felt what happened when they were implemented was significant. This made the question clearer and tied to the responses of the early childhood students during the lessons and the artifacts of student work that were part of the data collection.

After organizing the data by initial codes and sub-codes, next I organized the data by events, looking across the participants' responses during the selected events. I chose

those parts of the events that were most in line with my research questions. Using a word program, I cut and pasted each of the participants' responses into one document according to events. For example, I created a word document of what all of the participants wrote in event 2ai Sept. 14, the survey in response to the question: "Describe your own personal experiences with people with disabilities. Think about people you know from your community, from school and/or in your family". Doing this, I looked for patterns of codes related to the disability discourses of the participants. During this phase of the analysis, additional themes were revealed while others became more refined. Going back to my questions, I began to see which themes were interesting, but unrelated. These were removed from the list of codes. Also, certain topics were more salient than others. Organizing the data by event and across participants, helped me to see which discourses were most prevalent during the study and to make decisions for the final report.

During the peer group meetings when participants read their books to their peers and discussed their storybooks and lessons, I chose to be not present. I was curious if the participants' discourse would change. In two groups their language was much more relaxed and casual, which I interpreted as much more authentic data of their discourses compared to the more formal setting of the classroom or during written assignments. It was in these moments that participants were brutally honest of the resistance from cooperating teachers. In addition, their concerns about the lesson plans and critiques of the children's literature seemed more genuine. One peer group appeared to be intimidated by the audio-recorder. They whispered under their breath when they were talking about

tasks outside of the protocol. This seemed odd given the fact that we had been audio-taping whole classes for six weeks at the time of the peer group meetings.

Most of the analysis to this point addressed the first question of the research study, looking at how pre-service teachers positioned disability during class discussions. At this point in the data analysis, I had begun to make decisions about which discourses were most prevalent. At the time I had decided on six categories of discourses; these were later collapsed to the four discourses in the present report.

Next I turned my attention the second question: How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses? To address this question, I went back to the data and read through each of the individual folders I had created for each participant earlier in the data collection. I read the data chronologically and looked for changes in their language and also in the ways that they presented the lesson and reflected upon them. I anticipated they would adopt more than one discourse and therefore I did a careful reading of each participant's data set. Then I looked across the data, comparing the discourses of all of all 10 participants.

In this final stage of the analysis, data was arranged according to four main themes that represented the participants' discourses. All of the themes surrounding the discourses told a story, yet they were also not exclusive and often intersected with each other. For example, the discourses of labeling and being human were often included in the conversations about the powerful discourses of segregation and integration. Also, during this final analysis, I began to notice how within each of their discourses there were

often tensions and conflicts as their consciousness of disability was nurtured throughout the course of events.

In this final phase of the data analysis I returned to the documents from the lesson plan. In a nutshell, the focus of the first two research questions were based on how pre-service teachers positioned disability and how their discourses changed during a one semester methods course. Going back to examine the lesson plan documents, I began to examine more carefully how disabled people were positioned during the planning and teaching of the lessons. I compared the each lesson plan analysis to what I had already found out in the analysis of each of the participants' conversations and written assignments. I became aware of when participants grappled with more than one discourse and noted how they described the experiences of designing and implementing the lesson plan. During this time I also noticed what disability discourses shifted and remained the same and some instances where discourses were silenced or omitted during the activities in class and during the lesson plan process.

At this time, I went back to review my questions one more time and created drafts of the generalizations of my preliminary findings. As I started to write down some generalizations, I also stepped back to look again at the themes and rechecked the data to assure that it supported this initial draft. When pieces are pulled out for close examination, sometimes the researcher loses sight of the whole. Going back and forth between pieces and the whole was important. Finally the picture of the participants' disability discourses began to take shape.

Before writing up the final findings I decided to use three strategies in order to increase internal validity: peer review, member checks and clarification of researcher

bias. The strategies utilized for internal validity are described in the next section. Memos summarized what I learned during the peer review and member checks. Then the final report was written.

Internal validity

As suggested by Merriam (1997) several basic strategies were used to enhance internal validity. In this study I decided to utilize the following strategies: peer review, member checks and clarification of researcher bias (pp. 204-205). As the preliminary findings were completed, I invited the participants to a member checks meeting. All but one of the members was able to attend. The participants gave me permission to audio-tape this session. During this meeting, I summarized the findings into key points, read them one at a time and gave the participants an opportunity to react to the findings. Since the participants had willingly volunteered to attend the meeting and were no longer a part of my teaching class, I felt their comments were genuine and without any restrictions. During this meeting, the participants confirmed all of the findings in the study.

The only finding questioned was that university supervisors offered little feedback to the participants who were observed during the lesson. Malena asked me to check her written reflection, where she thought she had described feedback on the lesson plan from her supervisor. She couldn't remember the details and when I rechecked, the passage she mentioned was not in her reflection. Otherwise, all of the generalizations were agreeable with the "members".

In addition, the participants added to the conversation by describing their experiences with disability in the present student teaching placements. Two of the participants felt that the atmosphere was more caring towards disabled students and

promoted a more positive message for everyone. They also noticed that within a more accepting atmosphere, disabled and non-disabled students had developed friendships. Upon hearing about our work, one teacher asked Mary to develop a lesson about disability to teach the class. And Jill went on to describe how she had convinced the teacher to honor the request of one student who wanted to speak to the class about her seizure disorder. Talking about the resistance that some of the participants encountered during the study, strategies for creating a caring classroom community became a new topic of discussion for the group. This meeting enhanced the validity of my findings.

In addition, I asked two peers who are faculty in the same teaching program to make comments on the findings. Discussions about the findings as they emerged were done regularly, though informally throughout the semester. Finally, I gave a copy of the generalizations to my peers and set time aside for discussion.

One peer asked me questions about how the critical literacy approach met the needs of the disabled students in the class. Upon closer reading, she found out that this was in fact a significant part of the findings. During this peer review, in light of the findings we wondered about other places that disability could be included in our teaching program. Similar to the member check meeting, the findings seemed significant to both the practices of teachers and the teaching program.

The second colleague was a teacher educator and was on a leave of absence as a second grade teacher. In addition to the preliminary findings, I had been sharing the concerns and written reflections of the participants on a regular basis. She often confirmed when the feelings and actions of the participants represented what she saw

happening in the field. These meetings validated this study and furthered my thinking about the study's implications for early childhood teachers.

At the onset of this study I have acknowledged my history and orientation toward disability. My research journal guided my reflexivity as a teacher and instructor within the study. Although I entered this study with insider knowledge of disability, the study took place in a constructivist classroom where knowledge and understandings were co-constructed and with an emphasis on reflective practices. It was in this environment of practices built on shared authority and reflection that I was able to conduct this study without bias.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The point is to pull up short before the possibility that what we thought was true might not be, that what we thought was normal or natural might be the product of political struggle, and to start- from just that place- *to think*- which means to question, to critique, to experiment, to wonder, to imagine, to try. (McWhorter, 2005, p.xvii).

Three research questions guided the data collection and analysis of this study: (1) How do pre-service teachers position disability during classroom discussions ? What are their discourses, omissions and silences ? (2) How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses ? And (3) How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lessons designed for early childhood students that incorporate children's literature with a disability topic? As I embarked on this journey of investigation and examination of the disability discourses of this specific cohort of pre-service teachers, I remind myself that it is just that- a journey. For some it will be the first time they will examine disability and its meanings or perhaps the first time they've been asked to *really* look and think of what might have passed by as invisible though it was really there all the time. For some, disability stories jumped forward, obvious, unconcealed, an open manuscript of their personal history. For others, disability stories slowly unfurled, while some remain hushed. My original intent as an instructor was to raise consciousness, though perhaps it is better said, to nurture consciousness about disability. "To raise" seems mechanical, prescriptive and linear, such as to raise your hand or to raise a partner's bid. To nurture takes into account our humanity and emotions and speaks well to my belief that we are all intimately mindful of

disability already; what is required is a nurturing space to imagine and reflect on our multiple positions within its discourse. The findings in this study are an affirmation of that belief.

Eleven "events" from the course were selected as data sources and are outlined in the methodology. Data from these events were analyzed to generate these findings. In this chapter, excerpts from these sources are identified by event number, subscript and date. Event number and subscripts are defined in the data collection chart provided in the methodology section of this paper.

Participants and their disability experiences

I begin this chapter by introducing the pre-service teachers and their early-semester responses when asked to describe their personal experiences with people with disabilities. In the first few days of the semester, participants were required to complete an online survey related to their personal experiences with disability and their beliefs about teaching young children about disability. I expected that this survey assignment would guide me to gain an initial understanding of each of the participant's experiences, beliefs and assumptions about disability. In the following section, I include excerpts of their written responses to this prompt. *Describe your own personal experiences with people with disabilities. Think about people you know from your community, from school and/ or in your family* (E2ai,9/14/11).

Giada (age 27) is a white female majoring in Sociology and Early Childhood Education.   Here is an excerpt from her response.

> One of my best friends since I was just a toddler is hearing impaired. He has been that way since birth. Throughout my life I have experienced many ups and downs with him. He never learned to use sign language, but has however learned to speak quite remarkably. To most he speaks with a severe speech impediment, but

for some reason me and those close to him understand him 98% of the time. He is a great example of someone with a disability who has overcome many odds. Despite being able to communicate fairly well, I have had many emotional challenges in my relationship with him (E2ai,9/14/11).

In her response, Giada described a long-time best friend who she identifies as

"hearing impaired"; her response is genuine, personal and infused with emotion.

Malena (age 22) is a white female; her majors include Psychology and Early

Childhood Education. This is an excerpt from her response.

I had a brother Tom that was Down Syndrome. He was exactly one year and one day younger than me. He passed away when he was 7 and I was 8 years old. He passed away from Leukemia. Even though I was young when he passed away I still remember him, and think about him every day. My mother was fortunate to be able to have another child. I now have another brother Charles who is 17…My mother is a very strong woman to go through a tragedy like that. She has been an advocate for many different groups and organizations. She has been the spokesperson at many different groups to parents who have gone through or were going through the same thing as her (E2ai,9/14/11)

The subject of Malena's story is about her brother Tom who was diagnosed with Down

Syndrome; I had heard this sad story before, during one of our personal conversations

last semester. Malena's account includes a common component in the discourse of the

disabled child, the story of the mother.

Whitney (age 22) is a white female whose majors include Liberal Studies with

concentrations in History and Psychology concentrations and Early Childhood Education.

This is her response in its entirety.

I have had many family members with different disabilities so I have been exposed to the differences of people throughout my life. From Autism, to MS, to ADHD, I have witnessed firsthand different disabilities. In school, I never really witnessed or dealt with any children with disabilities because they were in a separate room for them to learn (E2ai,9/14/11).

Whitney's response is short and to the point and specifies that she has had multiple

family experiences with disabled people. Her comment about the absence of in-school

encounters supports the disability discourse of segregation, lack of privilege and

invisibility that in time found its way into many of our classroom conversations.

Jill (age 27) is a white female; her majors include Psychology and Early

Childhood Education. Here is an excerpt from her response.

> In elementary school I never had anyone in my school that had a disability. Once I
> got to high school that is when I experienced students with disabilities. I had a
> boy in my class who was in an electric wheelchair and also had an aide that
> followed him around. …He was in the same classes with all the other kids in my
> class and he was a lot nicer than most of the kids in my grade. He was involved in
> a lot of school related activities, such as academic clubs and marching band…He
> was overall a nice person and I still keep in contact with him through the
> computer (E2ai,9/14/11).

Like other participants, when speaking of her own early school experiences with

disability Jill comments on the lack of encounters during her elementary school years and

therefore the invisibility of disability. It would take until high school before an

opportunity for a relationship with a disabled peer was possible.

Ariel (age 26) is a Hispanic American female; her majors include History and

Early Childhood Education. This is her response in its entirety.

> I would have had wonderful experiences with people with disabilities. I have
> known people with disabilities in my family as well as other settings such as Girl
> Scouts. They have done great things in their lives and have been inspirations to
> me. They let nothing hold them back from their goals and passion. They truly love
> life(E2ai,9/14/11).

Ariel's response describing the disabled people in her life is exceptionally positive and

upbeat with an emphasis on "great things" and "inspirations". Later in the semester,

Ariel's story will expand and the societal challenges of what is meant by "let nothing hold them back from their goals and passions" will be uncovered.

Mary (age 22) is a white female; her majors include History and Early Childhood Education. By far, Mary's writings represented the widest variety of disability experiences. As an introduction, I will include here an excerpt about her neighbor, Robert and then a story of hesitation during her middle-school experience with "extreme disabilities".

> My neighbor, Robert who is now seventeen years of age, was born with Down Syndrome. Growing up, I was close with his family, who had three other children, two of whom were close in my age and one who was Robert's twin…I feel that Robert was given such wonderful and suitable care that he flourished as a student and a patient of Down Syndrome. I admire his mother for her patience, perseverance, and positive outlook in providing Robert with an opportunity to succeed with a disability. Although I don't see Robert or his family as often as I used to, I am always greeted with a big smile and wave upon crossing paths with him near our driveways.

> As a member of the school band in my middle school, I remember that special education students would occasionally be welcomed into our practice room to watch. I can recall that my fellow band mates and I were at first apprehensive to their presence, having little or no exposure with such extreme disabilities, but eventually discovered the importance and beauty of allowing such students to become part of the school community (E2ai,9/14/11).

In her response she   describes her neighbor, Robert "who was born with Down Syndrome", the middle- school special education students who were permitted access to watch during her school band practice, and stories of the children labeled as disabled and those suspected of disability from the day care where she worked. Like all of the participants, the subjects she raises on day one will return to form a distinct agenda for reimagining disability.

June (age 25) is a white female; her majors include English literature and Early

Childhood Education. This is an excerpt from her response.

> In my own personal experience, I never had a disabled student in my class until high school. The student was in a wheelchair and as she came down the hall people would stare and snarl remarks about her….It frustrated me to the point where I just wanted to say something to them…[N]ow since I substitute I see that younger children have more respect for the disabled classmates. They seem to want to help them more and they do not seem to view them as different. I guess in a sense the age does matter but seems as through the high school/middle school students who are probably trying to seem "cool" are the ones who are the most disrespectful towards the disabled. This is only from what I've seen (E2ai,9/14/11).

Like other participants, high school is the site of her first memory of a disabled peer. In

her story, June describes incidences of bullying that she witnessed. Although she makes

no real connection to how early and full inclusion might influence peer relationships, she

does notice that when disabled peers are present and included in younger grades, mutual

respect is a real possibility.

Sofia (age 24) is a Hispanic female; her majors include Psychology, Women and

Gender Studies and Early Childhood Education. This is Sofia's response in its entirety.

> I personally have not had much experience with individuals living with disabilities. I have been around individuals who live with disabilities and I think many times I try to be aware of how I behave or make these individuals feel. I don't want them to feel incapable or that they are unable to do things on their own, but I also want them to know that if they need help I am here. I guess I am extra sensitive to individuals who are living with disabilities that I have come in contact with (E2ai,9/14/11).

In Sofia's story about her limited disability experiences, the reader can appreciate an

admission of uncertainty, insecurity and maybe discomfort as she grapples with how to

behave or interact with a disabled person. Here the elephant in the room is a person's impairment.

Mackenzie (age 23) is a white female; her majors include Psychology and Early Childhood Education. This is her response in its entirety.

> I am fortunate enough that I do not personally know anyone with a disability. I have however had the experience of working with a child with autism. When I was a dance teacher a few years ago, I had a little 3 year old girl with autism. The mother never told the dance school or myself that she was diagnosed with this disability. I know something wasn't right with her though and very quickly I realized I needed a little more patience with her than the other girls in the class. She always wanted to do her own thing and would never sit still. Sometimes it would be distracting to other girls. This was before I had any classes in college about autism and disability so I wasn't really sure how to handle things or if I was dealing with things the right way or not. But I tried my best at the recital, she performed beautifully after crying during rehearsals. It wasn't until another mother in the class, who was friends with her mother, told me she had autism that I found out. I right away told the owner of the dance school and she talked to the mom. I thought it was really weird how she didn't let anyone know. I don't think she came back to that school after that year because I don't remember seeing her again (E2ai,9/14/11).

Mackenzie states that she does not know anyone personally with a disability, yet she tells a revealing tale about a three year old girl who was a dance student in a class where she was the instructor. Not knowing at the time that the girl was diagnosed with autism presented a conundrum as Mackenzie considers how labels make disability visible and creates an authority on how to deal with things the right way. She then wonders about the notion of intentional invisibility and the secretive inclusion created when this little girl's mother did not tell.

Kiki (age 22) is a white female, age 22; her majors include History and Early Childhood Education. Here is an excerpt from Kiki's story.

> In my family, my grandmother had a stroke about 13-14 years ago. Her whole
> right side was paralyzed; she could not walk, nor talk, nor eat by herself. I would
> say about a year or two she bounced back. Her right side is still weak, but from all
> the therapy and help she is alive today. My grandmother is not the same person
> she was from before the incident (E2ai,9/14/11).

After describing, from a distance, several disabled peers from her elementary through

high school years, Kiki describes her grandmother's story after experiencing a stroke.

Therapy is credited for her bouncing back, though she is "not the same person she was

before the incident". Scholars have observed that one of the reasons able-bodied persons

hesitate to discuss disability is the fear of the inevitable. If you live long enough,

disability is a likely fate.

Many of the discourses that were introduced in the early survey responses of these

pre-service teachers arose again during our classroom conversations. Linda Ware is a

disability studies scholar and teacher educator who utilizes the narration of an early

memory of disability, as a starting point for understanding disability. Similar to Ware, I

noticed that "few relied on medical or psychological language in their narratives, the

absence of labels and deficits was clear; their word choice afforded a more intimate, more

humane narrative" (Ware, 2006, p.281). In most cases, the lives of the disabled

individuals who participants recollected became familiar subjects in the narratives

framing the disability discourses exposed during class discussions and in reading

responses.

During the course, the agenda for class discussions was sometimes initiated as

part of a class lecture or in response to a reading or a video viewing, as I had established

in the class syllabus. But equally, participants augmented the conversation with questions

and topics that were pressing to their personal and professional experiences, and therefore

were unanticipated. Data revealed that during classroom conversations and reading responses, the discourses of these pre-service teachers intersected with both medical and social models of disability.

In this study, the following disability discourses were most prevalent: (1) the labeling discourse; (2) the humanness of disabled people; (3) inclusion and segregation; and (4) the discourse of authority. In my examination of the discourses of these pre-service teachers, I was conscious of how the unlimited intersection of these discourses became a source of tension as participants grappled with how they understood, imagined, reflected upon and therefore positioned disability. In this next section, I will describe participation in and changes within each of these discourses, followed by an examination of how these pre-service teachers positioned disability. The following research questions guide this section: (1) How do pre-service teachers position disability during classroom discussions ? What are their discourses, omissions and silences ? (2) How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-semester social studies and language arts methods course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses?

