

Cultural work:

**Whitepower-normalcy and knowledge-power intersections in
special education practice and scholarship**

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Monte Williams, 1983-2007. I was his teacher; he was my teacher. The systems failed him: his humor, insight, and energy were assets not recognized or nourished. His life ended too soon, yet his life continues to push me as I work to disrupt racist-normalist structures and guide future special educators.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation interrogates three educational structures in a set of three manuscripts: (a) Technologies of Behavioral Intervention: Systematizing Control and Constructing Identities for BIPOC Students, (b) Parent Advocacy: Black Family Cultural Wealth and Special Education Structures, and (c) Ethics Review for Critical Special Education Research: Disqualified or Official Knowledge. Knowledge-power relationships and hidden ideologies of Whitepower-Normalcy within the cultural work of special education teachers and scholars are explicated. Understanding of the politics of knowledge and structural oppression within educational institutions informs critical praxis, transformational resistance, and a structural ideology. Connections to practice for special educators and scholars are made.

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It is summer, 2020. I write in solitude from my home office, in Des Moines, Iowa, United States of America (US). A global health pandemic has been made worse by leaders' ideological, politically-motivated decisions; people who do not fit into the "in" group are literally dying, not because of inherent deficiencies, but longstanding structural racism and ableism in our health care system. The structural racism, which has been obscured for White people with equality rhetoric, *common sense* thinking, and claims of incremental progress, is now fully illuminated for those willing to look. Simultaneously, institutional racism itself is being identified as a pandemic in our nation, one that requires a collective response at all levels. George Floyd's public death under the knee of a veteran police officer has become the symbol of decades-long state-sanctioned violence. The largest protest movement in United States history (Buchanan, 2020) has called out status quo structures built on Whitepower as insufficient at best, and intentionally violent at worst. Another layer of complexity impeding understanding of this problem involves science and journalism; these cultural institutions being challenged with questions such as *what is real?*, *what is news?*, *what is science?*, and *who gets to decide?*

While some White people are shocked and appalled by these events, that in itself exemplifies privilege and power; we have been protected from state sanctioned violence, and the awareness of it. Black community members and scholars acknowledge this moment as more of the same, part of how US institutions work, rather than an isolated event, or a result of the actions of a few violent actors (Coates, 2014; Kendi, 2017). This inflection point challenges public institutions and workers who enact legally sanctioned policies to interrupt the status quo, and consider who is benefiting from the current organization of society. As educators and

scholars, answering the question, why does this keep happening? is central to transforming our systems. Considering problems within the system, rather than as inherent deficiencies in people helps expand educators' understanding of the *common sense* ideologies and corresponding structures of power. Common sense involves “ ‘our’ ordinary ways of understanding our daily activities inside and outside educational institutions,” which acts to “make it extremely difficult for us to fully appreciate the nexus of social relations in which we participate.” (Apple, 2014, p. xxx, emphasis in the original).

The cultural shifts and illumination of power differentials have direct connections to educational structures of knowledge construction and socialization of our children; educational institutions are integral in this construction and reconstruction of American culture, and identities of privilege and marginalization as well. Answering the question *how does this keep happening?* is central to transforming systems that exclude and silence othered people; this dissertation relates that question to disproportionality in special education. Institutionalized racism is being recognized widely, yet institutionalized Normalcy is not. This dissertation interrogates cultural institutions, policies, and procedures that construct deficit identities, and corresponding expectations of assimilation, compliance, and remaining in an assigned space. These rules and norms are made explicit in some cases, and hidden in other cases. As a future teacher-educator and lifelong special educator, I see the need for expanding educators' understanding of the structures of oppression, and our role within systems that exclude or silence Black people. It is in this context that I formed the broad questions for my dissertation:

1. How is Whitepower-Normalcy ideology evidenced within education's knowledge-power structures?

2. How can critical educators and scholars resist, subvert or disrupt educational structures that construct othered identities, knowledge, and professional practices?

The three articles within this dissertation articulate cultural practices within education that construct hierarchies of race and Normalcy as *common sense* and maintain dehumanizing policies and practices. I critique of the institutions' means for enacting and masking racist-normalist policies that perpetuate harm and protect Whitepower. However,

a critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest. [We must] stop regarding as superfluous something so essential in human life and human relations as thought. (Foucault, In Kritzman, 1988, p. 155)

My underlying premises, which will be explicated throughout this dissertation, include: (a) educational institutions are cultural institutions; their policies and practices have cultural implications, such as constructing identities and maintaining relationships of power (b) cultural workers such as White-normal researchers and educators are trained and operate without full knowledge of the hidden ideologies of the work, (c) cultural processes such as social construction, reification, and hegemony serve dominant ideologies, and (d) resistance to the systems of inequity is supported by understanding cultural ideas, values, identities, and relationships. Everything is connected; nothing can be isolated from context.

Foregrounding the Three Articles

The second and third chapter of this dissertation provide theoretical and conceptual grounding. I discuss ideologies of Whitepower and Normalcy, and their interconnectedness. Then, I explicate how educational institutions enact cultural work and construct hierarchical identities; this involves social construction, reification, and hegemonic processes. For example,

the rhetoric of special education, claims disproportionate identification of Black youth as emotionally/behaviorally disordered (EBD) is not acceptable. However, there have been incremental changes to the systems that have produced minor changes in outcomes (Annamma et al., 2016). Limited theoretical framing of the problem has not led to the transformation the field seeks (Artiles, 2019). Therefore, Black students continue to be mis-labeled and segregated at higher rates than their White peers, and placed in segregated settings (Whitford & Carrero, 2019). Furthermore, this group's exclusion from classrooms of White, non-disabled peers, through special education identification is considered *common sense* (Bornstein, 2014). This exemplifies a tacit intentionality (Gillborn, 2005) where educators are placed in positions of complicity.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framing

Whiteness Studies scholars, Critical Race scholars, Disability Studies Scholars, and Disability Critical Race theorists inform these studies; a fuller understanding of the complexity of structures of Whitepower-Normalcy is gained by including each of these theories. I interrogate systems that construct racialized and normalized identities and the scientific knowledge used to justify current practices. Critical analysis facilitates educators' and scholars' innovation and corresponding transformation of structures. While this dissertation is a primary means for meeting the expectations of scholarship, within my PHD program, I also see it as a means for disruption and resistance, as part of scholarship that intends to do more than ally with oppressed people. The knowledge created within this process will be shared both within and outside the academy, because, as Gramsci discussed, all people need access to the

knowledge of power in order to navigate and disrupt these institutions, per Gramsci (Mayo, 2017).

Chapter 2 grounds the overall study by describing the ideologies of White Supremacy and Normalcy, I refer to these as Whitepower-Normalcy. I begin with ideas, or ideologies, because they permeate our culture and influence us consciously and unconsciously. I argue that as cultural workers, educators and scholars need to recognize and acknowledge our role within these ideologies. Specifically in special education, scholarship that explicitly addresses hidden ideologies is lacking (Annamma et al., 2016; Artiles, 2019). In chapter three, I conceptualize culture and cultural processes, wherein a *reality* is constructed through norms, and relationships. This reality is not neutral; our culture provides meaning to identities, constructs our values, makes sense of the way society is organized (Gergen, 2010). I describe the cultural processes of social construction, hegemony, and reification; as part of the cultural context, these help explain how educators may unknowingly enact unjust policies and avoid critiques of the system.

Connecting Educational Institutions with Culture

Cultural processes within institutions such as social construction, reification, and hegemony are means for codifying an ideology, making it practical and applicable, and concealing inequities so the ideology is accepted. Educational Institutions help to determine and reinforce: (a) cultural norms and ways of being, (b) which knowledge is relevant and aligns with cultural values, and (b) who belongs, or doesn't belong, as members of the culture (Bourdieu, 1986). In the three articles of this dissertation, I describe educational institutions'

cultural work as it relates to special education teachers, the marginalization of Black family Cultural Wealth, and the ethics review for critical work that disrupts deficit identities.

Technologies of Behavioral Intervention: Constructing Identities and Systematizing Control

The first article is entitled *Technologies of Behavioral Intervention: Constructing Identities and Systematizing Control for BIPOC Students*. I interrogate the power afforded evidence-based practices for behavioral intervention (EBPs-B), that help to construct deficit identities of BIPOC students and limited roles for teachers as technicians. Using a historical and socio-cultural analysis, I critique the special identification process that privileges data developed within EBPs-B over other knowledge of the child and their system of support as decisions of IDEA eligibility are made. I interrupt special education teacher preparation (SPED PREP) programs that train teachers to use standardized interventions that may not meet each student's needs (Sullivan, 2017); in this way, their role as caring professionals who serve students more humanely by building positive relationships is marginalized. Additionally, I discuss potential impacts of this limited knowledge used to make eligibility decisions for special education identification.

Parent Advocacy: Black Family Cultural Wealth and Special Education Structures

Black parents' counterstories are presented in the article *Parent Advocacy: Black Family Cultural Wealth and Special Education Structures*. Their culturally-specific knowledges and non-normative ways of being are centered as models of resistance to structures that produce harm, such as the Behavior Intervention-Special Education Identification Process (BI-SPED IDP). This article explicates the aspirational, social, familial, linguistic navigational and resistance capital of Black families, their Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), as theorized by Yosso and Burciaga

(2016). The experiences of four Black families show the presence of CCW Theory that is not fully acknowledged within the codified processes of the BI-SPED IDP. In this way, Black family assets and strengths are added to special education scholarship; this study becomes a form of action within the greater movement of disrupting the status quo systems that stratify and exclude people and knowledge.

Ethics Review for Critical Special Education Research: Disqualified or Official Knowledge

As Artiles (2019) states, special educators need open discussion, theoretical background knowledge, and support from scholarship as they reflect on the ideological roots of educational institutions in producing inequities for BIPOC student (Artiles, 2019). This article, entitled *Ethics Review for Critical Special Education Research: Disqualified or Official Knowledge*, centers the structures and process the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB codes and procedures do not separate social inquiry from medicalized or biological studies; this article discusses my submission of a critical qualitative inquiry related to Black family parent advocacy for approval. The IRB is responsible for ensuring human participants in research studies are not harmed, and has ultimate authority to approve or deny studies (Hottenstein, 2018). This article connects IRB to the sorting of knowledge into categories of official (Apple, 2014) and disqualified knowledge (Foucault, 2010). I connect my experiences as a graduate student scholar to critical theory (McLaren, 2017), and the politics of knowledge (Said, 1999). I argue that the failure to accept disqualified knowledges from BIPOC families as official knowledge creates limitations for special educators rather than opening doors to critical reflection.

Researcher as Instrument

Institutions are not the only site of critical analysis within this dissertation. As Tatum (2014) states, educators' starting point of cultural awareness is not to be judged, but moving towards justice is expected. If we are to make meaningful shifts in consciousness, "power relations in institutions...must be demystified, but the inner embodied life cannot be exempted from the process" (Heshusius, 2004, p.305). External forces cannot be separated from this inward witnessing (Gallagher, 2004); knowledge of both external and internal sites is necessary if we are to disrupt the status quo. I am explicit in each article that that is not the case: this is personal. This dissertation intends to be an act of solidarity with victims of state sanctioned harm and those protesting social injustices; I explicitly name institutionalized *Whitepower-Normalcy*, and I am intentionally transparent about my moves towards constructing my identity as a scholar and educator of resistance. This self-work is not meant to judge or excuse my acts and ideas, but to understand internal biases that affect my work, so as Gallagher (2004) discusses, I can actually see them, recognize their power, understand how they operate, and then put them away.

As Bonilla-Silva (2006) asks, why are there so many racist outcomes, if there are no racists in education? Identifying educators as cultural workers positions us within the relationships of power. Therefore, further questions need to be considered: '*what is the culture?*,' and '*how am I benefiting from the structures as they operate now?*' I am not calling out everyone in education as overtly racist or ableist, yet we are all cultural workers who operate within the *Whitepower-Normalcy* ideological structures. Inequitable outcomes are evidence of a tacit intentionality; while diminished opportunities and outcomes for people who

are constructed as *less than* may not be deliberate, these conditions are not accidental (Gillborn, 2005). Thus, the paradox of special education: while the federal law supports students with learning or behavioral differences, it also enables the racialization of disabilities. If our cultural work is not critical, we are complicit, knowingly, or unknowingly; I challenge those of us educators and scholars in positions of power and privilege to engage in this discussion. This dissertation supports critical questions such as '*why does this keep happening?*,' '*what is my role in this process?*,' and '*how can this be challenged?*'

In US culture, holding multiple privileged identities affords a separation between “us” and “them,” which could result in my approaching this dissertation as purely an intellectual endeavor studying the “other.” I am a White, middle-class, Christian, educated woman and lifelong educator; these privileged positions also come with ethical responsibilities. Therefore, I explicitly name my work as political: teaching, constructing knowledge, and participating in school communities are not removed from the political climate or cultural conditions (McLaren, 2017). I want to challenge current ideological practices and cultural norms because people who are currently excluded or silenced have the right to full participation and protection of cultural institutions. I criticize educational structures that devalue Black and Brown people and their knowledge, as a “gesture of citizenship” that demonstrates I expect “more than rhetorical promises and broken dreams” (Apple, 2014, p.4). I take the promises of education in the US seriously, and expect the benefits for *all*.

Conclusion

Cultural and institutional norms perpetuate *common sense* narratives of deficit, set boundaries of access to opportunity, and control what knowledge is acceptable. Each teacher

and scholar, as a cultural worker, needs to have knowledge of educational structures that create conditions for their work. “Problems of practice are complex, and ethical dilemmas result from conflict between legitimate goals;” for educators to be responsible decision makers, their development “cannot be satisfied by prescriptions for practice or unchanging rules of conduct” (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Instead, she recommended that educators pursue ongoing development and critical reflection on practices in order to make decisions for the good of students and the profession. It is necessary, therefore, to critically analyze educational institutions and practices that claim to be neutral and independent, to unmask their violence is necessary so we can resist that violence (Foucault, 2010). This unmasking is necessary in health care, policing, and schooling. My dissertation connects hidden ideologies with social practices and material outcomes because institutional structures of power, including schools, are sites of potential disruption (Foucault, 2010).

Structures codify the hierarchy, making the *Whitewater-Normalcy* ideology real and acceptable in schools; it has become common sense. Then, professional practice is structured in ways that support educators’ compliance rather than critical thinking, as my articles on evidence-based practices and the ethical research review process outline. Normalcy and Whiteness ideologies are similar in their origins, purpose, and impact; they sustain each other (Annamma et al., 2016; Connor, 2013). Constraints on knowledge and participation within educational institutions maintain the hidden dominant ideologies of White Supremacy and Normalcy. Educational structures serve to construct people and knowledge as cultural insiders or outsiders, with benefits afforded to insiders. Boundary-making occurs openly, because it is considered common sense, or the “right” way to organize society (Gallagher, 2004). In

conclusion, educational institutions construct selective access to the dominant culture's knowledge and opportunity (Bourdieu, 1988) and cause material harm to BIPOC youth (Annamma et al, 2016).

This dissertation disrupts that notion of common sense: there are other ways of being and knowing, which if normalized, would move our educational institutions to more just policies. My analysis encompasses multiple complexities to show the relationships between ideologies, cultural processes, social constructions, and educational structures. I add to the knowledge base so cultural workers within educational institutions that construct power and privilege gain deeper understanding of the politics of education and are better positioned for transformational resistance (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) and critical praxis (Freire, 2018). Critical analysis of ideologies, and structures of power supports understanding of ourselves, our place in within the institutions, and our work as cultural.

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CHAPTER 2. WHITEPOWER-NORMALCY IDEOLOGY: US SOCIETY AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Educators have an ethical responsibility to be part of the movement towards dismantling structures of oppression, including those within our own institutions. Urgent action is needed to correct the ills of division and oppression in our society, and rushing into action without reflection and a deep understanding of culture, history, and political workings is ineffective and may induce more harm. Moreover, resistance to systems of oppression requires understanding of context, and an understanding of self within that context. Within teacher education and professional development there is a lack of reflection and socio-historical understanding (Gay, 2018; Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Ideologies are part of this socio-cultural context, yet, in part due to the challenges of making ideas concrete and measurable, the philosophies, beliefs and assumptions that undergird our practice are neglected in educational discourse. Today's educational context is one of neoliberalism, with its competition, individual accountability, and need for quantified data as proof of progress; this serves to stifle and distract inquiry involving ideologies of Whiteness or Normalcy (Schmeichel, et al, 2017). This dissertation intends to interrupt that distraction, by focusing on the ideological constructs, as well as their cultural processes and their practical, day to day impact on people within the culture (Mayo, 2017).

Ideologies inform power distribution and the ordering of society; they are enacted through institutions, structures, and individuals. hooks and Hall (1986) discussed ideological power and resistance in relationship to race and gender; they included media, state and education as ideological actors that work to convince people that the status quo is better than radical social change. However, Foucault argued that social relations are the sites where the

truth of society is masked, through the hegemonic processes that covertly gain consent for a culture's social hierarchy and distribution of power. Ideologies in action reproduce social structures through institutions like education. School structures and social relations are part of an overall educational complex that constructs, reinforces, and ensures cohesion of the dominant ideology; they are one of the sites where beliefs, norms, and interests of the institutional powerholders become material. Whoever controls the schools, controls society (Hall, 1986). Leonardo (2003) reminded us that educators represent the dominant ideologies whether we are aware of it or not; in order to transform inequities, or change the current ways of being, we cannot ignore the ideas that undergird our work. I center educators' context for action and sites of influence, the institutionalized structures that set parameters for our practice.

The Need for Ideology in Scholarship

In solidarity with Love (2019), I am focused on ideologies embedded in our educational infrastructure in order to ground action within ideological concepts, cultural processes, and practical activities of educators. Love describes the complexity of injustices, and the need for entry points, arguing that theory allows us "to break down injustices into small, digestible pieces" and reminds us that in the work of transforming our institutions, "our job is not to move mountains, but to outmaneuver them" (p. 133). She describes the power of theory as similar to a North Star; it provides (a) foundational language and knowledge to respond to issues, (b) alternative ways of seeing situations and conditions we are in, and (c) a vision for transformation. The language from theory brings the hidden barriers to justice into the light. I

believe developing an understanding of ideology and cultural processes will also help us outmaneuver educational structures of injustice.

Using ideology for analysis involves discussion the points of cohesiveness and points of potential disruption within ideas and cultural practices. Within our educational institutions, the inequitable access and structural violence is evidenced by the opportunity gap, and the increased segregation of schools, as well as the disproportionate placement of Black youth identified as Emotional Behavior Disordered in segregated settings. Because these phenomena continue over time and in spite of reforms, they show a cohesion between the dominant ideologies and our socio-cultural institutions which validates the Critical Race Theory that schools are doing what they are intended to do (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Disruption of these structures of exclusion and silencing can be facilitated through a deconstruction of the ideologies and a reconstruction of different relationships between social forces; ideological change is not about replacement or imposition, but “an articulation and disarticulation of ideas,” allowing transformation (Hall, 1986, p. 23).

Understanding the dominant ideologies of our culture and their connection to our role as educators is a starting point for critical analysis and action; as cultural workers, we are political actors. “If we recognize that values are grounded in material practices and interests, it follows that for appeals to values to be politically successful, they need to achieve resonance with people’s lived experiences of the social world” (Leggett, 2013. p. 310). This chapter provides a description of the values that are connected to the practical activities of educators and scholars that will be discussed in the three articles. I begin by answering the question “what is an ideology?” and then speak specifically to the ideologies of Normalcy and Whiteness.

These are dominant ideologies within American culture, yet they are hidden within institutions, structures, policies, and practices that claim to be race-neutral. For each ideology, I discuss a definition and how the ideology is constructed; I then discuss examples of how the ideology is manifested in educational institutions.

Defining Ideology

An ideology is a framework of thought used to understand and explain the social and political workings of society (Hall, 1986). Ideologies affect people's socio-cultural, political and economic conditions, as well as their understanding of these conditions. According to Gramsci, an ideology is a coalescence of ideas, assumptions, customs and beliefs that become *common sense* in society through a complex system of laws, institutions, and structures (Ramos, 1982). Ramos goes on to explain that Gramsci's conceptualization of ideology was based in class struggle, describing ideology as a terrain of practices, principles, and dogmas; it exists both conceptually and materially within society. Moreover, an ideology operates to unify, strengthen, and preserve itself, so the given philosophy and practical applications are coherent even as other conditions change. Specific structures within educational institutions exert ideological power; however ideologies also operate unconsciously in images, concepts, and systems; active systems of representation reinforce or modify how people in the culture act and think (Althusser, 1964).

Althusser argues that all members of society absorb the influences of the ideology, we are all subject to the distortions of reality in favor of the hierarchy of power. These distortions may cause a person to construct an imaginary version of their conditions and their place in society built on hope or nostalgia, rather than material conditions. For the individual, this

imaginary vision may become more true than the tangible realities of their life, which can lead to complacency, the submission to the current social order. Overt claims of equality or “common good” based in nostalgia or hope mask inequities and protect the status quo; the dominant ideology persists without broad resistance.

Ideologies are not isolated or individual; multiple dominant ideologies collude to socially construct the cultural actors, and differentiate dominant from subjugated groups. The dominant group, defined by the norms as superior, uses ideology to maintain the system’s order and their own power over those constructed as inferior. “Ideology resides in language” (Mayo, 2017, p. 45) and language supports the construction of an artificial binary of “us” as actors and “other” as objects within society. Language and knowledge of the ideology are imparted through educational institutions; the production of knowledge that is disseminated as truth within a culture is another means of creating and recreating ideology (Hall, 1986). Therefore educational institutions, and the cultural workers within them who fail to critically question where the ideas come from, or who the ideologies serve, remain complicit in the masking of inequities. Developing a deeper understanding of the dominant ideologies of the United States requires looking at Normalcy, Whiteness, and White Supremacy

Ideology as a Framework for Analysis

The grounding of my dissertation in ideologies of Normalcy and Whiteness is a Disability Critical Race Theory approach to inquiry (Annamma et al., 2016). DisCrit discusses questions of race and ability, focusing on ability as the construct fails to encapsulate the complexities of people’s unique ways of being and thinking, or their identity. Race and ability are socially constructed, with corresponding norms, material affects, and psychological impacts. DisCrit

centers the interdependency and invisibility of racism and ableism, and their connection to normalcy; historical legacies and legal policies operate to deny rights in the racialization of disability. Intersectionality, at the level of individual identity and structural oppression is a central tenet. DisCrit scholarship privileges the voices of people raced and disabled by the system.

Furthermore, “DisCrit requires activism and supports all forms of resistance.” (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 19). It is necessary to begin with ideas, because traditional discourse and urgent present-centered practice often fail to afford time and space for critical analysis of the inequitable material impacts of our work or deep self-reflection about our role as educators within the larger system. While DisCrit is moving the discussion forward, at this point, there is little critical language and few structural opportunities that facilitate discussion of the social construction of race, ability and goodness; I argue that lack of knowledge and language perpetuates the status quo. I consider this set of studies a beginning of a conversation within the special education field, disrupting the technical solutions discourse (Thorius, 2019).

Ideological structures, policies and practices that work towards democratic ideals also produce material and psychological harm to people identified as others. Analyzing the ideologies and their material manifestations for sites of deconstruction and reconstruction affords an understanding of potential realignment and can reveal different relationships between social forces and ideas (Hall, 1986). I am able to recognize points of cohesiveness and potential disruption within the ideas; hidden beliefs and assumptions are exposed so I am able to make conscious decisions on how to respond. Furthermore, this critical analysis helps make abstractions explicit and humanizes the people who are victimized by the systems of

oppression; the means for convincing members of society that the status quo is acceptable are interrupted (Smith, 2005).

Normalcy, Whiteness, and White Supremacy ideologies are similar in their origins and purpose; they reinforce and sustain each other in ways that increase their power in cultural, political, and economic arenas. Moreover, they are enacted across multiple systems of marginalization and oppression, including education, through covert means, which enables educators' complicity within the institutions. I use the term Whitepower-Normalcy for the dominant ideology undergirding educational institutions in the US. Whiteness Studies scholars, Critical Race scholars, Disability Studies Scholars, and DisCrit theorists each have unique perspectives on how these ideologies operate. By including these multiple perspectives as I explicated these ideologies, a fuller understanding of the complexity of these ideologies within US society is gained. Moreover, this study aims to coalesce ideas that may seem on the surface to be separate and therefore incompatible by including a broad range of scholars. Interdisciplinary work, such as that of Smith (2005), is appropriate for understanding both institutional and interpersonal conditions, as well as their interconnections, redundancies, and contradictions. She discussed ideology as a system of discourses that creates a macro-social set of ruling relations that is produced through micro-social interactions across settings. By including both discourses and relationships, I am able to show connectedness, moving discussion of educational inequities defined as a series of isolated events to a more contextualized discourse regarding the networks of interests, influences and outcomes.

The Ideology of Normalcy

My focus is on people who are raced and whose behaviors and emotions are constructed as disordered; therefore, I use the broader construct of Normalcy. Additionally, Normalcy ideology allows me to discuss norms of knowledge, as well as people's characteristics, as in the critical analysis of the IRB process in Chapter 6 of this dissertation. As an ideology enacted within US institutions, the power relations within Normalcy construct hierarchies of acceptability of identities, behaviors, and ways of thinking. Additionally, the construction of *normal* relies on the existence of abnormal; by creating a boundary, the normal is centered as the preference, and privileges are distributed accordingly. Members of the *normal* group are so encompassed by these conditions that they fail to critically consider Normalcy; therefore, the power of the normal is that it is treated as *common sense*, and remains uncontested (Smith & Erevelles, 2004). Within US culture, *normal* is that which is centered in discourse and power: White, male, christian, middle-class, cisgendered, with an abled body and stable emotions. Without metrics of Normalcy ideology enacted within cultural institutions, the social construction of superior and inferior identities would not be possible; corresponding "isms" such as classism, racism, ableism, sexism, are possible because of the ideology called Normalcy. Erevelles (2000) further discussed Normalcy, perfection, and wholeness as illusions that can only be understood because of the existence of the *other*. For critical scholarship, the questions *who does normal serve?* and *how are the boundaries constructed?* become core to understanding how ideologies are enacted and how resistance may occur.

Describing Normalcy

Normalcy is a contemporary ideology of individualism wherein a constructed normal is valued. A *normal* person is self-contained, productive, and isolated; therefore he (because that is the norm) is responsible for himself (Goodley, 2016). Davis (1997) described *normal* as a configuration of ideas and systems that occurred at a particular time and place as a part of the ideology of *progress*, or industrialization, which was itself an ideological consolidation intended to serve institutions of power. It is important to note that *normal* is a social construction which does not exist in all societies, and is not a condition of human nature (Davis, 1997); ecosystems need diversity to survive. Conversely, the homogeneity encouraged by Normalcy benefits only segments of the whole.

Within western culture, Normalcy matters because it is understood as the “legitimate way of being in the world,” and “the only version of the good life” (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009, p. 5). Normalcy, as constructed by the dominant cultural group is an ideology used for sorting and segregating; privileges are granted or denied according to who meets the arbitrarily-constructed criteria of *normal* (Sensory & DiAngelo, 2017). When discussing the normal person, Thomson (1997) called the privileged person within the majority the *normate*, with access to cultural capital and opportunities for authority. Furthermore, the norm becomes the ideal, even though normal is a social construction, not a reality (Davis, 1997); this process of making things real, called reification, is described in the following chapter.

Foucault (2010) stated that the norm is one of the “great instruments of power” (p. 188); by the imposition of homogeneity as the ideal, a hierarchy and distribution of rank is also possible. The privileged group is at the top, and they have justification for judging others as

acceptable or unacceptable; this makes surveillance and monitoring acceptable. By constructing and enforcing a norm as an ideal, the policies and practices within our cultural institutions imply the majority of people should meet the constructed criteria of *normal*; deviations from the norm justify exclusion from the norm group (Thomson, 1997). Thus, ideological norms provide structural privileges that comfort those in the norm group which reinforce the status quo; furthermore, the arbitrary boundary and policies that reinforce Whitepower-Normalcy are not considered problematic for people in the norm group (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). The boundary is considered neutral and the policies make sense because there is order.

In order to maintain the construction of Normalcy and educate people so they support it, the ideology needs to be structured and institutionalized. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) discuss cultural institutions as the primary socializing forces that guide life; they produce and maintain the dominant values, yet this work may be hidden, intentionally. Schools are part of the complex system that maintains the boundaries and rules of Normalcy and revises these constructions to ensure ongoing benefit for the norm group. Furthermore, schools are one of the institutions built to respond to the dilemma of the group outside the norm; the outside group is constructed as a problem to be fixed, which leads to multiple, various interventions of oppression (Karmiris, 2020). This aligns with my argument in my first article about behavior interventions. Furthermore, I assume that schools, enacting Normalcy, are complicit in the stratification and corresponding limited opportunities for the outside group; educators are either complacent or resistant to this role.

Normalcy in Action

Institutions such as laws, customs, and governing organizations do the work of constructing and maintaining the *normal* (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Normalcy is an oppressive force which marginalizes people and excludes their stories; this will be referred to as “othering” throughout this dissertation, a form of dehumanization. As Davis (1997) discussed, this dehumanization has the effect of objectifying people who are in the ‘other’ group, which validates their treatment as passive objects. Furthermore, that object needs to be managed, controlled, educated by the dominant group; this justifies a broad range of interpersonal actions, government policies, and cultural institutions meant to manage, fix, or contain the ‘other’ The dominant group benefits.

Sorting and Signifying

Scientific methods and corresponding data are privileged in the construction of an ideal that pushes others to work towards it and validates the elimination of deviance through a culture of pathologization and correction. Because of the socially constructed nature of normal, its definition is fluid and the boundary between normal and other can change as conditions change, to maintain privileges for the dominant group. According to Foucault (2010), the process of othering occurs through (a) dividing practices, (b) scientific classification, and (c) subjectification. Scholarly inquiry informs scientific classification, claiming the status of science as it studies objects, and makes meaning of them; this process is considered to be nonbiased and the scientists are the knowledge holders, or experts. Campbell (2009) discusses how scientific means are used to determine the boundary between normal and abnormal for people with physical or mental differences. This validates the scientists as experts, and the

amelioration and correction of the abnormalities becomes the responsibility these experts (Campbell, 2009); scientists are constructed as pathologizers and fixers. Schools apply these scientific methods and classification schemas as they make data driven decisions based on an average, or normal group, to track students into ability groups, determine who has access to advanced placement classes, or identify students as disabled. Science is further discussed in the Whitepower Ideology section below.

Storytelling

Stories further ideology; they are told through media, schools, and policy (Loenen, 2019; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) in order to make the ideology, such as Normalcy cohesive. In furthering the dominant ideology, stories are told from the perspective of the cultural norm, or insiders, reminding people who is subordinate and inspiring the dominant group to enact *normal* ways of being. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) describe this as the majoritarian story, which centers members and values of the dominant culture. This majoritarian story is validated within the standardized curriculum of schools and privileged in educational scholarship. Counterstories come from outsiders who construct their own meanings and resist the dominant cultural narrative. Educators can disrupt the majoritarian stories by including counterstories from people who are othered, and teaching critical consumption of the majoritarian stories.

An example of how the culture is influenced by stories comes from social media. In the year 2020, social media is a force where stories are shared at a rapid-fire pace and their reach is global; this can move the boundaries of democratic participation and elevate social movements in positive ways (Mills, 2017). Still there are cautions; today's cultural norms equate social media influencers to journalists, blurring the lines between propaganda and news, which

requires new sets of critical skills. Consumers need to understand potential ideological agendas and be conscious of the value they put on these stories.

Parallels with Racialization

For further understanding how Normalcy operates, I make parallels to the ideologies of race and processes of racialization, as outlined by Leonardo (2004); in *The Color of Supremacy*, he described how to make racist ideology work: (a) set up the system that benefits the dominant group. (b) mystify the system with unique language and hidden knowledge that is only held by those in power (c) separate the knowers who understand the complexities of the ideology, from the doers, who are enacting the ideology, and (d) when challenged regarding the ideology, distort, distract, and question the veracity and reality of the charges. Within this process, a privilege is also created, the privilege of evading critique. For example, dividing practices operate to segregate Black disabled children from non-disabled White children in US schools; Black youth identified as Emotional Behavioral Disordered are placed in segregated settings at higher rates than any other group (Whitford & Carrero, 2019). However, this segregation is overshadowed by the broader educational discourse of special education as a helping profession. Special educators avoid critique, even as they may unknowingly be complicit in the segregation. Furthermore, my experience with the research review process implicated the system's distraction and distortion techniques, as I sought approval from my research critiquing special education's sorting practices.