Disability discourses

In my examination of the disability discourses of the participants in this study, I borrow from the archeological and genealogical works of Foucault (1969/1972, 1975/1995, 1988). In his early archeological work, Foucault (1969/1972) seeks to make clear the structures, rules and procedures that determine the different forms of our knowledge (Kenway, 1990, p. 173). In what Foucault refers to as an "archeology of knowledge", he studied the rules that determined what can and cannot be said within a particular discourse at a particular time. Foucault conceptualized discourse as "practices

that systematically form the objects of which they speak…"(1972, p. 49). Foucault

noticed that as new disciplines were constituted, discourses were organized in a manner

that power/knowledge was exercised. Foucault identified power/knowledge as an

inseparable relationship that defines the concept of discourse and legitimizes the social

meanings that become our everyday assumptions and practices.

      For this study, I turned my attention to how the disciplines of medicine, law, and

education operate to objectify the human body of the disabled by use of what Foucault

calls "disciplinary technologies"   (Rabinow, 1984, pp 179-88).   Designed to produce a

"docile body which can be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1995,

p. 138), these technologies can be recognized as all of the diagnostic and prognostic

methods which identify deviation, label, individualize and govern the disabled. These

technologies are regulated to specialists and professionals who then generate, promote

and act to institutionalize "regimes of truth" about disability. It is through the acts of

these disciplinary technologies that that objectification of the disabled person, *the docile

body*, takes place. In reference to these acts as "dividing practices", Foucault (1982, pp.

777-78) explains how through the relations of power/knowledge, professionals are

sanctioned to classify, categorize, distribute, contain, manipulate and control people.

(Kenway, p. 174).

      Through this class and in this study, I aimed for the participants to reimagine

disability, to examine, question and challenge the traditional disability discourses,

generated and promoted by "expert" regimes of truth and acted upon through "dividing

practices" inherent in the "disciplinary technologies" of medicine, law and education. At

the start of our conversations on disability, I began with a short lecture on the history of education in the United States for disabled children. In preparation for this particular class, participants were required to read the first three chapters of *Rethinking Disability: A Disability Studies Approach to Inclusive Practices* by Jan Valle and David J. Conner (2011). This reading included: Chapter 1: *Making Sense of Public School Culture and Context* (pp.1-15); Chapter 2: *Contemplating the (In)visibility of Disability* (pp. 16-38); and Chapter 3: *Examining Beliefs and Expanding Notions of Normalcy* (pp.39-54). One intention of the course was to expose how discourses of disability may have formed and changed over time with the goal for these pre-service teachers to examine how they are positioned within its present day discourse.

In the *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969/1972), Foucault discards traditional tendencies to read history as straightforward narratives of linear progress, rather "attention [should] be turned…to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity" (Foucault, 1972, p. 4). The Education of All Handicapped Act (EHA 1975), later reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA 1987/1997/ 2004), in concert with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 1990) represent such phenomenon of rupture in the history of disabled children and public education (Ware, 2004, p. 152). How federal policies became enacted in regards to historical judicial landmarks in disability history and the present-day performances of their impact on the discourses of disability in and out of schools framed our first class conversations. In summary, during class conversations , in written reading responses, and during the lesson plan assignment the participants in this study put an emphasis on the following disability discourses: (1) Labeling discourse; (2) Discourse

of being human; (3)Discourse of inclusion and segregation; and (4) Discourse of authority.

In the next section, I will describe the lesson planning assignment and then provide definitions of each discourse. While I utilized four discourses in the organization of this report, I did not wish to imply that these are discrete categories for thinking about the experiences of disabled people. Clearly, there is a relationship between all of these discourses and their contributions to what it means to be disabled.

The lesson plan assignment

From the beginning the participants in the study appeared to be enthusiastic, though somewhat tentative about the lesson plan assignment. For this assignment, each participant had selected a book from my collection of children's literature with a disability theme. There was little resistance and all but one participant completed the assignment. This participant had personal difficulties at the end of the semester and in the end, she did not implement the lesson.

On the second week of class, using the Young Children journal article, *Using read-alouds with critical literacy literature in K-3 classrooms* (Meller, et.al., 2009) as a guide, I demonstrated a critical literacy approach using the book recommended in the article, *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson. In advance, participants read the article and completed an electronic reading response. In their responses, they cited a variety of reasons for using a critical literacy approach, such as "to understand societal issues that effect their daily lives" (Whitney, E3ai, 9/15/11) and to "explore and get to know the world around them" (Mackenzie,E3ai, 9/15/11). Overall, participants presented a

beginning understanding of the benefits of using a critical literacy approach which was

encouraged for the lesson planning assignment.

Enthusiasm for the lesson plan assignment grew, when one participant came in on

week three and asked if she could share a story. On her first day of practicum, Sofia had

brought along the storybook she selected for the lesson plan assignment, *Rolling along*

with Taylor and his wheelchair (Riggio-Hellan, 2000). A new student who used a

wheelchair had just started in the second grade classroom down the hall. Sofia's teacher

asked her to read aloud a storybook, *My Buddy* (Osofsky, 1992) a story about a boy who

uses a wheelchair and has a service dog named Buddy. The teacher was very surprised

that Sofia also had a book to share that included disabilities. So, on the very first day of

practicum, Sofia read *Rolling along: The story of Taylor and his wheelchair* (Riggio-

Hellan, 2000) and had a discussion with her third grade class about disabled people and

wheelchairs. Back in class, the participants were very excited to hear how the story

reading went.

> Sofia reported on the impromptu conversations with her students about disability.
>
> Um. They didn't have a lot of questions but I talked to them like what are some things you think could help people who have disabilities who are in wheelchairs. And things like that. They said like having a ramp…They said having a ramp and one of them said that thing like you put the wheelchair on and it lifts.
>
> They talked about the button. And then I asked them um do you think somebody who is living with a disability is much different from you? And I felt they…a lot of them were going to say, "Yes". But a lot of them said, " No" and I asked them why. They said they still like to do things like we do. And they have feelings…It was nice. (E6ai,9/22/11).

Participants seemed excited that students were curious and were impressed with Sofia's

report of student remarks about difference and disability. When the storybooks were

chosen, participants expressed feelings of hesitation; they were uncertain about the appropriateness of the story themes and content and concerned about how students might react. Sofia's excitement about her impromptu story reading seemed to reduce some of the group's anxiety about the lesson plan assignment.

I examined the data from the lesson plan assignment in two parts: lesson planning and lesson implementation. During both aspects of the assignment, participants engaged in a critical examination of disability using a problem posing pedagogy as proposed by Freire (1970). During the lesson planning aspect of the assignment, peer discussions took place in small groups and followed a protocol that, for the most part, obliged participants to pose and work through the "problems" of planning and performing a lesson about disability. Lesson plans were also submitted to the instructor for review and revisions. Because these lessons were implemented, all cooperating teachers had the opportunity to respond to the lessons; in some cases, these lessons were also observed by university supervisors. After teaching the lessons, participants were required to write a reflective response about how the lesson went, including students' questions and comments, and participants' responses. Back in the university classroom, a whole class discussion ensued about the planning process and what actually occurred when the lessons were taught.

Disability discourses in this study

The four discourses that were most prevalent in this study included: (1) the discourse of labeling; (2) the discourse of being human; (3) the discourse of inclusion and segregation and (4) the discourse of authority. Next I will provide a brief definition of

each of these discourses, followed by how each discourse was enacted in the university classroom and during the lesson planning assignment.

For pre-service teachers the discourse of labeling is tied to their preparation for describing disabled students they will later encounter in their own classrooms. Mutua and Robin (2006) claim that pre-service (and in-service) teachers are "oblivious of the power inherent in the social and political meanings of the labels they use for children in the classrooms and how those labels reify, reinforce and reproduce the hierarchical social arrangements of the larger society" (p. 125). The language and terminology of labels are not value-free. Labels can systematically stigmatize disabled people while also providing a forum of equality that renders equity issues to remain unexamined.

The discourse of being human ties closely to the advocacy efforts and political struggles of those people who were most close to disability and saw past the "societal machinery of dehumanization" and to create a new text of full humanity for disabled people (Kliewer, 2006, p. 92). Here the civil rights and inclusion of disabled people is viewed as a social justice issue and the belief that disabled people are fully-human and therefore should be recognized as full-citizens alongside their non-disabled peers. This becomes a complicated discourse when consideration is given to the unborn fetuses of potentially disabled children and when the conversation shifts to include those who are identified as severely mentally retarded (Erevelles, 2005).

The discourse of inclusion and segregation is bound to theories of child development proposed by psychologists, the foundation of early childhood and special education practices and policies. The participation of disabled students in the general education curriculum is "predicated upon meeting specified pre-set eligibility criteria"

(Mutua & Robin, 2006, p. 124) that are protected from critical scrutiny by the tight grasp of the field of psychology (Kliewer, 2006).   In public school settings, the script of disabled students as lacking in capabilities necessary for school success justifies their segregation in either specially designed environments. In those instances when they are included in the general education classroom, disabled students are regulated to the fringes and are denied access to full participation in the school curriculum and activities. This same script is then reproduced in acts of non-inclusion within the community. Included in the discourse of inclusion and segregation is a normative curriculum that silences the insider knowledge and life experiences of disabled students.

The discourse of authority refers to the historical notion of the "disability expert". While Disability Studies advocates designate disabled people as delegates for what is best for disabled people, the non-disabled other is often the recognized authority. In schools, special education specialists are recognized as disability experts and wield their power to sort, classify and determine the spaces and activities of schooling for disabled students. Their dependence on a deficit-oriented, medical model of disability draws from professional knowledge in the field of child development and has a profound effect on the general education teacher who is positioned and recognized as less knowing when it comes to the disabled children in her classroom. General education teachers fail to act outside of the directives of the widely- recognized special education specialist. These directives often act to "obscure the need for activism, agency, and autonomy- life skills" that fall outside a curriculum of remediation (Ware, 2004, p. 155). Therefore, in concert with the discourse of segregation, the discourse of authority acts in a manner to silence prospective conversations with and about disabled students.

In the section that follows, I will describe the discourses of the participants in this study during class conversations and writings followed by what occurred during the process of planning and teaching the early childhood lessons using the children's literature with a disability theme.

Labeling discourse

The labeling discourse was a powerful theme that came into view early on in the study and framed many of the dialogues and writings of these pre-service teachers. In our opening conversations, labeling and evaluation often framed the conversations of participants' experiences and formed the silhouette of their leading questions.

In the classroom

Evaluation was considered a key factor in the labeling process and one participant questioned if the staff at a day care center could "legally" tell parents that a child needed an evaluation to determine special needs. This led others to ask, what was the youngest age that an evaluation could be done in order to determine impairment? How long should a teacher wait before approaching a parent about an evaluation was asked? Denial on the part of evaluators in regards to assigning a label was identified as a fight worth pursuing. Three participants described the discourse of what a fight for a diagnostic label looked like.

In Mary's story of "an issue with a little boy" one teacher "crossed the line".

M: She was trying to tell the parents that he needs to be evaluated. She was fired. Because she was calling them at their house and telling them that she thinks he is autistic….The parents were completely against us. Because they had taken him to be evaluated. And the evaluator said that academically he is on target. And he is. I know he is (E1bi, 9/8/11).

In the quest for a diagnosis, Whitney responded that that sometimes evaluators are

wrong. Here a determined parent is credited for the successful labeling of her child's

impairment.

> W: My cousin has autism. My aunt got him evaluated three times. They all said,
> No, No, No. I know you are wrong and she was right. And she just kept pushing
> for it and pushing for it (E1bi, 9/8/11).

Yet another participant explained how a family friend from New Jersey went "All the

way to Michigan to evaluate him". The quest for a proper evaluation was believed

essential and in the best interests of any child with a disability. Although the participants

would later identify how once labeled, disabled children are segregated and positioned to

a lower status than their able-bodied peers, throughout the semester, the ideas of

evaluation, diagnosis and labeling remained a powerful and necessary discourse for

teaching disabled children.

In our conversations, evaluation and labels served several purposes. One purpose

that the label served was a proper school placement, as in Whitney's cousin whose

evaluators finally acknowledged as autistic and now attends a private school designed for

children with autism. "He goes to IA and he is much better" (E1bi, 9/8/11). Acting

through the modern day "disciplinary technologies" of special education, labels

fundamentally make disability visible and consequently authorize a truth about how to

deal with things the right way. Participants' beliefs are best represented by Mackenzie's

story of one of her three year old dance students whose mother did not tell of her

daughter's diagnosis. "The mother never told the dance school or myself that she was

diagnosed with this disability". Like her peers, "dealing with things the right way or not"

was a concern. Therefore within a mind-set focused on teaching outcomes, knowing the "diagnosis" versus knowing the student was often regarded as a fundamental priority.

Lesson planning

The discourse of labeling was prominent during the lesson planning process. All of the children's books included at least one disabled person and these characters were described using language about his or her impairment (disability). During the course, the words disability and impairment were used interchangeably, while handicap came to be understood as that which occurs as the result of systematic attitudinal or environmental barriers imposed by or lacking in society. Therefore while most disabled people are forever "disabled" or "impaired"; this does not mean they are always "handicapped".

All of the storybooks offered to the participants were selected because of their potential to challenge readers to think critically about the meanings of disability. Especially challenging was how to address the issue of impairment, the striking feature that defined disabled people as "not normal". A common initial concern in lesson planning was how to understand disability from a social model perspective with able-bodied early childhood learners who possibly possessed limited knowledge of disability.

In preparation for their lessons, participants anticipated that children would have questions regarding the disability label as described in the storybook. The following are some of the excerpts from a critical literacy sheet that participants completed when they first received their storybooks.

What questions do you anticipate children might have about the story?

Malena: What is muscular dystrophy? … (My Buddy).
Whitney: What kind of disability does Alex have?.. (Way to go, Alex!)
Sofia: How/why do kids get cerebral palsy? …(Rolling along with Taylor)

> Mackenzie: The children might ask about cerebral palsy….(Imagine Me on a Sit-Ski!) (E1 ci, 9/8/11).

Participants expressed concern about whether bringing attention to the sight of disability, the impairment, was the right thing to do. They wondered how much background knowledge students had about disability and whether talking about the impairment would be harmful. Since, for most of the participants, this was the first time that disability was included in the curriculum, there was uncertainty about what students already knew and how they would react. One participant wondered if it was appropriate to omit the issue of impairment and conversely plan the lesson around what students said when asked to make text- to-self connections. Essentially, the participants questioned what to silence and what to say about disability.

During peer discussions, some participants expressed frustration over the lesson planning process and were especially fixed on how to address the label or impairment.

> Whitney: (Storybook: *Way to go Alex!*) Mine was. It was hard for me to come up with a lesson.
> Whitney: Yeah, but you don't really know what's wrong with him.
> Jill: What's wrong?
> Whitney: When I read it, you'll see. It's like Alex is different. His body doesn't work right or something, or like his brain doesn't, [this references part of the storybook text] and you're like, "What?". [E8aiv,10/13/11].

In the end, all but one participant began the lesson by focusing on some aspect of the disability label and thereby opened a conversation about the story book characters and their impairments. This is an excerpt from Sofia's lesson on *Moving along with Taylor and his wheelchair* (Reggio-Heeland, 2000).

> Sofia: 3rd grade lesson: I would like students to understand disability and the similarities between themselves and someone living in a wheelchair. Questions: What is the definition of a disability? How can we break down the definition to understand what it really means? Do you know anyone with a disability? (E10a).

This is an excerpt from Mackenzie's lesson on *Imagine me on a sit-ski!* (Moran,1995).

> Mackenzie: 2nd grade lesson: Do you think children with special needs should be treated differently? Students will be able to: define cerebral palsy; use the computer to look up information on other sports for physically challenged people.. . (E10a)

Though participants were unsure about how learners might react to the topic of disability, in all but one lesson plan, participants consistently included and addressed the disability label. In doing so, they opened the conversation to find out the students' disability experiences and then to address the main ideas in the storybooks. In their lesson plans, participants planned for a variety of critical literacy actions, including making personal connections, challenging commonly held assumptions about disability and addressing social injustices.

As the reader will find out later in the section on teaching the lesson, moving from good intentions to good outcomes is a particular challenge when it comes to sensitive and often silenced topics such as disability.

Teaching the lesson

Sofia planned to begin her lesson using *Rolling along: The story of Taylor and his Wheelchair* (Riggio-Hellan, 2000) with third graders by looking up the definition of "disability".

> Sofia: So I got the dictionary and I wrote it down on the easel. And it says like physical or mental incapacity or ability to do something. So obviously we have to break that down. So inability, we broke it down to not able, not being able to do something…(E 11ai, 11/17/11).

At first glance this seemed to be a clever way to guide students towards noticing that the dictionary is not always accurate. However, later I learned that Sofia did not go back and

help students to deconstruct and reflect upon the meanings of disability as set forth in the definition. By not disrupting the dictionary definition and asserting a discourse of disabled as capable, the lesson also did not move to a critical level and an abelist perspective of disabled as pitied and unable was evident in the written expressions of several of the students. Later on, Sofia realized that by not challenging the dictionary definition she had missed a critical literacy opportunity. This is an excerpt from Sofia's reflection paper:

> The dictionary definition of someone living with a disability states an incapacity or incapability of doing certain things. In relation to what someone living in a wheelchair can do, I would talk to the students about some of the things they think someone in a wheelchair can or cannot do. By then having the students research the topics they choose whether it is sports, or driving, or work, they will be able to perhaps shatter the stereotypes they have set in their minds (E11ci,11/17/11).

Shattering the stereotypes entrenched in labels is not easy task. Mary's intention in her third grade lesson plan using *Ian's walk: A story about autism* (Kennedy,1998) are clear. Her lesson plan was organized around intentions to address the concepts of "Fairness and Equality". In the section of the lesson plan, "Essential Questions", Mary writes, "How should people with disabilities be treated and what are some ways that we can spread that knowledge to the school community?"(E10a).

While reading the book aloud, Mary elicited students' responses, asking them "to write down questions or comments about the topic and discuss them in whole group after the story has ended". Then, "[a] discussion about fairness and equality will follow and we will record ideas about how to reduce discrimination toward people with disabilities" (E10a). During our whole class debrief, here is how Mary described her experience teaching this lesson.

> Mary: I did a lesson about autism and it was based on this Ian's Walk book. It was interesting. I feel like it didn't hit me that I was going to have to discuss this type of thing. I already was prepared, but as I starting reading the story I was like oh my god, these kids are going to have a lot of questions (Event 11ai, 11/17/11).

While adults may hesitate in what lies ahead when talking about sensitive topics, children easily bring forth ideas and assumptions. Like other participants, Mary reported how she felt unprepared to address prejudiced responses of some students. After reading the storybook, and starting a conversation about prior experiences with autism, some students made a connection between autism and a "weird, crazy" lady who is known for walking the streets of their community

> [A]pparently and she is known for walking around and acting differently than other people. And the kids were like, oh, I know this lady. She always walks around. ..Because the kids are like she must have autism, she acts weird. ..It was hard for them to avoid calling the people weird. They kept using the word weird or not normal" (E 11ai, 11/17/11, Mary).

Like adults, children's discourses on disability are influenced by the way things happen in the real world and will collectively and individually change over time. Many of the students in Mary's class grappled with the discourse on what is normal and what does autism mean, and based on their experiences with the "weird lady" in the community.

> Mary: …I wanted them to create like a poster that advocates fairness for people who have disabilities…But one of the girls was struggling a lot with coming up with something and she came up and she was asking me, so what if I write just because people act crazy it's just because they have autism (E 11a).

Other students proclaimed a counter discourse during the poster activity that was part of the lesson. One girl wrote, "Just because someone is autistic doesn't mean they're not normal". One student in the class who Mary described as "pulled out for all these things" offered a hint to his insider knowledge of what it means to be disabled.

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Mary: And one of the boys, he gets pulled out for all these things but he was the one that wrote something that I thought was really interesting. He wrote, "You should not laugh at people if they have autism because they were born like that". None of the other kids really connected to the fact that this is the way that these children are born" (E11ai,11/17/11).

Tackling the challenge of an open discourse on disability must begin with time spent on understanding children's past experiences and examining their assumptions. This idea of centering the text on personal connections is a first step for both teachers and students towards a critical literacy curriculum (Lewison, et. al, 2002). Mary reported that this was the first time this class was given the space to openly discuss autism. Mary was taken aback because she felt unprepared to challenge the children's connotation of autism as "weird" and "not normal" In addition, like the other participants, her practices as a newcomer to critical literacy and her lack of insider knowledge about disability made it difficult to respond to some of the children's remarks.

The children's remarks focused on assumptions about autism that were rooted in a discourse of labeling and associated with an essentialized notion that autistic behaviors like those portrayed in *Ian's Walk* were not normal. Thinking that these behaviors represented all autistic people, students concluded that all persons exhibiting these kinds of "abnormal" behaviors must be autistic. During one class session, Mary reported that that one read-aloud was not effective to reach her goal of "fairness and equality". In addition, participants began to express that the use of a problem posing approach with the literature was an effective pedagogy for exposing the children's abelist beliefs.

Giada was the only participant who did not bring attention to the label of learning disabilities in her storybook, *The Junkyard Wonders* (Polacco, 2009). For her lesson plan, the cooperating teacher recommended that she apply a text to text strategy by

adding a second Polacco book that included a character with learning disabilities, *Thank You Mr. Falker* (1998). Giada was hesitant about planning her lesson without bringing attention to the label of learning disabilities. Here is an excerpt of from Giada's peer group discussion about what happened during her read aloud.

> [T]he one little girl was like, "Why doesn't she speak?" And it doesn't really tell you. …So she was like, "Why doesn't she speak? Is she deaf?" And I was like, oh, I knew the book, though, so it's not that she's deaf… She just doesn't use words. But I thought that was so interesting that they thought like- this was someone who is deaf, a lot of times they do sign. They're learning about sign language in the class, so they don't talk. They use silent communication. So I thought that was kind of interesting how they <u>assumed </u>right away that the person was deaf (E8aiii, 10/13/11).

> Though she did not bring attention to the label of learning disabilities, Giada found out that children were already grappling with connections and assigning disability labels based on what they understood about disabilities .

Shifts in the discourse of labeling

All of the participants in this study believed that skilled teachers should identify and refer students for evaluations when they suspect that students are disabled. The designation of evaluation for those students who do not perform well in a curriculum designed for typical students is therefore understood as a truth. Hence, the labeling of students is considered an essential first step towards their repair.

It was during the planning of lessons that participants were faced with thinking about the meanings of the labels. All of the participants wondered how students would react to the label of disability or to the labels of cerebral palsy, learning disability, blind, and autism. In two of the classrooms where there were disabled students present, the participants reported that all conversations about what it means to be disabled were

missing; these participants and their peers wondered how the disabled students would react when disability language was introduced into the curriculum.

As it happened, disrupting the discourse of labeling was particularly difficult for Kiki and Whitney, the two participants who had disabled students in their classrooms. Kiki read *Arnie and the New Kid* (Carlson, 1992) and Whitney read *Way to Go Alex* (Pulver, 1999). During their lesson planning, both participants repeatedly returned to the notion of explaining the label, as the heart of each of their lessons.

In Kiki's lesson using *Arnie and the New Kid* (Carlson, 1992), she used pictures of accessible accommodations and discussed with her second grade class, how these accommodations are useful to disabled people in wheelchairs. During one peer group meeting, her struggle with the language of impairment became apparent.

> Kiki: So I'm basically going to have---motivate interest. Do you know anyone who cannot use any of their body parts? Like how does that sound? I feel like that sounds like---
> Mary: Do you know anyone who can't use a body part? Is that what you said?
> Kiki: Yeah, any of their body parts. Like how does that sound—you know what I mean, it doesn't sound right (E8bv,10/13/11)

When Mary questioned Kiki, it became more apparent that she felt that the use of deficit language was an inappropriate approach. In Kiki's original submission I questioned her use of the term, mobility impaired people. Yet, the language remained in the final version. To introduce her lesson, Kiki chose to use the universal handicap sign symbolizing a person in a wheelchair. There is no evidence that Kiki provided space for challenging the use of the word handicapped during the lesson.

Upon close examination of the resulting student artifacts, one student illustrated his picture using the text "handy cap person". Other pictures and texts illustrated able-

bodied students offering compassion for disabled peers in wheelchairs. "I'll push you" "Could you help me up the ramp" "I'll help you" (with a sad face drawn on the disabled peer). Although compassion for disabled children is a worthy goal for early childhood students, Kiki's lesson acted to also reify an inequitable helper-helpee relationship of able-bodied-disabled peers. In none of the pictures were children portrayed doing activities together. Not able to shift the discourse of labeling away from one that defines the lives of disabled people, rather than disrupt a medical view of disability, I assert that Kiki perpetuated a stereotype of disabled people as handicapped and helpless.

Whitney also struggled with a label of "mental handicap" which she appropriated to Alex, a learning disabled character in the storybook, *Way to Go Alex!* (Pulver, 1999). The dividing powers of the discourse of labeling were present in the concept section of her lesson plan.

> The Concept: Children will learn to celebrate the abilities of all others, even those who seem limited by disabilities. They will learn that although faced with disability, they are not different from us (E10a)

Here Whitney implies that disabled people are limited and creates a dyad of "they" and "us". Here it became apparent that these participants were unable to shift away from the discourse of labeling and therefore may have preserved the notion of disabled people as not normal and helpless, a consequence of the discourse of labeling.

Mutua and Robin (2006) propose that pre-service teacher are "oblivious of the power inherent in the social and political meanings of the labels they use for children in the classrooms and how those labels reify, reinforce and reproduce the hierarchal social arrangements of the larger society (p. 125). The ideas of evaluation, diagnosis and labeling are understood as powerful and necessary discourses for teachers. In this study,

there is evidence that when designing their lesson plans, the participants were openly conflicted about which aspects of impairment and labeling they should bring attention to and what they should silence when speaking with early childhood students.

While not all of the participants ended up designing lessons that disrupted the discourse of labeling, the lesson planning process provided a space where all of the participants became more aware of the powerful discourse of labeling. It was during the planning of lessons that all of the participants began to struggle with how able-bodied and disabled students would respond to questions about the labels of impairment and about what is disability. At the same time, the discourse of labeling for the purposes of special education evaluation remained an irrefutable truth. However, following Henri Jacques Striker, the participants were beginning to become aware of the paradoxical position of disabled people as "unspeakable and invisible". As "children are taught not to point, stare or mention the impairments of people they meet", able-bodied people are taught to not see "the one person in the room of whom they are acutely and uncomfortably aware" (cited in Ingstad & Whyte, 1995, pp. 8-9). I assert that as participants struggled with this paradox and tried to figure out how to address the labels of impairment mentioned in the children's literature, there was evidence of a slight shift in their discourse and they became more mindful of "the power inherent in the social and political meanings of the labels" (Mutua & Robin, 2006, p. 125).

During the early part of the semester our conversations shifted away from using labels as a reference point for special education services and we explored how scientific technologies act to label and divide people into categories of normal and abnormal, human and less-than-human. In this next section, I will report on the discourse of being

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human, first as it emerged during class conversations and writings and then during the lesson planning process.

Discourse of being human

The discourse of being human ties closely to the advocacy efforts and political struggles of those people who were most close to disability and saw past the "societal machinery of dehumanization" and to create a new text of full humanity for disabled people (Kliewer, 2006, p. 92). Here the civil rights and inclusion of disabled people is viewed as a social justice issue and the belief that disabled people are fully-human and therefore should be recognized as full-citizens alongside their non-disabled peers. This becomes a complicated discourse when consideration is given to the unborn fetuses of potentially disabled children and when the conversation shifts to include those who are identified as severely mentally retarded (Erevelles, 2005).

The institutionalization of disabled people at birth is centuries old. In the 20th century common practices for disabled people included institutionalization at birth and sterilization during adolescence. These practices have changed, thanks to the civil rights efforts of parents and advocates who created a new text of full humanity for disabled children. The horror stories of disabled people growing up in state institutions with less than minimal custodial care is part of disability history in the United States. Despite these won rights, there is still a need to examine whether disabled people are viewed as fully-human and understood as full- participating citizens in schools and communities.

In addition, new contemporary concerns shape the disability discourse of being human. In a quest to provide families with options for a "quality life", disabled babies are still positioned in society as less human or lacking potential human capability. One such

practice is prenatal abortion and is tied to the recent marketing of a simple blood

screening for Down Syndrome (Materni T 21, October 2011). Studies estimate that

termination rates for fetuses who tested positive for Down Syndrome range from 87 to 98

percent (Mansfield, Hopfer, & Marteau, 1999). The potential consequence of this

screening and other more sophisticated medical testing practices such as amniocentesis

and CVI is the eradication of people with Down Syndrome . Therefore, the dividing

practices of physical and psychological segregation from mainstream society and the

cessation of existence of disabled people prevail as prominent aspects of the discourse of

being human.

In the classroom

In our discussion of social segregation and the practice of institutionalizing

disabled people, several participants had stories to share. Malena referenced her own

mother's option to place her brother with Down Syndrome , to live in a hospital setting

when he was born.

> N: [There is] a special part…for like Down Syndrome too…Yea. Like someone told my mom that you should put your son there. (E6ai, 9/22/11).

Jill told of a family friend, a mother who did choose to institutionalize her son with Down

Syndrome.

> J: My parents have a friend who was married and they ended up having a child with Down Syndrome and the mother gave him away against his (the father's) will. He divorced her and he still keeps in contact with the kid who lives in South Jersey…And for …his birthday he goes there…Yea. like the mother just gave him away behind his back (E6ai,9/22/11).

Subsequently, Ariel and Mary informed the group that because of genetic testing, a more common response by doctors when tests indicate that babies will be disabled is a the recommended option of abortion.

> A: But now they automatically tell you. Because I had to go to counseling because my daughter had to go to the geneticist. And they automatically tell you that you should abort that's it. That's it. You can have more children. It's not necessary (E6ai,9/22/11).

> M: My neighbor was pregnant with twins and she found out before she had the children that one of them had Downs Syndrome. And they were like, do you want to keep it? She's like YEA. They're twin boys. I'm going to abort one? Now he's 18 (E6ai,9/22/11).

During these conversations, Ariel also shared the experience of a procedure she was given, to remove a disabled twin in utero. It was these kinds of conversations that made me realize how safe our classroom environment had become. I assert that the inquiry design of the course and the safe space created within our classroom community encouraged this and other critical dialogues that took place during the semester.

Although the discourse on how disabled babies are positioned as less than human in society may seem out of place in a teacher education program, the conversation began with how labels authorize the segregation of disabled people as a right and natural thing to do. Because today the institutionalization of disabled babies is not a common practice, participants began to see how a discourse that was once right and natural was challenged and disrupted. My intent was to focus the discussion on how the discourse of segregation in society changed over time, from one of total community exclusion and institutionalization to present-day inclusion in public schools. In addition, I wanted them to see how despite this shift to a dialogue of inclusion, the everyday policies and dividing practices in society continue to maintain a condition of segregation for disabled people.

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But many participants were dumbfounded and expressed concerns about the effects

technical advances had on current day practices and the position of disabled babies; so

our conversation stayed there longer than anticipated.

In these conversations, it became clear that several participants already had a

working knowledge of situations where disabled babies were positioned as less worthy as

human beings. Other members of the class expressed their shock at the stories of

institutionalization and the recommendation of abortion. When the option of leaving a

disabled twin in the hospital for adoption was also raised, Sofia could not forgive parents

for considering this choice.

> Can you believe it? Leave one and take the other, that's so selfish. If I was the
> doctor I would tell them to leave them both.

Other participants considered the secrecy and then long term consequences to the child

that parents chose to bring home.

> Whitney: Would you feel guilty for not having the problem? If you did find out
> that your parents did give up a child that did not have a problem (E6ai, 9/22/11) .

I assert that these conversations nurtured the consciousness of these participants

as they examined the intentional and unintentional consequences of the discourse of

being human and noticed how the medical model in action affects the lives of disabled

people.

Sometimes the mere physical presence of disabled people in schools and

communities is thought to signify recognition as full human beings and therefore having

gained full citizenship. This is a common misconception. Ware (2001) argues that, "[a]t

large, policies and practices that have a direct impact on the material reality of living with

a disability are rarely examined by society as many believe that disabled people already

won their rights"   Four participants told stories about disabled people who were viewed

as less that human and therefore they implied these individuals were positioned on the

fringe of society.

One story included an adult with Down Syndrome who works as a bagger at the

ShopRite where Malena also works.

> Malena: I work at ShopRite in my town and one of the baggers there is [sic] Down Syndrome. He is in his thirties and I see how people just ignore him if they are sitting in the break room with him and people just have conversations to each other right around him like he is not sitting between them. I feel that people like that don't understand that he is a human being with feelings just like them and yes maybe you can't have a conversation with him like the one you have with your friends, but that doesn't mean that you cannot talk to him, ask him questions, or include him so he doesn't feel segregated because people look at him as being so "different" (E5ai, 9/21/11).

The story of physical presence without social acceptance is mirrored in June's story about

bullying, an observation that occurred during her own public school education.

> June: This student was in a wheelchair and as she came down the hall people would stare and snarl remarks about her. They were cracking jokes and it was disgusting! (E 2 ai, 9/14/11).

Clearly, these participants realize that the mere physical presence of disabled people in

the school and community does not signify their recognition as full human beings.

Lesson planning

There were times when the text in the storybook described the characters and their

actions as "not normal". Participants were aware that these texts challenged the reader to

critically address prejudices about disabled people. During one peer review session,

participants agreed with Whitney that in her storybook, *Way to Go, Alex!* (Pulver,1999)

"it's hard for them [the students] to understand like what's really…" "Going on"

(June,E8biv,10/13/11). "Yea. But they said he has a learning disability like the other kids,

so they can't SEE the learning disability. You know what I mean?" (Whitney, E 8biv, 10/13/11). At this time, they expressed their discomfort that abelist language was included in the storybook text; however they did not offer each other any suggestions on how to invite children to question the language and abelist messages in the text.

Carly is a character in the storybook, *Way to Go Alex!* (Pulver, 1999) who is unhappy about how her brother, Alex acts, a problem that she blames on his learning disability. In the story, she describes that "his brain doesn't work right" and she wishes he could "draw normal pictures". With her parent's encouragement, Carly helps Alex prepare for Special Olympics track and field events. When he wins a participant medal she wonders, "But I'm thinking we cheated. Wasn't it cheating for me to hold Alex's hand?". In this story, Carly's discourse is one that describes her brother as not fully-human. Instead of changing the way she thinks about competition, throughout the story she reverts back to a medical model focused on fixing Alex because "his brain doesn't work right". Carly wonders if Alex is cheating because she does not feel that his level of participation falls within the definition of normal human success. Designing a lesson plan that might disrupt the text of Alex as not fully human presented a challenge to Whitney.

Critical literacy scholars noticed that in their efforts to "get the meaning of the text right" pre-service teachers struggle to move the conversation to a "critical level" (VanSluys, et.al, 2005). During their lesson planning, it was evident that all of the participants struggled with how to move the conversation to a level that challenged the able-bodied students to think about their assumptions that disabled people are not fully human. However, in their attempts to "get the meaning of the text right" those

participants who became dependent on the label and medical diagnosis subsequently had a difficult time reframing disability as a natural variation of what it means to be human.

Here is one example. In her lesson plan questions, Whitney asked "what were some of the physical difficulties that Alex faced with his mental handicap", with a goal that second graders will be able to "explain that disability is a disadvantage or handicap". In her efforts to "getting the meaning of the text right", Whitney relied on the literal text and didn't question how Carly portrayed Alex as less human.

After Whitney taught the lesson, she wrote the following in her reflection, "I think that after the lesson was taught, it could have gone a lot smoother than it actually did. The children didn't really understand the concept of what a disability was…" (E11c,11/17/11). In this reflection it is apparent that Whitney still feels that potential of using this storybook depends on students' comprehension of disability based on the medical attributes depicted in the text.

In all instances, it was during the lesson planning process, that I became most aware of how the participants conceptualized disability. I became aware of how participants were influenced by the discourse of labeling which assigned and reified a hierarchal human status to each disabled person and those medical discourses that were most resistant to change became more visible.

Teaching the lesson
Most participants described how curious and attentive students were during the read alouds. Five of the participants reported that based on students' responses their lessons were successful. While the other participants reported students "not getting it". Upon examination, these reported failures were later judged as successful lessons based

on the merit of uncovering learner's inaccuracies and assumptions about disability. During one of our classes, participants recognized that the uncovering of learners' abelist views was a successful first step toward challenging traditional disability discourses.

In cases, where students were reported as "not getting it", participants referenced ways that students expressed feelings of empathy, compassion and also pity towards disabled people. At the same time, participants understood that there is a difference between empathy, compassion and pity; they were also aware that the latter often positioned disabled people as not normal, less than human and incapable.

During our class debrief, Sofia reported on her lesson using *Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair* (Reggio-Heelan, 2000). In this lesson, third graders wrote a letter to Taylor, the main character, a boy with cerebral palsy. Sofia aimed for students to view Taylor as a friend, just like them. She felt that any acts of pity ran counter to the critical message of equality and meant that students "didn't get it".

> And I think some of them really got it. I didn't really want them to write like, oh, I feel sorry for you but I guess some of them did write that. One of the students who, he really is in his own world a lot and he wrote "Dear Taylor, what's it like to be in a wheelchair? I just feel bad for you. Your friend, Alex". So I talked to him about it after but I didn't want him to change what he wrote (E11a).

Sofia hoped to dispel discomfort with disability and wanted students to view disability as a natural variation of what it means to be human. A tall order in a school culture in which disability is silenced and there are minimal opportunities for interactions between disabled and able-bodied students. Yet, uncovering these instances of pity towards disabled people was recognized as the first step towards Sofia's goal.