Institutional Benefits of Normalcy

The construction of a norm facilitates order, a common language, and a common culture (Foucault, 2010). The effect of the dominant culture establishing what is "normal"

within their own narrow cultural bounds is to make all cultures outside of the dominant “abnormal” by default (Bartoli et al, 2015). Classification and distribution of rank using the norm, gives meaning to the hierarchy and its corresponding judgements (Foucault, 2010, p. 188). Furthermore, the norm benefits those people with institutional power, constructing asymmetrical power relations favoring those in the insiders. There are consistent unearned privileges and advantages for the dominant group, whether they are acting intentionally or not. Furthermore, these are taken for granted, given the cultural and ideological stories that are told to reinforce the status quo as common sense.

As a cultural force, ideologies help form an imaginary vision based in nostalgia or hope, which masks oppression and supports the status quo; the system benefits (Althusser, 2018) . Separation of the ‘other’ from the insider is rationalized when claims of benefits to those othered mask harm; Normalcy socializes the norm group members that separateness acceptable and it is natural (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). These authors go on to describe the impact of a Normalcy ideology. An insider/outsider system is validating for those considered full members of the culture, furthering ideas such as ‘we belong,’ ‘we’re in the right group,’ and the ‘other’ is unnecessary and expendable. In this way, institutions erase the evidence of disproportionate resource allocation and their failure to serve this segregated population equitably. Inequitable resource distribution follows, minimizing opportunities for the outside group; structural violence is hidden. Institutions become powerbrokers, deciding who gets what, how much, and for what purposes; this may be tangible resources or knowledge itself.

Benefits to and from Science and Scholarship

Scientific methods of inquiry based on a constructed norm serve to remove the scientist from any responsibility for the results of the inquiry. Science, in this estimation is the equation of knowing with detachment, quantifying, mastering, and controlling (Heshusius, 2004, p. 205). By detaching, and controlling, one comes to know objects. These specific methodologies are the privileged way of knowing within the academy; they maintain authority through exclusion and objectification, according to Berman (Heshusius, 2004). “The claim to neutrality is a ventriloquist trick, a mode of speaking where the voice is smartly hidden, so smartly, that the reader/listener is made to believe that it comes from somewhere else,” somewhere else being the valorized method of science. (Heshusius, 2004, p. 207). The norm, as in the rule or standard, is claimed as instrument of power when sorting, evaluating, or segregating, which furthers the claim the scientist’s bias or prejudice is not present. Therefore, the outcomes cannot be biased or discriminatory; these are objective Truths that are contested through further studies using science.

Furthermore, these scientists’ position of power is reified through institutionalized structures that perpetuate the status quo of *normal* inquiry: randomized control trials and statistical calculations. Within this context, special education scholarship that is funded and supported by government grants remains positivist and behaviorist, even as these methods reinforce special education policies and practices that produce racist outcomes. Gallagher (2004), over fifteen years ago, encouraged the forms of knowledge construction which center lived experiences and knowledges other than “scientific;” my articles add to that scholarship.

Benefits of Standardization in Schools

Schools serve economic concerns, educating and shaping future workers, and civic concerns, preparing youth to hold the national identity and be active citizens. Additionally, purposes of education included humanistic or egalitarian interests (Zion & Blanchett, 2017). Regardless of the stated mission, schools serve as sorters and signifiers, with policies that track by ability or achievement, construct schools within schools, or define special education categories that reinforce the boundaries of the norm. Students who do not fit into the school's definition of making progress toward the stated purpose are constructed as outsiders. Special education itself is framed within deficit ideologies of race and ability, and separateness is made acceptable for those identified as disabled in schools. Segregation is no longer *de jure*, yet it remains *de facto* in policies and practices. All of these policies help schools maintain order and meet the stated and hidden agenda of education.

Teachers may operate from a humanistic or egalitarian perspective, and work towards equitable practices, yet policymakers may be serving other purposes all together. The normalization forces continue their ascent in US schooling, through teacher standards, curriculum standards, and state mandated testing. Critically conscious teachers ask the question 'who is benefiting?' Standards-based education, No Child Left Behind, and now the Every Student Succeeds Act have narrowed curriculum and further marginalized students who did not fit into this curriculum (Sleeter, 2005). Standardizing the curriculum within schools has created another *us and them* binary, which benefits people already in the *us* group. A fixed curriculum minimizes opportunities for full inclusion, because it leaves no room for children's own funds of knowledge (Moll, et. al, 1992), but it makes instruction more efficient. While

teachers are expected to meet the needs of diverse learners within the general education classroom, the resources needed to do this well are not allocated, so segregating into categories with funding streams benefits the school. The rhetoric of serving all students remains that, rhetoric rather than reality.

Benefits to People Constructed as Normal

People are categorized at birth, with attributes they have no control of, into insiders and outsiders within this system of Normalcy which inequitably distributes cultural capital. Cultural capital involves a cultural goods such as art, language and mannerisms, education in the cultural knowledge and norms, and institutionalized credentials (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Access to cultural capital provides privileges of status, material wealth, knowledge of opportunity and advancement, and cultural stability. Cultural capital is gained and reinforced through access to and full participation in the dominant culture. Still, when systems of Normalcy are central to the culture itself, an individual must start with a fund of capital in order to gain more; therefore individuals who are born into the normative group have unearned advantages. Being born into a White, middle class, two-parent family without physical or mental defects, (as differences at birth are called), and living in a house with 'good' schools nearby equates to cultural capital that can be leveraged for more cultural and social capital.

Also, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) discussed the comfort that is derived by members of the in-group, when Normalcy ideology is produced and reproduced within a culture. Comforting attitudes for the Normate are fostered and reinforced: (a) I am part of the best group and we have the right to be at the top. Others need to assimilate or be fixed. (b) I know what is right and best because I have more knowledge than others. (c) I live within the norms, so I do not

recognize my privileges or the inequities and I am not responsible for doing anything about these conditions. And (d), the world has order, so it makes sense; systems are supposed to work this way.

Additionally, identifying who doesn't fit in solidifies an insiders' position as someone who does fit in. Insiders are not made aware of the conditions the outsiders experience, which allows equal opportunity rhetoric to be accepted (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Critical reflection of cultural norms is further discouraged by the use of so-called neutral science and "best practices" language that validates current teacher behavior. Thus, an individual's incentives to critique the cultural institutions, or operate outside the norm, are minimized. With no need to question the current conditions, individuals support the model and avoid the discomfort of cognitive dissonance.

The Ideology of Whiteness

DisCrit also recognizes Whiteness and Ability as property, and argues that reforms of systems constructing people who are raced and disabled are the result of interest convergence; White middle-class people benefit (Annamma et al., 2016). In concert with ideologies of Normalcy are ideologies of Whiteness, both of which are so embedded within US society that they remain invisible, unless we make a conscious choice to discomfort ourselves enough to recognize and respond to them. Harris (1993) described Whiteness as a property that is defined, controlled, and hoarded by White people; she described this process in her germinal work. First, the color of skin is used as rationale for enslaving Blacks; they become property held by White people, based on an arbitrary identifier. Then Whiteness becomes synonymous with freedom, which could only be held by White people. Second, the institutions, policies and

practices are all constructed within White norms to serve White people, so White ways of being become “normal;” these norms are codified into law. Society, then supports Whiteness as a right, with corresponding privileges for those who belong; the line between White and other is arbitrary but fully enforced to keep others out and maintain the social order (Harris, 1993). The US education system is one of the primary arbiters and managers of this property.

Furthermore, given the pervasiveness and invisibility of Whiteness, White ignorance and dysconscious racism is enacted by White school policymakers and practitioners. Mills (2017) discussed White ignorance as the process of being misinformed and being unaware or unwilling to acknowledge this ignorance, or acknowledge that current ideology actually harms people of color. This aligns with dysconscious racism, when people and institutions unknowingly adopt Whiteness as the rightful norm. King (2015) defined dysconsciousness as a form of impairment, different from unconsciousness, because it limits a person’s willingness to challenge current beliefs and expectations around race and racial inequities.

This complex set of structures and policies that are enacted within schools involves teachers and scholars in a system that perpetuates inequities. Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) scholars have begun to theorize Whiteness in ways that make connection to educational policies and practice more evident. CWS aims to elucidate the invisibility and constant reproduction of White Supremacy and privilege, as part of an overall discussion of race formation (Matias & Mackey, 2016).

Whiteness

Whiteness is an ideology that has been made ‘real’ through cultural stories, tools and means of expression, institutions, and cultural workers. “Whiteness is also a culture; it was

created by the educational, social, economic, spiritual, and political conditions that intentionally and methodically give power to racism” (Love, 2019, p. 127). Mills (2017) contends that the ideologies of Whiteness are spread through misinformation and social practices of White people. It has its own structures that maintain power for White people; cultural institutions and structures support the White values of individualism, competition, and ownership. These values undergird how education operates today, and are fully supported by the current neoliberalism agenda. Furthermore Whiteness culture affords access to economic, social and political power that is not accessible to Black people (Harris, 1993); White is equated with normal, acceptable and better-than, given this ideology within the American culture (Bonilla Silva, 2006; Mills, 2017). The goal of Whiteness and its’ corresponding institutions is perpetuating the racial hierarchy with White people at the top. These White values are rarely challenged, and when reformers investigate causes of inequity or discrimination, ideologies of Whiteness are rarely implicated.

Conversely, Leonardo (2002) argued that Whiteness is not a culture, but a social concept, one that is produced and reproduced in order to remain meaningful and perpetuate benefits. He discusses Whiteness as performative, differentiating Whiteness from White people: Whiteness is invented, and the invention itself is used to mask its power and privilege. “Whiteness’s only stable investment is ideological power and material advantage, synonymous with the continuation of Whiteness as long as it remains a social fact” (Leonardo & Broderick 2011, p. 2210). Characteristics of Whiteness, include (a) unwillingness to attribute inequities to actions of White people, (b) avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group because

the culture around them is common sense, and (c) operating from an ahistorical perspective, which minimizes the racist legacy that has material impacts economically and culturally (Leonardo, 2004).

Whiteness in Education

White cultural workers and institutions built on Whiteness have constructed the meaning of able/disabled, Black/White, success/failure, right/wrong, safe/dangerous, and American/un-American into an overarching definition of *normal*. For example, assimilationist policies within schools serve the purpose of Whiteness, attempting to “homogenize diverse White ethnics into a single category (much like it attempts with people of color), for purposes of racial domination” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 32).

This reality is hidden through the machinations of Whiteness that are mostly invisible in school structures and policies that (a) segregate students spatially, such as students identified with disabilities being separated into restrictive settings; (b) competitive/free market school funding structures that benefit White people and schools in White neighborhoods within rhetoric of egalitarianism; (c) sorting and structures that limit access to knowledge in public schools to those with social and cultural capital; and (d) codified controls over what is determined to be “good”, in schools or in individuals (Diem & Hawkman, 2018).

Educators Constructing and Reconstructing Whiteness

White cultural norms of schools have been discussed by White, Vilson and Brown (2018), and Dubose (2014). See Table 2.1. *White Cultural Norms in Schools*, which provides several examples of White norms and their material manifestations in schools.

Table 2.1 White Cultural Norms in Schools

Norm	Manifestations within Schools
Rugged Individualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual grades, tasks. ○ Goals of independence and autonomy. ○ Control of environment, fixing errors or problems. ○ Competing for self: winning.
Eurocentric Communication of Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ English Language is Dominant. ○ European Music and Art ○ Written word privileged over oral tradition. ○ Rational ideas privileged over emotion.
Power and Authority held by Institution	<p>Privileged Ideas : Scientific method, linear thinking, cause and effect, quantified data.</p> <p>Privileged People: Those with credentials, titles, positions. Material possessions.</p>

Adapted from White, Vilson and Brown (2017), Okun (2000)

These norms form the basis of organizational structures, scheduling, grouping, discipline, curriculum, and pedagogy; they interact to construct Whiteness as common sense, and maintain White superiority (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Stratification of people and ideas is validated using Whiteness, constructing White Supremacy; deficit ideologies of ableism, Normalcy and racism are built on this foundation. Schools' structures, policy and practices reify the; ideological norms and values are made tangible and real, including the identities of students as insider and outsider, White and not White through the process of reification (Gergen, 2014) .

Researcher Positionality: Whiteness

The racial sorting that occurs within the US culture requires that White is a racialized category: I argue that White people have cultural norms, and these norms are constructed to

maintain White people at the top of the cultural hierarchy. Cultural institutions and stories add meaning to the physical characteristic of being White, determining distribution of cultural power and cultural capital, and membership in the group. White people' culture is based on having and holding on to power through cultural production and reproduction. While race is an illusion (Omi & Winant, 2014), dominant ideologies such as race evasion (Jupp, 2017) and White Supremacy (Bonilla Silva, 2006) are cohesive and consistent enough to be called cultural elements of Whiteness; these ideologies intersect with each other for increased power in racial projects enacted through White cultural institutions. The construction of deficit identities for the *othered* involves deficiency in moral character itself (Yoon, 2016); Whiteness has been conflated with moral superiority and the culture constructs White people with corresponding moral authority over other races.

As a White educator, I have personal responsibility to use the privileges and power afforded by my race to disrupt Whiteness and actively engage with White Supremacy. With over 80% White educators around me who are enculturating young students in what it means to be American, I am furthering Whiteness in my work. I must explicitly interrupt individualistic ways of being and work towards a collective of *all* people invested in dismantling structures of oppression. The myth that People of Color and people with socially constructed disabilities, the *others*, have inherent deficits that explain the achievement gap, employment gap, and discipline gap is constantly produced and reproduced within educational institutions; I cannot be complacent or operate unconsciously. This requires that in my work, White Supremacy is identified by name, not just subsumed under the concept of Whiteness.

White Supremacy

Critical Race Theory discusses White Supremacy as systemic and structural, not a collection of individual acts by a ‘few bad apples’ who have poisoned the bushel of fruit that is otherwise lovely. White Supremacy, as constructed by CRT, disrupts the belief that individuals who are part of a group of organized extremists are different from ‘the rest of us’ White people. bell hooks described White Supremacy as a central and comprehensive form of racism that cannot be oversimplified in discourse; it is a historical exercise of power that endures even when overt discrimination is addressed:

As I write, I try to remember when the word racism ceased to be the term which best expressed for me exploitation of black people and other people of color in this society and when I began to understand that the most useful term was White Supremacy. (1989, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Talking Black*)

White people must recognize the coercive control and domination within structures, and the way their actions affirm those structural expectations (hooks, 1989); this is White Supremacy. The following paragraphs bring the systemic nature of White Supremacy into relief.

White Supremacy and the Construction of Science

Science, itself a construct, is one of the structures that is used to produce and reproduce White Supremacy (Omi & Winant, 2015). In order to define race as biological and natural, with corresponding inherent deficits or superiorities, eugenicists developed measurements and methods of *proof* and disseminated their findings as truths (Omi & Winant, 2015). Science that was considered valid in the early 20th century, when eugenics was the norm, epitomizes the science of Whiteness, and *scientific racism*. The science was used to validate the stratification of

society and the distribution of resources, maintaining White Supremacy. Eugenics morphed over time, yet contemporary scientific racism continues to impact discourse and practice.

Vera et al. (1995) further explicated the use of scientific methods and scientific knowledge in constructing intellectual and moral superiority based in Whiteness. This science is deemed “Western Science,” with an elaborate infrastructure for scientific knowledge construction. Scientific knowledge is enforced within scholarship in this cycle; other forms of knowledge are discouraged and devalued. Ways of knowing, beyond western European norms of objectification and tangible measurement of individual units, are erased. The hegemonic power of scientific methods that construct and reify deficit identities is maintained through the use of quantitative methods and “objective” information, even if the knowledge formed uses faulty theory, manipulative methods or selective findings (Vera et al., 1995). Hegemony within scholarship is further discussed throughout this dissertation.

White Supremacy in Scholarship

Scholarship that is ahistorical, acontextual, and apolitical ensures White ignorance by reifying Whiteness and protecting White Supremacy; these conditions are present in positivist, quantitative scholarship. Knowledge that has been constructed in this way involves misinformation about past and present conditions that is touted as fact and believed without question (Mills, 2017); this forms a *White ignorance*, where White people’s claims of moral superiority are perpetuated and communities of color are harmed. Vera et al. (1995) problematized educational researchers’ focus on the individual as the unit of analysis, rather than contextual factors; while individualization and autonomy align with White ways of being, this type of science produces partial knowledge. This is an intentional masking of reality,

necessary to maintain cultural power. However, empirical scientific research is privileged within the academy; the norms of higher education signify it as *hard science*, more valuable to the institution (Labaree, 2006). Higher educations' structures, policies and practices of knowledge construction are connected to a marginalization of contextualized analyses by social scientists or critical qualitative education scholars (Artiles, 2019). When scholarship does not address ideology or structures of power, the status quo is maintained. Our status quo is White normative and White supremacist.

White Supremacy in Special Education Scholarship

Knowledge construction on dis/ability is still overwhelmingly located within the fields of medicine, psychology, and science, which are privileged by Whiteness and Normalcy. As Danforth and Gabel (2006) pointed out, many of the premises within traditional special education scholarship serve to pathologize children who do not fit society's norms.

Furthermore, special education's technical solutions discourse and positivist methods have marginalized qualitative methods and critical inquiry in the field (Connor et al., 2019), which perpetuates racist manifestations of policy. Given this prevailing cultural paradigm, disproportionate representation of Black youth as having Emotional Behavioral Disorders persists, and is perpetuated. Connor (2013) claims this orthodoxy of practice and knowledge construction amounts to resistance towards other ways of thinking and knowing, even from the people special education claims to serve. The norms of privileging scientific knowledge and the pathologization of *other* are maintained; this is Whiteness at work. For a field that claims neutrality and charitable service to those in need (Connor et al., 2019) relying on traditional

scholarship and scientific methods masks any complicity by individuals or institutions in perpetuating systems that produce harmful outcomes for Black youth.

White Supremacy Enacted Institutionally and Individually

Gillborn (2005) and Bonilla-Silva (2006) reminded us that even well intentioned actions by individuals can have racist consequences. Questioning the intentions of policy and practice, may inform ways in which institutional structures, policies and practices continue to produce racist outcomes even when major reforms have been implemented. Why is it that change is so slow?

One answer is that institutional racism and race inequity are deliberate insofar as (at best) there appears to be a judgement that their eradication is simply not important enough to shape the main tenets of education policy: it is possible, of course, that the situation is even worse than this, and that there has been a judgement that race equity is dangerous... [The fact that] racist measures are not only retained, but actually extended, suggests that policy makers have decided (tacitly, if not explicitly) to place race equity at the margins – thereby retaining race injustice at the centre (Gillborn, 2005, p. 500- 501).

Critical educators and scholars must consider the possibility that racist policies are purposeful, serving the ideology of White Supremacy. If discourse and scholarship are to move beyond the fragility of White innocence, or White guilt at being called racist, critiquing the systems that produce racist outcomes by using innovative means is essential. Scholarship that considers sociocultural context and includes knowledge from people who are othered needs to become the norm; then disseminating research from the academy to practitioners could guide educators and schools away from White ignorance and reproduction of White Supremacy ideology.

Conclusion: Whitepower-Normalcy Ideology

The dominant ideology that undergirds the cultural processes and educational structures within US schools is an overlapping set of ideas from Whiteness-White Supremacy and Normalcy; the ideologies are interdependent, and when combined, the ideology's dominance is strengthened. I conceptualize an ideology of *Whitepower-Normalcy* to ground the discussions of cultural work, structures of power and exclusion, and the cultural processes in the next chapter. Whitepower-Normalcy centers White ways of being as normal and legitimates this as the only version of the "good life" (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009, p. 5). However, Whiteness is more than a culture, it is a social concept that is constantly being reproduced, an invention used to mask power and privilege (Leonardo, 2002). Whiteness is a property right; there are rules of membership and exclusion (Leonardo, 2004). Tools of Normalcy are used to do the necessary sorting and signifying (Vera et al., 1995) to maintain Whiteness as exclusive. The use of Normalcy's scientific methods and scientific knowledge in constructing intellectual and moral superiority based in Whiteness is part of day-to-day practice (Vera et al., 1995).

Scales of Normalcy are used to position people within an all-encompassing social hierarchy; this is *othering*, which occurs through dividing practices and scientific classification (Foucault, 2010); the hierarchy constructs White Supremacy. White Supremacy's coercive control and domination is hidden within institutions and structures (hooks, 1989). For example, *normal* behavior becomes a form of *goodness*, with moral judgements attached to the people who are placed on the hierarchy of *goodness* (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016); this is acceptable, given Whitepower-Normalcy ideology. *Goodness as Property* is further discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). Normalcy's scientific practices and use of

abstractions for decision making is a form of dehumanization. People outside the norm group are constructed as passive objects (Davis, 1997), rather than agentic actors capable of autonomous decision making and independent participation in society. Moreover, society is more likely to accept the control, containment, and regulation of passive objects (Foucault, 2010). Whitepower-Normalcy ideology is the center of cultural practices, as discussed in the upcoming chapter.

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CHAPTER 3. CULTURAL WORK WITHIN SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICE AND SCHOLARSHIP

In order to understand the ways in which ideologies are made real, this chapter discusses the role of educational institutions in building culture and shaping people. Schools are powerful tools within cultures: they socialize everyone involved into the dominant group's norms, values, and beliefs (Gramsci, 2008); therefore they are socio-cultural-political structures, not just purveyors of academic and social curriculum. Schools are tools, used to create order, sort students and guide them into the workforce. As builders of Americans, schools clarify what is means to be American, which is based on (White) Western European and christian ideals and cultural norms (Ervelles et al., 2006). Moreover, schools protect class privilege while working to build "consensus for the democratic ideals and republican virtues" (Ervelles et al., 2006, p. 81) and regulate differences from those norms. As Zion and Blanchett (2017) further state, schooling served and continues to serve political purposes: forming educated citizens in a democracy, and controlling the behaviors of the masses. Additionally, educational structures that bring ideologies into relief are continuously constructed and reconstructed.

Schools construct identities; some identities are privileged with access to cultural capital, wherein access to knowledge equates to access to power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Those constructed with *othered* identities are subjected to limitations to their freedom, participation, and humanity (Annamma et al., 2016). Additionally, schools confer cultural knowledge and corresponding cultural capital; schools, people with access to this knowledge are afforded privileges and power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1973). In this way, cultural knowledge and power are inseparable. Within schools, educators and scholars, or *cultural workers*, are

part of the institutional structure; they produce and reproduce knowledge, norms, and systems of social stratification.

Educators and scholars work within structures that either facilitate or constrain their individual practice and values (Zion & Blanchett, 2017). Four purposes of schools, that each serve the interests of different stakeholders, are present within schools, and are the source of contestation; these include civic, humanist, egalitarian, and economic (Zion & Blanchett, 2017). As cultural process are enacted, the rhetoric of the humanistic and democratic purposes of schooling conceals the hidden agenda of White Power-Normalcy ideologies. The ideology is not explicitly named, in case its' faults may be exposed.

However, a dominant ideology “manifests itself in the political, economic, social, and cultural terrains of society” to construct and reify “dominant and subordinate classes” (Jay, 2003). In Chapter 1, I discussed Whitepower-Normalcy ideology; I premise each of my three articles on this ideology as the dominant ideology in the US. Therefore, educational structures work to maintain the Whitepower-Normalcy status quo and shape how schools operate, as Bonilla-Silva (2003) discussed. However, educators and scholars have knowledge and power that can be used for disrupting the status quo, rather than serving it. In this chapter, I ground my three articles by describing culture, cultural work, and cultural practices. Then, I discuss teachers and scholars as cultural workers that make choices to protect the status quo or disrupt systemic problems. This chapter discusses two roles of educational institutions in constructing and reconstructing culture and people: socialization and knowledge construction. Socialization is connected to the cultural practices of construction and reification. I outline multiple forms of knowledge, then knowledge construction is connected to hegemonic processes. Lastly, I

connect cultural workers, or educators and scholars, to resistance practices, including transformational resistance, counter-hegemony, de-reification, and contestation.

Educational Institutions and Culture

In order to provide a description of *cultural work*, a definition of culture itself must be stated. “Culture is the historically shaped terrain on which all new theoretical currents work;” cultural is always changing as “old alignments are dismantled and new alignments can be effected between elements within different discourses and between social forces and ideas”(Hall, 1986, p. 23). Culture is socially transmitted, learned and taught (Ishfaq, 2013). Disability Studies scholars McDermott and Varenne (1995), discuss Culture-as-Disability as a means of organizing society and people. They describe culture as

an historically evolved pattern of institutions, [that] teaches people what to aspire to and hope for and marks off those who are to be noticed, handled, mistreated, and remediated as falling short. Cultures offer a wealth of positions for human beings to inhabit. Each position requires that the person inhabiting it must possess, and must be *known as possessing*, particular qualities that symbolize, and thereby constitute, the reality of their position to *others*. (p.336-337, emphasis in original).

Within this conception of culture, “one cannot be disabled alone”; only when this is the culture, can members forget or deny their complicity in the social production of disability and the corresponding discomfort, marginalization, and oppression that follows (McDermott & Varenne, 1995, p. 337). For this dissertation, ‘positions for human beings to inhabit’ are referred to as identities.

Cultural Work within Education

Schools serve different purposes for different interest groups within the culture. Zion and Blanchett (2017) discuss four social concerns that schools may serve: egalitarian, economic, civic, and humanistic. Schools’ roles within the culture include constructing knowledge and

socializing youth so the culture makes sense and each person participates as they are expected. Cultural workers, or educators who construct culture within institutions, are expected to comply with the way the system is ordered, for cultural cohesiveness. However, McDermott and Varenne (1995) argue that cultural cohesiveness is not gained by everyone knowing and doing the same thing; cohesiveness is dependent on the interactions and the work that people do together, which includes naming and designating, creating cultural arrangements and borders, and interpreting and explaining relationships (McDermott et al., 2006).

Part of *cultural work* within educational institutions includes the actions of those who have access to cultural knowledge and power to further the dominant ideology: Whitepower-Normalcy. Schools not only operate in Whitepower-Normalcy ideologies, they explicitly and implicitly teach others to participate in the White-Normal culture and its' constructed hierarchies. Cultural practices and cultural workers in schools are part of a system that constructs the meaning of success/failure, right/wrong, safe/dangerous, and American/un-American (Leonardo, 2009); additionally, people are constructed with these identities. Furthermore, schools enact and reinforce social norms, beliefs, behavior, and policy that mediate asymmetrical power relations among the participants (Welner, 2001). This is a form of ableism, according to Goodley (2014), wherein cultural and social conventions, habits, and expectations are used to create boundaries between what is normal, and what is deviant or disabled; each individual within the cultural institution has an assigned place on the hierarchy of power.

These practices within schools occur under the guise of well-meaning structures and systems that claim to help subordinated people, which dissuades critique. A *collective*

intentionality behind constructed norms, practices, and institutions intentionally constructs dominance of some people and ideas over others; systems construct unequal control of material-social resources (Thompson, 2017). However, this dominance has limitations; people need to participate in the system so there is order, so the ideological agenda is hidden and structures are created to order society while masking the ideology (Nicholas, 2017). In the next section, I focus on two political roles of schools: socialization and knowledge construction, in order to provide context for my discussion of cultural practices within my three articles that interrogate structures of evidence-based practices, parent advocacy, and research ethics review boards.

Educational Institutions: Socializing All People

One role of educational institutions is socialization, or the teaching of “skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture” (Maccoby, 2014, p.3). Schools are socializers: constructions such as social roles and identities, norms of behavior, and understanding of relationships within society are passed on from teachers to student through structures, curriculum and pedagogy. “If we view schools then as microcosms of society, children (particularly those who belong to the subordinate classes of our society), are taught the values, ideas, objectives, and the cultural and political meanings of the dominant class” (Jay, 2010, p. 7).

Social Construction

Gergen (2014) describes social construction as a framework for discussing how meaning is created through relationships within a given context, or culture; meanings and language for describing the cultural norms of thinking and acting are constructed. Additionally, making

meaning of events, objects, people, and processes occurs within social interactions and language; the language of the culture gives things shared meaning, such as traditions and relationships. Social construction forms identities of people as well as things and events. The social constructionist viewpoint argues that nothing is fixed; constructions are in constant change as conditions and context shift. All meaning-making occurs socially; cultural workers are co-constructors and collaborators.

The Power of Cultural Constructs

The names and meanings given to objects, structures, and processes are cultural constructs. Social constructivism reminds us to be cautious of cultural constructs, because if we commit to them, we erase other meanings or potential meanings (Feenberg, 2014a) . Gergen (2014) provides an example from psychology. Mental health disorders are constructed and named, while the rules for these disorders are arbitrary, so people's identities within mental health measures are also arbitrary. If the person constructed as mentally disordered accepts the identity without question, they are also accepting cultural limitations associated with that identity. This caution also relates to socially constructed identities of race and ability within US educational institutions; given Whitepower-Normalcy ideology, each of these constructions sort people on a scale of better-than and less-than (Annamma et al, 2016). People who are assigned these identities are then placed on the social hierarchy, with corresponding rewards or sanctions (Gallagher, 2004). If people who are raced or disabled by cultural institutions accept the definition of who they are unconsciously, they do not resist their subjugated place, which maintains the cultural order.

The Constructs of Science

Social constructivism is interested in making sense of multiple ways of knowing, being, seeing and doing. This framework challenges science as objective knowledge (Gergen, 2014) and removes the necessity of making sense of society through hierarchies of value. When considering educational institutions' knowledge construction and social constructions, clarifying the difference between *Truth* and truths is helpful. Gergen (2014) differentiates *science*, which works to define Truth, from *constructivism*, which works to reconcile different truths as they are perceived by different individuals. Social constructionist theories support critical scholarship as a way to disrupt knowledge disseminated as Truth (Gergen, 2014) and disrupt structures that allow oppression and victimization (Foucault, 2010). Within the academy, critical qualitative scholarship is marginalized when compared to science, as I experienced in my own scholarship. (See Chapter 6 in this dissertation).

Reification

Reification processes are related to social construction. Feenberg (2014b) describes reification as a process where natural or social processes are made simple, to enable understanding; abstractions are made concrete and therefore can be discussed and placed into the cultural order. When a symbol or name is given to an object or process, it becomes something real and concrete. Rather than the name being treated as a symbol for the thing, the language is used for shared meaning and discourse (Feenberg, 2014b). Thus, reification objectifies people, processes and ideas, and allow the story of a culture to be told (Leonen, 2019), one which reinforces the dominant ideology. However, use of reifications in rhetoric or discourse as real objects rather than symbols of abstract ideas or complex processes can be

misleading. A reification limits understanding of the process; when a label is fixed and socially accepted, people do not approach the label critically (Feenberg, 2014b). From the field of special education, reification occurs throughout many of the mandated Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) processes: students access IDEA supports only after they are labeled as disordered. Quantified discipline data, such as number of Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs) are used for decision-making, rather than centering material effects on individual children and families. The numbers become the story, and incremental changes in the numbers can be used to argue success in how the system is working.

As Thompson (2017) describes it, reification is a form of alienation, resulting in the commodification of people; in Marxist thinking, one group of people is separated from their purpose and agency, becoming passive objects. Another group of people are defined as active; their agency is facilitated by the label they are given. Thus, reification transforms people into thinglike objects that behave according to the expectations and norms assigned to them; social relationships become transactional (Nineham, 2010). I connect this to the construction of *at risk* labels for children in schools. When a child's behaviors fail to align with school expectations, the behaviors are targeted as in need of fixing. A process of defining the problem and intervening follows, in order to correct the behaviors. When the interventions are added, the child is now listed as *at risk* of becoming a special education student; that socially constructed label impacts his participation in the school culture, in my experience. Moreover, the possibility of being free of that label is curtailed, given the power of reification.

Deficit Identities

Identities are constructed, which involves assigning certain purposes and demands for people with that given identity, which then facilitates a process of sorting and valuing. By naming and determining a person's identity, a value and purpose is assigned to them, with corresponding expectations for their way of life. Constructed identities are unique to the time, place, and conditions surrounding the social construction process; because they are related to the ideology within the culture. Furthermore, schools are one of the sites where Whiteness is produced, enacted, and reproduced through institutionalized policies (Leonardo, 2009); White cultural norms determine the beliefs, behavior, and policy within schools (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). White cultural norms include, but are not limited to: the use of science and data and a focus on product vs. process, a privileging of measurable progress (Okun, 2000), the written word, the English language, and rational ideas over expression of emotion (Katz, 1985). Given today's school policies, ideologies of Whiteness and Normalcy remain mostly invisible, yet their power is wielded when constructing what and who is acceptable. Categorization, as in sorting students into abled and dis/abled, enables stratification that privileges White-Normal people and validates the categorization within schooling as common sense. Differences from White-Normal norms are constructed as deficiencies; this is the deficit thinking that frames racism, ableism, and goodness discrimination.