Sofia was in a unique situation, in that a new student in a power wheelchair had just started school. Students' natural curiosity and interest about disability will be best guided and built upon when they are given authentic experiences with real live disabled people like the new second grader. During the first week of her attendance and when she taught her lesson plan using *Rolling Along with Taylor and His Wheelchair*, Sofia had a conversation about wheelchairs with her students. However, the new student was not welcomed into the conversation and Sofia missed an opportunity to help the students in her class and the new second grader to gain first-hand encounters with each other.

In June's placement, kindergarten students had first-hand knowledge and experience with a teacher assistant, Mr. K.

> The children know to open the door for him, hand him his pointer, and move the chairs around so he has enough space to get to the rug and the tables where the students are working (E11ci, June).

During her lesson, students began to make connections to Mr. K. and as is typical of kindergarteners, fascination with body functions did arise. June and I spoke about her struggle with how to answer their questions, such as how does the teacher assistant, " Mr. K. go to the bathroom?" It never occurred to her that it could be answered with a rationale for privacy, much like you would answer the same question about an able-bodied person. This discretion made me realize that June did not give disabled and able-bodied people the same human status. In this simple question about the bathroom, I sensed June felt there were two different sets of rules, one to follow when responding to questions about able-bodied people and the other, reserved for disabled people who she viewed as objects. I assert that had the question of bathroom habits been directed to her

own body, she would have responded quickly that such questions are a matter of human privacy.

Two of the participants' accounts included incidents where students' reactions indicated a discomfort about speaking up when discussing real-live disabled people. Here is one such account by Sofia that took place after reading *Rolling Along : The Story of Taylor and his Wheelchair* (Riggio-Hellan, 2000).

> So I read it to them and they had questions and stuff and then right after we were leaving cause they were going to gym. And there was a women in a walker and one of the girls looked and me and she---because the walker is in the book too. She's like (whispering) that's a walker. (whispering) I was like yeah. They were so smart (E6a, 9/22/11).

I asked if any of the students talked about personal experiences with disability. Mackenzie reported this story:

> Mackenzie: Just one little girl but she told me on the side, she had, I think it was her cousin she said, he, I forget, nothing like cerebral palsy but he had like a disability. But she didn't talk about it in class. But (whispering) she's like I wanted to tell you. I was like, awe (E11a,11/17/11).

Linda Ware (2004) brings to our attention, "[d]espite thirty years of mandates and educational reform that have evolved to the current conversation on inclusion-silence remains about the virtue of living with disability (p. 161). The status quo assumption is that living with disability is a taboo topic and therefore warrants whispering voices and conversations out of the ears of others. The fact that young students maintain this assumption is disturbing and re-emphasizes the importance of making sure that the experiences and stories of real live disabled people are incorporated in the curriculum.

Shifts in the discourse of being human

Early in the course participants examined the intentional and unintentional

consequences of science towards the humanization of disabled people and noticed how

the medical model operates to affect the lives of disabled people. I assert these moral

conversations nurtured participants' consciousness around these issues. However, once

disability touches on the personal, a tension occurs and it becomes difficult to locate

disability outside the powerful medical discourse. In other words, it sometimes becomes

irrational to see disabled people as fully human. This is a challenge that I confess is

likewise faced by even the parents of disabled children. Outside of Ariel's brave account

of the abortion of a twin who was identified as "not developing properly", no one in the

room mentioned the unspeakable. Given the possibility of a disabled child, what might

you do? From my position as a mother of a disabled child, now young adult, I assert this

is an expected silence that makes visible the complexities of disrupting the powerful

medical discourse that positions disabled people as less than human.

Seven of the participants shared stories of personal relationships with disabled

people. In one electronic response assignment, after reading assigned chapters in

Rethinking Disability (Valle & Connor, 2010), eight of the participants chose to answer

the following question:

Do you think it is important to consider disability as another aspect of diversity (like race, class, gender)? Why or why not? (E5, 9/21/11).

> Mackenzie: [Quote from Rethinking Schools, Valle & Connor, 2010,p.53]
> "Children come to us from all kinds of multiple and intersecting forms of
> diversity (e.g. socioeconomic class, family configuration, religion, culture, race,
> linguistic tradition, background knowledge, gender, life experience and ability).
> In other words, children come to school bearing all that makes us human". I do
> believe that diversity includes all of these. I do not however that because of this

people should be treated differently. Like the quote says, we are all human…(E5,9/21/11)

Ariel: As mentioned in the article rethinking disabilities, it is usually thought that people without disabilities are superior. A disability is something that makes someone have to do things differently. Just like race, class and gender, people with disabilities are stereotyped and treated like second class citizens (E 5,9/21/11).

In these excerpts, all of the participants who chose this question assumed a discourse of

disability as an aspect of human diversity. Many of the responses made reference to the

civil rights and the discrimination of disabled people.

Sofia: As stated in the article, "the world is configured with able-bodied people in mind" [Rethinking Schools, Valle & Connor, 2010, p.18] (E5,9/21/11).

Whitney: We do not discriminate or say that children that are a different race, gender or any other aspect that is considered diverse are not allowed in our classroom, but yet we separate people with disabilities in other rooms (E5,9/21/11).

As I read these responses and reflected upon how the participants positioned

disabled people in the discourse of being human, I was reminded of *beliefs-in-action*, a

type of reflection Linda Ware (2002) describes in *A Moral conversation on disability:*

Risking the personal in educational contexts.

This early work to initiate a moral conversation on disability in high schools among youth and inclusive of their teachers has led me to reflect on the meaning of that which I refer to as *beliefs-in-action*. Professional beliefs must be made explicit in everyday practices and actions, informed by the expression of virtues such that the default to unexamined compliance to mandate and conformity to policy is no longer an option. Beliefs-in-action would capitalize on the opportunity learn about others as we come to understand ourselves and to reexamine the knowledge sources upon which we create our understanding of disability-whether in school or in society (Ware, 2002, p.163).

Beliefs-in-action is informed by a professional pledge to reexamine what we already know about disability, to become more intimately aware of the truths of disability as told by disabled people, and to understand the impact of political acts of schools and society. This pledge includes a commitment act upon these beliefs, a key aspect of the course in which this study took place.

All of the participants expressed the desire towards the belief that disabled people are fully human and in the discourse of being human, disability is considered another variation of human difference. At the same time, half of the participants including those who told stories of close relationships with disabled friends and family members expressed a hesitation about speaking with or about disabled people.

> Giada: I am comfortable talking about disabilities with adults. I am however often worried of saying something not "politically correct" or saying something that would offend someone without meaning to, of course (E2, 9/14/11).

> Whitney: I think that in the classroom I would be comfortable discussing it with the children, yet when I see someone with a disability, like anyone else, I do not want to stare or make them feel as I am judging them, which may make them feel invisible instead of accepted…I feel as if I would be walking on eggshells with an unfamiliar person with disabilities (E2, 9/14/11).

All of the participants wrote lesson plan goals centered on students developing an "understanding of disability" and many included a discourse of being human which comparing "what is fair and unfair regarding people with disabilities" (Jill, E 10a). Yet none of the participants "capitalize[d] on the opportunity to learn about others as we come to understand ourselves"; none of the lessons incorporated the lives of real disabled people, though there were several opportunities.

I assert that interactions between able-bodied and disabled people may ease some of the hesitations and discomfort and contribute to a discourse of equal human status. For able-bodied pre-service teachers beliefs-in-action begins with these kinds of interactions. However, during the study, participants noticed there was no space in the curriculum to include the knowledge and personal experiences of disabled students. Although there were disabled students present in the classroom, the discourse of what is means to be disabled was silenced.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in opening up the conversation with and about disability related to the participants' own less- than- teacher status. The progress of the pre-service teachers is dependent on an evaluation score; this created a tension about what participants could say or not say in the classroom. From the evidence, I inferred that all of the participants acknowledged a discourse of disabled people as fully human. During the course they examined these beliefs and in the lesson plan assignment participants began to develop a plan towards beliefs-in- action that involved using the children's literature as a vehicle to talk about disability. In the classrooms where discourses about disability were limited to traditional medical models, this became especially challenging work for pre-service teachers who were positioned as less-than-teachers and apprentices in the discourses of disability sanctioned by the public schools.

Discourse of inclusion and segregation

Early in the semester, we discussed how psychological and standardized tests, such as IQ tests are used as scientific measurements to determine where to "place" children within the special education system. Right away, the conversation on inclusion and segregation led to observations and inquiries of how disabled people are positioned

as less privileged than able-bodied children in schools and neighborhoods. Although in

our teaching program, there is a focus on inclusion as a best teaching practice, when

participants offered examples of disabled students in the general education class, none of

the students were positioned as full participants in the general education classroom. In

the same fashion, their accounts of disabled people in the community established a

pattern of segregation in which, much like in schools, disabled people are positioned on

the fringe of inclusion in communities as well.

In the classroom

Participants explained that today disabled students could still expect to be placed

in segregated classrooms designated solely for the disabled.

> Mary: We learned. I mean everyone tells you that you're going to have learning
> disabled kids in the classroom. But every classroom I've seen. I haven't seen any.
> They are always in a little room with a round table sitting with an aide.
> (E6ai,9/22/11).

They offered several examples of how segregation in terms of physical space and

curriculum was a natural part of the school day. During class we discussed how the

division and compartmentalization of space can be an instrument of power and is one

way that schools convey to students what it means to be disabled (Foucault, 1975/1995).

Participants were astute to point out the times when these kinds of divisions meant lost

learning opportunities. In the first month of school one of the basic skill teachers in

Malena's practicum placement suggested to the general education teacher that

supplemental reading instruction for a small group of disabled students could take place

within the four walls of their general education classroom.

> Malena: [basic skills teacher] She's like if I can just come in the classroom and
> work with her. She [general education teacher] said No, pull her out. Pull her out.

..My teacher's like it's too distracting…she's too distracting to the general ed learners (E6ai, 9/22/11).

Evidently, a specialized curriculum for those classified and labeled as disabled also brings with it a visible lack of privilege and freedom to occupy the same space and learn the same curriculum as those deemed abled and therefore privileged. Here the discourse of segregation is authorized because disability is seen as a problem. Participants reported several instances where teachers questioned, why are these kids in my class?

Participants discussed how pull out programs may be viewed by parents as a good thing, given the one to one nature of "specialized attention" (Giada, E 6ai,9/22/11). But the downside of pull out and self-contained segregated classrooms and the effects of a special education curriculum dominated by behaviorist practices was also part of the conversation.

Mary's comments about a friend who was a "pull out kid his whole life" is one such example of the kinds of poor outcomes and limited and restricted school experiences that occur when segregation is combined with low expectations.

> Mary: I just have a friend who, the story really disturbs me because he's now a college student and he was a pull out kid his whole life and he can't do anything. He can't write a paper…he said, [Mary], this lady Mrs. Whoever, I was with her from this grade to this grade, she did everything. I was in this little room and she helped, he's like I loved her, although he loved her but…And now he's dropped out of school. (E6 ai, 9/22/11).

In addition, to the academic effects of how periodic segregation during the school day positions disabled students in a separate but unequal education, the social effects of not attending the neighborhood school was also a topic of discussion.

> Giada: One of my best friends was Deaf …he went to a separate school. But then he'd come home and we'd all be playing with the kids in the neighborhood and he was so disconnected. ..Like we would be all involved in things and he wouldn't

have an idea because he was at a different school at the time and we all walked home from school together and he would wait and come on the bus later. And he would already be home. It was just really sad…bringing him back was the best thing they did for him…it just took people who were willing to work with him in our public school. And they did. (E6 ai, 9/22/11).

While on the surface all of the participants' conversations appeared to favor inclusion in neighborhoods and public schools as opposed to segregation, there were also tensions and inconsistencies in their accounts. This was especially apparent when it came to inclusion in the general education classroom. I will discuss this further in the section that gives evidence of the powerful discourse of authority.

Lesson planning

While participants at least seemed committed to planning lessons that used the storybooks as a vehicle through which to examine larger social issues, they also worried about offending disabled students when talking about disability. During the peer review of her lesson plan using the storybook *Way to go Alex* (Pulver, 1999), Whitney couldn't anticipate how the students identified as autistic would respond to a lesson about disability.

> Jill: And you're going to ask them if they know anybody [who is disabled]?
> Whitney: Yeah.
> Jill: **Have [emphasis]** they ever seen anybody?
> Whitney: Well---two of the kids in my class have autism. So I don't know if they could comment on that or if they would feel comfortable about that.

Throughout the semester, participants discussed how disabled students in their class were assigned to aides and attended pull-out classes. Yet, the lack of space in the public school curriculum for conversations about disability created a silence, making it difficult to realize how the disabled students in the class comprehended their disability identities. While participants wished to include the knowledge and lived experiences of

disabled students in the lessons, the discourse of segregation objectified and excluded the disabled student.

During one meeting, Kiki told her peers that her cooperating teacher advised her to start her lesson about *Arnie and the New Kid* (Carlson, 1992) with an emphasis on bringing attention to impairment and the definition of disability. "She said, 'You would have to kind of like describe what disability is'" and give examples. Ironically, the cooperating teacher's reasoning is "because a lot of them are IEP students too", meaning these students who the school had identified as disabled were not *smart* enough to understand the idea of disability. Tied to the disability label, the disabled identity is constructed by schools as a segregated other. Within this discourse, disabled students are given little access to "activism, agency and autonomy" (Ware, 2004) and there is little attention paid to their disability identities outside the regulations and dividing practices of special education. Participants reported the challenge of utilizing a critical pedagogy about disability with disabled students that were present in the classroom. In classrooms that promoted no dialogue about disability, the discourse of exclusion reinforced the construction of disabled as segregated other.

Four participants advocated a discourse of inclusion by tying their storybooks to activities that promoted social justice for disabled people. After reading *Ian's Walk* (Lears,1998), Mary planned for students to create a poster "that will advocate fairness and equality for people who are disabled" (E10a). Prior to implementation, I offered the following feedback which suggests Mary scaffold the lesson, by first finding out about students' experiences and assumptions about autism, before addressing fairness and equality issues. In turn, Mary did execute these suggestions during the lesson.

> Sue: Maybe you want to ask more Qs about the story and find out what they know about autism. If they know someone with a disability you want them to talk about what it means to them. What kinds of Qs can you come up with about Ian's Walk, that will help you to find out what they know. This may then lead to-Are disabled people treated differently? And then HOW? WHY? Then you can get to your Q about fairness (Event 9b).

Mary's initial intentions to reposition autistic people as equal peers and to tackle the all-encompassing subject of disability discrimination were admirable. But I imagined that the discourse of segregation would have a powerful influence on how these third graders responded to the never before discussed topic of autism. Therefore, it was especially important to take extra time to find out their contributions; there was no certainty that the discussion would instantly turn to one of inclusion. Instead, Mary did find that while one read-aloud was not effective in reaching her goal of "fairness and equality", using a problem posing approach with the literature was an effective method for exposing the children's abelist language.

As they designed their lessons, three participants chose to focus activities on providing students with experiences that would potentially help them to build knowledge of what it means to be disabled. During her small group meeting about her lesson plan, June explored the possibility of creating a braille alphabet to show kindergarten children how blind people read.

> I got the braille alphabet off line….So I was thinking beads and so they can feel how many beads..so this is the letter A and this is one dot….Like I wanted them to learn, but…I don't know if it is too complicated. (E8biv,10/13/11).

She took the initiative to speak with the art teacher who gave her encouragement to try. "[W]hen I spoke to the art teacher she was like we could try". However, when she shared her ideas with the cooperating teacher, "she was like I think it's too advanced". Similar to

Whitney, June's response pushed against the resistance of the cooperating teacher. "And I was like, it can't hurt to try" (E8biv, 10/13/11).

Finding connections that would help students to construct new knowledge about the lives of disabled people was a prominent goal in all of the lessons. Peer review sessions played a positive and successful role when it came to problematizing how to use the literature to draw out the kinds of connections that encouraged a discourse of inclusion.

June also struggled when the kindergarteners obviously did not fully understand the meaning of blindness, a goal that June considered important.

> June: ..and then they would close their eyes and be like, I'm blind. And I'm like, well they got the concept of it. I said, well, what do you see. And they're like we see nothing. The other kid's like can I put sunglasses on and be blind.
> Sue: Interesting questions
> June: And I'm like not because you can still see through them (Event 11 ai, 11/17/11).

While June reflected on these issues, she also wished to extend the lesson to include other aspects of disability. Participants were encouraging and commented on how her commitment to the topic of disability was inspiring to the early childhood students. "You inspired them to be interested" (Mary, E11ai,11/17/11). Eventually, as part of another course assignment, June did create a three day lesson about sensory disabilities. This commitment to continue the conversation about disability, to keep disability visible in the curriculum *is* inspirational.

Whitney announced to her peer group the difficulties she was experiencing to come up with ideas for a lesson plan for *Way to Go, Alex!* (Pulver, 1999)*,* a story about Alex and his sister who helps him prepare for a Special Olympics event. One of the

questions she pondered was if students would know what Special Olympics are. The other participants offered constructive suggestions based on her intentions. Peers suggested resources such as Special Olympics commercials or visiting a local Special Olympics headquarters for more information. They discussed local events that might tap into students' prior knowledge, such as the Special Olympics running event that took place nearby and ended in the Lincoln Tunnel.

A pattern of helping each other to identify good questions and find lesson resources that presented a discourse of inclusion dominated the small group work. When June presented her lesson plan about *Lucy's Picture* (Moon, 1994) and blindness, because of grandpa's dog, Honey, peers suggested she ask the students about service dogs.

> Jill: So you should say, why does grandfather have a dog?
> June: Oh. As one of the questions?
> Jill: Yep. Or like a question you ask during the book. To see if they know what a service dog is. Because if they don't then you can talk about it too.
> June: Yea.
> Jill: How some people need service dogs to help them (Event 8ci).

Sometimes the questions strayed away from disability as the central theme. Together as a group, participants were sometimes able to identify themes that were relevant, regardless of whether the main character in the story was abled-bodied or disabled. When discussing the scene in *Ian's Walk* (Lear'1998) where Ian (who is autistic) gets lost during a visit to the park with his sister, they decided that getting lost in the park and the fear of being lost is relevant and should be examined. In this case, the human story of a sibling lost in the park took precedent over the story of disability, and for just an instant, it was evidenced that the boundaries of normal and abnormal were starting to blur.

In this same small group, when Giada worried that she did not bring enough attention to the disability themes in her books, *The junkyard wonders* (Polacco, 2010) and *Thank you Mr. Falker* (Polacco, 2001) her group mates were supportive and implied that introducing concepts that effect disabled and abled in a manner that allows children to find connections and construct their own meanings is a worthwhile approach. Instead of pointing out the characters' learning disability label, the students in Giada's class discussed and asked questions about the story and then found text-to-self connections. Giada waffles with her intentional omission of addressing what it means to be learning disabled.