Special education operates within these deficit ideologies, and for BIPOC children, this results in intersectional marginalization, diminished opportunities, and segregation (Blanchett, 2010; Ford & Russo, 2016; Harry & Klinger, 2014; Losen et al., 2014). Furthermore, the interests of the normal children have claimed higher priority than the individual needs of students

served in special education; serving students identified as disabled “without disrupting the normal functioning of the school system” was one of the impetuses of special education structures (Erevelles et al, 2006, p. 82). The racing and dis/abling of students through labels “result(s) in the child being targeted as the problem; the label becomes part of the child’s everyday reality and reinforces the mistaken notion that the problem is in them” (Cassidy & Jackson, 2005, p. 444). For example, the EBD label, when used for Black youth, validates the White narrative defining Black youth as other and deficient (Skiba et al., 2016). It is important to note that the converse of this deficit thinking is also true: school structures validate Whitepower-Normalcy thinking and socialize all involved to accept this ideology as common sense.

Educational Institutions: Constructing and Controlling Knowledge

The other role of educational institutions involves knowledge construction and dissemination. Knowledge involves the interplay between beliefs and truths. Knowledge may be considered religious, scientific, or moral (Pritchard, 2018). Structures of knowledge construction, teacher preparation and pedagogy, and school functioning overlap within educational institutions; identities and power relations within these structures are dynamic. Within the academy, scientists are constructed as experts, whose knowledge is privileged as precisely accurate and valuable (Gallagher, 2004; Labaree, 2004). This, in turn, serves a reality where there is one “right” way to be, and there is certain knowledge that is the “right” knowledge. *Othered* knowledges are erased or called unacceptable (Foucault, 2010) and the people holding those knowledges are told they are lacking in knowledge.

Ladson-Billings states, “there are 106 well-developed systems of knowledge, or epistemologies, that stand in contrast to the dominant Euro-American epistemology” (2000, p. 258). I discuss an example of a different knowledge system, the Cultural Wealth model (Yosso, 2005), in Chapter 5 of this

dissertation. Current constructions of educators as technicians (doers) focused on compliance diminishes their role as knowledge constructors (thinkers) and caregivers (Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017). In Chapter 4, I interrogate knowledge that is used to guide behavioral intervention practices and eligibility decisions regarding special education. The technologies of instruction, assessment, and classroom management are codified in standards of practice (CEC, 2020). Many teacher competencies are based on skills or “ability knowledge,” rather than ideas and intellectual understanding, or “propositional knowledge” (Pritchard, 2018, p. 4). I discuss the construction of teachers as doers rather than thinkers, as compliant workers who follow the prescribed curriculum and pass on the knowledge within textbooks and standards.

Hegemonic Processes within Educational Institutions

Education that socializes and constructs knowledge involves hegemonic processes. *Hegemony*, as theorized by Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser is a set of cultural practices that ensure power is maintained at the top of the socially constructed hierarchy, and people’s acceptance of the status quo system of domination is gained through covert consent rather than overt coercion (Ramos, 1982). Hegemonic processes occur within the context of instability in the culture: dominant ideologies are continuously constructed and reconstructed. Institutionalized structures of power construct and reify dominant and subordinate groups of people, conferring identities, and a corresponding value and purpose for members of each group (Hall, 1986). Moreover, institutionalized structures, rules and knowledge socialize all people so the order within the culture is accepted as common sense; structures that construct inequities are masked through hegemonic processes (Gramsci, 2008). As a result, people with less access to power are conditioned to accept the socialization and power distribution without disruption of the cultural order, or their diminished opportunities.

Schools are a site of hegemonic practices; therefore educators are cultural workers that serve the dominant ideology unless they are explicitly resisting the status quo. Gramsci's (2008) descriptions of hegemonic processes have relevance in schools because they provide a framework connecting real, concrete activities and their philosophical, theoretical, or ideological underpinnings; "Hegemony is not exercised in the economic and administrative fields alone, but encompasses the critical domains of cultural, moral, ethical, and intellectual leadership" (Hall, 1986, p. 17). Hegemonic processes are part of cultural institutions such as schools, media, and political institutions as they construct norms, language, policies and processes that reinforce the current social order (Nicholas, 2017).

On the other hand, hegemonic processes also serve to mask the inequities, and provide an alternative story to the reality of people being constructed and treated as inferior (Hall, 1986). For example, in schools, the process of sorting, through special education identification, is a hegemonic process, because it reifies some people as normal and others as disordered (Annamma et al., 2016). School structures that medicalize and pathologize difference are used to label children, and justify different schooling (Annamma, 2018). Structures such as special education, are legally sanctioned and may be necessary for helping some students access learning and make beneficial gains; culturally, they are considered beneficial and charitable. However, for some who are reified as *disordered*, there is corresponding stigma, limited access to cultural knowledge, and diminished opportunities for full participation in the culture (Connor et al., 2019).

Hegemony and the State, Including Educational Institutions

Educational institutions are part of the state apparatus, or governing system; they are therefore influenced by the dominant ideologies that guide the state's goals. The state apparatus involves systems and structures for governing civil society; it is used as a tool, like a piece of equipment, or a machine that serves a specific purpose (Ramos, 1982). Therefore, addressing hegemony as it relates to Whitepower-Normalcy requires an analysis of the state-sanctioned educational institutes' role in cultural production. Hall (1986) describes these connections: members of the dominant group create the state and control its functioning; the state is used to maintain the dominant group's social interest and ideology. One of the responsibilities of the state beyond forming society is the education of its people; this adds new aspects of power and politics, including ethical, cultural, and moral dimensions to schooling.

My analysis of the state, and therefore schools and their hegemonic processes related to Whitepower-Normalcy ideology, is grounded by Bracey's (2015) Critical Race Theory (CRT) of State. Bracey analyzes the state's processes and rules that guarantee racial inequality, expanding on Marxists' discussion of state. Bracey centers White people in positions of power; hegemonic processes reify and conceal ideologies of White superiority and dominance; state power is held and controlled by White people, "often through a series of policies and traditions that appear to be race-neutral" (Bracey, p.562). Discourse revolves around the distribution of power, and access to power, rather than power itself. Institutional powerholders alter structures, laws, and institutions only when a benefit to themselves is identified. This is interest convergence, which is validated by CRT of State: White people allow access to institutional knowledge and socialization structures for people constructed as *other* or *less than* when the

state benefits. For Whitepower-Normalcy ideology, those institutional powerholders are not only racially constructed, they are superior on the Normalcy scale as well.

Common Sense Knowledge and Narratives

Reinforcing and maintaining the status quo ideology involves *common sense* knowledge, as theorized by Gramsci (2008). *Common sense* thinking assumes that members of the culture think the same way, the way the culture works is natural, and the way it is supposed to be (Nicholas, 2017). Additionally, Ideological structures and the socio-cultural order are hidden when *common sense* thinking is accepted, therefore structures are not questioned (USOQ, 2018). The cultural knowledge shared within educational structures through curriculum and pedagogy normalizes Whitepower-Normalcy ideology, therefore constructing these ways of thinking and being as *common sense* knowledge. Thus, *common sense* narratives support White people, their knowledge, and ways of being as superior. This benefits people who are constructed as *better than*, those who already have power and privilege. For example, schools are constructed in Whiteness, using White cultural norms; educators enforce the behavioral codes and norms of the school culture, which serves the White students and constructs Black youth as deficient (Leonardo, 2009). Thus, school's discipline policies normalize removing a child with challenging behaviors from the learning community (Gregory et al., 2010); teachers can operate without challenging that norm, telling themselves there are no other alternatives. This exemplifies structural discrimination, which is the focus of each of my three articles.

Official Knowledge

How to tell the story of a culture, and who gets to tell it are determined by cultural norms, boundaries, and practices. Some people are constructed as experts of cultural knowledge; they control what story is told. Official knowledge is constructed as the only acceptable truth, limiting other ways of studying phenomena, conditions, or progress.

Furthermore, scientists claim the knowledge or truths are universal and objective; the knowledge is supported with structures and norms, making it *common sense* and therefore, not challenged. Foucault argues that the construction of knowledge is historically contingent, connected to power relations, and the knowledge itself is not fixed (Nicholas, 2017).

Foucauldian thinking says that when official knowledge is disrupted, shifts to new ways of thinking are possible, which also have limits, given the socio-cultural and political conditions of the time (Nicholas, 2017).

Within educational institutions, credentialed intellectuals are the producers of validated knowledge that is used to socialize people with moral values and maintain dominant ideologies of the time and place. Within higher education, production of *official knowledge* (Apple, 2014) is big business, serving multiple interests and stakeholders. Educational institutions' production of knowledge and determination of *official knowledge* is ripe with tensions; the conflicts around official knowledge are ethically, politically, and ideologically charged (Apple, 2014). For example, scientific thinking, the scientific method, and the identity of scientist are privileged; scientific processes become normalized within higher education. Scholars who hold a scientist identity within higher education are responsible for producing truths through scientific methods, manipulating objects in tests of hypotheses (Gallagher, 2004). The constructed truths become real and are disseminated as the correct knowledge, supporting the management of the culture, social order, and hierarchy of people's worth (Feenberg, 2014a). Feenberg argues that experimentation and quantified explanation has become a culture in and of itself, replacing stories as a form of knowledge. Thus, the official knowledge of Whitepower-Normalcy ideology is that which is scientific.

Subjugated Knowledge-Disqualified Knowledge

Conversely, knowledges that do not fit into the category of science are less valued, and therefore, less resourced (Apple, 2014). People who are constructed as outsiders or less than may have knowledge, but their knowledge lacks value because it does not reinforce the dominant ideology; that knowledge is marginalized or silenced by institutions. These are *subjugated knowledges or disqualified knowledges* (Foucault, 2010). Additionally, by creating official and subjugated knowledges, schools construct the teacher as authority, the person who has the ‘right knowledge.’ For example, the banking model of education places the teacher as the holder of knowledge and students as the receivers of knowledge (Freire, 2018). As schools are constructed now, that power differential is exacerbated because teachers are primarily White and female, while there are an increasing numbers of Students of Color. In this construction of teaching and learning, marginalized students are not provided opportunities to share their funds of knowledge, the skills , and beliefs learned within their culture and homes (Gonzalez et al, 2006). Their knowledge is disqualified.

Cultural Capital-Cultural Wealth

The adage “knowledge is power” applies to people’s access to cultural capital, the approved knowledge, behaviors, and skills. Educational structures facilitate an accumulation of cultural capital for some people, confirming their full participation in the culture, and their identity of elevated social status because of their cultural competence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1973). Because social capital corresponds with cultural capital, schools and systems validating the dominant ideology enable some people and groups to form “a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu &

Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Educational structures that give access to official knowledge to only some people become levers of control, used to maintain status quo (Apple, 2014).

On the other hand, people and groups that are constructed as outsiders do not have access to this cultural and social capital. Yosso (2005) theorizes that there is a different set of capitals that are formed within this group; this is Cultural Wealth. She describes the accumulation of assets and resources within Communities of Color as forms of Cultural Wealth, which consists of skills, abilities, networks and cultural knowledge that go unrecognized within structures based in Whiteness. She categorizes the different forms of capital that combine to form Cultural Wealth as familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, resistant capital, aspirational capital, and linguistic capital. Cultural Wealth is valued within the outsider community, but it does not carry that same value in the school context (Yosso, 2005). This connects Cultural Wealth back to subjugated knowledges, and hegemonic processes that operate to maintain Whitepower-Normalcy ideology.

Educational Institutions, Cultural Workers, and Resistance

As cultural workers, educators and scholars socialize people into dominant norms, values, and beliefs (Gramsci, 2008). With over 80% of the teaching profession identifying as White, and educational structures developed using White cultural norms, these cultural workers further Whiteness ideology, often without any critical understanding of their work as cultural or political. Kozleski and Handy (2017), acknowledged the cultural work of educators, and encouraged pre-service teachers to “foreground the cultural complexities of their situated experiences while aiming to produce cultures that transform prevailing inequalities and injustices to public education” (p. 196). Picower (2009) discussed the “unexamined Whiteness

of teaching”, validating that White teachers held “internalized ways of making meaning about how society is organized” (p. 202) that justified retaining their privileged identity and place in society as well as their fear of the *other*. These pre-service teachers protected themselves and their work from being called racist by claiming, “its personal, not political,” indicating that they did not acknowledge power differentials or structures of power in teaching. On the contrary, educators cannot practice as if being *nice* is enough, when Students of Color are constructed as deficient (DiAngelo, 2019).

Gramsci also reminds us that hegemonic processes are always in states of change, and systems that harm people can always be resisted, and *common sense* narratives can be disrupted (UOQC, 2018). Educators are part of systems of cultural work, and therefore teaching and scholarship are *political*. Apple (2014) states that critiquing educational systems must involve determining who counts as an expert and the role of students within knowledge construction:

Not only must we ask what and who’s knowledge is to be selected as legitimate or official knowledge, but we need to take a stand on who should be deeply involved in the entire process of such selection and organization of knowledge. (Preface)

Importantly, culturally relevant teachers and scholars consider these tensions.

Educators and Scholars as Political

According to the definition of political in the Oxford Dictionary, political actors have the capacity to affect decisions that impact a group, organization, or society. Artiles, (2013), Skiba et al., (2016), and Whitford and Carrero, (2019) have each argued the necessity of including cultural politics in educational discourse. As cultural workers, educators are part of a complex organization of knowledge construction and socialization practice that constructs overall ways

of being within a context of explicit and implicit ideologies; cultural context and dynamic power relations are all around. Moreover, their participation in processes that further Whitepower-Normalcy is part of their job, whether they are aware of the political nature of education or not. Given hegemony theory (Gramsci, 2008), that hidden agenda based on dominant ideologies is at work at all times, organizing society and its structures to remain as is, with people 'in their place,' because the system as it already has been constructed benefits those at the top of the hierarchy.

Still, as it currently operates, the educational system prepares cultural workers as technicians of isolated practices, comparable to the workers in an industrialized economy as theorized by Gramsci (2008); constructing cultural practices in this way enables denial of historical context and structural harm, validating the status quo as *common sense* and deflecting criticism. Critical cultural workers challenge official knowledge construction and structures of socialization; this may be considered subversive, yet working within the system using counter-practices is possible, because educators and scholars are positioned to recognize the "seeds of conflict and transformation" (Giroux, p. 109). Framing educational inequities as socially constructed problems affords choice: re-stating and re-producing things as they have been, or working towards transformation. Critical cultural workers are culturally relevant; they understand knowledge as constructed, shared, and recycled and ask critical questions about knowledge itself (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Furthermore, critical researchers see the production of knowledge as situated; which requires that "one acknowledges and respects other ways of knowing and understanding, particularly the stories and narratives of those who have experienced and responded to different forms of oppression" (Bernal, 2002, p.120).

Educators as Resisters

Freire (2005), in his book *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, positions teachers as professionals who are part of the democratic project, and challenges us to exercise our rights to confront the systems that limit us or our students. As educators, we are expected to construct knowledge with our students, and create opportunities for our students to share their perspective and thinking in order to understand their *common sense* thinking and correct any misconceptions. My use of the term *cultural workers* for educators and scholars does not contradict Freire; I also place teachers within the culture, and define teachers as political actors who influence culture within our classroom as well as society. I recognize the agency of teachers to be critically conscious educators and develop a praxis for their teaching (Freire, 2018).

Praxis involves integrating critical questions, reflective thinking and direct actions towards justice (Freire, 2018). As Giroux (2001) theorizes, traditions and conditions of cultural-political institutions that have prevented them from being reflective scholars and practitioners can be challenged. According to Connor (2013), resistant acts for scholars and researchers include: (1) Actively engaging in interdisciplinary inquiry to inform educational policy; (2) Developing inquiry to better understand disabled people's experience and their historical movements; and (3) "Unpacking the dangers of special education" (p. 505) through non-traditional methods of inquiry, and critical analysis of special education's conception of disability.

Giroux (1988) describes teachers as transformative intellectuals; this in itself an act of resistance because it critiques the construction of teachers as compliant cultural workers.

Understanding the hidden curriculum and cultural practices within US schools provides the opening for educators and scholars to be resisters, de-reifiers and contesters. When educators and scholars take on their cultural work as political, opportunities for multiple forms of interruption, subversion, disruption, or activism are present. Moreover, with educators acting as cultural workers of resistance, schools can be inserted into the political sphere where questions of power and its' connection to curriculum and pedagogy are answered (Giroux, 1981). This context allows crossing the so-called fixed boundaries to enact the cultural counter-practices of transformational resistance, de-reification and contestation. Resistance is supported when teachers have knowledge of the structures and relationships within education and attend to power; therefore, understanding how systems and power relations are reproduced through school curriculum and codified practices enables educators' acts of resistance (Giroux, 1981).

Transformational Resistance

Critical scholars within education are charged with elucidating that which is mystified and concealed within our cultural institutions in order to counter the cultural norms and transform the system; this is referred as *transformational resistance* (Giroux, 2001). When educators and scholars become critical thinkers who gain access to knowledge hidden through reification and hegemonic processes, there are opportunities for resistance and critical inquiry. Critical self-reflection and specific action linked to the local context "transgresses, disrupts and confronts larger forces" by centering questions of how power is enacted; the intent of this form of resistance, then is "weakening the classification among social categories" at the individual and institutional levels to equalize power distribution (Peters & Reid, 2009, p.551).

De-reification

Those with institutional power are not the only people who enact cultural practices. Consciousness of social constructions and false reifications within the culture allows for this process of resistance that may be enacted by people who have been constructed as deficient, or lacking knowledge. Thompson (2017) discusses Lukacs' concept of non-reified thought, or critical thinking, which occurs any time an individual or group recognizes purported facts as constructions of social relations. Lukács argues that through reification, when people are objectified, they are both subservient and have the capacity to revolt; people have consciousness and can change ideas through intervention (Nineham, 2010). Feenberg (2014a) adds that the counter-practice of de-reification may occur individually or collectively; collectivism activates consciousness of oppression, language for interrupting cultural constructions, and solidarity against laws and structures that codify inequities. For example, de-reification enables deficit identities to be reconstructed as identities of pride. As an example, the term "crip" was derogatory decades ago, used to demean and exclude people with physical differences or who moved differently. Schalk (2013) describes her personal, social, and political connections to the term, which make "crip" a desirable identity that enables transformative possibilities and new coalitions.

Contestation

Culture is dynamic and hegemonic processes are always being reconstituted and rearticulated. "All social relations and identities are the outcome of acts of power" and are related to constituting identities (Leggett, 2013, p. 305). Yet the identities are never static; people who are identified as 'other' continuously challenge that positioning. This is

contestation, wherein “the social arrangements that keep a certain class or social grouping in power are constantly open to renegotiation” (Mayo, 2017, p. 36). Recognition of these points of negotiation is part of cultural work; as educators and scholars, this recognition enables contestation. Contestation and resistance within systems of dominance and subordination is always present, because people who have been objectified or subordinated have power and are aware of the inequities (Mayo, 2017). Leggett (2013) also discusses the prevalence of contestation across social sites in a democracy, because politics are everywhere. As an example of the counter-practice of contestation from education, Goodley and Roets (2008) encourage centering disability when creating active coalitions for resistance; people who have been identified with disabilities are expected to lead the movement to counter ideologies of Normalcy as fixed.

Conclusion

This chapter described the cultural practices of social construction, hegemony and reification. Each of these complex, multi-faceted processes are indicted as means for serving Whitepower-Normalcy ideologies. Schools are sites of knowledge construction and socialization; people with full access to schools and corresponding cultural capital are positioned at higher levels of cultural status and power in the US. Explicating the ways in which culture is socially constructed through schooling, and educators’ role in the cultural politics of these socio-cultural institutions supports an *unlearning* of the ubiquitous Whitepower-Normalcy ideology that permeates our educational policy and practice. For example, constructing, sorting, and signifying people’s identities solidifies people’s place within the culture; cultural cohesiveness is maintained through the process of reification, wherein people

are placed within the hierarchy of deficit and superiority (Gergen, 2014). Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) provides a means for understanding how ideologies of racism and ableism are made into practical and everyday practices that support cultural stratification (Connor et al., 2019; Voulgarides, 2017). Specifically, the construction of BIPOC students as disabled and cultural workers as pathologizers are urgent starting points (Annamma, 2018).

The cultural processes outlined in this chapter support understanding of how norms and rules of cultural institutions assign certain identities and create a particular social reality. That reality endures over time and normalizes the ways of being “that serve unequal power relations” and hide “from cognitive view the actual nature of domination relations” (Thompson, 2017, p. 208). It follows that shaping critically conscious educators and scholars would involve individual self-reflection and modifications to educational structures; understanding socio-cultural and historical context supports the transformation of systems of inequity (Artiles, 2019). Multiple forms of transformational resistance, as means for disrupting the status quo, can be enacted by educators and scholars: counter-practices of transformational resistance, de-reification and contestation. Cultural workers within educational institutions are uniquely positioned to transform the system using these counter-practices.

Analysis of cultural structures and identities as socially constructed affords connections between and across social constructs, and points of potential disruption. As a critical scholar, I start from the position that no authority can stand unquestioned (Foucault, 2010). I locate my individual studies within socio-cultural-historical context to interrupt structures that reinforce the dominant ideology and hierarchies of power (McLaren, 2017). In the three articles of this dissertation, I describe educational institutions’ cultural work: (a) privileging knowledge

constructed within evidence-based practices of behavioral intervention and the special education identification process, (b) constructing parent advocacy in ways that limit Black family Cultural Wealth within special education processes, and (c) the ethics review boards' disqualifying critical qualitative scholarship with Black families using an intentional power-sharing, culturally sustaining design.

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CHAPTER 4. TECHNOLOGIES OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION: SYSTEMATIZING CONTROL & CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the power afforded evidence-based practices for behavioral intervention (EBPs-B); privileging knowledge and data from EBPs-B enables the construction of deficit identities of BIPOC students. Furthermore, centering educator practice around these technologies limits the role of teachers to that of technicians, rather than critical thinkers free to interrupt systems they work within.. Using a historical and socio-cultural analysis, this article critiques privileging of EBPs-B data over knowledge of the child that is not quantified or constructed as measurable as decisions of IDEA eligibility are made. I interrupt SPED PREP programs that train teachers to use standardized interventions that may not meet each students' needs (Sullivan, 2017). The ways in which EBPs-B racialize disability are discussed; this supports special educator preparation that explicitly names the ways in which special education structures impact BIPOC children differently than White children. Future special educators need experiences and opportunities to build the mindset and skillset of a caring professional; this article reveals the behaviorist ideology that may not explicitly be named if special educator teacher educators privilege the *how* of EBPs-B rather than the *whys* behind these powerful practices.

Introduction

Stories matter. Many stories matter...stories can be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2009

BIPOC youth are overrepresented in the special education category of emotional behavioral disorders (EBD) and they are disproportionately placed in more restrictive settings (Whitford & Carrero, 2019). The causes of overrepresentation are complex and multi-faceted, and the sociocultural context has been undertheorized when seeking reform of the problem (Artiles, 2019). The system of special education identification, including preventative evidence based practices for behavioral support and intervention (EBPs-B) are potential sites for reform. This paper centers on EBPs-B as they are currently constructed, that involve technologies of behaviorism (Garrison, 2019; Horner, 2016), wherein special education teachers (SPED Ts) are expected to master skills of behavior modification and measurement (Tefera et al., 2014). These EBPs may be implemented without consideration of race (Sullivan, 2017) or the classroom context and teacher-student dynamics (Skiba et al., 2011). When reforms and EBPs-B fail to explicitly address race, SPED Ts miss the reality that EBPs-B for BIPOC children have different conditions and context than EBPs-B for White children (Gillborn, 2016, Sullivan, 2017).

EBPs-B are specific and structured practices that are shown to be effective in a broad body of high-quality empirical research (Gustavsson, et al, 2017); most often in special education this research body consists of Random Controlled Trials and Single Case Studies (Cook et al., 2015). EBPs-B involve a set of technical skills and quantified measurement, and have become part of the *cultural work* of special education (Connor, 2013). EBPs-B provide observable and measurable descriptions of behavior and quantified data statements, which

may be precise but not fully accurate (Wheelan, 2013). Data collected within these technologies, or EBPs-B, are given elevated power in discussions of planning and eligibility for IDEA supports. In this way, SPED Ts who implement EBPs-B are also constructed as experts of the technology, and technicians adept at behavioral management. When EBPs-B data is privileged within SPED evaluations, the voices of BIPOC families and students who are navigating White spaces are silenced (Delpit, 2006; Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020), and the racialization of disabilities is perpetuated (Annamma et al., 2016).

Purpose of this Study

This paper interrogates the privileging of EBPs-B within the special education identification process for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students, to facilitate the inclusion of critical questioning and SPED T vulnerability within special education teacher educator programs (SPED PREP). To disrupt deficit narratives of BIPOC youth, this paper challenges SPED Ts and teacher educators to consider the story we tell about ourselves through the use of EBPs-B. The technical data from EBPs-B is privileged and often uncontested within the process of special education identification (Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017); the story told of BIPOC youth when technical data is privileged is incomplete. I argue that the structure of EBPs-B (a) perpetuates deficit constructions of BIPOC youth that make their diminished outcomes seem *common sense*, and (b) makes SPED Ts into technicians rather than transformative intellectuals who have agency to humanize their practice. Common sense narratives are constructed to support the way things currently are working; these stories mask systems the construct hierarchies of power and stratify people's value within the system (UOQC, 2018).

This article expands understanding of the privileging of EBPs-B data over other forms of knowledge, which perpetuates the discriminatory impact of special education for BIPOC students (Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al, 2017). An emphasis on concrete evidence of behaviors and progress elevates quantitative data wherein the whole child may not be considered, and non-tangible things such as power or culture are dismissed. Given the special education structures and the sociocultural context, the need for evidence of progress facilitates a bureaucracy of science and a form of technical rationalism (Connor, 2006). SPED Ts as technicians work to master EBPs-B and implement them with fidelity because they are told that is their job. As cultural workers, SPED Ts and special education teacher educators are positioned to make decisions about their own practice and their role within structures that produce diminished outcomes for BIPOC youth. This critical analysis of EBPs-B informs special educators and those that prepare them to be critically conscious cultural workers.

Approach

For this conceptual article, I begin by situating myself related to this topic. I review theoretical frameworks, then analyze the privileging of EBPs-B in the construction of deficit identities for BIPOC students. I center their behaviorist foundations as a process of objectification and abstraction that SPED Ts implement. I then examine the construction of SPED Ts as technicians, who are trained to master the technical skills of EBPs-B. Finally, I describe the transformational resistance and consciousness raising practices that SPED Ts and SPED PREP programs may integrate into their curriculum and pedagogy.

Theoretical Framework

Schools are sites of cultural construction and cultural work, where the norms, beliefs, behavior, and policy enacted are mediated and asymmetrical power relations among the participants are determined (Losen & Welner, 2001). Cultures are always changing; this is social construction and reconstruction, which occurs through processes of (a) naming and designating, (b) creating cultural arrangements and borders, and (c) interpreting and explaining relationships (McDermott et al., 2006). “If we view schools then as microcosms of society, children (particularly those who belong to the subordinate classes of our society), are taught the values, ideas, objectives, and the cultural and political meanings of the dominant class” (Jay, 2003, p. 7). Special education does this cultural work and SPED Ts are *cultural workers*, with positions of power in the cultural processes that construct identities for BIPOC students.

As a cultural institution, special education’s laws, policies, and practices construct language, boundaries, and practices that maintain the racial and Normalcy hierarchies of status, power, and access to opportunity in the US (Cavendish & Artiles, 2014; Kramarczuk Voulgarides & Tefera, 2017; Tefera et al., 2014). Furthermore, special education has been used a tool of naming and sorting through labeling and placements away from White children (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Connor et al., 2016). Special education is one of the “mechanisms of disablement” (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016, p.55) wherein inequities are institutionalized and often unspoken. Additionally, special education structures privilege those who already have social and cultural capital; special education processes serve as controls over what is determined to be “good,” in schools or in individuals (Diem & Hawkman, 2018). Broderick and Leonardo’s (2016) *Goodness as Property* is discussed below. SPED Ts’ recognition of this *cultural*

worker identity supports the integration of socio-cultural and historical knowledge into the SPED PREP programs. SPED T's role is political. Therefore, a deep understanding of the cultural forces and ideological structures is warranted.

Racialization of Disability

When discussing race and disability, as well as goodness, an intersectional lens facilitates analysis of the racialization of disability (Annamma et al., 2016). Racialization of disability is a term used to describe a complex set of interactions and structures that connect race and ability to deficit identities; these identities are taken for granted and membership in these deficit categories is assumed to be enduring and static (Artiles, November 2011). Thus, when BIPOC students are identified as EBD, racialization of disability is codified. Disability and race are socially constructed deficit identities, and children with multiple marginalized identities such as BIPOC and EBD endure oppression that is unique and greater than persons with only one of those identities (Annamma, et al., 2013). Furthermore, ableism and racism are interdependent; both have been normalized and operate invisibly in educational institutions and structures to produce diminished material outcomes those who are raced and disabled (Annamma et al., 2013). The cultural work of EBPs-B manifests as a racialization of disabilities, wherein BIPOC youth are both raced and disabled (Artiles, 2013).

Goodness as Property

Broderick and Leonardo (2016) discuss the construct of *goodness* in cultural institutions such as schools, stating that “education is racialized to reinforce the goodness of Whiteness” (p. 56). Schools’ process of creating student identities, or normed subjects, involves valuations on the hierarchy of *goodness*. *Goodness* is a “performative, cultural, and ideological system that

operates in the service of constructing the normative center of schools” (p. 57). *Goodness* is an ideological-material force that maintains the current hierarchy of power and results in material disparities in school experiences. In the racialization of the EBD category, *goodness* has elevated relevance: behaviors become indicators that White-Normal people can use to evaluate morality of the individual, given their authority as constructed by Whitepower-Normal ideology. *Goodness* has become a property, similar to the property of Whiteness, as theorized by Harris (1993). Harris argued that the characteristic of being White has corresponding privileges and power that equate to a property, like land, that is owned. Therefore, property rights apply to Whiteness: White people have been granted rights to define Whiteness; the boundaries of Whiteness and access to Whiteness are controlled by the property owners.

Goodness as Property is reified through education structures that sort and stratify, including the special education identification process for EBD. The work of schools includes defining certain ways of behaving as acceptable and good: for BIPOC youth, that involves assimilating to the White normative ways of acting within schools. Broderick and Leonardo (2016) clarify that goodness is often “differentially distributed quite irrespective of the actions or behaviors associated with it” (p. 57); goodness is not inherent. However, the ideology of goodness is “intertwined with the creation of good people” (p.57). Inferences about students’ morality are made by those with institutional power, for students who are outside the norms of goodness (and therefore Whiteness). Educational structures help construct and maintain the good/bad identities of students. Moreover, special education helps construct *goodness*, which is used to determine who has access to opportunity, social settings, and resources. The pattern

of disproportionately identifying BIPOC students as *bad*, then, validated with an EBD label, is longstanding, as interrogated by Artiles, 2019.

Structural Intersectionality

Intersectionality, wherein multiple interdependent deficit identities result in multiple and compounding structural oppressions (Crenshaw, 1990), frames how racialization occurs (Artiles, 2013). Collins' (1990) matrix of domination frames how systems intersectionally oppress people who have been constructed with multiple marginalized identities. This matrix involves four dimensions (a) *policy*, (b) *disciplinary*, institutional structures and norms, (c) *hegemony*, or processes that further the dominant ideology through the manipulation of culture, and (d) *interpersonal*, or daily practices and interactions. EBPs-B are part of the policy, disciplinary, and hegemonic dimensions. SPED Ts as technicians is part of the interpersonal dimension.

Structural intersectionality explains how multiple interconnected systems construct deficit identities and perpetuate practices that result in oppression for people who are *othered*. Connor (2006) describes the intricate connections between systems of oppression wherein an external force on one system also impacts the other systems; it is necessary to theorize the connections as much as the discrete systems to understand how *othering* occurs, and see the corresponding diminished outcomes. However, when the structures frame SPED Ts as technicians expected to implement a set of skills such as EBP-B, the analysis becomes fragmented and intersectional oppression is not acknowledged.

This is Personal (and Political)

The personal is political. bell hooks, 1985.

After decades as a practitioner and mentor of early SPED Ts, I recognize young SPED Ts' signals of being heartsick and overwhelmed as a *preparation-to-practice* gap: their job is not what they thought it would be. Their teacher preparation program often centered assessment, instructional practices, specially designed instruction, and due process. Each of these elements are essential to the success of SPED Ts, yet opportunities for critical analysis and self-reflection may not have occurred. These novice SPED Ts express their disappointment when they are called overly idealistic, or 'too soft on kids' when they build relationships with BIPOC students and families. Sometimes, navigating this *preparation-to-practice* mismatch of expectations becomes too much to bear, and they leave. That is a loss to the field and to those students who could benefit from SPED Ts who are using humanist pedagogies and interrogating the system by asking "why" questions.

I am an insider within the field, whose own SPED PREP was decades ago. For decades, I have worked directly with families and fellow special educators who are fully invested in helping all students succeed. When I consider what future special educators need, I do so with hope. The future is going to become more and more complex, and I believe Sped Ts are capable of using their professional judgement in the best interests of students and families. SPED PREP should provide guidance in a wide range of skills, not just technologies of behavior.

I am a realist and social constructionist: teaching students identified as disabled is a political act, and should be acknowledged as so. Our work is not isolated from the educational structures that construct deficit identities and maintain the social order through hierarchies of

access and power. Describing special education's current level of functioning is the starting point, challenging SPED Ts and SPED PREP to go beyond the basic standards is the challenge going forward. Several assumptions ground my work:

- Each of us wants all children to do well. However, our best efforts towards progress have yielded questionable results. Doing more of the same, with more intensity and more frequency, with EBPs-B as the path of intervention needs to be challenged.
- Special education's goals rely on individualization. It should not be one-size fits all; autism, vision impairments, learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders each have unique cultural meanings, characteristics, practices, and paradoxes. The privileging of 'generalizable' interventions such as EBPs-B has parallels to standardization of curriculum, which is antithetical to the individualization that is mandated in IDEA.
- Special education is framed in a medical model which privileges professionals as experts on other people's children (Delpit, 2006). We are told our job is diagnosing a problem, prescribing and implementing effective solutions. The need for evidence of progress has accelerated in the past 20 years, due to socio-cultural forces inside and outside schools and the medical framing, and EBPs-B are more deeply entrenched in practice.
- When BIPOC students are involved, special education structures support the racialization of disability. Making these topics explicit in our SPED PREP, and differentiating individualized "isms" from structural "isms" supports SPED Ts engagement and critical consciousness.

In this manuscript, I refer to Normalcy and normalism rather than ability and ableism, in my discussion of US culture. *Normal* is that which is centered in discourse and power (Smith & Erevelles, 2004): White, male, christian, middle-class, cisgendered, with an abled body and stable emotions. Additionally, *normal* knowledge is interrogated in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, where I discuss official knowledge (Apple, 2014) and subjugated knowledge (Foucault, 2010).

The social construction of superior and inferior identities would not be possible without metrics of Normalcy (Smith & Erevelles, 2004). Additionally, because my foundations are in DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2016), the term ableism is used when referencing the work of DisCrit scholars focused on the interdependent constructions of race and ability in schools. Yet, the use of Normalcy, rather than ableism, affords a broader discussion of emotions and behavior, allowing the discussion of *goodness* as described by Broderick and Leonardo (2013). These authors argue that goodness has increased relevance when discussing discipline and interventions for BIPOC youth because the educational system ultimately constructs some students as *good*, and others as not so good, with corresponding benefits or sanctions.

EBPs-B and Deficit Identities

In the following section, I discuss the use of EBPs-B data to form a single story of deficit for BIPOC children. I critique the marginalization of data that is not quantified, or constructed through the use of teacher-initiated and controlled interventions. I recognize that while EBPs-B are developed through scientific methods, schools remain places where variables cannot be controlled and the data needs to be used with caution (Saari, 2019). “Despite repeated attempts to transform unruly education spaces in the image of a closed system of behavior control, schools could never efface their complex and unpredictable character” (Saari, 2019, p. 18). Practices that have been tested in controlled settings, that are expected to be generalizable across settings, are problematic in their dismissal of local context. Additionally, they limit the knowledge used to determine special education eligibility.

The Single Story of Deficit

This is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again and this is what they become...The consequence of a single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of equal humanity difficult.

- Adichie, 2009

Majoritarian stories are constructed through the cultural work of institutions such as schooling, journalism, social media, churches, and the arts; they are intended to valorize the status quo and those in the dominant group (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Majoritarian stories validate stereotypes and essentialize the identities of Black and Brown youth, obscuring their individual identities, rights, and agency, through the construction of a monolithic “other” created within the system (Ladson-Billings, 2016). Special education scholarship, policies, and practices add to the majoritarian narratives using evidence derived within EBPs-B; in this way, the majoritarian story of BIPOC youth as deficient is reinforced. The deficit story of BIPOC youth as lacking *goodness* (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016) is validated as truth and that story becomes the only one told, erasing the knowledge and beauty of BIPOC students. Goodness is a construct created and controlled by White norms, wherein students are sorted on a scale of bad to good, based on their behaviors. For BIPOC students, the racialization of disabilities such as EBD exemplifies the goodness scale; the superiority of White people over BIPOC youth and families is made real, or reified using data that is treated as neutral and objective (Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017).

IDEA regulations and corresponding measurements for legal compliance support a cultural narrative in which BIPOC youth are constructed as deficient; this maintains order and upholds institutionalized Whitepower (Goff et al, 2014). Data collected for evaluating the progress of students and the effectiveness of EBPs-B constructs a *common sense* narrative

(Gallagher, 2004), wherein the current ways of being and thinking are considered normal and logical, and critiques of the system are minimized (Gramsci, 1999; Haney Lopez, 2004).

Furthermore, the story is incomplete. While EBPs-B privilege data centered on a targeted, measurable behavior, a single behavior is not the only unit of analysis that should be used when gathering evidence of functioning. McDermott, Goldman and Varenne (2006) discussed the anthropologist Arensberg's (1982) units of analysis used within various disciplines when studying behavior: (1) psychology focuses on one person's actions; (2) sociology focuses on at least two people's interactions, and (3) anthropology, or cultural work, involves analysis of at least two people interacting and one person interpreting. Artiles and colleagues (2010, 2015) and Leonardo (2009) have often reminded special educators to incorporate the historical, contextual, and structural forces surrounding behavior. Scientific data and statistical calculations are precise, yet they may not reveal the whole story (Wheelan, 2013). Targeted behaviors and progress monitoring of EBPs-B provide precise data, but as Wheelan (2013) reminds us, mere precision in describing details of the story using numerical data is not to be equated with accuracy and no amount of precision can make up for lack of accuracy.

Validating and Perpetuating the Single Story

Legal mandates, research funding, and teacher preparation programs elevate EBP-B data to the level of a complete story, with the power to reify a BIPOC child's identity and corresponding opportunities. When this is the single story told of BIPOC youth and their behavior, the stratification within society is validated and solidified by law (Vera, et al., 1995). Bell (1979) also discussed federal regulatory measures which "legitimize the subordinate status that is already de facto reality" (p.154) and deny Black youth their rights to a full education.

Charitable services mandated by legal policies validate the goodness of those in power, but do not truly provide equity (Bell, 1979); special education structures such as EBPs-B are a manifestation of this type of regulation.

EBPs-B have become synonymous with multi-tiered systems of support such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), given the research base and federal policy mandates (OSEP, 2021). The evidence base validates the broad use of these practices as an effective schoolwide tiered system of prevention when implemented with fidelity (Bradshaw et al, 2012; Simonsen & Sugai, 2019; Sullivan, 2017). PBIS is referenced in the latest reauthorization of IDEA (2006), and in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015); the Office of Special Education Programs' PBIS technical assistance center began in 1998 and 20 years later, there are over 25,000 schools implementing the framework (OSEP, 2021). PBIS and its more recent iteration, Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (CR-PBIS) (Bal et al., 2018), are central to SPED PREP; they align with SPED T standards (CEC, 2020). In these ways, EBPs-B are normalized to the point of common sense, which reinforces their implementation without question (USOQ, 2018) by SPED Ts and interventionists. This is a disservice to BIPOC youth for whom decades of these practices have not significantly changed material conditions, such as the discipline gap, that are created aligned with the single story of their identity (Gregory et al., 2017).

Technical Rationalism: Constructing Race and Ability

Nkali is an Igbo word, loosely translated to “to be greater than another”... Stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: how they are told, who tells them, when they’re told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Adichie, 2009

Special education's approach to reforming the overrepresentation of BIPOC youth in the EBD category is primarily technical, rather than inclusive of socio-cultural frameworks (Artiles, 2019). The privileging of quantified data to the detriment of other forms of knowledge constructs a "deceptive description" of what is happening (Wheelan, 2013, p. 37). Since EBPs-B like PBIS are considered scientific technologies (Simonsen & Sugai, 2019), the progress monitoring data gained "is ranked higher than knowledge that is anecdotal and therefore subjective" (Kalyanpur et al., 2000). Furthermore, EBPs-B operate with race as an abstraction, if they address race at all (Artiles, 2019). The abstraction of race "obscures the humanness of Black persons;" possibilities for empathy are erased when the discussion centers data and numbers and all context is removed (Ross, 1990, p. 6). This is technical rationalism.

Technical rationalism (TR) involves claims that science is objective, neutral, and universal (Ware, 1994); it is synonymous with scientific racism, which is used to validate special education's claims of colorblindness and race-neutrality (Watson, 2001). Identities of BIPOC youth with EBD are reified, or made real (Gergen, 2014) using the evidence gained through scientific, objective procedures. EBPs-B evidence uses fragmented information and facilitates experts' knowledge of abstractions, rather than the material conditions related to race; thus, a defined reality is constructed and the difficult decisions involving race are avoided (Starke, Heckler & Mackey, 2018).

Additionally, Campbell (2005) discussed scientific ableism's (SA) use of scientific methods and evidence to equate impairments with deficiencies; SA masks the socially constructed identities and corresponding barriers for those with differences. By making the process scientific, an emotional connection to the people being marginalized is diminished;

fragments of information ensure that context is not considered (Reid & McKnight, 2006). As it stands, the privileging of technical-rational EBP-B serves to dehumanize the people we are meant to support (Fynn-Aikins, 2016).

Behaviorism and EBP-B

EBPs-B are developed within behaviorist framing of student actions as central to the work of educators, rather than less tangible ideas. Today's successful use of behaviorist theory and practices has been documented with a broad range of students. For example, applied behavior analysis (ABA) has been shown to be effective for children on the Autism Spectrum (Makrygianni et al., 2018). Behaviorist principles have been used to increase positive reinforcement ratios and develop interest inventories where children describe their preferences and motivations (OSEP, 2021). PBIS and CR-PBIS methods have brought SPED Ts and students a sense of order, and have reduced exclusionary discipline (Bal et al. 2018). Within educator discourse, the roots of these practices are rarely considered, because the EBP-B are considered common sense.

In order to understand ideological forces undergirding current practices, an historical context of behaviorism is necessary; understanding of present day applications should not be isolated from the past. Garrison (2019) outlined behaviorism as a philosophy and a means of control; in the early 1900s, behaviorism was connected with the science of eugenics. Moreover, he argues that the science of behavior and corresponding scientific methods were developed to maintain the culture, supporting the idea that "Through the repeated experimental manipulation of variables, 'cultural design' can take place." (p. 331). In the 1960s, a "machine paradigm" framed behaviorism; that foundation has lingered to the present day, taking on

different forms (Saari, 2019). The system benefits from the level of precision gained by reducing the complexity of tasks, which supports efficiency (Garrison, 2019).

The appeal of behaviorism as a model of reform is related to the ideas and practices of control, yet the process of transferring research-supported science to schools often is messy; moving from a controlled environment of the lab to classrooms where the environment is less predictable (Saari, 2019). Behaviorism's classical conditioning focus on reinforcements and consequences following the behavior has evolved to a more operationalized framing which includes antecedents and targeted behaviors (Garrison, 2018). However, operationalized procedures and behaviors do not provide means for teachers to construct knowledge with their students, or processes for integrating cultural knowledge into instructional activities (Iano, 2004).

Constructivists and humanists have critiqued behaviorism, highlighting its "utterly mechanistic and reductionist stance" that fails to acknowledge individual agency or meaning making (Saari, 2019, p 115). The model of reducing meaning and significance of abstract concepts to only that which is observable erases nuances and the reality that the data itself is constructed within a theoretical stance (Iano, 2004). In Table 4.1, I outline connections between the roots of behaviorism and current applications in schools, and the role of educators. Following the table, I expand on teachers as technicians, when behaviorism is the primary means for guiding student behavior.

Table 4.1. Behaviorism, EBPs-B and SPED Ts as Technicians.

	Garrison (2018)	EBPs-B Technologies	SPED Ts as Technicians
What is behavior?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior is..."an abstraction from the person in the form of constructed variables" p. 336 • A behavior can be isolated and operationalized • A behavior can be modified through manipulation of the antecedents and consequences of the behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task analysis for operationalizing behaviors • Defining target behavior • Defining replacement behavior • PBIS: Defining respect, care, safety • PBIS: Defining disrespect, defiance, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child's social emotional state and feelings are included in interventions only when they can be operationalized. • Multiple Tiers of Intervention (MTSS) requiring specific technical skills for each; different professionals attached to each tier. • Prioritizing data collection over direct instruction of replacement behavior.
What causes behavior?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior is completely related to the stimuli within the immediate environment. • Behavior is functional: it is a form of adaptation to the environment, to function within the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operant conditioning: Positive Reinforcement • Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence Analyses • Environmental Modifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards for teaching and intervening: Special education, EBPs-B requirements, • Fidelity of implementation: PBIS, FBA, and structured BIPs. • EBPs-B involve preventative practices (antecedents) as well as responses and consequences.
How are behavior, knowledge, power, and control connected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions are evidence of knowledge. Therefore, mastery of skills is the goal. • Those with knowledge and corresponding control are in charge of the environmental stimuli (control) • Behaviors do not require the person acting to have an understanding of why they are acting in that way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation becomes evidence or <i>knowledge</i>, we know the child through the data. • Social validity, people's perspectives on the intervention is marginalized because it has not been operationalized. • Teachers and authorities are responsible for controlling the experiments, or interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions are implemented <i>on</i> children and families, rather than with them; authority is held by experts. • Controlling the environment leads to adaptation to the environment, exhibiting behaviors that are functional within this environment. • Operationalized behavioral data from progress monitoring is elevated when making decisions.
What are technologies of control?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operant conditioning: analysis of the antecedent stimuli shifted to rewards and punishments following behavior. • Complex behaviors can be shaped by task analysis and reinforcement of each behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PBIS- Maintaining Authority for Teachers and Administrators • CR-PBIS- • Reliance on quantified data. • Claims of neutrality and scientific processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and administrators have ultimate control of environment, antecedents, and consequences. • Interventions are an ongoing cycle of managing the environment to control the student.

Behaviorist foundations continue to permeate intervention models, including (a) task analysis of complex behaviors, (b) use of systematic behavioral observations such as Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) recording (Pence & Peter, 2018), (c) OSEP's (2021) guidance on EBPs-B, and (d) functional behavioral assessments as an essential practice (Gresham et al., 2001; Hirsch et al., 2017). EBPs-B, including MTSS-B methods, have evolved yet they remain tools for the racialization of disability (Annamma et al., 2016); corresponding diminished outcomes for BIPOC students who are identified EBD raise questions of whether the original intent has been fully erased. When students are constructed as deficient, common sense practices my mask practices that control with claims that the system is charitable. EBPs-B that are grounded in behaviorism facilitate "the control of the few over the many" (Saari, 2019, p. 119).

EBPs-B and BIPOC Students

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power...Power is the ability not just to tell the story...but to make it definitive....to flatten my experience and overlook the many other stories that formed me...Many stories matter.

Adichie, 2009

Leading EBD scholars have written extensively to stifle the discussion of disability as a social construct, with calls to avoid cultural politics of special education (Kauffman & Sasso, 2006; Kauffman & Anastasiou, 2019). Kauffman (2015) validates current special education structures by reinforcing the need for (a) science, (b) more precision, and (c) increased fidelity of implementation even as they recommend a professional culture and understanding of the history of special education. This seems to suggest that if we are going to solve special education problems, we need to do more of the same: implement medicalized intervention technologies, not consider other practices.

On the other hand, the institution of special education is one of the educational structures that racializes disability; EBPs-B and SPED Ts have a direct impact on the economic opportunities and physical well-being of people constructed as deficient (Siordia, 2015). Yet, as a field, special education has yet to take full responsibility the racialization of disability which ties disability and race together as inherent deficits (Artiles, 2013; Connor et al., 2019; Kramarczuk Voulgarides & Tefera, 2017). Furthermore, within the field of special education, there is discord related to disability models: social, medical, and cultural models, and the corresponding policy recommendations (Gallagher et al., 2014). The status quo is perpetuated. Given that context, the preparation and evaluation of SPED Ts centers on the mastery of evidence-based practices and measurement of discrete skills (CEC, 2020) and marginalizes alternative or untested ways of supporting BIPOC children. Behavioral assessment skills of screening, observing, and documenting progress gain importance and relevance within this paradigm, furthering the pathologization of BIPOC youth (Annamma, 2017) and the hunt for disability (Baker, 2002).

Special education scholarship is resplendent with evidence, from EBPs-B, that BIPOC students are the targets of increased exclusionary discipline such as suspensions, exclusions, and office referrals, as well as disproportionate identification as EBD students (Connor et al., 2019; Gregory et al., 2017). However, that evidence can further the story of deficits as inherent to the BIPOC child, rather than initiate critical analysis of the system that treats White children differently than BIPOC children. Therefore, there is a paradox within the EBPs-B. The data driven nature of EBPs-B involves increased surveillance and monitoring of a child and their target behavior (Nance, 2016). The overemphasis of operationalized behaviors and

measurement within EBPs-B often center on behavioral deficits, while the child's strengths and assets are neglected (Raines, et al, 2012). SPED Ts who are responsible for progress monitoring required within EBPs-B, enact practices that further pathologize the child, if the system equates failure to make progress within the intervention with inherent disability (Bornstein, 2017). EBPs-B can construct the identity of a disordered child, rather than a disorderly behavior (Bornstein, 2017). For example, the EBPs-B that purport to target the actions of a child also result in the child being targeted; this "reinforces the mistaken notion that the problem is in them." (Cassidy & Jackson, 2005, p. 44).

Special Education Teachers as Technicians

Behaviorist theory not only frames how we shape student behavior, it provides a framework for understanding how SPED T practice is constructed. To implement behavioral interventions, SPED Ts become technicians that document the stimuli, response, and reinforcement loop and adapt the environment to produce different behavioral responses. ABC charting (Pence & Peter, 2018) is used to determine which stimuli and reinforcements can be adapted to decrease undesirable behaviors or increase behaviors that meet the norms of the school. As technicians, SPED Ts are constructed as interventionists who implement the standardized practices with efficiency and compliance is measured as "fidelity" to Current special education structures and norms construct SPED Ts as technicians, privileging quantified data on operationalized behaviors over other forms of knowledge and ways of interacting with students. The value of skills and technicalities is evidenced within the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) standards of professional practice, Standard 1.0, Teaching and Assessment

(CEC, 2020). There are twelve competencies listed for this standard, seven have signals of technical skill expectations, paraphrased below.

- Systematically individualize instructional variables to maximize learning (1.1).
- Identify and use evidence-based practices that meet individual needs (1.2).
- Periodically assess students to accurately measure progress and individualize instruction variables (1.3).
- Use culturally and linguistically appropriate measures that accurately measure what is intended to be measured, and do not discriminate (1.6).
- Only use behavior change practices that are evidence based and which
- respect the culture, dignity, and basic human rights of students (1.7).
- Support the use of positive behavior supports and conform to local policies of disciplinary methods and behavior change procedures, unless that involves corporal punishment (1.8).
- Refrain from using aversive techniques unless the target of the behavior change is vital, repeated trials of more positive and less restrictive methods have failed, and only after appropriate consultation with parents and appropriate agency officials (1.9).

The remaining five CEC guidelines for standard one relate to choosing and using culturally responsive materials and practices, creating inclusive environments, refraining from corporal punishment, monitoring colleagues' ethical behaviors, and referring students that have the right to special education supports.

Within this focus on data-driven decisions and surveillance of children, classroom teachers and interventionists become diagnosticians (Thorius, 2016), practitioners of the pedagogy of pathologization (Annamma, 2018). Given today's construction of teacher, techniques and technicalities are privileged skills (evaluation); instruction and behavior management are technologies that provide proof of timely progress on standardized goals. Teacher standards (CEC, 2020) and professional development resources committed to EBPs-B (OSEP, 2020) incentivize SPED Ts to operate within the behaviorist framework without challenging it. Teacher competencies are based on skills or "ability knowledge," rather than ideas and intellectual understanding, or "propositional knowledge" Pritchard (2018, p. 4). The current structures usurp the SPED Ts' role as conceptualizer and designer of curriculum (Boveda, 2020); their role as someone who has deep knowledge of the context and the student is minimized.

Discussion: Interrupting the Single Story of Deficit

*Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign,
but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize.*
Adichie, 2009.

When SPED Ts, in particular are constructed as interventionists focused on individualized skill development and monitoring of progress (Boveda, October 2020), humanist and egalitarian frameworks may be marginalized. Additionally, when future SPED Ts are constructed as technicians, they are not given opportunity to explore the historical and cultural foundations of these EBPs-B. In the case of EBPs-B, evidence that can be standardized, and practices that can be generalized are used to serve the interests of accountability, order, and meritocracy (Garrison, 2018). EBPs-B's focus on progress monitoring and data collection is

problematic because of the abstractions that quantified data involve, and the expectations of standardization that minimize cultural differences. This context reinforces SPED Ts as technicians, masters of standardized practices and data collection on discrete behaviors. The deficit thinking forwarded by the racialization of disability infiltrates educators' practice (Annamma, 2017). Without opportunities for reflection and risk-taking, White teachers avoid admitting or discussing issues of race (Matias, 2020); their invulnerability is not challenged (Applebaum, 2017).

Additionally, SPED Ts, like anyone asked to acknowledge personal complicity in systems of oppression, may take defensive postures similar to Sensoy and Di Angelo's (2017) list of common rebuttals: (a) an insistence that society's deficit messages of ableism and racism do not affect them, (b) claiming that processes and outcomes of school policy are not political in nature, and (c) a refusal to recognize structural and institutional power. They may not work through the discomfort of recognizing their role in a system that produces harmful outcomes for BIPOC students. Critically analyzing the socio-cultural context of teaching affords the recognition of forces that impact SPED Ts practice. SPED Ts are serving many interests (Zion & Blanchett, 2017) as they identify problem behaviors and implement interventions that produce concrete evidence of progress (Garrison, 2018).

Telling Multiple Stories: SPED Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals

Special educators who actively interrogate practices that produce diminished outcomes for BIPOC students need to have a deep understanding of the structures and their role within those structures (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Critical analysis of the behaviorist structures of EBPs-B informs critical praxis (Freire, 2018), wherein teachers are simultaneously reflecting and acting

on injustices. The current EBPs-B structures fail to facilitate self-reflection or critical analysis; interventions that require teacher acknowledgement of bias, or changes to the teacher-controlled environment are lacking (Skiba et al., 2019). Furthermore, the structures fail to provide opportunities for interrogating the data for bias, or questioning the ‘expert knowledge’ of professionals using data to make important decisions. Given SPED Ts’ meaning making that elevates the power of technical data, special education professionals can claim to know what is best for other people’s children (Delpit, 2006), including Black youth (Brantlinger, 2006); this story is privileged over Black families holistic stories of their child (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020).

However, critically conscious educators who integrate reflective thinking and actions of social justice in a liberatory praxis (Freire) can begin to deconstruct and reconstruct the structures that limit their practice. Elucidating the historic and cultural context of behaviorism can provide entry points for understanding how a technology of control (Garrison, 2018) continues to influence SPED Ts practice. Traditions and conditions of cultural-political institutions that have prevented them from being reflective scholars and practitioners can be challenged (Giroux, 1988); teachers acting as transformative intellectuals rather than technicians who are constructed as compliant cultural workers (Giroux, 2011).

SPED Ts’ transformational resistance knowledge and skills position them as active participants in humanizing BIPOC children as an integral part of their practice. Transformational resistance occurs when people have a strong sense of self, have knowledge of injustices, are competent in understanding multi-cultural perspectives, and critically question information and conditions (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). In this way, SPED Ts who make connections to their role

within the structures that construct deficit identities and limitations and take action steps to interrupt the use of EBPs-B without critique, can be transformational resisters. Power is central to this shift from technician to transformative intellectual. Ellsworth (1989), reminded educators that their position of power must be explicitly named and actions taken to re-order the power arrangements embedded in educational structures.

Special Education Teacher Preparation

Current SPED PREP facilitates CEC Standards (2020) and perfecting the de-contextualized skills of EBPs-B and assessments of progress; EBPs-B are designed to fix the broken child (Annamma, 2017) not challenge the system. As cultural workers within a behaviorist system, SPED Ts are expected to standardize procedures, or act as technicians: behaviorism's roots center control, order, and standardization (Garrison, 2018). The potential of SPED Ts as intellectuals (Giroux, 2011), who consider holistic needs of the child and family to design individualized supports is diminished, given this paradigm. Re-balancing SPED T PREP that currently privileges EBPs-B technical skills with humanizing pedagogy and critical questioning is necessary if we are to disrupt the current harmful outcomes for BIPOC students within our schools.

Expanding special educators' understanding of institutional forces and *common sense* structures that affect day to day practice informs humanizing practices (Taylor, 2019), rather than perpetuating the mastery of technical skills. SPED T PREP that includes opportunities to wrestle with critical questions and reflect on their role within structures that produce inequities help SPED Ts navigate explicit and implicit responsibilities within their practice. SPED Ts then can develop an expanded idea of their role, from technical experts to humanizing relationship

builders. Critically conscious SPED Ts can then resist the dehumanization of BIPOC students and families that may come from hyper-surveillance and overly technical practices (Annamma, 2018; Kramarczuk Voulgarides, 2018).

Implications for SPED Teacher Identity

SPED PREP would move towards justice-centered practice by making SPED Ts aware of the behaviorist roots of EBPs-B; this would disrupt the practices that construct SPED Ts as technicians focused on implementation with fidelity. Considering the cultural work of EBPs-B expands critical questioning by SPED Ts. When they are equipped with knowledge of structural inequities and the social construction of deficit identities, they are prepared to differentiate structural racism, ableism, and goodness norms from individual bias and prejudice. When educators recognize their role as cultural and political, schools can be inserted into the political sphere where questions of power and its' connection to curriculum and pedagogy are answered (Giroux & McLaren, 2018). Discussion of socially constructed educational inequities such as the overrepresentation of BIPOC students as EBD are explicit. Furthermore, daily teaching and behavior modification practices frame daily practices in strengths-based thinking, disrupting the current pathologization of difference for BIPOC youth (Annamma, 2017) and disrupting the dehumanization of BIPOC students.

SPED Teachers Humanizing BIPOC Students

As Voulgarides (2018) discusses, a focus on compliance to procedures enables the asymmetrical power relations between professionals and families to remain intact and may directly harm the relationship. The constructed *teachers as technicians* identity serves to dehumanize students as well as teachers. When systems support invulnerability and deny

vulnerability as a human trait, the status quo to remains intact, maintaining hierarchies' power and privilege (Gilson, 2014). SPED Ts who resist the story of professionals as experts, and the incomplete story of BIPOC students as deficient have the potential to reframe the socially constructed invulnerability of Whiteness (Applebaum, 2017). Currently, teachers as technicians, and White-normative definitions of professionalism construct vulnerability as negative. In this context, vulnerability is related to weakness, dependency, and victimization, so it should be avoided; therefore, SPED Ts may seek an invulnerability (Applebaum, 2017) by exerting authority as experts. This is made possible with claims of objectivity and neutrality of data collected within EBPs-B, related to their construction as technologies of science. Thus, the data itself is approached as invulnerable; the erasure of the cultural-historical context and structural oppression is not acknowledged.

To counter this invulnerability mindset that is furthered by EBPs-B, a Pedagogy of Discomfort affords possibilities of individual and social transformation (Applebaum, 2017). This framework "assumes that comfort can foreclose learning and obstruct change" (p. 863). When vulnerability is reframed as a positive characteristic, it encompasses (a) openness to what is unknown or ambiguous, (b) risking the personal discomfort of accepting other stories as expert knowledge and (c) risk-taking in accepting what cannot be controlled. The Pedagogy of Discomfort requires "a constant vigilance and willingness to change oneself (p. 870). If the energy and resources currently expended to construct and maintain surveillance and control using EBPs-B were reallocated to transform the expectations of SPED Ts and the practices of behavior support, different stories of strength and dignity could be lived and told by BIPOC youth and their families.

Conclusion

This article expands on the understanding of special education as cultural work. Furthermore, the special education field's privileging of behaviorist practices perpetuates a pedagogy of pathologization (Annamma, 2018) which may conflict with SPED Ts' individual interests; critically questioning why EBPs-B exist as they do may provide alternatives to deficit thinking. By situating the privileging of data collected from EBPs-B within socio-cultural and historical context, I disrupt the construction of deficit identities for BIPOC youth through the prescribed use of EBPs-B. This conceptual article disrupts the single story of deficit furthered by the privileging of technologies and scientific evidence over other forms of knowledge and SPED T practice. I argue that the structure of EBPs-B (a) perpetuates deficit constructions of BIPOC youth that make their diminished outcomes seem common sense, and (B) makes SPED Ts into technicians rather than transformative intellectuals who have agency to resist harmful structures. As technicians, SPED Ts may become more focused on precision and compliance, rather than relationships with students and families (Voulgarides, 2018).

SPED Ts as intellectuals (Giroux, 2011) enacting transformational resistance (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) are positioned to have a direct impact on systems that produce harmful outcomes for BIPOC youth. When SPED Ts are given opportunity to understand their cultural work within US schools, they are positioned to disrupt the racialization of disability; these concepts should not be marginalized through the privileging of technical skills. This critical analysis provides knowledge and context for the preparation of SPED Ts who will work with BIPOC students and will be implementing EBPs-B. I make connections between SPED Ts' individual practice and institutional structures that racialize disability; this provides SPED Ts

entry points for interrogating forces that contradict humanist interests of education (Zion & Blanchett, 2017). Furthermore, this article supports the inclusion of individual reflection and collective discussion of the context of special education practice within SPED T PREP.

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CHAPTER 5. PARENT ADVOCACY: BLACK FAMILY CULTURAL WEALTH AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STRUCTURES

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Abstract

Black parents' counterstories related to their experiences with special education structures are presented. Their culturally-specific knowledges and non-normative ways of being are centered as models of resistance to structures that produce harm, such as the Behavior Intervention-Special Education Identification Process (BI-SPED IDP). This article explicates the aspirational, social, familial, linguistic navigational and resistance capital of Black families, their Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), as theorized by Yosso and Burciaga (2016). The experiences of four Black families show the presence of Community Cultural Wealth that is not fully acknowledged within the codified processes of the BI-SPED IDP. In this way, Black family assets and strengths are added to special education scholarship; this study becomes a form of action within the greater movement of disrupting the status quo systems that stratify and exclude people and knowledge.

Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006) outlines expectations for the process of Child Find, where schools are responsible for ensuring that those students who have a right to special education support are evaluated and identified. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) states that when social-emotional-behavioral needs are present, evidence-based positive behavioral supports, including multi-tiered systems of support

for behavior (MTSS-B) are to be implemented during Child Find. Child Find is the process of ensuring that students who are eligible for special education services are identified and served (IDEA, 2004). However, the process of identifying and intervening on behaviors can result in the child, rather than the behavior being targeted as the problem (Bornstein, 2017). The system centers on changing the child's behaviors; behaviors that align with the White cultural norms are reinforced. MTSS-B involves identifying students and sorting them, with corresponding stigma attached to students receiving interventions. When the label of "behavior problem" or emotionally behaviorally disordered (EBD) is attached to a child, the idea that the problem resides in the child is reinforced (Annamma et al., 2016; Cassidy & Jackson, 2005). This is a form of structural Normalcy (Slater & Chapman, 2018) and *goodness* enacted (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). Goodness involves boundaries constructed within educational institutions wherein students either meet criteria of good, or are implicitly identified as not good; there are privileges for those called good and sanctions for those who don't meet the criteria (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016).