> Giada: So like the whole theme of disability really wasn't part of the actual thing….But it's …like a good way to sneak that in.
> Mary: It's like introducing concepts to them without actually telling them, this is a disability. Yeah, …I kind of like that better.
> Giada: I was like worried I wasn't completing the assignment the right way, like I wasn't doing the lesson plan the right way. But then I thought this is a whole another approach to doing it and I thought it would be okay.
>
> Mary: I remember…one of our professors was talking about how one way to introduce the disabilities…Instead of physically saying like, "Oh, this person has autism and they're different because of this. What makes them different?" That almost makes them already like stereotyping them. But if you just, if you present it objectively, like this is actually what's real and then do what you will with it.
> Giada: Right, like I don't want to point it out. I kind of wanted them to notice it on their own.…Like you don't want them to think of them as different.
> Mary: Right, exactly. That's why I kind of like that… (E 8av, 10/13/11)

Research shows that conversations about texts that encourage students to make personal connections is a beginning step for teachers wishing to implement a critical literacy curriculum (Lewison, et.al, 2002).

Teaching the lesson

During several of the lessons, four participants reported examples of times when children expressed abelist views of disabled people. Operating on negative assumptions, the power of these discourses were most upsetting to the participants in the study. After reading *Arnie and the new kid* (Carlson, 1992) , Kiki asked children to respond to pictures showing situations and places that were designed so that people who used wheelchairs could become full participants in every day activities. One child refused to acknowledge that people in wheelchairs were capable.

> Kiki: …I had other pictures that had accommodations. I had someone playing tennis, basketball, skiing. There was one with a boat [holding us picture of ramp access to boat], like to get on a boat. …One kid, I'm showing him the picture, he's like " No, no, no, not possible, no, no the whole time" (E 11ai, 11/17/11).

After a discussion on adaptive sports following *My Buddy* (Osofsky, 1992), Malena's class completed a graphic organizer; one area asked "what are some sports you think the boy can play?" In the story, the boy uses a wheelchair. In her reflection, after the lesson, Malena reported on the power of peer opinion in her second grade class:

> When the students answered the question, what sports do you think the boy can play. I was surprised that a lot of them did say he can play sports. After the students answered the question on the graphic organizer and we talked about what they wrote on the graphic organizer, one of the students said he can't play any sports because he is in a wheelchair and he can't walk or run. I noticed some of the other students that originally did say he can play sports started to change their ideas and said maybe Joey is right and the boy can't play any sports (E 11ci).

The challenge of disrupting every day assumptions about disabled people is difficult, especially without a working knowledge of what it means to be disabled. Participants came to realize that given the general lack of space for these kinds of critical discussions to take place, it was especially important to first find out what students know. Becoming critically literate is process, for both teachers and students (Stribling,

2008).There was a general agreement that although it was difficult to respond to the

disparaging remarks and responses of the students, these were not indications of failure.

By allowing a space to uncover prejudiced assumptions about disabled people, there was

also room for combatting those ideas and remarks that might have remained silent, but

still developed. The participants agreed that this exposure of deficit beliefs about

disability was the first step towards the disruption of the kinds of power relations that

maintained the exclusion of disabled students.

Shifts in the discourse of inclusion and segregation

During the semester there were two instances during class activities when there

was evidence of a shift in the participants' construction of disability as they began to

notice the role that context plays in how people experience their disability. In the early

survey assignment, Ariel described a disabled friend, Beth who was in her Girl Scout

troop. Here it is inferred that Beth's success can be credited to her personality that is

characterized as determined. "[S]he never gave up".

> …[W]hile in Girl Scouts I was in a troop that had children in it from preschool to high school and we all worked together. There was a young girl maybe 8 years old that I believe had cerebral palsy…She did everything with us and she never gave up. We even found a way for her to go camping with us. (2a1,9/14/11).

When describing disabled people that Ariel knows, she says this: "They let nothing hold

them back from their goals and passions. They truly love life" (E2ai,9/14/11). While this

narrative counters a dominant discourse of disabled people as poor and pitiful souls, it

also places the individual at the heart of their disability status and responsible for their

own success. It does not examine how disability is socially constructed and the role a

society plays in determining the status of all of its citizens. Later in the semester, after

reading the first three chapters of *Rethinking Disability*(Valle & Conner, 2010) ,

participants were required to enter an electronic response to this question: Do you think it

is important to consider disability as another aspect of diversity (like race, class, gender)?

Why or why not? This is Ariel's response.

> Just like race, class and gender, people with disabilities are stereotyped and
> treated like second class citizens. Something that struck me as interesting in the
> reading was the difference between impairment and disability. I never thought of
> the two as being different. I also never thought of the preparation needed to be
> taken before someone with impairment may need to take. Looking back I
> remember how much work went into making sure my friend Beth was able to go
> on trips with us especially when we went camping. We especially always had to
> make sure there was an energy source so that she could have her treatments. (E5,
> ai,9/21/11)

In this reflection Ariel is noticing the role of context in the (de)construction of

disability. Beth's impairment remained, however, because she was privileged enough to

have all of the proper tools during the camping trip, her (dis)ability status changed.

Therefore, she was able to successfully participate with her able-bodied peers. Ariel's

comment, "I also never thought of the preparation needed…" suggests a change from her

original discourse that implied the success of Beth's inclusion was attributed to a

personality that could beat the odds. "[S]he never gave up". One of the aims of the

course was to nurture consciousness in a manner that participants would begin to see how

disability is constructed depends on context and therefore to understand disability as a

social construct (Valle & Connor, 2010, p. 42).

Similarly, during the semester I noticed a shift in how Giada positioned her next

door neighbor Robert who was Deaf, in the discourse on disability. Initially, Robert is

described as "a great example of someone with a disability who has overcome many

odds" (E2ai,9/14/11). Here we sense that Robert is a wonderful individual whose power

to overcome can be attributed to his fortunate individual personality or innate ability to

"overcome many odds".

Later in the semester, during one of our class discussions on inclusion in the

public schools, Giada told Robert's story about how he transitioned from a specialized

school for the Deaf, to the public school in their neighborhood. "[L]ike bringing him back

was the best thing that they did for him….it just took people who were willing to work

with him in our public schools. And they did". In the case of Robert, Giada began to

consider what factors contributed to his successful transition to the neighborhood public

school. It was more than his ability to "overcome the odds", but rather it required a

school atmosphere of willingness to figure out inclusive practices and policies.

The medical discourse of inclusion moves the focus away from systematic social

barriers in order to emphasize the acts of successful disabled people as ones of

"exceptional courage" (Hunt, 1966). By disrupting the image of successful disabled

people as heroes who can win the fight against all odds, in a small preliminary way, the

participants were beginning to gain a deeper understanding of how the medical discourse

of inclusion operates. This shift indicated a change in discourse away from a medical

model of disability and towards a social understanding of how disability is constructed.

During our debriefing session about the lesson plans, one participant reported on a

successful lesson that focused students' attention towards finding solutions so that

disabled people can gain inclusion in everyday activities. To start the lesson, Mackenzie

read *Imagine me on a sit-ski* aloud, and talked about cerebral palsy and the main

character's first experience skiing. Then, working in small groups, students selected a

sport and problem solved ways to adapt equipment for the boy in the story. Students drew

and explained their inventions and then used computers to research actual adaptive

equipment for the disabled. Mackenzie also printed out the pictures of disabled people

using adaptive equipment that students found for a final class discussion.

> Mackenzie: They were asking like a bunch of questions about it, and then when I
> had them look up--- they thought of different sports that would have something
> like the sit-ski and then they drew what they thought it would look like if there
> was different equipment. And then I had them look it up to see. They were so
> excited to look up---Like, I just couldn't believe how they really loved it
> (E11ai,11/17/11)

During the read-aloud, Mackenzie reported, "They would ask me things like 'how is he

going to ski?" I asked them what they thought. They thought maybe they had a special

sled for them, which the sit-ski is kind of like a sled" (E11ci). Mackenzie reported that

during the lesson some of the students made a personal connection and related their own

feelings going skiing to those of the character in the story. In her lesson plan reflection,

she wrote:

> We discussed if anyone had ever been skiing before. A few children had but they
> said they hadn't seen anything like a sit-ski. They thought it looked cool. We also
> talked about the feelings the boy in the book was having and related them to their
> feelings when they were skiing. They agreed that they felt the same way as the
> boy was feeling: excited, nervous, anxious, scared and happy (E11 ci).

The responses of these third graders are the result of a lesson that encouraged

them to make connections to the text, to gather new information and to partake in

conversations guided by a critical literacy and disability studies approach. The utilization

of a critical literacy approach facilitated stepping outside of students' usual modes of

understanding and countered the discourse of disabled people as helpless. Through this

lesson, Mackenzie empowered these students to nurture their consciousness of disability,

to "read the word, in order to read the world" (Freire, 1993). In doing so, students did not construct disability (or to be specific, disabled skiers) within a heroic perspective of defeating all odds, but rather by applying a social model lens, disabled skiers were viewed on par with non-disabled skiers.

In all, seven lesson plans were designed to bring attention to how social barriers such as discrimination and able-bodied environments interfere with the full participation and inclusion of disabled people. However, just designing the lessons with a social model in mind, was not enough. While Mary's lesson using the storybook, *Ian's Walk* (Lears,1998) was focused on debunking the discrimination of people with autism, during her account of students' abelist remarks, I noticed that teaching these kinds of lessons required participants to think on their feet. Good teachers know they have to think on their feet, but because of the multiple demands of teaching this is often a challenging achievement for pre-service teachers.

Jill's lesson was based on the storybook, *Arnie and the New Kid* (Carlson, 1992), a story about the encounters of a new student who uses a wheelchair and the school bully. During one class discussion , students' comments indicated astute observations skills about the able-bodied construction of the school environment. Unfortunately, just as students began to make a critical point, their conversation was silenced. This is Jill's description of what happened when the children became "rowdy" debating whether or not the school environment was accessible:

> I also asked them if their school was handicap accessible or wheelchair accessible
> and they started to be like, "No, it's not. No, but it is. It's not. It is". Because to
> like get in through the back door, you have to go up like one step, so one kid was
> saying that and another kid's like, "No, but if you go all the way around the
> school, you can get in". And so they did this whole thing where they…that's

> when they started to get like really rowdy. And so I was like, "okay, okay, okay. Let's break up". They broke up into groups and I let them pick the group and then I let them pick the book (E8 aiv,10/13/11).

As Jill abruptly ended the lesson, students were recognizing that just one stair can interfere with accessibility. I wondered if it was fair that a student with a wheelchair would have to "go all the way around the school" to enter, but Jill did not take the conversation to this critical level; she did not ask the students whether or not the school's accessibility options that they mentioned were fair. During her reflection of the lesson, it became visible that the multiple demands of the lesson, made it difficult for Jill to think on her feet. In addition, if she had more insider knowledge about the challenges of finding suitable doorway openings, curbs, and accessible points of egress, she might have understood that her students had uncovered a major social issue for those who use wheelchairs. This knowledge of what it means to be a wheelchair user would have helped her to respond more quickly and perhaps she would have been more confident and less likely to end the lesson abruptly when students became rowdy.

In summary, there were some shifts in the discourse of inclusion and segregation as two of the participants began to realize that inclusion is not dependent on the willfulness of disabled people to defeat all odds but rather depends on context and how disability is socially constructed. All of the participants agreed that disabled students should be included in the general education classroom. And there was evidence to support that they understood the disadvantages when disabled children are not fully-included as the result of pull-out programs or when they attend specialized schools outside the neighborhood.

During the lesson planning, in classrooms that promoted no dialogue about disability, the discourse of exclusion reinforced the construction of disabled as segregated other. This presented challenges to the participants who were required to act on their feet when students took the lessons in new directions. Participants also grappled with how to use the literature to draw out the kinds of connections that helped the able-bodied students to understand disability in order to encourage a discourse of inclusion. In those cases when the lessons revealed the ableist assumptions of early childhood learners, all of the participants agreed that teacher knowledge of these assumptions was an important step towards disrupting a discourse of segregation in the classroom.

Discourse of authority

Studies show that while general education teachers demonstrate knowledge regarding disabled students in their classroom, the power to act on this knowledge is superseded by the dominant deficit discourse of schooling. This discourse of authority empowers special education specialists to authorize the truth and disseminate knowledge regarding disabled students. Drawing from a knowledge base centered on a medical model, special education specialists are deemed responsible for the everyday decisions of when to include and when to segregate disabled students during the school day. The subjugated knowledge of disabled people is often not valued in this conversation.

In the classroom

When I analyzed the data, I concentrated on how the participants positioned disabled students in the general education classroom. The research of Dudley-Marley and Paugh (2010) support that the general education teacher will view disabled students "as

outsiders beyond the boundaries of *normal* teachers' knowledge and training", meaning

that the expertise of educating disabled students belongs to the special education teacher.

During class conversations and in her reading response that was submitted three

weeks into the semester, Whitney refuted the discourse of segregation. After reading the

required chapters in the book, *Rethinking Disability* (Valle & Connor, 2010), Whitney

writes the following:

> Sometimes we tend to treat people with disabilities as if they were invisible. We do not discriminate or say that children that are a different race, or gender or any other aspect that is considered diverse are not allowed in our classrooms, but yet we separate people with disabilities into different rooms (E5ai, 9/21/11).

Here Whitney assumed the position that disabled students should not be separated from

the general education classroom. Yet, on the first day of class when she describes her

cousin with is diagnosed with autism, she seems relieved that after a lengthy evaluation

process, he is placed in a segregated special needs school designed for autistic children.

"He goes to IA and he is so much better" (E1 bi,9/8/11).

Consequently, Whitney is straddling two disability discourses; both are focused

on advantage: the advantage of inclusion and the advantage of segregation. The former

positions disabled students as outsiders beyond the boundaries…" and the latter

potentially positions them as insiders within the "boundaries of *normal* teachers'

knowledge and training". I say "potentially" because even when general education

teachers accept the idea of inclusion, they still believe that the presence of a special

education co-teacher is the most essential ingredient.

In the same reading response, Whitney writes:

> After reading over the document, I realized that I wasn't sure if I would be able to teach children with disabilities. Then I realized that because of my education as a

child, where children with disabilities were educated in a separate room, I may not feel comfortable teaching them because it is not what I am used to…. "To honestly examine and reflect upon our beliefs, values, attitudes, and fears is to make the first step toward creating inclusion communities" (p.52). I felt as this was such a powerful sentence that helped me to realize my own possible fears as a teacher that may hold me back from taking on the challenge of having a completely diverse and welcoming classroom… (E5 ai, 9/21/11)

Whitney is not sure how to position herself within the discourse of inclusion/segregation. She is subjected to two conflicting discourses of advantage. She seems willing to position herself as a general education teacher that believes she has the authority to teach disabled students; but she also struggles with how her fears might hold her back. In addition to her reflections about disabled students in her future classroom, there is also a belief that the specialized autistic school her cousin attends is the right thing to do.

Whitney's story made evident the tensions and complexities of having multiple positions in the disability discourse. During the examination of participant's responses, I noticed fractures in their discourses about segregation and integration. These inconsistencies indicated the complications pre-service teachers face when they reflect on who has the authority to decide what is best for disabled children. For example, participants often explained the mechanics and desire for inclusive practices by were hesitant to identify themselves as an authority for teaching disabled students. Therefore, "[t]he teacher should make sure she has all of the necessary equipment, tools, and supplies for the children with disabilities" (Malena, E2ai,9/14/11). The discourse on inclusive teacher practices was denoted with talk about equipment, tools, supplies, differentiated instruction (Mary, 2ai,9/1/411), and understanding and accommodation of needs (June, Kiki; Giada, 2ai, 9/14/11). Essentially one of the goals of the teacher education program is to prepare and acculturate candidates to the idea that one day they

will have disabled students "placed" in their classroom. In this group of participants, there was no overt resistance to counter that idea. However, upon examination of their responses, few participants saw themselves as capable future teachers of disabled students.

Instead there was often hesitation to assume an authoritative role when it came to teaching disabled children. Therefore, despite the efforts of these participants to adopt the discourse of inclusion, it was not always clear how disabled students would be positioned within their general education classrooms. The following selection is Mary's hesitant response to this question: What do you think the role of the teacher is, when there are children with disabilities in the classroom?

> I believe that the teacher is responsible for providing all her students with an education that fits their needs. Although it may be difficult, the teacher should provide the opportunity for her disabled students to become active members of the classroom community. ..I also feel that an aide should be available for the disabled students when appropriate (E2ai,9/14/11).

Here I noticed that Mary depicted opportunities for active membership in the classroom as potentially difficult. I wondered how her own early exposure in middle school to "extreme disabilities" during band practice will influence her practices as a teacher. In her story of "special education students" who "would occasionally be welcomed into our practice room to watch", she summarizes the experience as one where she "discovered the importance and beauty of allowing such students to become part of the school community" (E 2ai,9/14/11). In Mary's eyes, these disabled students may have been provided "the opportunity…to become active members of the classroom community", when in reality they were positioned on the fringe of the general education curriculum and allowed to watch; watching is hardly an example of active community participation.

Likewise, while Malena's responses were almost always focused on the integration of disabled students in the general education classroom, her responses also pointed towards the belief that the special education teacher is the teaching authority.

> Disabled children should be able to feel a part of a general education classroom and receive extra help or assistance from a special education teacher in the classroom (E 5ai,9/21/11).

In brief, while participants expressed little open resistance to the idea of inclusive teaching and often challenged the idea of segregated, specialized classrooms, there was hesitation and concern when it came to their own potential teaching practices. The hesitation of these participants to believe that the general education teacher can be the authority may be attributed to the dominant special education discourse that abides by a medical model of disability. So while all of the participants in this study appear willing to include disabled students in the confines of the general education classroom, their beliefs in full class participation is uncertain. This hesitation to fully include the disabled student implies a belief that individual deficits are at the root of the disability and therefore must be fixed by specialists outside the general education curriculum.

Unfortunately, disability constructed as an individual deficit precludes teachers and the school from noticing socially constructed causes and other factors that inform how students experience the challenge of disability (Mutua & Smith, 2006, p. 127). On the other hand, when teachers are conscious of how societal attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and the built environment construct disability, there is opportunity for disrupting the way things are. As the semester continued, most of the participants in this study teetered between various aspects of the social model of disability and a medical model of disability.

Still, one participant did position disabled students at the center of the classroom community by planning to include all class members in the process of inclusion and acceptance. "The teacher should make other students aware of the things that the student(s) living with disabilities might find challenging and how everyone can play a role in creating a classroom environment for everyone" (Sofia: E2ai,9/14/11). Here the message is that by means of collaborative problem solving, the teacher can have the power and therefore the authority to facilitate a community of inclusion "*for everyone*" within the general education classroom.

Lesson planning

During a small group session when participants read their books and received peer feedback on their lesson plans, Whitney shared this with the other participants in her group.

> My teacher, when I talked with her, she got pissed that I had to do a lesson plan on disability. She was like, "That's not part of our curriculum and I don't really think you should be doing that kind of stuff". And I was like… "Well I have to" (E8aiv,10/13/11).

Each semester participants are advised to discuss with their cooperating teachers, the assignments in the program that will occur in their practicum classroom. For six participants, it became clear that disability was not a topic that had ever been included in the curriculum. Whitney reported that given the presence of two students in the class that were labeled as autistic, she felt that her cooperating teacher's resistance was surprising.

> Like I was really thrown off. I was really surprised she acted that way. She was like, "Of course I'm going to let you do it" but like she (said), "I'm not saying I agree with it". (E 8 aiii, group 2).

This is the same kind of disregard that Kiki's cooperating teacher expressed when she reminded Kiki that the "IEP students" required an explicit definition of disability. Accordingly, while disabled students have gained access to general education classrooms, their insider knowledge of disability is disqualified and silenced within the dominant discourse of authority. The absence of space in the public school curriculum for the lived experiences of disabled students and the silence that ensued created a challenge as participants planned their lessons. Because the topic of disability was virtually unspoken, participants were unsure about how disabled students would react to the lessons.

The silenced discourse of disability was reinforced by the authority of the state and the curriculum content standards. June's positive experience implementing her disability lesson using *Lucy's Picture* (Moon, 1994), a story of a little girl who creates a collage for her blind grandfather led to her decision to explore disability for another lesson plan assignment. During the semester, participants are also required to create and implement a three day interdisciplinary lesson. For this lesson, June expanded her lesson on blindness to include an exploration of other sensory disabilities. In this interdisciplinary assignment, participants design objectives and assessments and look carefully at pre – and post- assessment data to determine how and what children learned.

June reported that the teacher was open to the exploration of disability and had supported her ideas in the original lesson plan using *Lucy's picture* (Moon, 1994). However, she advised June against the exploration of sensory disabilities for this new assignment. Concerns that surfaced included identifying curriculum standards that would address the topic of disability and the obstacle of how to assess children's knowledge about disability, before and after the lesson. When June's lesson about sensory

disabilities became focused on a mandated curriculum, the issue of how students might

benefit from the lesson was lost.

Consistently, during the planning process of the disability lesson plans,

participants echoed the concerns of June's cooperating teacher, expressing frustration

over the limited state curriculum standards that were applicable to their lessons. "I don't

know what to do social studies wise for this" (June, E8biv, 10/13/11). In the end, almost

all of the participants used the following NJ Social Studies curriculum standard in their

lessons.

> 6.3 Active Citizenship in the 21st century. All students will acquire the skills
> needed to be active informed citizens who value diversity and promote cultural
> understanding by working collaboratively to address the challenges that are
> inherent in living in an interconnected world.
> > D. History, Culture, and Perspectives: Identify actions that are unfair or
> > discriminatory, such as bullying, and propose solutions to address such
> > actions (6.3.4.D.1) (http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/standards/6/6-3-
> > 4.htm).

In most cases, lessons about disability focused on fairness and accommodation,

and discrimination was sometimes a bi-product of their conversations. Unfortunately, the

language in this Social Studies standard steered some participants to only look at

disability from the vantage of problems and solutions. To meet the expectations of the

standard, one participant went so far as to ask students to read a variety of books with a

disability theme and complete a graphic organizer, identifying the problem (disability)

and the solution.

> [Storybook: *Our teacher is in a wheelchair* (Powers, 1987)]
> Graphic organizer: What is the problem/issue: Brian is paralyzed. He can't move
> his legs. Sometimes kids are scared of Brian. They think they could get the
> problem so they start tackling each other to make sure their legs work.
> How is it resolved: Brian is sad but at least he still has friends. The kids are
> helpful to Brian (Written response of group of three students)

Later on, this participant noted that she had met the curriculum standard. Therefore, it might be concluded that the state standards that are presented to teaching candidates as bibles to guide their instruction, sometimes fall short in the exploration of more difficult topics such as disability.

The actual invisibility of the topic of disability in the state standards backs-up the comments of Whitney's cooperating teacher. "That's not part of our curriculum and I don't really think you should be doing that kind of stuff" (E8biv, 10/13/11). Its invisibility also reinforces the lack of space in the curriculum for exploring equity issues regarding disability and reinforces the discourse of authority. This discourse is guided by disability experts who sanction a knowledge base of disability based on deficit and silences the subjugated knowledge of disabled students.

Teaching the lesson

The inclusion of disabled people as authorities of their lived experiences was missing in all of the disability lesson plans. One of the goals of a disability studies approach is to offer "challenging theoretical insights for educators to examine societal attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and more fundamentally, the lived experiences of disability" (Ware, 2001, p.111). At several points, participants considered the value of authentic experiences such as school programs that teach students about seeing- eye dogs, but never once was the inclusion of the stories of real live disabled people considered as part of the disability lessons, though there were a few good opportunities.

In June's case, I suggested that the children's questions about the wheelchairs and the teacher assistant, Mr. K. could be easily answered by Mr. K. He was at the school

every day and therefore a visible and comfortable presence. Initially, June agreed but then never followed through. Perhaps it was how she was positioned as a practicum student; perhaps her own status as an able-bodied person made her feel uncomfortable and stopped her from asking Mr. K. to speak with the children.

On the first day of class, Sofia was excited when her cooperating teacher asked her to read a disability book, to help children understand a new student in the school, a second grader who used a power wheelchair. Unfortunately, there was no action taken to include the new student in the conversation about what it means to be a new student and what it means to be a disabled person in a wheelchair, two matters of which this new student was an authority.

Shifts in the discourse of authority

Of all of the disability discourses mentioned in this report, the discourse of authority is identified as the regime of truth that is most difficult to disrupt. The discourse of authority is delegated to the discipline of special education and reinforced by the legal and educational institutions that have established its reliability as a discipline. The regimes of truth about how normal children learn and how we can address those who fall outside those limits are established by the unwavering disciplines of science and psychology. These truths form the foundation of early childhood teaching programs for future general education and special education teachers.

In the beginning of the semester, participants struggled with the notion that they were authorized to teach disabled students, delegating this power to the special education specialists. While they expressed little resistance to the idea of inclusive teaching, they were hesitant when it came to their own teaching practices. Then as participants began to

design their lessons, they struggled to find standards that sanctioned a discourse of inclusion. The lack of state curriculum standards reinforced the argument brought out by one resisting cooperating teacher, "That's not part of our curriculum and I don't really think you should be doing that kind of stuff" (Whitney, E8aiv,10/13/11).

In only two cases did cooperating teachers offer feedback on the lessons. In addition, in the five observations of participants teaching the disability lesson, supervisors only focused on mechanical procedures and did not address the content of the lesson. Therefore, the supports authorized by the university and state for designing lessons were minimal when considering the topic of disability.

Final Remarks

In the *Practical concerns of teachers*, Broderick, et al. (2004) recapitulates responses from teachers whose work is grounded in a Disability Studies perspective. Their responses "reveal how teachers come to understand that they have the power to resist and to encourage others to resist the debilitating positioning of disabled students and their families by traditional assumptions and practices of special education" (p.156). Several of these teachers note their low status and impotence in the face of federalized educational bureaucracy presents challenges to their resistance. The reader is informed "how difficult and painful/isolating/exhausting/draining/discouraging/disheartening resistance can be (p. 156). In this study, I was reminded of the low pre-service status of these participants and how they are being acculturated to accept schooling with all its rules and bureaucracy, making the lesson plan assignment a challenge.

Near the end of the semester, I asked participants for some final remarks on the lesson plan assignment. This passage is an excerpt of these remarks about the assignment.

Sue: I though overall that it (the lesson plan assignment) was a worthwhile venture. What did you think?

Mary: I thought it was good. I thought it was a good first experience with teaching a lesson like this.

Sofia: I agree.

Marissa: I think it's something we need to start teaching. At first my teacher was really hesitant to let me. She was like, you have to do a lesson on that?

Sue: Oh interesting.

Marissa: You would think with the two autistic kids in my class that you might want to introduce the concept to the other children so they would want to understand and get a deeper understanding. And she was like, really, you have to? It was like I think it would benefit the kids instead of looking like, oh like Mary said, they labeled them as weird because they just didn't know. So it gives them a chance to know.

Mary: It gives them the vocabulary.

Sue: Yes. Definitely.

Sofia: I think people are just scared of what can come. [Disability is] like any other form of diversity that you tackle. LGBT issues, a lot of teachers don't want to talk about that in the classroom because they feel like, oh then they're going to have questions. Am I going to be able to answer them? It's the same thing with this. Like over there, they had so many questions. I didn't know what to do. But it's like a good thing that they had so many questions because then moving forward they're going to be knowledgeable on the topic and not be ignorant.

Mary: They won't be scared to talk about it (E 11, 11/17/12).

The ideas in these final remarks indicate our collective progress; participants included how able-bodied students need tools to understand disability; the advocacy needs of disabled students; the challenge and benefits of a culturally responsive pedagogy in order to combat prejudice; difficulties with resistance; and an understanding of how disability fits a cultural framework. The experience of using a critical literacy approach and implementing lessons that included disability led to challenges, successes and missed opportunities for these participants. I assert that the success of attempts towards a critical approach for having conversations with children about disability depended on their own insider knowledge of disability and upon their developing beliefs about disability.

During this study, I noticed slight shifts in the discourses of the participants. In particular the lesson planning assignment provided an opportunity for beliefs-in-action and gave clarity to the complexities of adopting a new discourse about disability. While participants perceived the discourse of labeling as necessary, they also became more mindful of the social and political meanings of labels and how they contributed to the dividing practices of schools. In addition, they came to examine and discuss the politics of schools and questioned the acts of segregation that were common to their own history and acted out in their school placements. While there was evidence that all of the participants adopted a discourse of being human and therefore assigned disabled people equal human status, there was also evidence of hesitation about speaking with or about disabled people. First hand encounters and including the authentic stories of disabled people were counted as missed opportunities. Through the lesson plan assignment, the participants noticed the absence of space in the public school curriculum for the lived experiences of disabled students and the silenced that ensued. Throughout the study, participants straddled the traditional discourses of disability that were expected as part of their enculturation as new teachers and the alternate discourses of the course, based on a disability studies perspective.

Within the context of this social studies and language arts methods course, participants were given a first time experience with critical literacy and "doing disability studies". In their final remarks, I sensed a remarkable resilience and commitment that I hope they act upon in their future teaching. The findings of this research study has brought me one step closer to understanding how to address and challenge the deficit interpretations and reluctances reminiscent in the disability discourses of pre-service

teachers like Fran, Christine and Betty. In Chapter 5, I will provide a summary of the

findings of this dissertation, including implications for researchers; teacher educators;

early childhood classrooms; and my final reflections on this research study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, & REFLECTIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the disability discourses of ten

undergraduate early childhood pre-service teachers who were enrolled in a one-semester

social studies and language arts methods courses. During this course, participants

planned, taught and reflected upon a lesson for their early childhood practicum

classroom, utilizing a problem posing approach with children's literature that contained a

disability theme. This lesson together with class discussions , readings and videos framed

the course outline that intended a sociocultural understanding of disability .The activities

in this course were designed so as to nurture participants' consciousness about disability

and with the critical literacy goal to "read the word, to read the world" (Freire, 1970).

Consequently, the intention was to provide opportunities to reimagine disability, to

examine, question and challenge traditional disability discourses which are

institutionalized through the disciplinary technologies of medicine, law and education.

Specifically, this study examined the disability discourses of participants as they

explored disability and planned, implemented and reflected upon a disability lesson plan

designed for an early childhood classroom. Attention was paid to how the pre-service

teachers in this study framed disability, the language they used and how classroom

conversations and assignments influenced their lesson planning. This study utilized

multiple data sources including a survey, field notes, observation, transcripts of audio-

taped class sessions and documents which included components of the lesson plan

assignment. The lesson plan assignment consisted of three phases: lesson planning, teaching the lesson and final reflection. Data was analyzed within a critical framework, drawing on the genealogical and archeological works of Michel Foucault.

In Chapter 1 of this study, I introduced the background, purpose, research questions and significance of this study. In Chapter 2 the review of literature establishes the theoretical, empirical and practical contexts for the study. This review draws on the theories of Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault and incorporates literature in the fields of disability studies, critical literacy and teacher education. Chapter 3 provides the rationale for my methodological choices and includes a detailed description of the methods utilized throughout the study. Upon examination and analysis of the disability discourses of the pre-service teachers in this study, the findings of this study are described in Chapter 4. This chapter presents conclusions from the study, implications for researchers and teacher educators, and my reflections on this process.

Summary

The research questions that guided this study were (1) How do pre-service teachers position disability during class discussions ? What are their discourses, omissions, and silences?(2) How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses? and (3) How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lessons designed for early childhood students incorporate children's literature with a disability topic?

Based on data collection, the following general conclusions have been derived from the findings: (1) The same powerful discourses that influenced how pre-service

teachers perceive and position disabled people are well-established in the schools where they do their practice teaching. These same discourses lead to school actions and non-actions which in turn, present challenges to pre-service teachers who wish to "do disability studies" in schools; and (2) Using a critical pedagogical approach with children's literature within an inquiry based course has potential for helping pre-service teachers to problematize the issues of disability and in turn, to promote a critical examination of disability with disabled and able-bodied early childhood students.

Disability discourses

As part of the course requirements, participants read about, discussed and reflected upon various aspects of disability, specifically related to the social and medical models of disability and the education of disabled students. I analyzed the data gathered from these class sessions to answer my first research questions: (1) How do pre-service teachers position disability during class discussions? What are their discourses, omissions and silences?

Four major themes related to these discourses were prominent during class discussions and during the lesson planning assignment. These discourses are discussed in the findings and include: (1)the discourse of labeling; (2) the discourse of being human; (3) the discourse of inclusion and segregation; and (4) the discourse of authority. Excavated from a medical model of disability, an intersection of disciplines-special education, medicine and law -permeated each of these discourses. The discourses established and institutionalized through these disciplines had a powerful influence on how the participants in this study, general education pre-service teachers, viewed and positioned disabled people.

In the classroom

In my examination of participants' discourses of labeling, the acts of evaluation and labeling essentially made disability visible and authorized a truth about how to deal with disabled students. Therefore, finding out a students' diagnosis was recognized as a powerful and necessary discourse towards positive teacher outcomes. This follows Mutua and Smith (2006) who found that a "major concern shared by pre-service teacher is whether or not their students will have the 'correct' diagnosis and therefore whether they will be correctly labeled" (p. 126). Though all of the participants agreed that the dehumanization and segregation of disabled people was problematic, none connected these problems with the act of fixing a disability label.

During the class, all of the participants shared stories and comments that contributed to the discourse of being human. This discourse touched on the personal as the class explored historical and contemporary examples of the dehumanization of disabled people. I assert that the inquiry design of the class that included a problem posing pedagogy created the kind of safe space for courageous conversations and critical analysis of social injustices (Gay, 2005). Participants explored the intentional (i.e. a shift from institutionalization to schooling) and the unintentional (i.e. elective abortions of potentially disabled fetuses) consequences of the discourses of being human. These moral conversations nurtured their consciousness about these issues; however once disability touched on the personal, tensions occurred and the traditional medical discourse acted to silence conversations about the unspeakable, such as what participants might do if faced with a potentially disabled child.

In our discussions of segregation and inclusion, participants reported on many examples of ways that disabled people that they knew had been segregated through private school placements and pull-out programs. Also, participants gave examples and analyzed the actions of teachers who favored a pull-out approach for disabled students in their practicum placement. On the surface, in all but one account, participants' discourses refuted a discourse of segregation and favored a perspective that inclusion in neighborhoods and public schools benefitted both disabled and non-disabled people. However, when the discourse of inclusion touched on their own capabilities as teachers with disabled students in their future classes, there were tensions and inconsistencies in their discourses. While the participants favored the presence of disabled students in general education classes, they also doubted their own capability as teachers for these students, who they viewed through a medical perspective.

During the analysis of participants' responses I noticed tensions in their discourses of authority as participants reflected upon who has the authority to decide what is best for disabled students. While during class conversations and in reading responses, participants often explained the mechanics and desire for inclusive practices, they were hesitant when it came to their own potential teaching practices. The participants began to adopt a discourse that acknowledged disabled students' strengths, but positioned students as "outsiders beyond the boundaries of normal teachers' knowledge and training" (Dudley-Marling & Paugh, 2010). This hesitation to imagine that they could fully include disabled students was noticed in their writing responses where they expressed a reliance on other specialists to authorize the truth and make decisions regarding disabled students. This belief that individual deficits are at the root of

the disability and therefore must be fixed follows the conservative indoctrination of the teaching program in which the study took place, which abided by a developmental perspective and established the parameters of normality from which all students could be understood.

Lesson planning

As part of the course requirements, participants selected a piece of children's literature with a disability theme to use in a lesson with early childhood learners in their practicum classroom. Analysis of the participants' discourses during the lesson planning process included data from transcripts of whole class and small group peer sessions, field notes and the initial submissions of the lesson plan document. I analyzed this data and the data collected during the actual teaching of the lesson plan to answer the research question: How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lessons designed for early childhood students that incorporate children's literature with a disability theme? In this section, I will describe the disability discourses of the participants during the lesson planning process.

The discourse of labeling was prominent during the lesson planning process. A common concern while planning the lessons was how to address the specific disability diagnosis described in the storybook. Participants expressed concerns about whether bringing attention to the sight of the disability, the impairment was the right thing to do. Therefore, all of the participants began to understand the paradoxical position of disabled people. Stikers (1983) explains "In American middle-class culture, disability is treated as unspeakable and invisible. Children are taught not to point, stare or mention the impairments of people they meet" (cited in Ingstad & Whyte, 1995, pp.8-9). Yet by not

bringing attention to disability, there exists a paradox of "nobody 'seeing' the one person in the room of whom they are most acutely, and uncomfortably aware" (Murphy, 1989 as cited in Instad & Whyte, 1995, p. 9). During the lesson planning process, figuring out how to use the children's literature highlighted the complexities of the discourse of labeling. It was during this time that participants wondered how much background knowledge able-bodied students had about disability and whether talking about the label of impairment would be harmful. Though they were uncertain about how able-bodied and disabled students might react, in all but one lesson plan, participants decided to include and address the disability label in the lessons. In doing so, they intended to open the conversation about disability, to find out about students' disability experiences and then to address the main ideas in the storybook.

Linked to the discourse of labels, there were times when the storybooks challenged the participants to examine the discourse of being human. In particular, some storybooks directly described the characters as "not normal" and other times when it was inferred that the characters were less than human. In planning the lessons, participants worried that able-bodied students would not understand disabled students as fully human. Those participants who became dependent on the label and medical diagnosis, focused on what was wrong with the disabled character in the story and expressed more difficulties in planning their lessons. I became most aware of how the participants conceptualized disability by their actions during the lesson planning process. When influenced by a medical discourse that promotes a singular view of disabled people according to their label, participants assigned a hierarchal human status to disabled people and were unable to plan lessons that framed disability as a natural variation of what it means to be human.