For Black families, the process of targeting behaviors and considering special education identification is unique (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020; Cassidy & Jackson, 2005). When subjective categories of disability such as Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are part of the discussion, the process is even more complex, and when Black families are participating in advocating for their child within the behavior intervention and initial special education identification processes (BI-SPED IDP), the social construction of race intersects with the construction of disability (Annamma et al., 2013; Losen et al, 2015). Another layer of complexity is added by the White-normative expectations for parent involvement (Marchand et al., 2019)

and the structural limitations that constrain power for marginalized families (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020) Furthermore, educators have expressed their perception of Black families' involvement as deficient (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Lawson, 2003).

The diminished outcomes for Black students identified as disabled (Skiba et al., 2011) evidence the need for scholars and practitioners to transform the ways in which Black families are asked to participate in the BI-SPED IDP process. Parents have the right to interventions but should not be “made to feel guilty” for their child’s progress, “or assume full responsibility” (Cartledge & Dukes, 2009, p. 394) for solving what school has defined as a problem. Artiles (2019) called out the *color evasion* (Annamma et al., 2017) within the process: systems do not acknowledge race if that benefits the system, and race is visible when including it supports the agenda of people in power. The BI-SPED IDP serves multiple purposes: identifying students needing IDEA supports to access a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE), and the construction of Black students as disabled, which benefits “White, normal, abled students who speak English” (Phoung, 2017, p.47).

Per Artiles (2019), the special education field must ask hard questions of itself and incorporate innovative methods, in order to move towards a reality where Black and Brown families have opportunities to add their knowledge and impact the decisions made for their children. Using Yosso’s Cultural Wealth model (2005), I interrogate traditional definitions of parent advocacy using six forms of capital not unique to families who are marginalized. I illuminate unique skills and knowledge of Black families as they navigate the BI-SPED IDP. As a critical scholar, Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) (Annamma et al., 2013) provides the theoretical framing for studying Black family knowledge from a strengths-based perspective.

This study furthers the discourse around transforming special education's inequities, specifically by interrupting explicit and implicit norms of the BI-SPED IDP. Furthermore, this study challenges educators to resist the deficit framing of Black families and children and initiates discussion of Black family Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016). I frame the study with the following questions.

RQ 1. What are Black families' experiences within behavioral intervention-special education identification process (BI-SPED IDP) ?

RQ 2. What forms of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) are present when Black families participate in the BI-SPED IDP processes?

In this article, I briefly review the literature on Black family participation in special education processes. Then, I provide a theoretical framework for understanding Black family experiences, discussing knowledge as power and Community Cultural Wealth. I describe my methods of inquiry in this study: a critical qualitative narrative study using interviews with Black parents; the design includes intentional steps to address the racial-cultural difference between myself, a White researcher, and the participants, Black women. Then, four Black family portraits are included, followed by descriptions of six forms of CCW and a discussion of implications for practitioners and scholars.

Review of Literature: Black Family Participation in the BI-SPED IDP

IDEA (2004) requires families to participate in the process as their child is evaluated for special education eligibility. However, participation is not codified; the ambiguity leaves space for parent advocacy to be treated as a privilege (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020), and norms of advocacy to privilege people with social and cultural capital (Marchand et al., 2019; Trainor,

2015). School structures, including the BI-SPED IDP normalize structures based in Whiteness and white ways of being (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016), creating a culture clash that is not made explicit (Boyd & Correa, 2005). As the BI-SPED IDP operates now, Black parents in BI-SPED IDP meetings are expected to participate in processes where asymmetrical power relations and limits on valued forms of knowledge are not acknowledged or mediated, unless individuals choose to do so.

Hidden expectations for parent advocacy based in white cultural norms now guide the process, perpetuating the deficit frameworks of Black families. Harry and Ocasio-Stoutenberg (2020) argue that a hierarchy of privileged forms of advocacy has been constructed within education. Parent advocacy itself been constructed as a property right, this has parallels to Whiteness (Annamma, 2015), smartness (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011), and *goodness* (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). When considering the complex causes of disproportionality of BIPOC students identified as EBD (Artiles, 2019), Black parent advocacy is undertheorized; how does the process constrain or enable Black parent advocacy, rather than meeting minimal participation requirements? Harry and Ocasio-Stoutenburg (2020), identify parent advocacy as a property right held by White people, which is “an exclusive right for White-middle class families with more socially acceptable, less stigmatized disabilities” (p. 144). Harris (1993) first described Whiteness as a property right. Whiteness is material, it can be held; therefore, White people have the power to define the boundaries of Whiteness, determine who has access to it, and can change the rules at any time to benefit themselves (Harris 1993). As that relates to parent advocacy, schools have constructed norms, rules, and implicit codes of parent advocacy which are designed to serve White families (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020).

These conditions impact Black family participation and advocacy, For example, within IEP meetings, Black parents had a reluctance to speak (Wilson, 2015), and posed questions, rather than stating expectations. Parents' race and level of educational attainment is related to the types of advocacy parents engage in, as well as the likelihood of the parents' goals being met (Rehm et al., 2013); the type of advocacy from Black families was most often described as grateful/gratifier: those who build strong relationships with educators. In contrast, the high-profile advocacy type involved parents using demands and intimidation based in legal policy and personal expectations for their child's education; this advocacy was most often found in White, higher educated parents. Structures implicitly privilege White families.

Therefore, Black parents' interests may never be articulated within the BI-SPED IDP; proof of parent participation may be provided by a signature on IDEA forms without any shared decision making (Voulgarides, 2018). Black parents, when discussing special education placement for their children, have stated that their ideas have been dismissed, their questions ignored, and their cultural knowledge challenged (Akinola, 2015). Furthermore, the BI-SPED IDP is a poor substitute for cultural competence, and the mandated special education parental procedural safeguards are frequently "misused and abused," according to Black parents (Williams, 2007, p.255). Black parents have described their experiences of (a) being othered, and feeling like outsiders (Hess, 2006); (b) pervasive negative interactions with educators (Thompson, 2014); (c) not revealing their knowledge, given the closed structures of the SPED IDP (Trainor, 2010); and (d) feeling silenced in the process.

Black Family Community Cultural Wealth

Studies of Black parent responses to the deficit-based policies that claim race neutrality and power sharing involve many forms of capital and resistance (Fine, 1993). I describe several studies of Black parent CCW with the caveat that each person's circumstances are unique. Advocacy and resistance against educational hypocrisies and barriers to full participation in decision making is dependent on local context and interactions (Fine, 1993). In Reynolds (2010), Black parents gave their sons tools to identify and name racism within disciplinary processes rather than be silenced by the procedures and policies, because "without a name, racism becomes personalized, internalized, and detrimental to the psyche and sense of self", and it is processed alone (p. 158). In another example of resistance, Black families in North Carolina collectively challenged special education policies, expressing distrust, and questioning the need for labels as a requirement for getting the help that their children deserved (Williams, 2007) .

Frameworks for Analysis of Black Families' Experiences

The BI-SPED IDP is portrayed as a common sense, rationally scientific, and individually valid process, while it is none of those things (Harry, et al, 2001; Ong-Dean, 2009; Voulgarides, 2018). The process is one of the special education structures that racialize disabilities, tying disability and race together as inherent characteristics yet this is hidden within discourse and practice (Artiles, 2013; Connor et al., 2019; Voulgarides & Tefera, 2017). Within Critical Race Theory, scholars focus on the primacy of race and work towards active resistance to structures of oppression (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

To that end, this study centers the experiences of Black families within in the BI-SPED IDP. Counterstories, which are strengths based narratives sharing the beauty of a culture and

resistance to injustices (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) are constructed. The narratives are framed using CCW from Yosso and Burciaga (2016), which is an expansion of cultural and social capital. CCW also involves systems of knowledge unique to people of color, which are developed at the intersections of racism, sexism, classism, and other oppressions; these are culturally specific ways of positioning themselves (Bernal, 2002). A “system of knowing” that is linked to worldviews based on the conditions under which people live and learn is developed (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Knowledge as Capital

Cultural Capital, also referred to as information capital, or institutional knowledge (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) involves understanding of who holds authority, and knowledge of school structures, including institutional complexities and logistics; it works as a mechanism of determining who belongs, and cultural capital is often implicitly transferred within the dominant culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). These authors describe examples of cultural capital as home learning activities and parent involvement that are aligned with school norms. Social Capital involves networks within the school community, among children, parents, and professionals; members access collective resources to the benefit of their own child when they activate their social capital, (Forster & van der Werfhorst, 2020). These knowledges are forms of capital, invested and traded within an economy of knowledge wherein certain knowledges have more value than others. Furthermore, structures created with White norms ensure that White social and cultural capital is most valuable.

Community Cultural Wealth

Conversely, CCW exists within networks of people who are marginalized. Cultural Wealth includes aspirational, navigational, familial, social, linguistic, and resistant capital. Each of the six types of CCW capital have been further studied and incorporated into research and practice, and can be used as tools for social justice (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016). However, the CCW model has rarely been used by scholars to elucidate strength and beauty within the Black community. CCW consists of multiple skills, abilities, cultural knowledge, and connections that go unrecognized within White-normative structure; and because of asymmetrical power relations, CCW is not recognized as valuable within institutions, such as schools (Yosso, 2005). Marginalized people's resistance and survival within oppressive structures is considered an asset, supporting negotiation and advocacy within institutions and organizations (Brooms & Davis, 2017). One example from Allan and White-Smith (2018) highlighted Black mothers' Cultural Wealth and its relationship to their involvement in their sons' schooling. Also noted were the limitations to involvement and increased surveillance of their sons that curtailed their use of their Cultural Wealth. These mothers were pathologized and excluded from processes and power when they attempted to advocate for their sons.

Qualitative Narrative Inquiry

The goal of qualitative research design is constructing a "contextualized insight into human experience," with a "point of entry, or multiple points of entry, which have meaning in specific circumstances for both researcher and study participant" (Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014, p.3). To be a critical scholar, I design inquiry that questions the stories I have constructed about myself, families, education, race, disability, institutions, and the nature of

knowledge, in order to contest them. This narrative inquiry does not aim to produce a fixed truth to be generalized across Black families or the schools that Black children attend. Medico and Santiago-Delefosse (2014) remind us that readers interpret meaning, therefore an understanding of culture, identity, and knowledge as socially constructed is needed within the research and dissemination process. Crotty (1998) stated that all reality is constructed out of interactions within the socio-cultural context, and it is forever changing; we are cultured, we construct culture, and we depend on cultural understanding to organize our experience. Furthermore, experiences are not either subjective or objective, they are united, and this is where meaning is constructed.

Qualitative Inquiry Goodness, Transparency and Emancipation

Interpretive studies disrupt the technical-rational discourse that seeks measurable outcomes and generalizable statements (Gallagher, 2004); deep, authentic descriptions unique to local conditions connected to theory provide a different, yet equally valuable form of knowledge. Qualitative scholars have developed means for considering the clarity, credibility, confirmability, authenticity, or reasonableness of inquiry using non-positivist methods (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). Peshkin (1993) analyzed quality by considering description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation, yet determined that these are not distinct entities within qualitative work. Yet, Peshkin's framework is incomplete as a method that honors the epistemological roots of critical qualitative work; transparency is another quality indicator. Hiles and Čermák (2007) discussed measuring the value of research by considering transparency, wherein researchers make explicit their processes, practices, and decisions, which allows the reader to evaluate the knowledge constructed. Moreover, Cho & Trent (2006) discuss research

as emancipatory, leading to social change when it includes thorough self-reflection while working with the participants. To this end, I incorporate points of reflexivity (Barrett, 2007) and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) into my research design and this manuscript.

Researcher as an Instrument

My researcher's perspective is evidenced throughout this study because my ideology and values are present whether they are explicit or not. By being explicit, I take steps to acknowledge researcher as instrument (Xu & Storr, 2012). As a researcher, I must avoid being the 'expert,' and enter a relationship with Black parents with humility, ready to appreciate ways of thinking and being that are different from my own (Banes et al., 2016). Reflexivity enables this positioning; this requires ongoing self-questioning, comparing, evaluating, verifying, and reflecting (Hickson, 2016). By building practices wherein I notice the variations of my awareness, question myself, and intentionally identify how I am situated within in the process (Banes et al., 2016), my co-constructed knowledge intends to represent Black family CCW.

Therefore, I begin this critical qualitative study with personal context, with the understanding that my biases will be challenged and others will be discovered within this process; this inclusion adds trustworthiness for the reader (Tierney & Clemens, 2011) and introduces points of reflection for memos throughout the research process. Researcher memos, systemic reflection notes, and observations during interviews are also integral parts of this research design. Reflective memos provide means for integrating sociocultural context to the analysis, identifying my stages of knowledge construction, and making my biases transparent (Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014) .

Critical Researcher and Former Special Education Teacher

As a critical qualitative scholar, I am a research instrument (Xu & Storr, 2012) so throughout this research process, I wrote memos and reflections to maintain a stance of reflexivity and maintain humility, intentionality, and vulnerability. From Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) portraiture, I identified myself as a witness, responsible for making intellectual, ideological, and socio-cultural frameworks explicit. My role goes beyond "raising the voices" of Black families engaged in a system that marginalizes them and their child. In the research design phase, I used reflective practices to question the topic, myself, the literature, and the research experience (Mac an Ghaill, 1989) as I developed the questions and chose methods. I intentionally focused on assets of Black families, to counter the pervading narrative that they are less than, or difficult (Lightfoot, 2004).

My lived experience with families and people with dis/abilities encompasses hundreds of special education evaluations and even more behavior intervention team meetings; this work involved Black families in nearly half of those situations. My privileged identities in the context of this study are many: White, middle-class, doctoral candidate, and free of visually identified dis/abilities. These privileged identities, and the power of school structures operate intersectionally in contrast to the marginalized identities of Black families and children. Emotionally, this research confronts my biases and the structures that make me comfortable. However, this study is a form of resistance within the educational structures that construct and hoard power; this work intends to be emancipatory (Freire, 2018) for participants and myself.

Methods: Narrative Inquiry, Elements of Portraiture

Critical qualitative narrative is a valuable method for interrogating structures that result in discrimination of people with marginalized identities. I designed this study using interdisciplinary scholarship, critical questions, intentional power-sharing methods, and narrative inquiry. My research design centers on face-to-face semi-structured interviews with Black parents and caregivers who have engaged with educators to support their child's success when school has defined their behavior as problematic. My design affords use of stories to understand CCW and reconstruct events; rather than remembering and reciting events, story tellers add meaning and share insights as they describe their experiences (Forster & van der Werfhorst, 2020). This supports construction of Black families' counterstories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), narratives that provide deep descriptions of Black families' resistance to systems of inequity and marginalization.

Iowa State's Institutional Review Board approved this study as exempt in May 2020. Interviews occurred June-November of 2020; member checks occurred November 2020 through January of 2021. I describe each part of the design below, then present family portraits and an analysis of six forms of capital, or Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) that Black families described. Every part of the research design relied on a representative of the Black community who could help me navigate the racial differences, construct deep descriptions of Black family experiences, and understand Whiteness within educational structures (Leonardo, 2002). To explicitly respond to my identity as a White researcher making meaning of Black family stories, my special education colleague agreed to take on this role. Her participation was invaluable. My

ongoing reflexivity regarding the process and my power is included in this manuscript for transparency.

Sample

Within this manuscript, parent is anyone who takes on a primary caregiving role, carrying out the functions that a traditionally-defined parent would typically perform (Turnbull et al, 2011); family may extend to any Black community members or family friends who care about the child's wellbeing. This expanded version of parent and family explicitly counters the BI-SPED IDP legal definition (IDEA, 2004) based in White norms, which silences caregivers other than the biological mother, father, or legally-determined guardian (Williams, 2007). The term Black community describes a collective of interdependent people and organizations who take ownership for the success of all members of the group. Black community describes a way of living where people are invested in helping each other thrive within systems that are oppressive and discriminatory. "It takes a village to raise a child" sums up the Black community, according to my special education colleague that partnered with me for this study.

The six Black parents met the following inclusion criteria, they (a) have children enrolled in K-12 public schools currently or within the last 3 years, (b) parent a child who has been identified as exhibiting challenging behaviors within a K-12 school, (c) have been involved with behavioral interventions or special education evaluation related to behaviors, and (d) have attended school meetings where they have discussed their child's behavior with educators. All parents were over 18 years at the time of the study. Parents in this study were working mothers and aunts, two of whom were graduate students, two of whom worked in the school system, and two of whom worked in professional positions. The four Black children discussed

attended urban elementary schools across three states; behavioral challenges at school were identified before or during kindergarten.

Each of the four people who expressed interest described their connection to the Black community member that shared the study invitation as one of the motivators; they trusted me because they heard of my personal connection to these community members. This may be why the sample is weighted towards Black women who have ties to K-12 education or higher education. Some readers may consider this problematic, or a limitation of the sample. I posit a different theory for understanding the sample, based on Black Womanist standpoint (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002):

Womanism represents the cultural, historical, and political positionality of African-American women...Womanists recognize the interlocking oppressions for Black women within systems that privilege some and penalize others. They believe that social transformation requires both individual and collective action. And womanism works to elevate Black women's experiences of caring. (paraphrased, p. 72).

Additionally, othermothering, or community mothering, is present within the Black community. Othermothering is rooted in political activism and commitment to the Black community; it involves taking on caretaking responsibilities for a child that is not one's own (Story, 2014). Furthermore, the arrangement may be formalized or remain informal. This sample of women who describe caring for Black children beyond their own biological family, exemplify Black Womanism and othermothering unique to the Black community.

Recruitment

Prior to designing recruitment strategies, I reviewed literature on the Black community (Reynolds, 2013), Black males' Cultural Wealth (Wright et al., 2016) and Black family social capital (Brandon & Brown, 2009). Furthermore, I completed reflective memos, reconstructing

my experiences of working with Black families in elementary schools for 25 years and of building interracial personal relationships throughout my life. I discussed potential organizations and leaders within the Black community with my personal contacts who were members of the Black community in three different cities. I developed a list of community contacts, posters inviting participants, and talking points for the community contacts with contact information so people who were interested could contact me via phone or email. Most people contacted me by text.

Three people who agreed to share the invitation for participants not only shared the posters, but described my work and their relationship to me a friend. Roxane is a personal friend who agreed to share the poster and information; and described my work to parents and colleagues at organizational meetings. She also agreed to participate, when her sister-in-law showed interest. Marion is a friend and Black community contact I have known for years. She agreed to share information within community organizations and also matched criteria to be part of the study. She volunteered to participate as well as share information. Her niece Bettina contacted me to participate as well. The other two participants, Fannie and Kimberle, received information from Roxane through professional meetings and contacted me to express interest. Parents were given a minimal stipend for their participation in the study. The third personal community contact shared the invitation, but no one from her community contacted me to express interest.

Interviews

Again using literature review and personal reflections, I constructed an interview that would be conversational and align with my research questions. See Appendix A. Parent

Interview: Cultural Wealth to review the questions and potential follow up points for these interviews. Following screening conversations by phone, I sent each participant a review of research expectations, see Appendix B. Research Rules, and the interview questions. Prior to interviews, I reviewed the purpose of the study and discussed any questions. Each parent participated in an interview via a videoconferencing application interviews were audiotaped for transcription purposes. Rev.com transcribed each interview. The length of interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 80 minutes. Four people were in their homes. Two people were at their place of work. Two interviews included interactions with pets and two interviews were paused so the parent could interact with their children.

When I received the transcripts from Rev.com, I cross-checked them with notes to correct errors or fill in blanks when the professional transcription said “inaudible.” Additionally, de-identified each transcript and assigned each parent and child a pseudonym. All people, places, and programs that were discussed in the interview were replaced with pseudonyms. Each parent was given an opportunity to review the transcript. Via email, they were asked to review the de-identified transcript and discuss clarifications and revisions. Two of the women did not respond. Three women replied that the transcript did not require changes. The sixth parent chose to talk to me by phone, and corrected minor details.

Interpreting and Analyzing

As Lightfoot and Davis (1997) discuss, the co-construction of portraits involves both science and art. Analysis and Interpretation both occur during this process. The final portrait, in this case a counterstory from a Black family needs to be an authentic representation; yet the final interpreter is the reader. Everyone brings their own perspective to the portrait.

Constructing Portraits from Interview Transcripts

To respond to the first research question and describe Black families' lived experiences within BI-SPED IDP processes, I planned to construct family portraits, rather than individual portraits. This honors the interconnected social and familial capital of the parents. I open coded their descriptions of themselves, the child, school, teachers and administration, as well as the intervention-special education process. I was able to construct a strengths and interests profile of the child and a description of the each parent. Individual, detailed events were sequenced to construct an overall narrative of their experiences within the BI-SPED IDP. While I wanted to highlight family strengths, structural barriers and individual aggressions were central to their experiences. The portraits provide context for understanding their CCW.

My second round of analysis focused on common themes across participants to construct a general organization for presenting the portraits. I cross checked transcripts and notes, as well as reflective memos to maintain authenticity. I chose to develop the counterstories using primarily direct quotes from the Black families. Each parent portrait described the familial relationships and assets as well as a chronological story of their interactions with school during the BI-SPED IDP. I wanted to provide deep descriptions of Black family marginalization and unique responses from each parent. Prior to finalizing the portraits, I debriefed individual anecdotes with my special education colleague to check my interpretation of school and parent actions. Another round of member checks, where I asked parents to review the portrait occurred. Two of the four portraits were reviewed; Roxane and Marion completed member checks with no major revisions. The authenticity of the counterstory was validated.

Construct Coding: Cultural Wealth

The goal of my second research question was to describe the CCW of Black families who have navigated the BI-SPED IDP process. Following the construction of the family portraits, I was familiar with the interviews, having read them at least six times each. For the second research question, I coded all interviews one construct at a time, using a clean paper copy of the transcript for each round; this added another six readings of each transcript. See the descriptors for the constructs in Appendix C., Table 5.1. *CCW Starting Constructs* for the six constructs, which included: familial, social, navigational, aspirational, linguistic and resistance capital. I used construct coding (Saldaña, 2016) to highlight complete sentences or segments of paragraphs that exemplified the form of capital being coded. When there were instances when a section of the interview was coded as more than one form of capital, I included it in both forms of capital for analysis.

Additionally, I combined each set of coding for a given capital to develop patterns and expand understanding of the six forms of capital evidenced in this study. When the patterns were developed, Cultural Wealth literature was reviewed (Yosso & Garcia, 2007) to check the credibility of these interpretations. From the six interviews, I added to the descriptors for each form of capital, see Appendix C., Table 5.2. *Black Family Cultural Wealth*. Furthermore, as I finalized the patterns of Cultural Wealth that were present across interviews, I debriefed with my special education research partner with knowledge of the Black community to check for authenticity. Each form of capital was then studied for cross-participant patterns and exemplars. I also interpreted overlaps between the forms of capital.

Reflexivity Memos

As the researcher, my responsibility is to be transparent about what guides my work, including conceptual knowledge, lived experience, and bias and barriers; this requires “concerted efforts simultaneously to take oneself and one’s theories out of the equation while remaining constantly aware that both are always present” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 64). I took field notes during and after the interviews, noting observations and nonverbals. Additionally, I reflected on cultural norms and power differentials. See Appendix D. Reflexivity Guiding Questions. I used these as means for making the power associated with my identity and my positionality transparent. I shared insights from these memos when debriefing with my special education colleague. And these memos informed the reflexivity and transparency within the final manuscript.

Four Black Family Portraits: Experiences with the BI-SPED IDP

Each of the family’s experiences are described below, in four portraits. For each portrait, I used interview data, reflection memos, and member checks. Below, italics represent direct quotes from the parents interviewed. Traditional font is used for my connections so the writing creates a cohesive portrait. I intentionally minimized my language, to make room for an authentic portrait of each family’s experiences from their perspective. The portraits are counterstories of Black Families and their experiences when their child was part of the BI-SPED IDP in the early elementary grades.

Kimberlé and Antwann

Kimberlé is a *true believer in God and Jesus Christ...we're all working and striving to conform to the image. God's going to do a good work in us until he comes, so we're all working,*

but as we grow and mature, that's what it's about, and just trying our best to live that life daily.

Kimberlé brings these values to her professional role and to her family. She describes her work in Behavioral Health and schools: *The work I do, I do because I have a passion to do it. I don't do it just for my paycheck. I do it because I love doing it.* She's raising Antwann, her 11 year old son with his stepdad, keeping him connected to his cousins, who are like siblings, and to church, her *well rounded community*. She describes her parenting role with schools as *building that relationship...letting them know who I am, setting my precedence right when we come in. I'm his mom... but I come and let them know, "I'm not that type of mom that's not going to be there. I'm here. Call me when you need me."* I set my precedence with you right away.

Antwann loves basketball and attends church. Kimberlé describes him as *very unique*. *He wears glasses. He's so well put together....alot of people always made fun of him and stuff like that because he's different. To me he's not a normal child. Definitely raising him up in Christ and then raising him up... just the way we live our life. I have come to [understand] that, let him know that and he has come to that understanding that, "I'm different, I'm confident in who I am."* He's very smart and intelligent. Kimberlé keeps it real and thorough. She wants Antwann, *as a Black male...[to] understand what he's going to come up with and face in life, because it's the reality of what we're living in today. I let him know what he's facing. I tell him, "I need you to work hard"...and he does.* As a fifth grader in a private school now, *he's doing amazingly well. He knows how to cope with his anger. He knows how to come and talk and express hisself.*

At home, Kimberlé acknowledges that there are things to work on, but after attending therapy with Antwann, *it even helped me, the therapy did. So we was able to start changing things around and it really was a great thing. But it really worked for us.* She said, *Being really*

vulnerable helped, like "Okay, I take the feedback." Even if it's some hard critique feedback, I take it because it will make me a better person...not taking nothing always personal. Kimberlé sees her college education as helpful in understanding how behavior and schools work, and shares her value of education with Antwonn, so he knows mom's here, mom's big on education and we're going to work together with this. After working in schools, she believes more strongly that family involvement is crucial and it's got to be there for the staff, for school, for community. She also recognizes that educators need more cultural training to do that.

Experiences with School

Kimberlé describes Antwonn's behaviors as something...internal, he was dealing with some things in his life; she believes these things are generational. They worked with a therapist starting at age 4. At school he can blow up at you to get what he wants or tear up the room...he had behavior but his academics was so to the par that they really couldn't just automatically say, "Go right to special ed." They knew his academics was up here right on level but his behavior was an issue. She feels like she had to teach the educators, I was doing behavioral health intervention services, so I knew what to do in trying to deal with him...and then it's like, this is not working. We've got to come up with a different plan, and that's why I go back to "let's get to the core of the matter." Let's get to the core of the situation. Let's get to the bottom of it so we could be able to understand what's really going on with him...let's get some true data and not a month data, not 30 days, not 60 days. Let's get a full year of data of what's going on...and all that you [educators] have tried to do to make sure that this is what that child needs...but that was not happening.

When approached about special education initially, Kimberlé says, *They didn't give me all my rights and I didn't know what I was able to do. They just kind of forced me to doing something that I didn't want to do at [that school]. They wasn't giving me the time and before I knew it, I'm signing papers to put him in special ed.* They told me literally, *"If you do not sign these papers, we will suspend him every single day."* She talks about her response, *I didn't know my rights and for them not to give me all the information and instructions, that was like, "Oh my goodness"...So that's what that goes back to, not having all the information.* When she heard after the fact, *"No, you didn't have to sign that. They couldn't suspend from school," I was livid because I was like, "You guys just basically rushed me through this process to get a checkbox and be done with it"... "So now you're just calling me dumb basically, in a way, and then got what you wanted from it...instead of actually working with the family."*

Kimberlé's fears of special education included...*They keep you in there forever. It's hard to get out of special ed when you're in special ed.* An IEP was developed and implemented during kindergarten year. Kimberlé invited her mom, dad, and pastor to IEP meetings, wanting *somebody that can talk the lingo, that knows the lingo...They [educators] see my support system.* After third grade, Kimberlé chose a new school for her son, a private Christian school; the IEP that had been written was no longer used. Things were different at this school...*it was "we're"...It was, "We're working with you, we care about you, we want to help you with this thing. What do he like to do?"* Also, it was, *"We know that you're a caring parent,"* The family worked with a therapist again, and Antwann has been on the honor roll each year...*we got a schedule down, we got a routine down and we're working with it and I'm working with him so he knows mom's here, mom's big on education and we're going to work together with this.*

Targeted and Degraded

Kimberlé described Antwann being *targeted*. *We've seen a lot of attitude I want to say, or a lot of degrading from teachers. So, because your student act like this, we look at you like you're no good. I felt that from staff. From staff and administration and teachers. She was not included in planning preventative supports for Antwann, they made their own interventions and then they just let me know what they had. They started documenting right away. I didn't even know they had...when they had our first meeting, they had so much documentation on my baby, I said, "Oh, we documenting." I said, "But nobody decided to call his mom?"...So the first meeting, you have a whole packet of documentation on Antwann but nobody decided to call his mom, and now I've got to go back to try to clean up a mess that has been going on for 60 days. How's that possible if I don't know what's going on myself?*

And when she attended meetings about Antwann's behaviors: *It was threatening. With the principal, with the social worker, with the teacher, it was very "we don't believe you." Like I say, "are we doing this? Are we doing this?" [they say] "Yep, we're doing everything we can. Basically we don't believe you that he's not acting this way at home." That last formal meeting was just like, "If you don't sign this paper, we're going to suspend him every day." I remember that like it was yesterday, because ... growing up, we didn't believe in putting kids in special ed. That was one thing I did not believe [in], or even putting them on medication."*

Teachers who Care and Parents who Know their Rights

Kimberlé believes that all educators can learn to work with Black kids. *After elementary schools, I had all White teachers. I don't remember having no more Black teachers. So that's why I really know it's not about race or color or Black and White. It was about just the care and*

a heart and a passion. As for schools and educators, they need to see more of Black people in those type of settings to give that real, authentic truth of what is going on, and we understand our...We're the same. We [Black families] discipline the same...we discipline different than others [White people]...we understand each other [Black families]. She also is looking toward her future role in schools, Honestly, I've been praying on it because I don't know...I believe my calling is to be an advocate for that now and parents...We have to be aware and have knowledge. We have to gain the knowledge...I just want to tell Black parents, "Know what you're doing. Know what you do, when to sign. Don't be intimidated because they're just pressuring you to sign something." Know what we're signing. If we've got to, go find a lawyer. "Know your rights because that's something that I wish I knew."

Bettina, Marion, and AJ

Bettina is the mother of AJ, who is 8 years old, a 3rd grader. There is a new baby in the home, a 10-month old sister, who AJ named Sharice. Bettina's job ended during COVID-19, so she is parenting and teaching from home. Bettina describes AJ as *helpful, caring, energetic; he plays football and basketball*. His father is involved nearly every day, and has helped coach AJ's sports teams; *his brothers from his father's side* are on the team. He *loves video games*. Academics are challenging, but AJ was *one of the top readers* in his afterschool reading program. Bettina's great aunt, Marion, a Central City Public Schools social worker has been one of the people in AJ's circle of care for his whole life. Marion says AJ's parents *have a good way of co-parenting, they've made it work...his dad is very active*. AJ is *happy and cheerful*, according to Marion. But, he's a *big boy...so unfortunately, teachers can be a little scared about that or*

not really know how to handle him...I mean, he tries really hard, he wants the teacher and people to like him.

Bettina reflects on her parenting, *I'm probably that mom that wants to choose his own path of what he wants to do. I'm not going to try to control him, and he's not going to let me either, because he's not that type of kid.* She talks to her family when she makes decisions like assessing or medicating AJ, changing schools, and responding to school's expectations for her parenting. She talks about doubting herself as a parent earlier in AJ's schooling, *I don't know if I was the best advocate then because I'm just new to him going to school so I'm just hearing these things and I'm like, "Okay."* Currently, she describes her parenting as part of a team...*We're all a support, me, my aunt, my mom, his teacher, the principal...We're all going to know what's going on...just to stay on top of things and try to get him on the right track.*

Marion describes the ways she participates in AJ's life: she's the occasional transportation person for afterschool and tutoring, and she communicates with his school when incidents occur, if needed. She says *you just do it, you don't even think about it.* She wants AJ to *really focus on education and learn different skills....and figure out what he likes and what he enjoys and what he wants to do.* She has coached AJ on school success and Bettina on parenting AJ. She goes to school *just to see what's going on.* She goes to conferences or meetings when AJ's grandmother or his mom request that. AJ's grandmother is another day-to-day caregiver and support for AJ. Each of them have shared ideas with school for serving AJ, and they are keeping him connected to academic supports, mentoring, church, and his sports activities.