In their lesson plans, all of the participants planned activities with the intension of promoting a discourse of inclusion, including projects with social justice messages of "fairness and equality" (Mary, E 10a); experiences to build on their knowledge of what it means to be disabled (June, E 10a); and connections to common disability symbols and events (Jill; Mary; Whitney, E10a). The inclusion of disabled students in three of the participants' classrooms presented a problem in the discourses of segregation and inclusion. While their presence in the general education classroom seemed to offer potential for moving the conversation on disability towards a discourse of inclusion, the lack of space for conversations about disability created a silence and perpetuated a discourse of segregation. As participants wondered how to include the knowledge and actual lived experiences of the disabled students present in the classroom in their lessons, they also noticed there was little attention paid to their disability identities outside the regulations of special education. Foucault's genealogical work brings to light how discourses come from two sites of "subjugated knowledge", from above (institutional discourses, "expert" knowledge produced *about* rather than *by* people labeled as disabled) and by means of people who have been disqualified and marginalized "subjugated" knowledge (a particular, local knowledge of disabled people) (Carlson, 2005, p. 133). Based on the analysis of participants' responses, the subjugated knowledge of what it means to be called disabled appeared to have no space in the public school curriculum.

The silenced discourse of inclusion for disabled students was further perpetuated by the legally sanctioned discourse of authority that synchronized with the disciplinary technologies of special education. This discourse is guided by disability experts who

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sanction a knowledge base of disability based on deficit while silencing the subjugated knowledge of disabled students. According to Ware (2001), general education teachers report that they lack "the authority to talk about disability; that was someone else's job" (p.120). Upon analysis of whole and small group conversations in class and the lesson plan documents, I found that the lack of inclusion of topics about disability in the school curriculum was reinforced by minimal language in mandated state standards and the natural assumptions and disapproval of cooperating teachers; further silencing the discourse of inclusion for disabled students.

Teaching the lesson

After the participants taught their lessons, they were required to complete a written response of their reflections about the actual teaching event. The data from this reflection, transcripts of class discussions and documents that included the final lesson plan and artifacts of student learning were analyzed and used towards answering the research question: How do these same pre-service teachers plan, implement and reflect upon lessons designed for early childhood students that incorporate children's literature with a disability theme? In this section, I will describe the disability discourses of the participants as they reflected upon teaching the lesson.

While teaching the lessons, the participants became more conscious of the values that early childhood learners associated with the language and terminology of disability labels. The perspective of disabled people as pitied and unable was evident in the artifacts of student work. In one half of the lessons, participants reported that student responses and work demonstrated a consistent positive image of disabled people. In the other half of the lessons, the students portrayed disabled people as helpless and used

negative, abelist language in their conversations. In their reflections, participants reported being surprised and unprepared to address these prejudiced responses. They concluded that reading one book about disability was not enough. There was a general agreement among the participants that an open discourse about disability should begin with time spent on understanding all students' past disability experiences and on examining their assumptions about disability. Even in the one lesson, where the participant did not bring attention to the disability label in the story, it was reported that some of the students' questions focused on what the character could not do and assigned a label of Deaf to explain the actions in the story. The discourse of labeling as method of understanding disability within and outside the realm of normal experiences was reported as a natural occurrence as the participants taught the lessons.

In their reflections, participants worried when students' responses and work expressed pity towards disabled people. They reported when they believed that students had positioned disabled people as not normal, less than human and incapable. However, in conversations where students whispered when talking about disability, participants did not notice how these actions also support a taboo mentality and contribute to the discourse of disabled people as less than human.

While Sofia and June's lessons were written with the intention to dispel discomfort with disabled people, there were missed opportunities for helping students to reimagine disability within a positive discourse of being human. Though easily available, both of these participants did not take advantage of opportunities to invite real-life disabled people to be part of their lessons. In addition, in the analysis of Sofia's student artifacts (and those of others- Mary, Kiki, Sofia,Whitney), there was evidence that able-

bodied students saw relationships with disabled students with the uneven reciprocal relationship of disabled student as the "tutee or receiver of support" (Mutua & Smith, 2006, pp. 129-130). During my analysis, I inferred that instead of dispelling discomfort with disabled people, the non-actions of these participants unintentionally maintained a status quo discourse of being human and supported the assumption that living with a disability is a taboo topic.

As all of the participants taught the lessons with the intention of promoting a discourse of inclusion, it was upsetting when student responses indicated a resistance to their presentations of necessary social accommodations and to their lessons of disabled people as capable. Although it was difficult to respond to students' disparaging remarks, there was a general agreement among the participants that the exposure of these prejudices was an important first step towards the possibilities of a new discourse about disability. Otherwise, these prejudices would have remained silent, but still developed. I found that it was through the actions of the lesson plan assignment in this one-semester class that a small space was created for these kinds of conversations to take place. While this study was not designed to consider the shifts in the discourses of early childhood learners, I infer that it was during the actual teaching of lessons that the discourses of the participants began to shift.

While teaching the lessons, in the three classrooms with disabled students, participants did not bring attention to their disabilities. The inclusion of disabled people as authorities of their lived experiences was missing in the lesson plans and did not come up as participants taught their lessons. Ware (2001) describes how students placed in inclusive setting remain unintentionally excluded in other ways. In this study, the

participants were aware of that by deciding to not bring attention to their disabilities, they were intentionally excluding the disabled students. However, it was difficult to challenge the rules and regimes of truth of special education. As an instructor in the course, I became more aware of how the rules of school had established and then silenced the identity of disabled students. Upon analysis of their class conversations and written reflections of teaching the lessons, I inferred that it was a nearly impossible task for pre-service teachers, whose status were less than teachers to counter the unwavering discourse of authority. In addition, while the inclusion of space to talk about disability might counter the traditional discourses disseminated through the disciplinary technologies of special education, the need for an alternate discourse with a new common language for talking about disability and especially with disabled students became apparent. I agree with Mutua and Smith (2006) who propose "DS [Disability Studies] puts new language around familiar truths" (p.136) and therefore holds potential as a pedagogical approach with teacher educators and early childhood learners.

Shifts in disability discourses

The entire data collection of the participants' discourses during the one-semester course were compared and analyzed to address the final question: How do pre-service teachers' discourses of disability change during a one-semester social studies and language arts course aimed at challenging traditional disability discourses?   Once again I will utilize the four themes of disability discourse: (1) discourse of labeling; (2) discourse of being human; (3) discourse of inclusion and segregation; (4) discourse of authority, as I describe the findings for this section.

All of the participants in this study believed that skilled teachers should identify and refer students for evaluations when they suspect that students are disabled. Mutua and Robin(2006) propose that pre-service teachers are "oblivious of the power inherent in the social and political meanings of the labels they use for children in the classrooms and how those labels reify, reinforce and reproduce the hierarchal social arrangements of the larger society (p. 125). As stated earlier, all of the participants did agree that the dehumanization and segregation of disabled people was problematic, while none connected these larger social problems to the act of fixing a disability label on a person. Yet, during the lesson planning process, the participants were faced with thinking about the meaning of labels on a smaller social scale of what might happen within their classroom walls. In particular, there were threads of shifts in the discourse of labeling as they prepared their lessons and questioned how able-bodied and disabled students would react to the disability language in the storybooks. It was during the act of preparing the lessons that participants became openly conflicted about which aspects of the impairment and labeling they should bring attention to and what they should silence. While not all of the participants ended up designing lessons that attempted to disrupt the discourse of labeling and the negative connotations that define and stigmatize disabled people as incapable, the lesson plan assignment provided a space where all of the participants began to develop a beginning understanding of the social and political meanings of labels.

While all of the participants made personal connections to the intentional and non-intentional discourses of being human, it was difficult to infer if they would be able to make a commitment to apply this knowledge of disability as another aspect of human

variation to their own professional practices. Referred to as beliefs-in-action, Ware (2002) states that "[p]rofessional beliefs must be made explicit in everyday practices and action" (p.163). In their lesson plans, the shift to act on the beliefs of a positive discourse of disabled people as fully human was difficult during the lesson planning process, especially with those participants who during the planning process became stuck on the medical label and diagnosis. Instead, the lessons of these participants portrayed a singular view of disabled people.

During our class conversations and writings, there were small shifts in the discourse of inclusion and segregation as two participants began to notice the role that context plays in how people they knew experienced disability. Also, as evidenced in half of the lesson plans, participants began to shift their attention to how social barriers such as discrimination and able-bodied environments interfere with the full inclusion of disabled people. The complications of helping students understand these social barriers came to light while teaching the lesson. Because the participants lacked insider knowledge and confidence, they did not always respond appropriately to students' questions and remarks and sometimes silenced students instead of taking conversations to a critical level.

When considering the ideas of segregation and inclusion for disabled students in their future classrooms, participants often teetered between two disability discourses. Whitney teetered between her commitment to not "separate people with disabilities into different rooms" (E5ai,9/21/11) and her cousin's placement in a segregated school for the autistic; Mary teetered between providing an "opportunity for her disabled students to become active members of the classroom" and her personal middle school band

experiences where "special education students [with extreme disabilities] would occasionally be welcomed into our practice room to watch" (E2ai,9/14/11). According to Malena, "Disabled children should be able to feel a part of a general education classroom" so long as they "receive extra help or assistance from a special education teacher in the classroom (E5ai, 9/21/11). Teetering between these two discourses it was not clear how disabled students might be positioned within their future general education classrooms.

The discourse of authority, situated in the discipline of special education, presented the most obvious challenges as participants sought professional guidelines that sanctioned the inclusion of disability in the curriculum. Following Kincheloe (1993), prospective teachers "encounter few experiences that challenge the status quo in schools" (p. 14). Additionally, prospective teachers encounter few experiences that allow them to challenge their teacher education program, which acts as its own disciplinary technology to produce the docile bodies of special and general education teachers, as objects to be molded. In schools, a shift in the discourse of authority would require the dismantling of the special education expert (Mutua & Smith, 2006).

The opportunity to question and examine disability was provided within the context of the course in which this study took place. I concur with Rice's (2006) proposal, "In working with pre- and in-service teachers, new ways of understanding disability must be used to counter the conservative identity in which teachers are often regulated during their professional education (p. 22). The course in which the study took place created a space for participants to question regimes of truth of school and of their education program, including the professional truths embedded in their early childhood

textbooks and the truths of a standardized view of teaching. For these participants the

shift in the discourse of authority was subtle and involved the nurturing of their

consciousness of how the invisibility of disability was sanctioned by their profession and

therefore acted to silence the voices of disabled children.

Conclusions

Based on data collection, two general conclusions have been derived from the

findings. First, the same powerful discourses that influenced how pre-service teachers

perceive and position disabled people are well-established in the schools where they do

their practice teaching. These same discourses lead to school actions and non-actions

which in turn, present challenges to pre-service teachers who wish to "do disability

studies" in schools. Second, using a critical pedagogical approach with children's

literature within an inquiry based course has potential for helping pre-service teachers to

problematize the issues of disability and in turn, to promote a critical examination of

disability with disabled and able-bodied early childhood students.

Conclusion 1

The same powerful discourses that influenced how pre-service teachers perceive

and position disabled people are well-established in the schools where they do their

practice teaching. These same discourses lead to school actions and non-actions which in

turn, present challenges to pre-service teachers who wish to "do disability studies" in

schools. These discourses became more evident and presented challenges to pre-service

teachers as they planned, implemented and reflected on the lesson assignment. During the

lesson planning aspect of the assignment, the following challenges were reported:

resistance by cooperating teachers; lack of state curriculum standards to support the

lesson; lack of feedback from key players, including the cooperating teachers and university supervisors; and the absence of space in the public school curriculum for the lived experiences of disabled students.

Not all cooperating teachers were open to the idea of talking about disability. Participants and I noticed that the state curriculum standards did not include any language for addressing disability as a curriculum topic, further supporting of the views of these cooperating teachers. Given the lack of state standards and the limited practice of including disability as a topic in the curriculum, it was not a surprise that few of the cooperating teachers and none of the supervisors were able to offer any constructive feedback before or after they taught the disability lessons. Therefore, feedback was limited and participants were often faced with the challenge to push against the established curriculum in order to complete the lesson plan assignment. Given their pre-service positions as "less than teachers", this involved a calculated risk which might have impacted their final grade for fieldwork. I was proud of the dispositions of these participants and their relentless desires to problem-solve solutions and resolve these challenges.

The absence of space in the public school curriculum for the lived experiences of disabled students, presented the most difficult challenge to participants as they planned and taught their lessons. Through the disciplinary power of special education, disabled students were often objectified as "docile bodies" in school settings. As I as observed participants grapple with ideas about how to use the children's literature and converse with children about disability, they also began to notice that the discourse of disability in schools is regulated to the cure and remediation of impairment.

The ideas that able-bodied students might benefit from opportunities that challenge their own abelist assumptions or that disabled students might need access to the life skills of activism, agency, and autonomy were hushed in some of the participants' classrooms. Therefore there were few school actions to explain or disrupt the perception of difference associated with what it means to be disabled. In the classes where disability was silenced, participants prepared their lessons, unsure what able-bodied students knew about disability and unsure of how disabled students in the classrooms identified with disability within the school context. Upon analysis of the data collection surrounding the lesson plan assignment, I came to the following generalized conclusion: when pre-service teachers plan disability lessons in classrooms that foster a discourse of exclusion and do not promote dialogue with able-bodied and disabled students about what it means to be disabled, the challenges to including disability studies in the curriculum are difficult for pre-service teachers to overcome.

Conclusion 2

Using a critical pedagogical approach with children's literature within an inquiry based course has potential for helping pre-service teachers to problematize the issues of disability and in turn, to promote a critical examination of disability with disabled and able-bodied early childhood students. Freire (1970) asserts that conscientization can become possible through dialogue with others, mediated by reflection and within problem posing pedagogy. The children's literature in this course served as a useful tool to uncover the pre-existing knowledge of the early childhood learners and the pre-service teachers about disability. Using the children's literature to plan and teach lessons with

early childhood learners created a forum, a platform on which the pre-service teachers posed the problems of doing disability studies in public schools with young learners.

Through the readings and class conversations pre-service teachers shared their personal stories about disability and gained new knowledge about what it means to be disabled. However, shifts in their discourses towards a cultural understanding of disability were most apparent during the actual acts of planning and teaching the lesson plan using the children's literature. The pedagogical approach of the lesson plan assignment drew from critical literacy and disability studies and helped the pre-service teachers to explore their own subjectivity acting out the regime of truth dispensed by the disciplinary technologies of special education. Figuring out the best way to introduce the lessons, they started to become aware of the sociopolitical ways that schools operate to position disabled and able-bodied students in the classroom. They began to question how disabled students identified with their disability and began to notice that there were few conversations about the disabled identity outside the terminology of special education.

In all of the lessons, participants reported that during the read-alouds children were curious and asked many questions. Even in cases where the participants worried about the length of the story, they reported children remained attentive. From this participants concluded, disability was a topic that students were interested in and wanted to know more about. As stated earlier, in cases where disability was never introduced into the curriculum, participants were unsure about children's background knowledge and were unable to anticipate in advance their responses. Reflecting on their lessons, participants came to realize that spending time to understand students' past experiences and to examine their assumptions in advance of teaching a formal lesson. Most of the

participants concluded that one book and one discussion was not enough for a meaningful exploration of disability.

In addition, developing the skills to be a critically literate teacher requires a reflective process that develops over time. While I am aware that the participants in this study were newcomers to critical literacy and this contributed to the challenges of teaching students about disability, I concluded that there were other factors to consider besides their newcomer status. In order to move the lesson to a level that examines disability and disrupts the traditional disability discourses, the lesson must first claim that disability is a natural variation among people rather than a pathology or tragedy. Most of the participants included a discussion about the impairment of the character in the story. However when the lesson fixated on the impairment or did little to disrupt the traditional discourse of disabled as incapable, prejudiced assumptions were maintained by the students.

Having insider knowledge of disability was identified as another component for teaching students about disability. Participants were upset and unsure how to respond when students made abelist remarks. In addition, during the lessons there were instances where equity issues were not recognized, simply because the participants did not have enough insider knowledge of what it means to be disabled. I conclude in order to promote a critical examination of disability with their own students, able-bodied pre-service teachers must first gain sufficient new knowledge of what it means to be disabled.

The children's literature served as useful tool for uncovering the pre-existing knowledge of pre-service teachers about disability and had the same benefit with the early childhood students as well. In this study, the literature provided a vehicle for

making connections, for gathering new information, partaking in conversations, dispelling discomfort and in some instances, challenging assumptions and beliefs about disability. From examining the lesson plans in this study, I concluded that when guided by pedagogy of critical literacy and disability studies, children's literature is a potential teaching tool that can provide a space to examine the lived experiences of disabled people.

Implications

The purpose of this dissertation was to describe and analyze the disability discourses of pre-service teachers as they examined disability and planned and implemented lessons for an early childhood classroom. Here, I will set forth the implications for researchers, teacher educators and early childhood teachers. I present my suggestions for future research and propose potential practices for teacher educators and early childhood teachers, based on the findings of this study and my own experiences in disability studies and critical literacy.

Implications for researchers

A closer scholarly examination of how pre-service teachers develop the critical skills required to do disability studies is a recommendation for future research studies. As I sifted through, deeper into the data, more questions came to mind and more than one story was uncovered. Each participant's journey into the study and use of disabilities studies in their teaching was a story worth telling.

In the semester after the study was conducted, I met with the study participants for the purpose of validating the early findings of this study. Their continued commitment to "do disability studies" was most evident as they shared stories of disability lessons

they planned for this, their student teaching semester. They continued to ponder, as did I,

what options they had for including a curriculum of disability in environments where the

disability discourse was regulated by the special education experts and therefore only

discussed in reference to remediation of impairment. A closer scholarly examination of

how critical literacy can meet the goals of Disability Studies is a recommendation for

future research studies.

During our meeting, their questions and potential solutions made me proud of

their development as future teachers. And I was keenly aware of how this disposition of

inquiry about disability that they displayed ran parallel to the expectations of public

schools. At the same time I began to see how they were becoming more conscious of the

sociopolitical acts of schools towards disabled students and noticing small positive shifts

in their disability discourses.

As I considered the reflections and inquires of these pre-service teachers, I was

reminded of *beliefs-in-action*, a type of reflection Linda Ware (2002) describes in *A*

Moral conversation on disability: Risking the personal in educational contexts.

> This early work to initiate a moral conversation on disability in high schools
> among youth and inclusive of their teachers has led me to reflect on the meaning
> of that which I refer to as *beliefs-in-action*. Professional beliefs must be made
> explicit in everyday practices and actions, informed by the expression of virtues
> such that the default to unexamined compliance to mandate and conformity to
> policy is no longer an option. Beliefs-in-action would capitalize on the
> opportunity learn about others as we come to understand ourselves and to
> reexamine the knowledge sources upon which we create our understanding of
> disability-whether in school or in society (Ware, 2002, p.163).

Beliefs-in-action will be informed by a critical understanding of disability , the

foundation which I sensed was evident in the responses of many of the pre-service

teachers in this study. I wondered, how do these beliefs develop? How can pre-service teachers turn these beliefs into action, in spite of their status as "less than teachers"? How might the beliefs and actions of pre-service teachers indoctrinated into the field of special education, differ from those in a general education teaching program? What are the challenges for teachers who act on their beliefs and "do disability studies" with the students in their class?