Experiences with School

Bettina shared positives and negatives working with educators during AJ's five years of schooling (Pre-k through third grade). She noticed that he had a hard time getting into the routine in Pre-K, and concerns about AJ's behaviors were raised by teachers and staff in kindergarten. Bettina described what it was like when school treated her son as a problem. *At that age, kids like to play fight and he has another sibling that's the same age as him and they play fight all the time. So he gets to school and he's doing that and they look at him as aggressive and a danger to the other kids...It's he always hit another kid. He actually got suspended in kindergarten for them saying he fought a kid.* The family advocated for a 504 plan, *because I just didn't think he needed an IEP.* She described the 504: *I have to approve anything that goes on it, or any changes. If I wanted to stop, then it'll stop...it doesn't have to stick with him...different from an IEP.*

Bettina chose to change schools after kindergarten; the 504 plan was not implemented in the new school. AJ moved to the school that his cousin Tyanna had attended. Educators in that building had developed relationships with AJ's extended family and his cousin was a high achieving student. During first grade, the school counselor met with AJ; Bettina says that *caused problems.* The counselor said, *maybe you should get him assessed,* so Bettina talked to their doctor. After a medical diagnosis of ADHD, she decided *I don't think he needs meds because I don't think it's going to do anything for him.* As the family worked with school, Bettina described examples of not having all the information, *I do feel like I wasn't getting the whole story.* When she saw other kids doing the same thing as AJ without consequences, and when she was called in to fix her son's behaviors: *I often doubt a lot of calls regarding him not sitting*

still. She often challenged school practices of reporting AJ's behavior without giving her context. He is currently working online because of COVID-19: When I'm sitting with him, it's like "Nope, we're going to get it done"...When he is online with his teacher, she gets none of that. None of the crying and whining I get.

Discomfort with Special Education

Bettina's impression of special education came from firsthand experience. She had a behavior IEP: *My mom did put me on an IEP. I didn't need no IEP. I knew what I was...I knew how to do my work or whatever.* She described this experience as a key factor in her resistance to IEPs. *That's all they had tried to get me to do, get an IEP on him. I'm not doing an IEP on my kindergarten child. Not doing it. You have this plan and I don't know. They're just passing them through. I don't want that for my son. I want him to be challenged. I don't want him to be looked at as, "Oh, well, he has an IEP so let's just move him." So no, I'm not having that.* Bettina described her understanding of IEPs, *They [schools] don't tell you that oncethey don't tell you that you that they stick with your kid until they graduate.* Marion describes the unique problems of special education for Black boys: *him being labeled and if he's labeled EBD, what that means for him as he moves through his elementary years, his junior high years, his high school. A lot of times just because of that label, teachers treat him differently, you know? When there are academic and behavior goals, they look at the behaviors. So for me, it was like, that's the last thing we want to do. What other services can we put in place to support him? And not just at school, at home because he was the first child.*

Comforts of Connections

Bettina and Marion say the biggest comforts from school are teachers who care. Bettina says *his [AJ's] second grade teacher was there for me and made me feel comfortable with keeping him at that school...she's wonderful, she supports me. He's still in contact with her. It's a good thing.* And for third grade: *That's the thing I loved about her because she communicated with his second grade teacher to figure out what his strengths are, what did he need to work on.* Marion described a family connection with the second grade teacher; she had been the teacher for AJ's cousin, which made the teacher *willing to work with the family and willing to put her all into it, because she knew what kind of family we were.* Marion describes AJ's teachers and as helpful, but questioned whether they would have done things differently if she wasn't present at the meetings: *I don't know if...I want to hope that it was just because that was her [the principal], versus I was sitting in the meeting...because she knew I was connected to Central City Schools.*

Fannie and Kenneth

Fannie is raising her son, Kenneth while she completes her doctoral program in Mental Health. As a PhD student...*I don't have flexibility but I also do, so I can build my life around what my son needs and that's basically how I survive.* She uses groups on social media to help her understand her son and the system. *I did all my own, Facebook groups, reading, asking questions out to actually autistic people.... There are groups on Facebook. It's like the hashtag is #actuallyautistic. And so, it's good because people will ask questions and they'll get really ignorant answers and then someone who's actually autistic will answer the question.* She

describes her best friend as her support, *she is an awesome support...She always comes through, always has been there, but she's really it.*

Kenneth is 7 years old and he loves pizza and his puppy...*he's so smart now, he will call his dad. If he asks me, "Oh, Mom, can I have ..." Because he really, really loves pizza, like loves pizza. He'll say, "Mom, can we have pizza, please?" And I'll say, "Not today. Not today, honey. Today, you're going to have lentils." He'll call his dad. He will call his dad and say, "Dad, can I have some pizza, please?"* Fannie is divorced from Kenneth's father, who...*for the last couple of months, he's been consistently seeing his son every other week from Thursday to Saturday....he's very happy about it. [Kenneth] loves his dad, he really does."* Fannie also notes, his father even *to this day, will not acknowledge that his son is Autistic.*

After speech language services as a toddler, Kenneth was still not verbally communicating with peers or his mother in kindergarten...*I had to do it [get an evaluation], I just knew you had to have faith that you are a strong enough mother, that you'll be able to be there for him and not let anyone tell you what is not true about your son. And so, that's ultimately why I did it.* Fannie makes it clear that she is part of the program for Kenneth...*I try and figure out stuff...as long as they believe and they know that "if we don't do what we're supposed to be doing, Fannie's going to find out."* She reminds herself, *as much as I try to stay on top of stuff, there's always going to be something that I don't know...at the end of the day, trust your child and trust your parenting.*

My biggest fear is me not doing enough or not knowing enough so that a systemic barrier hits him and I'm not there to prevent the damage. That's why I insist that they educate him, that's why I insist that they allow him to be himself, that's why I insist that he's treated

with respect, because I want, for when he grows up, for him to know that he deserves a fighting chance. Fannie says, While I can stay on top of them, I'm not seen as unreasonable because I do ask like, "What can I reasonably expect?" And they'll tell me...and with me knowing how they work, I'm able to pressure them to not treat [Kenneth] as though he is broken or a disease.

Experiences with Schools

When Kenneth was two, he was receiving speech/language therapy because he wasn't talking; services were in place until confidential information from his file was shared among staff members, one of whom was invested in supporting Kenneth's father during divorce proceedings. Fanny explains, they *totally violated FRPA* so it could be used for his father. *What they were saying was that I was not doing enough to help him. Fannie terminated services...I'm like, as long as he's getting services through the schools, how can I trust that she's not going to weasel her way into someone else's ... into convincing someone else to do that? At the time, I didn't know how to best advocate and protect my son and so I did what I felt I had to do, which was to remove him from that help.*

At age four, Kenneth was still not talking, and staying away from peers, and scripting....*I realized that he needed something a bit more specific so eventually I had to ask a couple of times, finally they did an evaluation. They were like, "Yep, he has autism." It worked out in the end but, once again, I had to take that on as well...I was a little bit resistant to getting him evaluated because I didn't want him to be labeled by it in the school system and throw him into special education spiral. That comes from seeing and hearing stories about Black children who are in special education, how they're treated. I've seen how they're treated, just not with respect and dignity. A lot of research out there that just shows how, especially Black boys, are labeled as*

being overly aggressive and a problem...I was afraid that was going to be what would happen with my son and that's part of the reason why I didn't get help for him until he was almost [five]. Eventually, I couldn't deny that there are benefits associated to children with an IEP and with a diagnosis and I knew that if I wanted my son to be successful, I was going to have to do that. And even though it has been challenging at times, I'm really glad that I did because despite the times that I've had to do a little bit more advocating and a bit more pushing, he has gotten supports that if he didn't have, I doubt he would've progressed as much as he has.

Special education services for Kenneth involve a team of educators, including *an ABA technician, is someone who does the, they call them, trials in ABA. The BCBA is the supervisor to the ABA technician* and a speech-language clinician. Now that the IEP is in place, Fannie feels like the Autism label can be used as a distraction, she and the educators have different understandings of *normal seven year old behaviors... for example, if he is getting up out of his seat, "Oh, it's because he's autistic." It's not like, "Oh, he's seven and he's overworking, he needs a break like all other seven year-olds"...why doesn't he get recess? When Kenneth has acted up in a way that is atypical and they try to say, "Oh, well, this is his behavior and he's doing this and he's doing this."* And it's like, *"He doesn't do that with me. He doesn't with anyone else. It's only with you, so you're the common factor."*

Letting them know...

I've seen how petty schools can be and teachers can be and doing little micro aggressions and little things to make you say, "Forget it, I'm going somewhere else"...And so, I have to really try and mitigate that because I know that if they think negatively of me, they're definitely going to think negatively of him...It is a lot. It is exhausting...It is a fight. It's a fight

because I have to play the balancing role of advocating for him while also not being labeled as an angry parent or an angry Black woman or hostile. Every individual that comes in contact with my son, I let them know that I have my Masters in Clinical Mental Health and I hate having to do that. I don't like having to flash my degree or my credentials but I let all of them know that I have a Degree in Clinical Mental Health, a Masters, and I'm working on my PhD. There's nothing they can do to outwit me. And even still, they still try me but I feel like if I didn't...Because I qualify myself, I feel like a lot of times...Essentially, I learned very early that I have to let White people know that I am not someone who is going to be able to be yanked, you're not going to be able to yank my chain, you're not going to be able to confuse me or talk around me, and they still try but it's not as bad, I think. And with social workers, I know there's a lot of paperwork and a lot of reporting and a lot of documentation and so it's like I have to be mindful of what that is too.

It's like constantly repeating so if someone new was added to the team, I have to introduce myself, I have to qualify myself, and then hope that they respect the qualification. I also am very mindful of how I speak so I try not to ...I taper my voice so that I don't sound like I'm as pressy. I kind of turn into a little bit of a counselor for a little bit like really watching my words and making sure that like, "Oh, this is a really nice woman that wants to advocate for her son." I have to try to think like them so that they see me as an advocate for my son instead of "Oh, this is going to be a bossy, abrasive mother"...And once again, because I'm educated, I can do that but it's very exhausting, especially some of the experiences I've had. It's very exhausting to have to do that all the time. And so, his whole team will say, "Oh, Fannie is such a great mom, a great advocate." And it's like you have no idea that amount of psychological labor that goes

into making sure that you don't [get stereotyped]. If I didn't have to spend so much time, for lack of better terminology, coddling Whiteness, I think...[supports would be] a lot sooner, a lot more efficient. I spent a lot of time making sure people feel safe and secure with me. I despise that. I feel like, in a lot of ways, it minimizes who I am as a person because, essentially, I'm playing into the trope that I am apparently threatening. It's up to me to not be that but if I don't do it then my son is mistreated so I have to, once again, bite the bullet for him. I feel like I can deal with everything else, as much as I don't want to, it's just I wish the racism piece would just disappear.

Staying in the Fight

Fannie believes if she said, 'I'm done,' they can do whatever, I swear my son's treatment would go right down the drain. I have no doubt about that. That is part of the reason why I fight, because he deserves a chance...I just have to show that I know what's best for my son and that I know enough about Autism to be able to not allow them to try to tell me that he's a problem, that he needs to be fixed. He's okay just the way he is. He's not broken, no matter what anyone says about him, he's not a problem, there's nothing wrong with being Autistic.

Fannie says, I'm glad that you're doing this research because there's definitely a racial component, I feel, to how my son is treated and how I'm treated versus maybe other parents... it's kind of challenging because you hold it all inside and so you're like, "Oh, I finally have an opportunity to talk." As I'm rolling in my own program, I'm also seeing there are a lot of systemic issues that go on that we don't really think about and so that's why I try to help with research as much as I can because I feel like we're starting to get into a place now where we have the language to ask what we want to know whereas before we really didn't...We didn't

have access, we didn't have Google...email was really small and tight knit and if you didn't have access to literature, you didn't learn. I think that now that we're starting to prioritize multicultural issues, we're going to start seeing some changes hopefully.

Toni, Roxane, Curtis

Curtis is an 8 year old second grade boy, who is the oldest child of Toni and her husband, Jerrod. Toni describes her son as *very outgoing* and *charismatic*. He is *super friendly*, *and is a good big brother* who offers to help his siblings and takes on responsibilities for their new puppies. He's a wrestler. He likes to be *large and in charge and likes things done in a certain way*. Toni hopes Curtis will be *confident in what he does...if he falls, I want him to know to get back up...he said he wanted to be a pastor. I mean if that's what he decided he wanted to do.*

Toni said she *has a White side and a Black side*, and grew up in a *diverse neighborhood*, yet she sees that her husband looks at the world differently. Toni expects schools to serve all kids: *I'm not singling him out. Everybody just deserves the education, not just him*. As a parent, Toni has taken risks with school in spite of feeling frustrated and overwhelmed in the process. *I feel like we were doing such a good part on our end...I want to fight for my son's education...I'm always here, I'm always at the school*. Looking forward, she considers her younger children as well as Curtis, *I like the school. I'm glad that is where they go, but I feel like we fought so much that I'm not going to waste all the fighting that we did to change them because I fought to make it.*

Toni also appreciates the support of Curtis' aunt, Roxane: *She was such a hard advocate... honestly, I don't know if I didn't have Roxane explaining stuff to me or having her*

with me to help would I have seen I the same that I seen it now...She was really a blessing when it came to that because not only is it her nephew, she wants to do it for everybody. But, I think it was more personal for her fighting this way because they are so close. Roxane is Jerrod's sister. She describes Curtis as all boy, very rough, lots of energy...and a big helper. With Curtis, she cheers his successes and holds firm to her high expectations, so he has a high level of respect for her. She got involved...because I felt [Curtis] was being mistreated per the stories that Toni and Jerrod were sharing with me. As a graduate student who had worked as a special education teacher, she felt more educated and informed on the special education process...and more comfortable, open to [communicating with educators]. Because the way my family understood special education is that once you're in it, you're in it. These ideas complicated the plans for supporting Curtis. She recognized that her brother and my sister-in-law were frustrated with the process...I offer to help Curtis. I know the process...I want him to come out of that sunken place with a new image. [So] In middle school, what happened back then can't be thrown in his face...he can coast academically.

Roxane's role for Curtis has been making school accountable to the plans, to clarify the rights of her brother and sister-in-law for educators, and teach her family their rights in special education. For example, when the principal asked Toni to come sign a document the same day, she checked with Roxane. *And I'd have to say, No, you don't have to sign that right now today...I actually know for sure that if I wasn't in those meetings, my brother and my sister-in-law would not have been able to point out [their rights].* During the extended process of making adjustments for Curtis, Roxane emailed, called, and responded when school staff asked for someone to come get Curtis. She attended meetings and provided ideas for supports. As the

team moves forward, the principal now reaches out to Roxane for ideas on working with Black families and students.

Experiences in School

In kindergarten and first grade, Toni says Curtis didn't have skills to manage his anger, which led to throwing a chair which *broke a window, tearing things up*, and acting *like a Tasmanian Devil* at school...*kindergarten was a disaster. The teacher, they couldn't help him. That's kind of when we didn't have the IEP in kindergarten. It was just kind of all over the place.* Toni and Curtis went to the doctor for evaluation after school suggested getting him on medication; Curtis *was diagnosed with ADHD/ODD. We started getting all these answers. We did the medicine thing.* At that time, Roxane suggested a 504 plan, rather than an IEP. The team wrote that plan together.

Curtis' first and second grade behaviors at school included *doing extra...he knew...it was all about anger, not getting his way or not being the center of attention...like at home kicking and screaming. Which is normal, but he would take it past normal. First grade,[we] went through half of first grade...and that's when Roxane called the school board...but yeah, we even had to bring [district level administrators] in because [school-level administrators] weren't properly giving us the resource we need.* According to Roxane, the school wasn't *effectively implementing interventions* that the team had developed. *And that's where Roxane stepped in.* Roxane says...*We'd have two-hour long meetings. [Toni] would be at meetings crying. I would be crying. We were just there fighting.*

Roxane helped set limits. *We're not just taking him out of gen ed, but we're going to assist him. Why doesn't he have an assistant kind of thing? You want this to be an IEP, then this*

is what we're going to do. Because for them, they're like, "We don't have assistants," or like, "We don't have enough people to offer him a full-time assistant." And that's kind of where it was, and [Roxane] was like, "No. You're getting him an assistant. That's not an option or we're going to sue you. But, you're going to provide him what he needs... We're not doing the pipeline to prison for him. We're just not. He won't be a part of it." At that time, an IEP was developed, with academic and behavioral accommodations and goals. Roxane describes feeling *sad and defeated* in that moment, yet later being *glad that all other options had been tried*. Toni says second grade *started off pretty well. The IEP was in place. And he had a real connection [with the teacher]...she has honestly fought with us...She's in tune with trying to help him succeed*. As a third grader, Curtis is doing online schooling because of COVID-19, and his mother says *things really clicked for him...during self-quarantine, all he wants to do is read. I think it was like, on his own time*.

Initially, Toni did not want special education: her impression was that meant a place for kids with physical disabilities. *I just was like, he can't be in there. I don't know how he'll react. I was crying, making myself sick, depressed...I don't want my son in special education. I just don't...I can't see my son in special education. I can only think of what this is going to do for his future*. A few years later, Toni recognizes her efforts have made a difference for her son. *If I would have known then what I know now, it would've been a lot different...If I wouldn't have fought or had his aunt next to me to fight with them, what would we be doing right now? Now she says...it was definitely worth it to get the IEP. Looking at it now, the IEP was more than worth it...but we haven't stopped fighting*. Her description of the IEP now is, *it's really your*

rules. It's really how you want your child to learn. So if you don't like what they're doing, you can work this out with the IEP...It's a success story.

Overall, Toni and Roxane feel like partnering with school was a *fight*, but a fight worth having. Roxane said: *My family was fighting for not, for him not to be [in special education]. [I] wanted to make sure there's some structure and accountability on the education system and decrease his destructive behaviors.* There were long meetings with crying and confusion because there were gaps in the information that school shared. *We never felt like we had the whole story.* Lots of energy was spent defending Curtis. Toni says her son was being called *bad...you're making my son sound like the biggest monster but he is not alone at all.* And, *they were blowing my phone up. I mean, I was getting calls back to back to back. Then, I would leave and go there, and it was like he was doing what he was supposed to. It wasn't until like...I almost had to be bitchy to them and rude for them to stop...We just had to be really firm with them because they were just not getting it.* Toni feels like their fight was unique *I don't feel like other people have [fought like us] because [the educators and administrators] weren't used to how we were coming at them.*

Harmed By School

Roxane discussed the harm to her family from the school, and wondered *when does the healing happen?* Working with the school for Curtis' benefit took an emotional toll on Toni and Roxane, as well as Curtis' dad and the educators. Toni felt the IEP was being *pushed on* her. Roxane said the whole thing was very emotional. *When they would come back with that large running log of all this negative behavior, it would be overwhelming. My sister-in-law would cry. We were frustrated and sad because...sad because he was so young and there was this*

education system that was suspending him for like three days. So, it was sad for me to know...because I know what happens when you're removed from the classroom. I know that you then become...you get behind in the learning process. When the IEP was written and they agreed to services. Roxane says, We felt defeated. We felt like the school won and got what they wanted...there could've been preventative measures to put in place before it got as bad as it got.

Vulnerability as a Tool for Relationship Building

One of the things that has made all the difference in Curtis' success is people choosing to be vulnerable, according to Roxane. In one of their many meetings, the principal voiced her recognition of a pattern at her school; they weren't doing what was needed for their Black students. The principal wanted to work on it, and the team had a discussion about *those ways that the education system was contributing to the problem*. Roxane describes that turning point, *after that [the principal] trusted a little more because there was vulnerability...and accountability in [Curtis'] behaviors*. Roxane took risks as well...*I learned to be vulnerable...there's maybe two or three times that I've said, "I don't trust you. My brother does not trust you." This is at the table with everybody. "My sister-in-law, we don't trust you. How can we gain the trust with you again?" I feel like that hit home. She [principal] started tearing up. Because I'm like, "I had to let you know this. I don't trust you to do the right thing." And I don't think that's an easy thing to do because your kid is still in the care of these ...So, I think that trust. Trust is very, very, very, very important. As Toni says, Now he's been doing so good I forget about how it all started. I mean, not that I forget about it, but it's kind of just like, 'I can't believe I was going through that to get to where I am now.'*

Reflexivity Throughout the Inquiry Process

As a critical scholar, I intentionally designed procedures for the inquiry that encouraged collaboration and partnership. During screening, consent and when introducing the interview protocol, I shared my background in working with families of color, revealed personal and professional connections I had within the Black community, and stated my goals for the study. Prior to each interview, parents were given copies of the questions and I described the process as conversational. Parents had choices for the time of the interview, and which videoconferencing site that would be used. I intentionally chose interview questions that would give parents the opportunity to talk about their strengths, funds of knowledge, cultural wealth, and positive experiences (Montoya-Ávila et al., 2018), so their counterstories would reveal resistance to injustices and the beauty of their culture (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). I debriefed with a Black special education colleague regarding my interview protocol and revised several questions because we determined they were deficit based. I designed recruiting methods that intentionally accessed familial and social capital within the Black community.

Following each interview and during the review of the transcripts, I did structured reflections of cultural norms and power, see Appendix D. *Reflexivity Guiding Questions*. I noted my behaviors of over-talking, needing to affirm their parenting decisions, and teaching them about special education law. In the moment, I rationalized this by saying I was being conversational, showing active listening and trying to build trust, but intentions do not always match impact. These behaviors had the potential to elevate my positions of power as more knowledgeable or as a *White savior* (Aronson, 2017). While interviewing them, I reworded their statements as I checked for understanding; I realize now I was trying to ‘fit’ their language into

White normative culture. This also positioned me as the expert, with more power in the relationship. While the parents most often validated my reframing of their ideas, using words like *exactly*, or *absolutely*, or nodding and extending ideas, I cannot know how my behaviors altered what parents shared and I did not design the study for follow up questions.

The parents chose the place they would videoconference from, which may have supported their comfort and power during the interview: four were at home, and two were in their offices. Considering reciprocity within the process, I incorporated counterstory theory, which says that telling the story itself is an act of resistance and power; I made statements such as “you’re really teaching school” or “wow, your story is so much like the other families I’ve talked to.” Several parents voiced their appreciation of the process “we never get to talk about this,” or “I’m glad I did this.” Others nodded, talked about the value of the study, or connected our conversation back to their goals for their child or schools. When parents reviewed the transcripts, they did not ask for major revisions or changes to their statements. Two parents clarified the sequence of events or specific anecdotes.

I constructed the portraits to represent deep descriptions of each Black family, rather than a composite profile; this disrupts ideas that all Black families’ experiences are the same. In order to disrupt the individualistic nature of White cultural norms (Katz, 2003), I chose to develop the portraits as families, rather than individuals. Because I had noticed my attempts to control the language during interviews, I intentionally designed the portraits using their words mostly, and my words to connect and organize their ideas for the reader. I made few evaluative statements and as little rephrasing as possible, so their meaning would be represented. Still, my interpretations are present in these profiles, because of what I chose to include and leave out.

The six Black women in this study were open and shared personal, difficult stories about their experiences with schools and their parenting, as well as their hopes and dreams for their child. I believe their trust in me was because they trusted the community member who had shared the information about the study. Their stories did not surprise me; yet the similarities across the counterstories were striking. I was also able to identify school structures and parent advocacy practices that could be disrupted, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Because I had often been on the school side of similar experiences, my reactions were more often regret, or wishing I knew then what I am learning now. My hope is that the portraits reveal the power of each of the Black women and my respect for them.

Black Family and Community Cultural Wealth

Below, I answer RQ 2: What forms of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) are present when Black families participate in the BI-SPED IDP processes? Each transcript was coded to identify the presence of the different CCW capitals in the counterstories of Black families' experiences within the BI-SPED IDP: aspirational, navigational, resistance, linguistic, social, and familial.

Aspirational Capital

When facing barriers, erasure, and discrimination, each of the Black families maintain hope; this is a form of aspirational capital; they shared long-term hopes for their son or nephew that involved success in school, in their job, and in relationships. Kimberle wants her son Antwann to be *“prepared for the real world...be ok with his differences...know that its ok to make mistakes.”* Bettina said her son should do *“whatever his heart desires.”* Toni wants Curtis to *“know how to get back up when he falls, know his limits”* and be what he wants to be. Fannie

also recognizes that Kenneth will have tough times, but she wants Kenneth to be “*comfortable with himself*” and choose “*whatever he wants*” for a job.

Aspirational capital was also noted when Black parents expressed their hopes for themselves and their role as advocate for their child. Kimberle dreams of being a parent advocate, and incorporates caring into her work in schools. Fannie is pursuing her degree so she can help families who have experienced domestic abuse, and seeks out information from people with Autism to find role models of success. Toni sees her role as parent as important to the school community as well as her son, she wants to *keep doing our part*; Roxane is working with teacher and parents to improve the relationship between home and school, and centers that in her own studies. Marion continues her work as a school social worker and Bettina recognizes that she has become more of an advocate for her son; she wants to keep setting limits with him and at school.

Each of the counterstories includes families’ aspirations for schools as well. Examples of these hopes include “*bringing everyone to the table*,” “*giving kids a clean slate*,” maintaining the supports so their child is successful, “*see(ing) their part of the problem be(ing) accountable for our kids success*,” sharing options with families, and challenging their child...“*believe he is capable...not broken*.” Fannie describes the barrier that she wishes would be torn down: “*Oh, just honestly the systemic racism one. If I didn't have to spend so much time, for lack of better terminology, coddling Whiteness, I think we'd get help a lot sooner, a lot more efficient.*”

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic Capital is the language, intellectual and social skills of the Black culture; it also has connections to funds of knowledge. Kimberle’s linguistic capital involves integrating her

faith with her parenting and work in schools. Bettina's "thinking aloud" which involves asking herself reflective questions when making decisions about her son's schooling is a form of linguistic capital as well. Fannie uses metaphors and sensory-based language to describe her experiences and Roxane frames her story using language of emotions. Double consciousness is a skillset, described by Du Bois, that supports survival in systems that construct deficit identities and erase the ways of knowing for Black families; marginalized people are conscious of mastering two different worlds (Banks & Hughes, 2013)

Double Consciousness and Codeswitching as Linguistic Capital

Within CCW is *double consciousness*, from Du Bois (Banks & Hughes, 2013), wherein oppressed people navigate identity conflicts between majoritarian narratives and institutions where they are devalued in order to honor their racial-ethnic-cultural identity; in situations, such as schools, where the dominant language and cultural norms overpower other ways of being and pathologize People of Color, a unique *double consciousness* supports survival. Additionally, navigational capital involves codeswitching, a boundary-levelling, or boundary-maintaining strategy that helps determine roles and relationships within processes, honoring the multiple relationships that people hold as they negotiate and manage the social boundaries (Heller, 2010). People adept at codeswitching are aware of the social and communication conventions in more than one culture, and are able to navigate between them successfully. Experiences of double consciousness or codeswitching were described in each of the Black family portraits.

Navigational and Resistant Capitals

Navigational capital of people with marginalized identities is defined as the skills of maneuvering through White spaces and institutions (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016). In schools, this may be similar to codeswitching, which was originally conceived as using more than one language within a single interchange of ideas; it has been expanded to include verbal and behavioral actions used in settings where multiple races or cultures are present (Heller, 2010). For example, Fannie says,

I also am very mindful of how I speak...I taper my voice so that I don't sound like I'm as pressy. I kind of turn into a little bit of a counselor for a little bit like really watching my words... like, "Oh, this is a really nice woman that wants to advocate for her son." I have to try to think like them so that they see me as an advocate for my son instead of, "Oh, this is going to be a bossy, abrasive mother. Each of the four families used navigational capital during the initial stages of interaction with the BI-SPED IDP system, and throughout ongoing partnerships with educators around their child's school success. They recommended strategies for other Black families navigating the system: "get the knowledge you need," "ask questions," bring your support system, and tell the educators what you expect for your child.

In the counterstories included here, *navigational capital* overlapped with *resistance capital*, which includes knowledge and skills of challenging inequities. *Resistance capital* has similarities with the advocacy that Hess et al. (2006) and Trainor (2010) describe, which requires overcoming the sense of "othering" that occurs within the BI-SPED IDP and having access to knowledge in order to assert one's values and secure rights. Black womanist resistance includes uplifting the group, care, and active resistance to historic and present-day

inequities (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002); these qualities were evident across these Black families. Roxane showed a critical consciousness of social structures and *resilient resistance*, wherein marginalized people use strategies to protect themselves from oppression, rather than working to change it (Yosso, 2000). She used her knowledge of special education to be explicit about the family's expectations for her nephew, call out practices that were counter to IDEA, create systems of ongoing communication, and make the school accountable to the plans that were developed together. Additionally, her navigational capital involved vulnerability which has led to a reciprocal relationship with the principal that benefits Black children beyond her family.

Familial and Social Capital

Familial capital is the historical/cultural knowledges and Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) that are developed within a student's home culture, in this case that involves Black homes and the Black community. Social networks that build personal relationship and support common goals are forms of social capital. Here is where the overlap between family and community is evident. Knowledge of Black culture, history, and structures of power is passed on through individuals within the family and across the Black community. Bettina received information about how each school operated from within her family who was connected to schools. Toni and Fannie noted that friends within the Black community pushed them to have their child in special education, even with the potential problems, because their child deserved help.

Funds of Knowledge as Familial Capital

Yosso (2005) connects Cultural Wealth and Funds of Knowledge (FOK) in education. From a FOK perspective, "every household is an educational environment, and its members

gain knowledge that helps them navigate their life-learning using social and historical wisdom, stories, and teaching as a road map” (Giraldo et al., 2017, p.50). FOK include skills or understandings based in religion, household management, jobs, inquiry and problem-solving, and the economy (Moll et al., 1992) that can be accessed by educators when building relationships or planning activities. Each of the four parents had developed knowledge of their child’s medical diagnosis, treatment, and any medications. They described detailed strategies for managing behaviors at home and celebrating successes with their child. They had found therapists, doctors, and evaluators through social contacts to help their child be successful. Additionally, multiple parents made connections between their child’s experiences and the socio-cultural conditions of Black people in the US, including forms of discrimination. Marion shared family history to help explain connections, values, and goals for Bettina and AJ.

Social capital is evidenced within the portraits of Marion and Bettina, who partner with Bettina’s mother Angela for AJ’s school success. Marion and Bettina describe Angela’s role on the board of the organization that leads AJ’s reading program. They also note relationships with family and teachers as resources when they wanted to find a new school for AJ. Bettina describe a positive rapport with AJ’s current teacher, which is making a difference in his engagement in school activities. Also, Toni and her sister-in-law Roxane collaborate for Curtis’ benefit. And Roxane discusses contacting a member of the Black community who is on the school board to discuss the actions of educators at Curtis’ school. Toni, too, describes building relationships with teachers that are helping Curtis. Kimberle describes a personal relationship with a board member of the private school that Antwann attends.

An asset-based example of social capital within the Black community is the network that enabled this study, without which I would not have access to a sample population of Black families. Furthermore, potential participants would not have had an introduction of me and my work, which I believe would have made building a trusting rapport for the interviews more challenging. In three of the four families, multiple caring adults attended school meetings; Fannie described her best friend as someone who *always comes through*, who sometimes watches her son Kenneth so she could attend meetings. Fannie and Toni describe community built on Facebook as well, that helps them navigate school and their sons' behaviors. As Fannie says, *It's been really super helpful. I've asked questions about so many things related to what is reasonable to expect from teachers...I also don't want to be unreasonable.*

Discussion

Currently assessment and BI-SPED IDP practices fail to include funds of knowledge or cultural wealth when determining if behaviors are deficient, and racializing disability. Black families' forms of resistance are constructed by schools as difficult (Fine, 1993); their resistance may include a denial of labels and services or advocacy for less restrictive services. When Black parents take on identities including advocate, victim, broker/negotiator, educator, surrenderer, and preserver (Miller et al., 2019) within special education processes, they are often pathologized by schools as intimidating, aggressive, and deficient (Allen & White-Smith, 2018) rather than honored as bearers of unique knowledge. However, Black family knowledge and cultural capital have been highlighted in several studies (Bray & Russell, 2016; Fennimore, 2017; Stanley, 2015). This study expands on that work. First, I discuss experiences of the four families in the study. Then, I discuss the value of this critical narrative work to special education

scholarship. Finally, I make connections between CCW, Black families, and the BI-SPED IDP for practitioners to consider as they interact with families.

Black Parents' Experiences: BI-SPED IDP Pressure and Parent Advocacy

In order to expand notions of “good” parental advocacy and engagement in shared decision-making, Yosso’s Cultural Wealth model affords recognition of Black family assets. I present four Black family portraits of their experiences advocating for their children within the BI- SPED IDP; the portraits provide insights into how Black families navigate the asymmetrical power relationships and structures that assume shared decision making (Connelly, 2021, in press). The legacy of structural racism and Normalcy was evident in each family’s counterstory. Each parent described negative perceptions of special education as the process began; the Black community, as they describe it, has little trust of the BI-SPED IDP process and they are aware of the socio-cultural impact of labeling Black children as disabled.

These counterstories challenge the construction of Black families as difficult, intimidating, aggressive, and deficient (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Fine, 1993), by discussing resistance as a form of Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). The stories reveal Black families as bearers of unique knowledge that, if accessed within special education processes, would support free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for their child. The four families in this study describe problematic structures and educator practices that limit their understanding of the process and their participation in decision making; this is similar to Akinola (2015) who reviewed literature centering Black parents’

experiences and found that Black parents were not given opportunities to fully participate, nor were they provided in-depth understanding of special education's legal categories or technicalities.

Black families' stories of their experiences with the BI-SPED IDP had similarities, yet the outcomes for each family were different. Fannie agreed to special education services with the label Autism and continues to monitor Kenneth's supports; Bettina advocated for and continues to navigate the 504 process for AJ. After two years of refusing special education, then agreeing to an IEP, Toni says, *It's a success story. I do wish people knew about it. I mean, I talk about it on Facebook. I'm just like, "If I wouldn't have fought or had his aunt next to me to fight with him, what would we be doing right now?" Because they do push IEPs on people, but it's not ... What they don't explain to you is that the IEP really is how you make it.* Kimberle moved Antwann out of the public school to a Christian school; she describes the support at that school as welcoming, and a partnership that is child focused: *Like I said, don't get me wrong, he had behavior issues there too, but they called right away...They cared about him so well...and so, immediate action, being proactive and not reactive, and so that's what I enjoyed about them.*

Black Families and Community Cultural Wealth

Black families in this study exhibited the six forms of cultural capital forming CCW: aspirational, navigational, resistant, linguistic, familial, and social. Their navigational capital supported their child's access to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) that provides meaningful benefit in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). They used their navigational capital in ways similar to families discussed in Tucker and Schwartz (2013), who listed the most effective resolution practices for Black families with schools as face-to-face dialogue. Resistant

capital examples were shared by Roxane, who discussed accessing a school board member's support, repeating expectations, enforcing the implementation of plans agreed upon by the school, and expressing the personal-emotional impact of the BI-SPED IDP on her and her family.

Yosso (2005) includes FOK, which are unique to each marginalized person's household and community; examples of home and community-based knowledge that can be accessed by educators when building relationships or planning activities encompass many areas: religion, household management, workforce and scientific, and economic (Moll et al., 1992). The Black family portraits provide educators and scholars entry points for sharing power, receiving knowledge from Black families in reciprocal relationships, and forming common goals, all of which are elements of effective collaboration (Cook & Friend, 2010).

Social capital, similar to Louque and Latunde (2014) also showed that Black families, counter to the prevailing stereotypes, invested in their child's success by providing learning opportunities outside school; this is a form of social capital, which is the connection to community networks of people and resources. Each of the Black families exhibited social capital from within the Black community as well as the broader community; they accessed community resources such as reading programs, the public library, and recreation centers. Three families considered an educator in their child's school as a connection that supported both them and their child. Three of the four families described their church community as a social support, and several families were connected to community organizations. An example of social capital is from Kimberle, who brought her pastor to the BI-SPED IDP meetings. A common aspiration of the Black parents is the desire to help children beyond their own; they talk about care for all

children, which involves naming injustices and using knowledge they have gained to work with schools for the benefit of Black children.

Black Families and Special Education Scholarship

Currently, the voices of Black parents raising a child with behavioral differences are nearly invisible in research; there is more research about them than from them. The conspicuous absence in literature of Black parent perspectives about their children who are showing behaviors identified as problematic aligns with the lack of shared power in the BI-SPED IDP (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020), which this study critiques. This critical narrative study uses the analytic tools of Critical Race Theory counterstories (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) and Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) to conceptualize Black family knowledge. Per Delgado (1989), counterstories (a) build community among those at the margins (b) challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center, (c) provide context to understand and transform established belief systems, (d) provide windows for powerholders to see the realities of marginalized people's lives and possibilities for change, and (e) teach others by combining elements from story and reality, which is richer knowledge than when either of these two things is presented separately. I made intentional decisions in my research design to incorporate these inquiry methods to influence discourse, promote action for social justice (Bell, 2018) and respond to Artiles' (2019) call for an expansion of theoretical frameworks and methods.

The connection between CCW and Black families' participation in the BI-SPED IDP or their parent advocacy strengths had not been made, prior to this study. My use of critical narrative research methods disrupt deficit notions of Black families and illuminate structural

problems within the BI-SPED IDP. Additionally, my intentional research design elevates disqualified knowledges that are typically silenced (Harwood, 2001) to contribute to special education scholarship. Each of the Black families' six forms of capital, comprising CCW, are described with elements of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture personally and powerfully challenges the masks hiding injustice and counter schools' racialized policies of reductionism and essentialism (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003); furthermore, portraits focus on the humanity of the storyteller, which removes the option of readers' silent complicity that occurs when data is presented as an abstraction.

Furthermore, this study recognizes that special education has avoided the "institutionalized marginalization" inherent in its system of identification (Kozleski, 2015, p. 102) and the field's technical solutions discourse and positivist methods have marginalized qualitative methods and critical inquiry in the field (Connor et al., 2019). This narrative study is a form of resistance to that historical and current socio-cultural context; I use my unearned power to interrupt the BI-SPED IDP structures of privilege and oppression that are taken for granted, or *common sense* (Leonardo, 2002). I leverage the power and privilege afforded me because of my identities to construct knowledge that disrupts the systemic racism and ableism within special education. This study expands understanding of CCW, to interrupt the majoritarian narratives that construct Black people as deficient, Black students as aggressive, and the Black families as poor advocates for their children.

Special Educators: Integrating Black Family CCW

"Ideally, changes in thought and research support a shift in practice that interrogates power inequities by promoting relationship-building...particularly for special education

professionals (Miller, 2019, p. 12). This study conceptualizes strengths and assets of Black Families, as Community Cultural Wealth. Overall, reframing Black family advocacy from a strengths-based perspective provides specific reflection points and action for practitioners. This work connects DisCrit (Connor et al, 2016) scholarship to practice; deficit framings of Black families and their advocacy are disrupted. This study expands an understanding of CCW with Black families; each form of capital is a potential entry point for building trust and reciprocity as practitioners implement the BI-SPED IDP. Individual educators who are ethically responsible for being culturally sensitive as they communicate and interact with students and families (NASDTEC, 2015), are encouraged to develop deep understanding of CCW and Black family advocacy. Within their local context, BI-SPED IDP teams could construct critical questions or explicit procedures to incorporate the six forms of capital into intervention planning and behavioral assessment procedures.

These portraits construct Black families as having power; they do not need to be empowered by people who are constructed as better than (Ellsworth, 1989). The BI-SPED IDP structures that construct barriers to their participation and shared decision-making are implicated. Four Black families told stories exemplifying their power to name and resist inequities and harm to their children within systems of Whiteness (Leonardo, 2002). Whiteness in schools involves the denial of legacies of race and structural racism, and the practice of special education policy as common sense, or natural (Leonardo, 2002). Marcucci (2020) discussed how Black parent advocacy, because it is outside the White cultural norms, may actually increase educator bias. Though the structures form barriers, Black families navigate the system using their CCW to ensure that their children have the opportunities they deserve. The

portraits validate that Black families' experiences are not the same as White families' experiences; given the racialized socio-cultural context and historical structures of the BI-SPED IDP, the process needs reform. Additionally, the Black family counterstories justify a more collectivist approach to partnering with Black families when developing and implementing the BI-SPED IDP process; behavioral interventions for the child impact the whole Black community.

Therefore, educators need to do more than empower (Ellsworth, 1989) Black families, because they already have power. They have CCW, including aspirational, linguistic, navigational, resistance, social and familial capital that should be acknowledged and incorporated into the BI-SPED IDP. Applying a CCW lens has the potential to reframe educators' understanding of Black family acts of resistance to oppressive systems; educators then can move towards more balanced partnership with families and disruption of barriers as allies. A necessary step in the development of critically conscious, socially just practice is recognizing the privileges that hierarchical identities and educational structures construct for educators with dominant culture identities. Practitioners who have means for reflecting on culture and power within educational structures, similar to Appendix D. Reflexivity Guiding Questions are better positioned to transform their practice. Intervention planning may then acknowledge socio-cultural and historical structures within schools to develop more holistic, culturally responsive plans, per Artiles' (2019) recommendation.

Each of the portraits include instances of structural barriers and individual aggressions that limit Black family advocacy for their child whose behaviors have been constructed as problems. However, three of the four portraits also identify individual educators as caring supports (Cooper, 2009); this highlights the power of practitioners to innovate within the

parameters of their practice. This study encourages practitioners' understanding of structural barriers (Leonardo, 2002), as well as ethics of care that are found in Black Womanism (Cooper, 2009). Practitioners with knowledge of CCW of Black families are more prepared to recognize hidden expectations for parent advocacy based in Whiteness, as discussed by Harry and Ocasio-Stoutenberg (2020). CCW provides points of disruption for the White normative rules and implicit codes of appropriate parent advocacy that construct Black families as less than, and perpetuate barriers to shared power.

Final Reflexivity Points

As I share this study, I need to continue to be explicit about my responsibility as a White scholar to disrupt Whitepower-Normalcy that is taken for granted as the *common sense* way of organizing and socializing people in schools. This study informs special educators about our discriminatory processes and proclivities, as much as it tells us about Black families. My reflections and discussions with my special education colleague on power within the research process continued up to the point of finalizing the manuscript. I identified cautions for myself, as a White special education scholar, in disseminating and presenting these portraits in the academy. I need to continuously name the Black parents as the authors of their story, I am a witness. Moreover, I need to honor the relationships with Black women that made this study possible and facilitated my understanding so my representations are authentic. I share the Black parents' struggles within the BI-SPED IDP not to imply they are powerless in the face of discrimination, but to provide specificity of the local context; CCW of Black families is present within educational structures of harm and individual microaggressions.

Conclusion

Current institutional structures privilege practitioners and their knowledge (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020) within the BI-SPED IDP; this study encourages the development of more balanced relationships between Black families and educators. Furthermore, the connection between CCW and Black families contributes to scholarship and provides practitioners opportunities to interrupt deficit narratives of Black families. Four counterstories from Black families evidence aspirational, linguistic, resistance, navigational, social, and familial capital, as the families face structural barriers inherent within schools. The examples of CCW further scholars' and educators' understanding of Black family acts of resistance as assets, and encourages explicit addition of Black family CCW into the BI-SPED IDP.

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Appendix A. Parent Interview: Cultural Wealth

Jeanne Connelly, ISU PHD Student

My study is about the experiences African-American, or Black families have with schools, when their child's behaviors are called out.

I want to understand why and how more Black students get called special education than White students. I'll use this information to help teachers see the strengths and assets of Black families. This is part of my dissertation, so I'll share this information in articles and at conferences.

I worked as a special educator in city schools for decades, so I was on the school side of this and worked with lots of families of color. This is more like a conversation than a formal interview...I'll be making connections from my experiences as we talk.

Thank you so much for sharing your story. I won't use this in exact order, or say them word for word, but these are the general ideas of what we'll talk about. You'll be able to add in anything you think wasn't covered with these.

1. Which child are we talking about? Describe her/him/they and your relationship with them.
 - a. What are your hopes and dreams for your child?
 - b. Outside of school what types of community activities and supports do you access?
2. How do you describe this child's strengths?
3. Tell me about yourself. What made you want to do this interview?
 - a. How do you like to support this child's education? Who/what helps you do that?

Going back to when you started hearing from school about behavioral problems

4. How old was the child? What types of behaviors? Match home or different from home?
5. What type of school did they attend? How did that school handle discipline in general?
6. Tell me about some of your experiences working with school about behavior.
7. What kinds of things did school try, to improve behavior?
 - a. What ideas for improving behavior were you able to share?
 - b. How was success recognized?
 - c. How was race included in the process?
8. When it came to formal meetings...how did those go?
 - a. Who, what, where, when?
 - b. How were you Invited, prepared?
 - c. What did your participation look like/sound like?
 - d. When did it feel comfortable? When did it feel uncomfortable?
9. What was the communication between home and school like, during this time?
 - a. What types of information was shared with you? What types of information was asked of you?
 - b. JC check for details...Who what where when?
 - c. What made two way communication easy? What were the barriers?

10. (If this child was assessed for SPED?)

- a. How did the team decide to test? How was special education decided?
 - b. How was that for you? Goals on first IEP?
11. Overall, how would you describe the system of getting help for your child?
12. Can you describe a time where you navigated the system and you feel like your input made a difference in what happened next?
13. Since you've been through this, you understand how the process goes. What suggestions do you have for other Black families that go through this?
14. Are there other things you feel are important to share, so we get a full picture of your child and your experiences working with school to support behavior?

Appendix B. Research Rules

Researcher: Jeanne Connelly. Special Education PHD student. I have to review this information before you officially agree to be in the study.

Purpose of Study:

- Because Black youth are called disabled inappropriately, we want to understand how the meetings with families go. Starting with behavior programs through the special education evaluation process, we want to hear about what type of input from families is received, and what type is blocked by schools.
- We base our questions on the belief that Black families and communities have knowledge and assets that the system does not include.
- This study will be published as a dissertation, and the stories collected will be used for articles and presentations by Jeanne Connelly within schools and conferences.

To participate, People in the study must be:

- Parent/Caretakers of children enrolled in K-12 public schools (currently or within the last 3 years)- their children must have been identified within the school as exhibiting challenging behaviors. Children are not participants.
- Parent/Caretakers of children who have exhibited challenging behaviors. Their child has had classroom behavior programs to improve behavior, or they have been given tests to learn about their challenging behaviors.
- Parent/Caretakers have attended school meetings where they have discussed their child's behavior with educators.
- Parent/Caretakers must be adults: 18 years old, at the time of the study.

Participants will be asked to

1. Share email and contact information for communicating , and compensation.
2. Do a 1 hour video interview. This will be audiotaped. If a second interview is needed, that will be scheduled at a different time.
3. At any point after you have agreed to the study, you may decide to quit, that's ok.
4. Review a transcript of the interview with the researcher for follow up. You'll be able to clarify or correct anything you'd like.

5. Let the researcher know if you'd like to receive a final write-up of the study, or a discussion of the outcome.
6. Share information for compensation: \$20 transferred to an online Venmo, CashApp (etc.) account that you have set up prior to the study or cash/check mailed to you.

As the Researcher, I commit to:

Respect confidentiality, not coerce participants, and be ethical when publishing the words and ideas of participants. Make my biases transparent in the process. Compensation must be distributed according to the research plan. I will respond to questions and respect unique situations/conditions of the participants. Provide you a chance to correct any miscommunication you see in the interview transcript. Provide you a copy of the study, if requested.

Appendix C. Cultural Wealth Construct Codes

Table 5.1 CCW Starting Constructs

		Descriptors
	Aspirational Capital	Hope for self, hope for child in the face of barriers
	Navigational Capital	Skills in maneuvering through White spaces and institutions
	Resistant Capital	Knowledge and skills in challenging inequities
	Social Capital	Networks of people, community resources
	Familial Capital	historical and cultural knowledge, funds of knowledge,
	Linguistic Capital	language, intellectual and social skills, communication through art

Adapted from Yosso (2005), Yosso & Burciaga (2016)

Table 5.2 Black Family CCW Codes

		Descriptors
	Aspirational Capital	Hope for self, hope for child in the face of barriers Hope for community, Hope for schools, Hope for other Black families and students.
	Navigational Capital	Skills in maneuvering through White spaces and institutions. Double consciousness, Codeswitching, Relationship building, Vulnerability
	Resistant Capital	Knowledge and skills in challenging inequities Understanding of Structures of Power, organizational structures, legal mandates. Clarity of self, Clarity of Political Purpose,
	Social Capital	Networks of people, community resources Present within the Black community, and within Educational System.
	Familial Capital	Historical and cultural knowledge, funds of knowledge, Sources are within Black community
	Linguistic Capital	language, intellectual and social skills, communication through art. Expression of emotions, Connections to lived experiences and metaphors/analogies

Appendix D. Reflexivity Guiding Questions

1. How were Cultural norms present, and were there related tensions? Adapted from Connelly (2019).

Table 5.3 Cultural Continuums

Category	Cultural Continuums
<i>Communication</i>	Pacing ----- Pausing ----- Overlapping
<i>Communication</i>	Restrained ----- Expressive
<i>Time</i>	Clock Time ----- Cyclical Time
<i>Orientation</i>	Individualistic ----- Collectivist
<i>Information</i>	Logic-Rational ----- Emotional
<i>Information</i>	Segmented-Fragmented ----- Holistic

2. Reflections on Power hoarding, Power sharing:

- As a researcher:
- As a special education teacher:
- As a middle-class White woman:
- As a PHD student:

3. What would I do differently?

4. Surprises?

Appendix E. IRB Letter

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
 Office for Responsible Research
 Vice President for Research
 2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202
 Ames, Iowa 50014
 515 294-4566

Date: 05/05/2020

To: Jeanne Connelly

Anne Foegen

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Parent Perceptions of the Special Education Identification Process

IRB ID: 20-185

Submission Type: Initial Submission

Exemption Date: 05/05/2020

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from most requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.104 or 21 CFR 56.104 because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

2018 - 2 (iii): Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) when the information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a LIMITED IRB REVIEW to [determine there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain confidentiality of the data].

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for continuing review. Instead, you will receive a request for a brief status update every three years. The status update is intended to verify that the study is still ongoing.**
- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any *modifications to the research procedures* (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, nature or duration of behavioral interventions, use of deception, etc.), any change in *privacy or confidentiality protections*, modifications that result in the *inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations*, removing plans for informing participants about the study, any *change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants*, and/or any change such that the revised procedures do not fall into one or more of the [regulatory exemption categories](#). The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.
- All *changes to key personnel* must receive prior approval.
- **Promptly inform the IRB of any addition of or change in federal funding for this study.** Approval of the protocol referenced above applies only to funding sources that are specifically

identified in the corresponding IRB application.

Detailed information about requirements for submitting modifications for exempt research can be found on our [website](#). For modifications that require prior approval, an amendment to the most recent IRB application must be submitted in [IRBManager](#). A determination of exemption or approval from the IRB must be granted before implementing the proposed changes.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

Additionally:

- All research involving human participants must be submitted for IRB review. **Only the IRB or its designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.
- Please inform the IRB if the Principal Investigator and/or Supervising Investigator end their role or involvement with the project with sufficient time to allow an alternate PI/Supervising Investigator to assume oversight responsibility. Projects must have an [eligible PI](#) to remain open.
- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected [adverse experiences](#) involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other [unanticipated problems](#) involving risks to subjects or others.
- **Approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**
- Your research study may be subject to [post-approval monitoring](#) by Iowa State University's Office for Responsible Research. In some cases, it may also be subject to formal audit or inspection by federal agencies and study sponsors.
- Upon completion of the project, transfer of IRB oversight to another IRB, or departure of the PI and/or Supervising Investigator, please initiate a Project Closure in [IRBManager](#) to officially close the project. For information on instances when a study may be closed, please refer to the [IRB Study Closure Policy](#).

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

CHAPTER 6. ETHICS REVIEW FOR CRITICAL SPECIAL EDUCATION RESEARCH: DISQUALIFIED OR OFFICIAL KNOWLEDGE

Jeanne Connelly, Iowa State University

This manuscript will be submitted to *Qualitative Inquiry*.

Abstract

As Artiles (2019) states, special educators need open discussion, theoretical background knowledge, and support from scholarship as they reflect on the ideological roots of educational institutions in producing inequities for BIPOC student (Artiles, 019). This article, entitled *Ethics Review for Critical Special Education Research: Disqualified or Official Knowledge*, centers the structures and process of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB codes and procedures do not separate social inquiry from medicalized or biological studies; this article discusses my submission of a critical qualitative inquiry related to Black family parent advocacy for approval. The (IRB) is responsible for ensuring human participants in research studies are not harmed, and has ultimate authority to approve or deny approval for studies to take place (Hottenstein, 018) This article connects IRB to the sorting of knowledge into categories of official (Apple, 014) and disqualified knowledge (Foucault, 010). I connect my experiences as a graduate student scholar to critical theory (McLaren, 017) , and the politics of knowledge (Said, 1999). I argue that the failure to accept disqualified knowledges from BIPOC families as official knowledge creates limitations for special educators rather than opening doors to critical reflection.

Introduction

Several years ago, the *Qualitative Inquiry* journal dedicated a special issue to critical scholarship and Disability Studies (Lester & Nusbaum, 2018), reminding scholars that we are part of a critical discourse and we construct the world through our research. Leading scholars within special education have also encouraged inquiry, policy and practices that include the sociocultural context as inequities are studied (Artiles, 2019; Bal, 2016; Gregory et al., 2010). There is an urgency for critical research, given special education's racialization of disability and diminished outcomes for students who are raced and disabled by the system (Artiles et al., 2013). Additional critical work within special education that decenters Whiteness and disrupts the structures of power has been recommended (Connor et al, 2019). Within special education in the last decade, theoretical framings such as Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) (Annamma et al., 2016) are pushing into the mainstream discourse.

As a doctoral candidate, my intention is to follow the lead from these scholars. However, I was unprepared for unforeseen challenges to my research. Like the field of special education, the structure of IRB has positivist conceptions of research (Dantley, 2002; Jacobson, 2007) which serves a neoliberal agenda and diminishes critical qualitative work (Tilley, 2019) and constructs difference as deficiency (Dantley, 2002). This paper discusses the complexities of navigating the research review process that privileges scientific methods and constructs barriers to critical research. Below, I describe my experiences of submitting a critical qualitative study research proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), that monitors ethical inquiry with people. My interest was making a contribution to special education scholarship. The study I proposed was designed to provide special teacher educators and practitioners a deeper

understanding of Black family strengths and practices of resistance. My proposed qualitative-narrative research design considered two questions related to (a) Black families' descriptions of their experiences of the special education identification process, and (b) Black families' assets and acts of resistance within school meetings.

Purpose of This Study

To support critical scholars who expand knowledge and help educators move toward socially just policy and practice, this article interrogates IRB's "tacit intentionality" in maintaining boundaries between official knowledge and subjugated knowledges, thus silencing knowledge that challenges the status quo. Tacit intentionality, as it relates to racial inequalities in educational policy and practice, occurs when "policy makers decide (tacitly, if not explicitly) to place race equity at the margins-thereby retaining race injustice at the centre" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 499); this is a form of Gramsci's *common sense*. Scholars and educators who have a full grasp of institutional structures of power are better positioned to resist unjust policies and make meaningful change; structures constrain or afford individual agency. This paper intends to connect lived experiences to theory, and provide concrete examples of structural limitations to critical scholarship. This analysis supports scholars and graduate students in building awareness of the power-knowledge dynamics that are enacted within the structure of the IRB.

Understanding how the IRB may constrain their practice informs scholars who intend to resist structural limitations on critical inquiry. Thus, scholars are better prepared to design scholarship that centers educational structures as the site for reform and explicitly address barriers constructed by the system. Furthermore, scholars may take steps towards elevating qualitative inquiry that disrupts the deficit narratives of people who are othered by the system.

Approach: Lived Experiences, Critical Theory, Politics of Knowledge

This paper reviews literature describing the purpose, practices, and potential problems of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). The analysis of my IRB experiences is grounded in critical studies, the power-knowledge relationship from Foucault (2010), and the politics of knowledge (Said, 1999). I share my experiences as a doctoral candidate: I submitted a critical qualitative research proposal for IRB review and made multiple rounds of revisions to validate my research design as ethical. Finally, I discuss implications for critical scholars as they navigate the IRB process. I use the term IRB for the general structure of ethics review codified by law, and the term U-IRB, *university IRB*, when I am referencing the specific board where I submitted my study.

Purpose and Practices of the IRB

Research has a specific definition in terms of the IRB: “A systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge” (Code of Federal Regulations, CRF 46.102). Research attempts to make comparisons or draw conclusions based on the data; make predictions applicable to other circumstances, or identify general explanations or themes that a reader can extrapolate. According to the University Office of Research Ethics (UORE, 2020), the purpose of the Humans-IRB is primarily grounded in the requirement that all institutions seeking federal funding have an IRB in place; the university chooses to review all research that involves human participants, “including proposals to gather data from participants for theses, dissertations, and other student projects. The IRB also reviews cases of noncompliance, provides policy input, and promotes ethical research throughout the University community ” (UORE, 2020). The office

goes on to state that the purpose of IRB is ensure that the rights and safety of human participants in research are protected. They advise researchers during the design phase to develop studies that minimize potential harm to participants, review all studies prior to their start to check for protection criteria, and monitor research after they have approved it.

IRB Structures of Practice

The UORE (2020) structures the relationship between the principle investigator, the IRB board, and the federal government; each of these entities are responsible for protecting participants. The principle investigator is described as having the most responsibility for “assuring that the rights and welfare of the individuals involved in research are protected” (UORE). Faculty and advisors also hold a role in protecting human participants. Ethical practices are guided by the Belmont Report, or “other appropriate ethical standards recognized by federal departments and agencies that have adopted the federal policies of human subject protection. All researchers are required to participate in Human Subjects Training, prior to any submission of proposed research.

As a graduate student, I am responsible for naming a faculty member as the supervising investigator, who will supervise the research. That individual reviews the study prior to IRB submission. In my academic department, the Department Chair also pre-screens the study prior to submission. Additionally, my dissertation proposal outlining the Black parent study’s questions and methods had been approved by my committee of five faculty members prior to submission. Professional staff screen the submission, and contact the research team; if any concerns are noted, revisions are requested. In my case, another professional staff reviewed the study prior to forwarding it to the board. Regarding the question: is this exempt? She

requested that, for the time being, I click no, so the U-IRB online form would allow me to enter a formal informed consent form, the protocol for any and all interviews, and a specific description of the procedures for recruitment and sampling. Following those additions, the submission is reviewed by the full IRB, if there is “more than a minimal risk.”

Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests (UORE, 2020).

The IRB has full authority to determine whether the study would be tabled, approved, or whether requirements for modifications would be requested (UORE, 2020). Not all studies are presented to the full board: an *expedited* review is acceptable if no more than a minimal risk is involved (UORE). Expedited reviews involve a professional staff or a U-IRB member studying all materials to make determinations about exempt status and approval of the study. A Limited Review may be requested by the board to gather additional materials for determining exempt status.

The U-IRB is a standing committee of appointees, whose authority is from federal regulations; appointees are named by the Vice President for Research (UORE, 2020). The committee requires at least five members, including at least one in a “scientific area,” one in a nonscientific area, one who is not affiliated or related to an affiliate of the university. The U-IRB has two boards, with 9-10 members each. The U-IRB meets two times per month, with any documentation required at least two weeks prior to the meeting; anyone on the IRB can schedule a meeting. Researchers are invited to respond to questions, and are not present for subsequent IRB deliberations. Submissions for approval are entered on a secure program that allows for note taking and revisions on the document. U-IRB members and researchers’ notes

are identified by date and person. When any revisions are made, the system does not save prior statements; the submission date is finalized after all revisions have been completed.

Theoretical Framework

Critical scholarship connects schools to the socio-cultural context, affords a critique of cultural norms and power, and moves educators and scholars toward individual freedom and social transformation (Giroux, 2001). Being critical involves more than finding faults, it requires understanding of the circumstances and contradictory power relationships constructed within our institutions (Apple, 2014). The practical intent of critical studies is challenging asymmetrical power relationships and transformation structures that produce inequities. Critical theories ask questions about how schools can impact social change (Giroux, 2017) and provide understanding of how social reality works and is maintained (Foucault, 2010). Goodley (2014), a Disability Studies scholar, encourages the use of critical theory to inform emancipatory practice and subvert ideologies of deficit; theory allows a disruption of the “fetishization of facts” (p. 73) and a rescue from technocratic rationality and positivity.

Critical Studies and Knowledge Construction

Critical studies connects knowledge and power; heterogenous ideas from various times, places, and traditions are incorporated into different forms of knowledge (Darder et al., 2017), with differing degrees of power to construct and control societal conditions. All knowledge is created within a historical context, which provides meaning; therefore, educational structures and identities are not separate from historical conditions (Darder et al., 2017). Understanding structures, policies, and practices of knowledge construction, then is informed by attention to the historicity of knowledge, hegemonic processes, and critical praxis within knowledge

construction (Darder et al., 2017). Knowledge, within hegemonic processes, facilitates the concealing of ideologies while they are used to organize society (McLaren, 2017), thus, constructing identities, structures, and policies.

Higher Education and Knowledge Construction

Within university structures, critical knowledge construction is meant to challenge, rather than reify. Gottesman (2016) discussed the value of critical knowledge construction, the role of the researcher, and understandings of truth and knowledge in his text, *A Critical Turn in Education*: critical work affords deeper study of structures of power that perpetuate inequities and the reasons why inequities exist, rather than staying focused on the mechanics of how they are formed. In this way, critical research makes it possible to interrogate the external forces within society that shape schooling and how educational institutions are implicated in constructing inequities within society.

The understanding of knowledge itself is also challenged within critical studies. Philips and Burbules (2000) discuss postpositivist philosophical commitments to knowledge construction: (a) There are no ultimate sources of knowledge. (b) Knowledge is not fixed at truth claims; all knowledge can be reconsidered. (c) Evidence is fallible, yet evidence is necessary; scholarship produces what is probably true, rather than what is certainly true. (d) There are multiple truths, and scholars are expected to determine what is relevant to the issue being studied. (e) Subjectivity is part of all knowledge construction. These authors continue, saying social constructivists recognize knowledge not as rational, but as an exercise of power, politics, and ideology

Discussion of critical scholarship is fortified by explicitly naming forms of knowledge and their different purposes, according to McLaren (2017): (a) *Technical knowledge* is measurable and quantifiable. It is based on natural sciences, uses empirical analytical methods, and is used to sort, regulate, and control. (b) *Practical knowledge* comes from the understanding of social situations within their historical and developmental contexts. Often this is constructed through qualitative studies. (c) *Emancipatory knowledge* “attempts to reconcile and transcend the opposition between technical and practical knowledge,” which helps form understandings of “how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege” (pp. 59-60).

Official Knowledge

Explicitly naming official knowledge and subjugated knowledge facilitates understanding of asymmetrical power relations within the academy. Higher education is one of the sites of official knowledge production and control. Apple (2014) argues against education policies and practices that racialize and control power, such as the construction of *official knowledge*. Official knowledge furthers the agenda of those in power, is used to establish who education is for, and determines which knowledge is legitimate; it has direct implications for policy development and implementation (Apple, 2014). By determining official knowledge, power can be exerted and institutional structures can be regulated to make sure that a certain group’s knowledge is maintained as legitimate (Apple, 2014).

Subjugated Disqualified Knowledge

Therefore, knowledge that does not fit the official knowledge norms is considered disqualified, or not valuable in discourse. Foucault discussed this knowledge as part of the

power/knowledge dialectic: control over the language and information of a society determines who has access and control of the knowledge. Conversely, those who control knowledge determine who has access to the language and information of society (Thomas, 2019). Given those conditions, people with socially privileged positions have the power to define rational argument based on science; knowledge from people who are *othered* by institutional structures is not rational, and therefore devalued (Ellsworth, 1989).

Seeking IRB Approval: Critical Narrative Study

In my doctoral program, I intentionally chose critical work as I completed a Social Justice Certificate and my special education program. My years of study culminated in a research design based in Critical Race Theory, as I interrogated structures of the special education identification process that I saw as related to the overrepresentation of Black students in special education.

Intentional Research Design

Special education regulations mandate the parent signature on legal documents prior to accessing services and being identified as eligible for special education services; however, that signature does not always equate to full membership on the team or equity in the decision-making process (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020; Voulgarides, 2018). Given the narrow construction of parent advocacy as a property held by White middle-class families, Black family advocacy is often treated as problematic (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020). Moreover, there is a dearth of Black parent knowledge, acknowledgement of Black cultural capital (Louque & Latunde, 2014), or recognition of unique forms of parent advocacy within Black families (Miller et al., 2019; Williams, 2007) in scholarship. My study intended to disrupt that narrative, and

theorize the connection between Black parent partnership within the behavior interventions-special education identification process (SPED-IDP), and the continuing misidentification of Black youth as emotionally and behaviorally disordered (EBD) (Carrero et al., 2017).