In her research with high school teachers and students, Linda Ware offers insights to the latter question. However, there is little research that reports on disability studies with younger students. Though not part of the disability studies literature, Marianna Souto-Manning's (2009) teacher action research of first graders who problematize the segregated nature of a pull-out program is one of few good examples that informs early childhood teacher research in this area.

My recommendation for future research is an extended study to examine the professional development of beliefs-in-action in teachers at different points of their career, starting with the formative pre-service years. Equally important is a focus on the students in a classroom where disability studies is acknowledged as vital to the curricula. How do students respond when the topic of disability is included? Special attention should be paid to the effects of this approach with disabled students. This recommendation follows my own commitment to continued research in the areas of disability studies, teacher education and early childhood education.

Implications for teacher educators

This study took place during a one-semester undergraduate social studies and language arts methods course in which I am the instructor. I have taught this same course

for several years. During this time, I have made adjustments to the course syllabus based on my own increasing knowledge of critical theory. As my awareness of how language, power and literacy plays a role in people's lives, I began to advocate a critical literacy approach for examining all of the social studies topics in this course.

After examining the findings from this study, the integration of a disability studies approach in undergraduate methods courses is the first suggestion I offer to teacher educators. Much like diversity topics such as race, gender, class, and sexuality are also integrated into methods courses, I recommend that those teacher educators who wish to adopt a culturally responsive pedagogy, consider where critical conversations about disability might also fit your syllabi. Also, in much the same way that teacher education programs promote inter-cultural experiences, I recommend that insider knowledge of what it means to be disabled can be gained from actual experiences with disabled people. I recommend these experiences are carefully structured so that disabled people are positioned as experts and resources to able-bodied pre-service teachers who wish to more about disability.

Disability Studies (DS) is a relatively new field that provides students, activists, teachers, artists, and researchers to explore disability practices, scholarship and policies within the larger context of society. Its curriculum is multi-disciplinary and includes the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. As such DS in general, and specifically, the field of DS in education which examines disability in social and cultural contexts, fits well in a teacher education program committed to diversity. Following DS, disability is viewed on par with other social identities.

Of great concern during the analysis of the disability discourses of the participants in this study was the focus of their views of disabled people from a medical perspective, the cornerstone of special education. This perspective positioned disabled students as remedial projects and had a strong grasp on how the pre-service teachers understood disability. In their general education teaching program, this outlook was reinforced by through the principles of developmentally appropriate practices, a recognized and established set of scientific truths in early childhood education. Though the participants in this study became more conscious of the consequences of labeling, they were unable to shift their discourse and reimagine children and their development outside a medical point of view. I recommend teacher educators rethink how the commonly accepted facts of DAP acts to sort and label children according to a regime of truth about normal development. It is through a text of developmentalism that early childhood pre-service teachers are indoctrinated towards a discourse of disabled people as not normal and therefore less than human.

The lesson plan assignment was a meaningful application of the principles of DS. It was during the planning process that participants thought about student disability in an empowering way and began to consider the educational opportunities for the able-bodied and disabled students. In concert with the course content and interactions, this assignment fostered a nurturing of their consciousness about disability and encouraged a critical examination of disability. While teaching the lesson, student remarks indicated prejudice and stereotypes of disability. Real opportunities for pre-service teachers to problem solve how to respond to and combat these abelist remarks was also a product of the actual teaching event. While the skills of these pre-service teachers are in the formative stage,

these actual DS experiences created a space for *beliefs-in-action* (as described by Linda

Ware, 2004). I encourage teacher educators to provide similar real schooling applications

in their disciplines.

In this study, the use of children's literature was a useful tool for dispelling some

of the discomfort for discussing disability with students in their practicum. The literature

was not always perfect, some of it was complex and used abelist thoughts to get its

message across. This required a critical read in order to challenge some of the messages.

The development of critical literacy skills is a recommendation for teacher education and

early childhood teachers, as well. Accordingly, as Stribling (2008) advises, "[t]eachers

need opportunities to become critically literate themselves so that they can scaffold this

development in their student; this, of course, is a process" (p. 37). The act of critical

literacy provides potential for discussions that challenge the traditional discourses of

disability and provides a suitable platform for disability activism by both able-bodied and

disabled students. Though the use of critical literacy to explore is sensitive topics is not

new, there are limited reports of teachers using a critical literacy approach to include

disability in the early childhood curriculum. The implications of this study suggest that

applying critical literacy to the children's literature with a disability theme is a viable

activity for early childhood teacher educators who wish to pursue a disability studies

teaching approach.

Implications for early childhood teachers

Talking about disability with students is unchartered territory for most early

childhood teachers. Using the children's literature proved to be a useful tool for opening

up the conversation and for examining what it means to be disabled. The storybooks that

were used in this study were selected because their plots included a conflict that involved a disabled character. One purpose for reading the storybooks was so early childhood students could examine the texts and ask questions pertinent to the lives of disabled people. The storybooks were a useful teacher tool that created the space for these conversations to happen.

The storybooks also have value for teachers who might learn new knowledge and reflect on their feelings and assumptions as they prepared for reading the texts to young learners. The findings of this study suggest that teachers generally do not include disability literature in their curriculum. In addition, those teachers who do include disability literature grapple with how to address the disability themes and therefore do not bring attention to any of the issues of what it means to be disabled. This study did not specifically address the reasons that teachers silence or omit disability literature. However, it is clear that having children's literature with a disability theme in the classroom is not enough, unless the teacher (and then the students) become critically literate.

This study found that students are interested in the topic of disability. Using the children's literature, the pre-service teachers in this study were able to uncover students' presumptions and ableist tendencies; as well they found that students were astutely aware of disability issues and their solutions. Based on this, I recommend early childhood teachers to consider a critical examination of disability literature as a first step towards its use in the classroom. Because teachers must first understand the power of critical literary practices, it is important to provide appropriate professional development. Professional

development in a community of learners that supports the efforts of a critical literacy

approach for social dialogue and change is therefore recommended.

Becoming knowledgeable about disability and seeking professional development in

the area of disability studies is also recommended. When the pre-service teachers in this

study had disabled students in their class, they often wondered how to include them in the

conversation. They were uncertain how these students identified themselves and although

acknowledged as "IEP kids" disability was only spoken of in terms of fixing their

impairments, through pull-out programs and the use of aides. How to include disabled

students in the conversation about disability is a question that arose from this study and

therefore requires further research. Including disability is complex work for teachers and

given the positioning of disabled students in public schools, there are no easy answers, as

this study also confirms. Teachers must become prepared for the increasing number of

disabled students who will be included in general education classrooms. As indicated, the

traditional discourse of disability in schools is regulated by the field of special education,

which views disabled students according to their impairments. How the teacher views

disabled students will influence her teaching practices and effectiveness. If the deficit

lens of impairment is the only way to view disabled students, it is not likely they will ever

gain full-status in the early childhood class, equal to their non-disabled peers.

Reflections

During this study, I was mindful of how I positioned myself in the research. As a

teacher-educator, researcher and disability activist, I started this journey reflexive of how

my experiences and beliefs would influence the participants in this study. According to

Ira Shor, "no pedagogy is neutral…To teach is to encourage human beings to develop in

one direction or another". This study took place during a one-semester social studies course in which I was the instructor. My intentions as an instructor were to nurture participants' consciousness about disability with the goal of disrupting traditional disability discourses. This goal is the result of a critical stance I assume as a teacher-educator and disability activist.

As I reflect, I understand that the role of researcher has afforded me a luxury, to take a closer look at the experiences of the pre-service teachers in my course. I worried how my status as the instructor would influence the data collection. Would student responses be genuine and represent their ideas about disability? Multiple data sources provided me with a clearer picture of their representations. I was visibly absent during their work in small peer groups, these sessions were audio-taped and revealed a more casual and authentic representation of their thoughts.

As a neophyte researcher, I constantly read and re-read books about disability studies and critical literacy. Since this was a chance to dive in deeply and closely examine at my work in these areas, I wanted to be fully-prepared. During the course, whenever we encountered a problem we listened carefully to each other's comments and tried to help each other come up with solutions, referencing the readings and our experiences. There was, of course, an awareness that I had more expertise on the subject of disability than the participants, given my experiences with disabled people and all the reading I was doing for this study. But there were times when I was stumped by their questions, and there were several times during the study when I wondered if I was the right person to answer their questions, given my position as an able-bodied person. How might the study or the course look different if conducted by a disabled person? In my

future research, reviewing my findings with a peer who is also disabled might offer a much needed perspective.

As an instructor, I aimed to create a safe space, so that courageous conversations about disability could take place. There were times when the stories were personal and emotional and I felt that I had achieved my goal. However, I always worried about what might have been silenced. In my role as an instructor, I usually jot notes down to remind me who spoke in class and who might need some encouragement. Everyone in the group, at some point, contributed to the conversations. On the first day of class, we did an icebreaker activity and they informed me there was nothing new to learn about each other, because they knew each other so well. This collective identity made me wonder if there might have been times when they spoke in one voice and therefore it was difficult for them to be critical of each other's opinions. I partially attribute this as the reason one small group hesitated to offer constructive feedback on one of the lesson plans. Perhaps these kinds of problems are a trade-off in a classroom, such as ours, where a strong sense of community had developed.

My goals and commitment as an instructor informed my research self and provided me with a purpose to listen carefully to the responses of the pre-service teachers in this one semester course. This research was exploratory and its findings affirmed my belief that we are all mindful of disability already; what is required is a nurturing space to imagine and reflect on our multiple positions within its discourse. This endeavor is significant to scholars in disability studies and teacher education; it is one small step forward in reimagining disability as one more variation of what it means to be human.

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Appendix A: Collection of Children's Literature

Carlson, N. (1992). *Arnie and the new kid*. London: Puffin Books

Lears,L (1998). *Ian's walk.* Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Co.

Mayer, M. & G. (1993) *A very special critter.* New York: Golden Books.

Meyer, C. (1999). *Rolling along with Goldilocks and the three bears.* Bethesda, MD:
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Moran, G. (1995). *Imagine me on a sit-ski!* Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Co.

Moon, N. (1994). *Lucy's picture*. New York: Scholastic

Osofsky, A. (1992). *My buddy*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

Polacco, P. (2001). *Thank you Mr. Faulker*. New York: Philomel Books.

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Pulver, R. (1999). *Way to go, Alex!* Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Co.

Riggio-Heelan, J. (2000). *Rolling along: The story of Taylor and his wheelchair.* Atlanta,
GA: Peachtree Publishers.

Appendix B: Critical literacy worksheet

Name:
Pseudonym:
Date:
Name of the Text:
Author:
Illustrator:
Publication Year:
Publisher:
In one sentence, what is this (text) story about?

What prior knowledge will help the reader to understand the story?

How are the characters constructed in the text? What groups are represented? What adjectives would you use to describe the characters?

What questions do you anticipate children might have about the story?

What questions do you have about the text?

Appendix C: Survey

Bb #1: Survey

Date_

Time _

Student Pseudonym_

This survey is part of a research study I am conducting about disability and using children's literature with a disability theme. The purpose of this survey is to gather some information about your background and to ask you questions about your personal experiences with disability in and out of your practicum assignment. As well, I want to explore your views and feelings about disability. You may choose to not answer some questions. This survey will take approximately 25 minutes. If you have any questions before you begin, please contact me at 973-534-6509 or mankiws@wpunj.edu.

Age__

Academic Major___

Certification Program__

Number of years at this university__

Practicum Assignment for CIEC 200 (School district and grade)_

Practicum Assignment for CIEC 300 (School district and grade)

Describe your ethnicity. __

In this study, I am exploring the topic of disability.

1.   Describe your own personal experiences with people with disabilities. Think about people you know from your community, from school and/ or in your family.

2.   What do you think the role of the teacher is, when there are children with disabilities in the classroom?

3.   What do you believe young children may know or think about people with disabilities? Tell me some examples to support your answer.

4.   What do you think the role of the teacher is, when talking to children about disability?

5.   How comfortable are you talking about disabilities? How comfortable are you when speaking to familiar or unfamiliar persons with disabilities?

6.   What questions do you have about any aspect of this research study?

Appendix D: Protocol for peer group meeting

October 13, 2011

Protocol for today's class.

1. Read your book aloud to your group.
2. Then each member of the group will complete a worksheet about the storybook.
3. During this time, the reader will write a short narrative. Include what you want students to learn from this lesson and how you anticipate students will respond to the lesson.
4. Next explain your lesson plan design.
    a. Tell everyone what you want students to learn from your lesson.
    b. Include details about how the lesson plan is organized. For example, do you plan to do the lesson first, and then read the book? Will you ask questions during the read aloud or will you ask questions at the end?
    c. Explain the questions you will ask and how you will go about this. Talk about what questions you anticipate students might ask and the possible responses they will have to your questions.
    d. At each point in the presentation, ask for suggestions from the group.
    e. Feel free to take notes and use this feedback in future revisions of the lesson plan.

Appendix E: List of participants in each peer group

Group 1	Sofia-*Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair* Malena: *My Buddy* Mackenzie: *Imagine Me on a Sit-ski!*
Group 2	Ariel-*A Special Critter* Whitney-*Way to Go Alex!* Jill-*Arnie & the New Kid* June- *Lucy's Picture*
Group 3	Giadao- *The Junkyard Wonders & Thank you Mr. Faulker* Kiki- *Arnie & the New Kid* Mary- *Ian's Walk*

Appendix F: Lesson plan assignment

Lesson Plan & Presentations (15 points): **October 13th & November 10th**
From my collection of children's literature, you will select a book with a disability theme and develop and implement a lesson plan that reflects a social studies concept. You will be expected to identify the grade level, and design an activity (or activities) as an introduction and/or follow up to the literature. Follow the lesson plan format provided and use the readings on critical literacy as a guide. In class you will meet in small groups, read the story aloud and discuss your lesson plan design. Then in your practicum classroom you will implement the lesson. During class we will discuss what occurred when you implemented the lesson and reflect on implications for teaching future lessons. Please be mindful of the following **due** dates. **October 13**: Bring the storybook and a copy of your lesson plan to class; be prepared to present to your small group. **November 10**: Lesson plans must be implemented by this date; bring your storybook and a copy of your lesson plan and be prepared to discuss and reflect upon its implementation.

Name

	Target (5 points)	Acceptable (3-4 points)	Unacceptable (0-2 points)
Critical Questions (5 points)	Critical questions are higher order and stimulate students' thinking. Questions help students to connect to main ideas in the story. The lesson plan is designed to encourage students to ask their own questions.	Questions are somewhat critical and/or loosely connected to main ideas in the story. There are a few higher order questions to stimulate students' thinking.	Questions are low level and do not stimulate students' thinking and/or questions are inappropriate and not connected to the main ideas in the story.
Lesson Plan Design (5 points)	The lesson focuses on concepts that are developmentally appropriate for the grade and developmental needs of the students. Students are actively involved in activities and the lesson is designed to elicit and connect to students' prior knowledge and understandings. Activities are designed to facilitate and lead to student inquiries about the central ideas of the storybook.	The lesson focuses on concepts that are developmentally appropriate for the grade and developmental needs of the students. There is some active engagement but overall the lesson is not designed to elicit or connect to students' prior knowledge and understandings. Activities facilitate and lead to student inquiries about some elements of the storybook. Suggestions are offered on the overall design.	The lesson does not focus on concepts that are developmentally appropriate for the age and developmental needs of the students. There is limited active engagement and/or the lesson is teacher-directed with little opportunity for awareness of prior knowledge and understandings. There are few chances for students to inquire about the central ideas or other elements of the storybook.

Reflection (5 points)	Reflection is contemplative and meaningful and references specific areas of the lesson plan design and its implementation.	Reflection is meaningful and relates to specific areas of the lesson plan design or its implementation.	Reflection is shallow and is not related to any areas of the lesson plan design or its implementation
Final Score			

Notice of Exemption from IRB Review

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs ASB III, **3**
Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus New Brunswick, NJ 08901

September 16,2011   **P.I. Name:** Mankiw
                                                                                          Protocol#: E11-778

Sue Mankiw
P.O. Box 63
Vernon NJ 07462

Dear Sue Mankiw:

Protocol Title: "Using Children's Literature to Examine the Disability Discourses of Pre-Service Teachers"

The project identified above has been approved for exemption under one of the six categories noted in 45 CFR 46, and as noted below:

Exemption Date: 8/31/2011   **Exempt Category:**

This exemption is based on the following assumptions:

•   **This Approval-** The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted.

•   **Reporting-** ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;

•   **Modifications-** Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;

•   **Consent Form** (s)– Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;

Additional Notes: None

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

The Federal wide Assurance (FWA) number for Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Sheryl Goldberg
Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
gibel@grants.rutgers.edu   cc: Nora Hyland

Consent Form

Using Children's Literature to Examine the Disability Discourses of Pre-service Teachers

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study about discussing disability and using children's literature with a disability theme to plan lessons. You have been selected as a possible participant because you are a current student at William Paterson University and because you are enrolled in the Language Arts & Social Studies methods course. Prior to signing this form, thereby agreeing to participate, please feel free to ask any questions.

Background: The purpose of this study is to find out what happens when pre-service teachers talk about disability and use children's literature with disability themes to plan lessons.

Procedure: Once you agree to participate in this study, you will discuss the topic of disability and disability models during three- two hour and forty minute class sessions, that will take place during the Language Arts and Social Studies methods class, that you are enrolled in. During these class sessions you will read and discuss children's literature with a disability theme. At the end of each class you will write your reflections and reactions in a journal. I will ask you to participate in a twenty-five minute survey talking about your background and asking questions about what you think about talking to young children about disability. You will participate in a small group discussion during class about your lesson planning and the inclusion of the topic of disability. Twelve undergraduates from the early childhood certification program at William Paterson University will be invited to participate in the study. All class sessions will be audio-taped using a digital recorder and transcribed by the researcher.

Risks and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks associated with this study. We hope that the benefit of the study is that through your participation you will learn new teaching methods using the topic of disability in your lesson planning. In addition, you will become familiar with children's literature with a disability theme.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: This study is voluntary and all participants are free to choose not to participate in this study as a whole or in particular portions of the study if they so choose. Your decision to not participate will not affect your current or future relations with William Paterson University or the researcher.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Since all records will contain only pseudonyms, age and gender it will be impossible to identify subjects by name. All consent forms , data and results will be maintained on a password-protected computer and in a locked

file-cabinet. All study data will be kept for three years after the completion of the study. Then all records will be deleted or destroyed.

APPROVED

Date: 8/31/11

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Ms. Sue Mankiw, a doctoral student at Rutgers University's EdD Elementary/Early Childhood program. You can reach her at 973-534-6509, or at mankiws@wpunj.edu. Please feel free to ask any questions now or at any time in the future. In addition, if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board at 848-932-0150.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I have asked. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature _____

_____

I consent to be audio-taped as part of this study.

Signature_____

VVitness: _____

APPROVED

Date: 8/31/11