Furthermore, I intentionally designed my work to be culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012). “Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. In the face of current policies and practices that have the explicit goal of creating a monocultural and monolingual society, research and practice need equally explicit resistances that embrace cultural pluralism and cultural equality” (Paris, 2012, p. 95). School support and advocacy behaviors are unique for Black families (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenberg, 2020), but the current SPED IDP process does not acknowledge the cultural difference. Furthermore, Black parents recognize school personnel’s negative perceptions about their children and their parenting, which impacts their engagement in the process (Williams, 2007). My intention was to add knowledge of Black family strengths and assets to the field.

IRB Proposal: Narrative-Portraiture Study

I completed the required IRB Human Subjects Research Training during the first year of my doctoral program. Additionally, I attended an IRB training prior to my preliminary exam to review rules and learn the new online process at our university. After completing preliminary exams and gaining approval from my dissertation committee for my research proposal, I completed the online IRB form. Two special education professors were supervising the study; each of them read through the submission to approve it; additionally, the chair of our department read it and approved. No one at this stage of the process discussed the question of

whether my proposal equated with generalizable knowledge, which is part of the federal definition of research (UORE, 2020).

The question of exempt-not exempt was discussed, with mixed responses from committee members. Prior to submitting my study for IRB approval, I developed documents that are required for non-exempt research: interview protocol, informed consent, recruitment poster and recruitment talking points. However, when reviewing the exempt categories, I believed that my research was exempt, using the institution's Information About Exempt Research (Info-ER, 2019) document, see Appendix A. *Abbreviated Information About Exempt Research Document*. This document also reviews the key ethical responsibilities of all researchers include promoting voluntariness, gaining informed consent, and protecting privacy and confidentiality.

Dismantling My Research Design

I submitted my IRB proposal and responded to requests for major revisions four times prior to withdrawing my submission three and a half months later. During those months, I met with the screener, a professional staff member, and attended a meeting with the ten volunteer, part-time IRB members. I consulted with my program of study advisor and later in the process, a different mentor contacted the Board members for clarification. Below, I describe four components of the study where the IRB's interpretation of the ethical standards of research was related to my decision to withdraw the study: exempt/non-exempt status, the significance of the proposed study for the academy, the proposed use of a cultural liaison, and the plan for interviews and use of artifacts.

Exempt Status

My understanding of exempt research proved to be incomplete, according to how my study was reviewed by the IRB. After revisions at the screening stage, another professional staff reviewed my submissions. I added each of the required documents for a limited review. Following those additions, a full review from the board was assigned. More documents were added: revised recruitment poster, revised talking points, revised recruitment plan, revised informed consent, and interview questions for the cultural liaison role. At the board meeting, U-IRB discussed the following components of Exempt status (Info-ER, 2019):

- Exemption #2 applies if any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.
- Exemption #2 cannot be used if significant risk or discomfort to subjects is inherent in the data collection procedure (e.g., asking detailed questions about traumatic experiences).

I responded to questions from the Board, and explained the need to be culturally responsive, as a White researcher; I left the meeting without knowing what their decision would be. Within a week, the board sent notification that my study would be tabled, until revisions met the board's expectations. At that time, I began the process of planning alternatives to this study; the study that had been tabled after two months no longer met the goals of the study I designed. I withdrew this study three weeks later.

Significance of the Study

As a doctoral candidate, I proposed a qualitative study using portraiture, a unique methodology which blends science and art (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), and is positioned for the expression of counterstories. Counterstories are narratives from people with

marginalized identities describing their resilience and beauty as they survive structural and individual dehumanization (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Chapman (2007) describes portraiture as “an effort to erode the status quo” (p. 159); the process of portraiture focuses on both macro and micro contexts, describing marginalized peoples’ “transcendence beyond structural barriers” (p. 157). My initial IRB submission included these concepts to describe the significance of the study, and added a description of Critical Race Theory when discussing counterstories.

Naming Critical Race Theory may have been ‘too much information’ (colleague, personal communication, January 2020) that resulted in increased surveillance and monitoring of my procedures. Another possibility is from Jacobson et al. (2007), who discussed risks and values associated with research. When IRB considers the study valuable, more risk is allowed; when the study has less value, less risk is afforded so more controls are exerted. Furthermore, at three months into the process, a veteran professor and mentor expressed her frustration, shaking her head as she questioned the situation, “I’ve never seen this before...This must be about race.” Two months later, I was meeting with a professional staff member at the IRB reviewing a completely different IRB proposal to make revisions. During that discussion, she asked, “Are you still going to be able to do Critical Race Theory?” yet I had never listed Critical Race Theory within that IRB submission.

Cultural Liaison

As a White researcher with multiple privileged identities, I designed my study with a cultural liaison: someone with knowledge of the specific community of the participants who could vouch for my trustworthiness and support the participants. I had discussed my study with three friends who fit this role in three different communities, and they were open to this

possibility. Additional responsibilities I designed for the community liaison involved recruitment. Since they were connected in the community, they were asked to explain my study and share my number so the interested party could contact me. Potential participants would self-identify their child as having received behavioral interventions or participated in behavioral evaluation. This recruitment strategy was deemed unethical by IRB, given that the cultural liaison had not received the Human Subjects required training. They suggested that the community members take the training, in order to be cultural liaisons.

During the screening phase, the professional staff member suggested that the cultural liaison role would be problematic, as I originally designed it. Therefore, prior to the presentation to the full board, I defined cultural liaisons as participants, and limited their role. I would interview them about my process three times, so they could give me feedback on my emerging findings and extend my knowledge of their community. They would sign an informed consent, which addressed confidentiality, prior to any interviews. At the IRB meeting, that role as participant was not approved. A U-IRB member suggested that I could find one Black scholar who had been through Human Subjects training that could speak for the Black Community; I felt that disregarded the local context and unique stories of each family.

Interviews and Artifacts

Within my initial IRB proposal, I outlined my process for audio-taping face-to-face interviews at a location the participant chose, as well as specific plans to de-identify the audio-recordings and keep pseudonym codes in a separate secure location. I would use pseudonyms for notes and memos, and keep these confidential as well. In subsequent rounds, I clarified anonymity and confidentiality procedures during the interviews, for the audio recordings, and

when using transcriptions, per the IRB review related Exempt #2: “Audio and video recording of the surveys, interviews, or public behavior is allowable, with adequate privacy and confidentiality protections” (Info-ER, 2019).

In conjunction with the interviews, I designed opportunities for parents to bring tangible objects or pictures that would symbolize experiences, strengths, and the cultural context. These would support authentic representation of their humanity, and align with Moll’s conception of funds of knowledge (Whyte & Karabon, 2016). I would take photographs and store them confidentially with the interview data. Informed consent clarified that these pictures would not be used for the final product without permission. Additionally, I planned to bring my own artifact to each interview, to signal shared power and build a relationship. Artifacts included (a) a symbol of their relationship with their child, (b) a symbol of a family/community asset or support, (c) a symbol of their own school experiences, (d) a symbol of their child’s school experiences, (e) a symbol of their experiences within the BI-SPED-IDP. These artifacts would be photographed and used as a form of data when interpreting interviews and co-constructing the portraits.

During the IRB process, screeners asked for specific examples of what these artifacts may be, and then reviewers required a clear description of each artifact included in the informed consent. On another round of the review, I was required to state that any pictures of people that were not participants in the study would be de-identified, along with any locations that were identifiable. The de-identification process that was expected erased the specificity and local context that were necessary to tell unique stories and provide Geertz’ *thick description* in high quality interpretive scholarship (Freeman, 2014) .

Perpetuating the Status Quo: Disqualifying Critical Qualitative Knowledge

After the three months of trying to gain approval, I determined that the emotional toll was too much for me, and I withdrew the study. I couldn't reconcile the my understanding of ethical research as a White educator with Black families who are marginalized by schools with the IRB's interpretation of ethical research. My mental health was at stake; I recognized the withdrawal of the study not as failure, but as grief. *What was lost by the erasure of the knowledge of Black families? What was lost by not having an opportunity to access the wisdom of Black women I knew existed? What did the field lose that would have provided ideas or concrete ways of humanizing families of Black children whose behaviors have been defined as problems?* The study I had designed was the culmination of a decades-long career of working with Black families and my core values: humanizing people who are dehumanized within educational systems. There was no indication that those losses were considered, when the IRB members reviewed my study and made determinations of risk and significance. In the end, I have no way to know if any of the losses were recognized by IRB members. I moved forward by designing a simplified, and White-washed version of a study with any families who had been through the behavioral intervention process.

Structural Constraints

Below, I discuss power-knowledge relationships and socio-cultural context that compounded the constraints to the study and resulted in my withdrawal of the study: identities of the participants, my identity as a researcher, the scientific norms of official knowledge, and IRB's authority. Then I discuss implications for scholars.

Ethical Risk Assessment and the Authority of the IRB

In hindsight, my *common sense* thinking facilitated my passiveness and compliance with the rules. I understood the board to be applying policy, not interpreting it, and did not consider that as a graduate student, there would be more scrutiny of my work (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2008). I did not recognize that relationships between researchers and IRB's are constructed as adversarial, wherein a researcher must accept IRB's authority to approve, require revisions, or prohibit studies (Feeley, 2007; Hottenstein, 2018). That is, until I sat at the IRB meeting with ten members, most of whom would not give me eye contact, and tried to explain the value of my study and design decisions. As Babb et al. (2017) stated, IRB members are "deputized to behavior as bureaucrats" (p.89) within the current structures. Also, IRB's approval has been constructed as a licensing power (Stark, 2007), a total control over what gets approved and what questions can be asked, thereby having the power to suppress data (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2008). Moreover, IRB's have little or no oversight, wherein the ethics of their functioning are evaluated (Peled-Raz et al., 2021; Rosenfeld, 2020).

The Common Rule for IRB functioning (45 CFR 46) states that the IRB is responsible for assessing the ethical acceptability of the research, an ongoing process of considering risks and potential benefits in balance with the value of the study. Risks to subjects are to be minimized (45 CFR 46); I made every effort in my study to do that. IRB's are expected to base risk-value decisions on the Belmont Report's three principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice; the role of the IRB is one of risk assessment to prevent harm, not eliminating all risks (Rosenfeld, 2020). However, IRB's conceptualization of harm is not aligned with social science; if the risk is unknown IRBs may default to assuming high levels of risk (Jacobson, et al., 2007). In

discussions with professional staff, colleagues, and U-IRB members, there was no explanation of how the risk-value was determined, or how critical methods or questions of structural racism may be weighted. While U-IRB board members verbally validated my research, there was no transparency or standard for their determining risk versus value. I attribute the hyper-scrutiny and tabling of my study on the IRB's perception of my study as risky to the university, not to the participants.

Norms of Science

IRBs disregard the distinctiveness of social science research, which dramatically affects knowledge construction and jeopardizes critical work (Feeley, 2007; Jacobson et al., 2007; Stark 2006). Prior to submitting my proposed study, I was aware of the norms of positivist scientific research, which privilege statistical studies and random control trials formulated to produce a truth (Stark, 2006). I believed my study, which was designed to allow for emerging questions and practices in order to describe or expand theory, conformed to the expected norms when I described the data collection and analysis procedures. Still, I struggled with the difference between interpretation and analysis (Phillips & Burbules, 2000) of data. Education structures privilege positivism, enforcing a “cult of efficiency, rationalism, and a fact-value neutrality” that serves control, standardization, and empiricism (Dantley, 2002, p. 334); “people of color and their ways of knowing are absent from discourse because they do not align with the predominant way of thinking in the academy” (p.335). Dantley also states that constructing official knowledge from positivist ideology enables the subjugation of other ways of thinking and it codifies the hegemonic knowledge: this is the way it is supposed to be. Therefore, my

intentional selection of research questions, methods, and participants very likely affected the process of approval.

Additionally, I had chosen portraiture methods, which are described as “blend of science and art” that assumes the subjectivity and situated knowledge of all involved (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997); this directly conflicts positivist models of research that claim to be objective and neutral (Philips & Burbules, 2000). The medical research background of IRB processes is problematic for social research (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2008). I had designed a study to understand the knowledge and assets of Black families, not a positivist study measuring an intervention that was meant to fix them. Because of hegemonic processes that construct scientific methods and the IRB process as *common sense*, I was unprepared. If I had received more coaching or advising from within my department about how to validate the significance of the study or stand up for my proposed participants as competent adults capable of determining whether they wanted to participate given the stated risks, outcomes may have been different. If we had approached the IRB process critically, we may have had means to resist the IRB structures, which as part of overall educational institutions work to subjugate some knowledge (Foucault, 2010) and set boundaries on official knowledge (Apple, 2014).

Participant Identity: Intersectionally-Marginalized Parents

For the proposed study of Black families within the special education identification process, the IRB process involved layers of repeated review not typical in my prior IRB experience, and each of the technical corrections I made felt arbitrary and capricious. I had not considered the potential ramifications of discussing racism or ableism within schools. Haarlammert et al. (2017) note the lack of guidance for IRBs when considering representational

ethics; representational ethics consider how the identities of the participants are portrayed; ethical researchers design and disseminate work that does not reinforce stereotypes or marginalization. Without naming this type of ethics explicitly, or developing ethical frameworks that apply to this type of research, IRBs have space to make determinations of ethical behavior from their own perspective (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2008).

The IRB's focus on ethical decisions made prior to the actual study are problematic because they fail to consider ethics as a process; tensions of ethical representation occur throughout the study, as well as when writing and disseminating the results (Haarlamert et al., 2017). These authors go on to state that the power differential between researchers and participants, and between dominant group members and participants who are marginalized needs to be explicit; there is "potential to harm communities' cultural heritage or their tangible property" (p. 420). Furthermore, damage-centered research fails to take on the complexity of their lives, and has the potential to reify marginalized people as others. Even if we are designing studies to center the strengths and assets of marginalized people, we are entering into a larger body of scholarship that has historically focused on needs and deficits (Haarlamert et al., 2017). In my estimation, that made the portraiture study I designed for Black families more valuable to the field; the IRB made decisions that indicated their estimation of value was different.

Furthermore, Dingwall (2016) explicates how participants' rights and power may be diminished within the IRB process: (a) An overly-technical, over-regulated written consent process weakens trust. (b) Ethics regulations position participants as lacking capacity to evaluate their own risks and benefits, and assume a power differential framed by positivist,

medicalized research. (c) IRB determinations of value-risk do not take into account the value of the research to the participant, and minimize the value of making institutions accountable in a democracy. (d) Lastly, when research is directed “away from ‘difficult’ populations, topics, and methods, it creates areas of ignorance about social conditions” and limits reform (p. 38).

Researcher Identity: White Insider, Race Traitor

Throughout the process, I reflected on my White identity and privilege in order to explicitly name and interrogate power differentials (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Swauger, 2011). As a White, middle class female, I’d been constructed as a compliant student, worker, and scholar, expected to follow the rules; most often, I did that. Moreover, I was constructed as a member of the in-group, allied with the system. I grasped the knowledge and the system’s technicalities because these expectations had been constructed as common sense, or necessary (Bush, 2011). I thought I could maneuver the system to construct knowledge while being ethical and responsive to the Black community. In the past, I had advantages of fewer challenges to my thinking and allies that would vouch for me. I had worked systems before, successfully. However, in this case I could not get the study I believed ethical and meaningful approved.

To design a study of Black parent knowledge, I had listed Critical Race Theory as the foundation of my study, a mere nine months prior to the 45th presidents’ memorandum requiring government agencies to stop discussing that theory (US-OMB, 2020). I did not predict that I would be seen as a race traitor (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996), for stepping too far over the line as a White person:

The rules of the white club do not require that all members be strong advocates of white Supremacy, merely that they defer to the prejudices of others...[this] imposes a stifling conformity on whites, on any subject touching even remotely on race. (p. 36)

I recognized my White identity as a privilege, within this process. However, I didn't acknowledge prior to the process that the IRB system constructed an identity for my research as well. My plan for knowledge construction had been *othered* as outside of the positivist norms, and given a deficit (Dantley, 2002), irrational identity (Ellsworth, 1989). Per Foucault (2010), the knowledge I intended to construct was disqualified and subjugated.

Interrogating Educational Structures: Discussion

As the IRB operates now, inequities are perpetuated; the knowledge constructed is incomplete (Babb et al., 2017) at best. Educational structures work to validate some knowledge while devaluing others; this also serves to devalue the people who hold the subjugated knowledge (Harwood, 2003). Studying systems to understand the difference between real, day to day practices and aspirational goals and outcomes may lead to policy changes (Dingwall, 2016). This article interrogates the ethics review structures as they create boundaries for acceptable researcher identity and participant identity. The boundaries of official knowledge (Apple, 2014) are delineated by implicit norms of science, which did not acknowledge the value of the portraiture method (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) or the culturally sustaining (Paris, 2017) design. The IRB wielded its authority to weigh the ethical risks against the value of the scholarship to the field, and chose to protect the system while claiming their intent was to protect the participants.

The IRB process, which is one of the benevolent structures (Thorius, 2019) within education that masks structural harm, served to marginalize the knowledge of people who had

also been marginalized by the system. Therefore, the current literature base that includes very little knowledge from Black families, and even less scholarship highlighting Black family strengths and assets (Akinola, 2015) has been published as official knowledge. If scholars fail to look at the socio-cultural context of educational outcomes or workings of educational structures that impact marginalized people, they may not notice what is missing when they review the literature base for 'gaps.' Disrupting official knowledge requires that a different stance towards ethics be considered: Solorzano and Bernal (2001) discuss risk-assessment: balancing the value of the work for the participants and the field with the risks involved in constructing the knowledge is worthwhile. Constructing knowledge with communities and individuals who are othered by educational institutions is not only more valuable than it is currently treated, it is essential for interrupting inequities.

Implications for Scholars

These experiences with the U-IRB indicate that the structures of the process constrained my research practices. While critical scholarship adds complexity and challenge to the process, Bell (2008) challenges ethical people to choose what is right over what is easy when confronted by situations that force them to choose one or the other (Bell, 2008). Scholars who make the choice to do critical scholarship have unique ethical responsibilities; the role of the researcher is altered because it involves questioning how much can actually be known, the goals of academic research, and "how to understand the social situatedness of the knower" (Gottesman, 2016, p. 111).

As a critical qualitative researcher, I am not separate from the participant, and the knowledge I construct is not separate from the socio-cultural context; ethical questions need to

be considered starting with the research design process through the dissemination process when enacting transformational resistance. Critical scholars need to be intentional about language used when submitting studies for approval. Clearly describing the significance of the study, within greater scholarship, and aligned with the institution's stated goals may add "weight" when the IRB is balancing the significance with the risks of the study. Methodological clarity is also necessary; citing leading scholars who have published using that method along with the step-by-step data collection procedures would have provided less room for ambiguity, and corresponding risk, for the IRB board members who may not be familiar with qualitative work.

Scholars must value the act of questioning itself; interrogating structures of harm contributes to scholarship even if there is no immediate practice implication (Haarlammer et al., 2017). Question-posing and subjecting all truth claims to critique furthers the interests of justice (Darder et al., 2017). Doing a risk-value assessment, similar to the expected process for the IRB, facilitates transformational resistance (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Knowledge construction structures work to validate some knowledge while devaluing others; this also serves to devalue the people who hold the subjugated knowledge (Harwood, 2003). This perpetuates the status quo, which as the literature shows, has very little knowledge from Black families that includes strengths and assets (Akinola, 2015). As the IRB operates now, inequities are perpetuated; the knowledge constructed is incomplete (Babb et al., 2017) at best. Without critique, a *tacit intentionality* is protected: although race inequity may not be a planned as a deliberate goal of education policy, it is not accidental (Gillborn, 2005). Naming and

interrogating the difference between the intent and the impact of educational policy such as IRB ethics regulation (Dingwall, 2016) is part of critical work: systems serve systems.

Critical scholars have the opportunity to challenge conditions wherein people in power do not understand the essentiality of “maintaining voices of social conscience” when society is moving against democratic values (Apple, 2014, p. 4). Critical scholars are positioned for a *counter-hegemony*, “those intellectual and social spaces where power relationships are reconstructed to make central the voices and experiences of those who have historically existed at the margins of public institutions” (Darder et al., 2017, p. 13). However, critical scholars need awareness of the potential dilemmas in proposing research that falls outside the norms of science in order to consciously make ethical choices. Per Solorzano and Bernal (2001), transformational resistance assumes that all people have the capacity to produce knowledge and resist domination and marginalization (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Constructing knowledge with communities and individuals who are othered by educational institutions is not only more valuable than it is currently treated, it is essential for interrupting inequities. Re-qualifying disqualified knowledge, such as counterstories from Black families discussing special education identification benefits the field as well as the participants.

Conclusion

As a graduate student making sense of the historical and cultural ideologies that undergird educational structures, my critical research is grounded in an understanding of situated knowledges, as well as hegemonic processes and ideologies of power (Gottesman, 2016). By constructing knowledge that aligns with hegemonic ideologies as official knowledge, the IRB performs the hidden duty of censorship (Peled-Raz et al., 2021; Stark, 2006). This article

discussed my experiences as I attempted to counter higher education's elite intellectualism, that McLaren discusses (Giroux, 1988), which serves to limit knowledge construction (Hottenstein, 2018). My critical qualitative study of Black families, designed to explicitly name power differentials and the value of Black community knowledge, was dismantled step by step, until I withdrew it, because it had so little resemblance to my original design. This experience of being deemed one of the "radicals and miscreants" who offer "alternatives to the reified hegemony" and ignore counternarratives (Dantley, 2002, p. 339) informs critical scholars who want to disrupt the unquestioned authority of IRBs, the subjugation of knowledge from people with marginalized identities, and the privileging of positivist framing of knowledge construction.

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Appendix. Abbreviated Information About Exempt Research Document (Info-ER, 2019)

Exempt Research:

1. Research presents little to no risk of harm to participants.
2. All research procedures fit into the Exempt #2 : surveys, interviews, educational tests, observations.
3. Confidentiality of participants will be protected when results are disseminated (no deductive disclosure or re-identification concerns)
4. The research does not include prisoners.
5. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to [determine there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain confidentiality of the data] (Info-ER, 2019).

Elements of Informed Consent:

- ✓ A statement that the study is research; the information will be disseminated,
- ✓ A general description of the study procedures and time commitment;
- ✓ A description of any plans to video or audio record participants;
- ✓ A description of any discomfort or risk (such as discomfort responding to sensitive or personal questions
- ✓ A statement that participation is voluntary;
- ✓ A statement that the participant may skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering in an interview or survey; and
- ✓ The measures that will be used to ensure confidentiality of data collected in the research, including how audio or video recordings will be used.

Privacy and Confidentiality:

- ✓ Limit questions and data collected to only what is needed to address the research questions.
- ✓ Avoid collecting identifiable information. Take special precautions with information that is inherently identifiable.

- ✓ Ensure privacy during data collection: location of interviews are private, collect emails for compensation separately. Adhere to ISU minimum data security standards.
- ✓ Separate meaningful identifiers from data in a timely manner; keep keys separate from codes or data.
- ✓ Keep confidential the names of research sites.
- ✓ Limit access to any identifiers to those with a “need to know.”

CHAPTER 7. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Nine months after beginning this writing process, US society is still reeling from the double pandemic of institutionalized racism and COVID-19. In the trial of the policeman who knelt on George Floyd's neck for over eight minutes, the jury has just been seated. Science and leadership have helped turn the tide of COVID-19 deaths, with more than 2 million people vaccinated a day. Still, students and educators continue to navigate an altered and confusing educational system. Another assault on the nation, and its democratic ideals, occurred early this year, perpetrated by White Supremacists who rioted at the US capitol. Socio-cultural forces such as some media outlets, and some leaders within US Congress then explained away or minimized that action against our government. Educational institutions are not separate from these socio-cultural conditions (McLaren, 2017). As cultural workers, educators and scholars need deep understanding of structural racism and normalism now, as ever before. Given the socio-cultural and political context, this dissertation gains relevance: I center the institutional levers of power related to knowledge, or the politics of knowledge (Said, 1993) as I discuss the cultural work of special education and higher education. Moreover, I make connections between the politics of knowledge, daily practices, and material outcomes for Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) students and families, in order to disrupt the inequities and structural harm perpetrated within educational institutions.

Educators prepared with knowledge of structure-specific harms are positioned to disrupt what Gillborn (2005) describes as *tacit intentionality* of educational structures and conditions that limit access to knowledge and opportunity for BIPOC people; while diminished opportunities and outcomes may not be deliberate, these conditions are not accidental

(Gillborn, 2005). Furthermore, this study shows that cultural processes of social construction, reification, and hegemony are at work within education; these serve to perpetuate the status quo. To disrupt this, educators and scholars may choose to be intentional in their cultural work; critical praxis positions educators for transformational resistance, de-reification, and contestation. Transforming the system rather than fixing people who are constructed as deficient becomes the focus. The current structures support the denial of special education's place in the construction of race and disability; this benefits the status quo, and the status quo special education systems harm Black students and families, by forwarding Whitepower-Normalcy ideology. This collection of studies was designed in response to the following questions:

1. How is Whitepower-Normalcy ideology evidenced within knowledge-power structures of special education practice and scholarship?
2. How can knowledge of the Whitepower-Normalcy and knowledge-power relationships within education inform educators and scholars' transformational resistance in local contexts?

For this discussion, I briefly review Whitepower-Normalcy within education. I discuss each study separately, connecting three different educational structures to power-knowledge dynamics for special education practitioners and scholars. Each article addresses one educator identity: special education teacher educator, special educator, and critical special education scholar. Structures of cultural work are partnered with each identity, and the article explicates one cultural process outlined in Chapter 3 of this dissertation: reification, social construction, and hegemonic processes. This is not to imply that one identity or structure can be separated from the others.

Moreover, this is not to say that the cultural processes are only present in the structure named for this discussion. Everything is connected, and everything is context-dependent. Studying the connections and in-between spaces has the potential to support educators as they grapple with the ethical dilemmas (Fransson & Grannäs, 2013) that arise from different interests within educational institutions. I connect three educational structures to Whitepower-Normalcy and power-knowledge relationships below. Then, I discuss knowledge-power dynamics across the three educational structures. For question two, I connect this knowledge with transformational resistance (Solórzano & Bernal, 2002), to inform the mindsets and skillsets of special educators and scholars.

Whitepower-Normalcy Ideology

This dissertation provides warrant for the argument that Whitepower-Normalcy ideology undergirds the cultural processes and educational structures within US schools. Whitepower-Normalcy centers White ways of being as normal, and is the foundation for cultural institutions and structures; the ideologies overlap and are interdependent. Normal is equated with White, and vice versa, given this ideology. This conceptualization of a combined ideology aligns with Thorius (2019), who links White Supremacy and Ableism. This author refers to special education as a “cloak of benevolence,” wherein education policy, systematic practices, and educators beliefs and actions converge” to maintain the racialization of disabilities(325). Therefore, special education as a system is constructed for non-disabled/White educators as “paternal, caring, protective, and fixing.” (Thorius, 2019). However, I center goodness, rather than ability, because I am speaking specifically to the special education category of EBD.

Whitepower-Normalcy hegemonic processes mask power and privilege, domination and coercion (hooks, 1989). White Supremacy's coercive control and domination is hidden within normalized institutions and structures (hooks, 1989). Davis (1995) states that we can only know normal by the existence of *not* normal; Normalcy makes the ideas of race, class and gender possible. Labaree (2006) states that when educational policy and practices become too "mechanistic, alienating, dull, disengaging and oversimplified, an 'ideological cover' is needed" (p. 159-160, quotes in the original). In practice, *we are serving students and there is no other way* becomes the cover, a vision, rather than a reality. Scales of Normalcy are used to position people within an all-encompassing social hierarchy of White Supremacy; this is *othering* (Foucault, 2010).

Power-Knowledge Structures

I frame the discussion of power using Lukes' (2004) conception of power, from Marxism, as decision-making, agenda setting, and preference shaping; power is largely invisible and needs to be demystified. However, my work follows Foucault's (2010) theory that power is everywhere. In this way, educators, scholars, families, and students, whether marginalized or privileged, have power; structures limit or enable access to knowledge, in all its forms. Foucault's (2010) power-knowledge relationship, which enables a "de-familiarization of modern institutions and practices" that are called "caring and benevolent" (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 57). Foucault discusses the ways in which power and knowledge are always related; knowledge constructs power relations, and power relations constrict or enable the knowledge (Nicholas, 2017).

This dissertation, by focusing on the power-knowledge relationship, reveals “technologies and procedures that normalize, manage, and control” people who do not fit the constructions of normal; this occurs through the workings of the government, or any systems that controls relationships and interactions within cultural institutions (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 57). Asymmetrical power relations are evident in each of the three structures I interrogated: evidence-based practices of behavioral intervention (EBPs-B), knowledge construction within the behavior intervention-special education identification process (BI-SPED IDP), and the university research ethics review processes led by the Institutional Review Board. Furthermore, each of the structures can be connected to *common sense* knowledge, from Gramsci (Leggett, 2013). Shulman (1986) reminds us that all knowledge is historically contingent: time and place matter; power relations are part of knowledge construction.

RQ 1. How is Whitepower-Normalcy ideology evidenced within knowledge-power structures of special education practice and scholarship?

Below, I interrogate three educational structures through a Whitepower-Normalcy and Knowledge-Power relationships (Foucault, 2010) lens. The titles of the articles are: (a) *Technologies of Behavioral Intervention: Systematizing Control & Constructing Identities for BIPOC Students*, (b) *Parent Advocacy: Black Family Cultural Wealth and Special Education Structures*, and (c) *Ethics Review for Critical Special Education Research: Disqualified or Official Knowledge*.

Special Education Teacher Educators, EBPs-B, and Reification

In the conceptual article, *Technologies of Behavioral Intervention: Constructing Identities and Systematizing Control*, I connect the privileging of technical skills of data management and

interpretation to the construction of intersectional deficit identities, or the racialization of disability (Kramarczuk Voulgarides & Tefera, 2017). This article provides examples of Normalcy's scientific practices as dehumanizing, because they turn people outside the norm group into passive objects (Davis, 1995), rather than agentic actors capable of autonomous decision making and independent participation in society. Tools of Normalcy such as scientific classification, do the necessary sorting and signifying (Vera et al., 1995) to maintain Whiteness as exclusive.

This study describes the connection between the data collected within EBPs-B and the construction of BIPOC students' as inherently deficient. While parent knowledge and qualitative knowledge has the potential to add socio-cultural context and asset-based framings of behavior, educators and those that prepare educators need access to this knowledge. Furthermore, those that would connect research to practice benefit if other forms of knowledge were normalized as relevant to daily practice. The privileging of positivist measurement (Dantley, 2002) of operationalized behaviors has the effect of erasing other knowledge that may disrupt the socially constructed identity, thus reifying identities for BIPOC children as behaviorally disordered.

I explicate the behaviorist-positivist foundations of evidence-based practices of behavioral intervention (EBPs-B) (Garrison, 2018); the knowledge constructed using the targeted behavior, direct observation, and prescribed progress monitoring methods serves to objectify BIPOC students and their behavior. Teachers are constructed as technicians, expected to implement standardized interventions as *common sense*: these practices that serve Whitepower-Normalcy are necessary and protective. Training teachers as technicians

constructs the role of teacher as implementing a set of skills, which attempts to diminish the politics inherent in the role (Kincheloe, 2017). Moreover, when teachers view themselves as technicians, there are fewer opportunities and expectations for constructing other knowledges because answers to questions are found in the data. Experiential knowledge is erased or marginalized so “tacit assumptions” (Kincheloe, 2017, p. 506) and *common sense* thinking retain their power in shaping educational practice.

As special educators are prepared now, implementing behavioral intervention practices that take into account the socio-cultural context, or factors such as race, remains optional (Sullivan, 2017). This aligns with interrogating the tools and scales of Whitenormativity, discussed above. Ideological practices and outcomes are revealed: the use of data from EBPs-B reifies disabled identities for BIPOC students. Additionally, studying the technologies of behavior interrupts the EBP-B structures that elevate the power of the evidence from these practices in decision making and special education identification. This analysis provides Special Education Teacher Educators language and entry points for scaffolding knowledge of special education structures, as they move future SPED Ts towards conscientization (Sleeter et al., 2004).

Special Educators, Structures of Parent Advocacy, and Social Construction

This critical qualitative study responds to two questions: (a) What are Black families’ experiences within behavioral intervention-special education identification process (BI-SPED IDP)? and (b) What forms of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) are present when Black families participate in the BI-SPED IDP? Portraits of four families’ experiences within the BI-SPED IDP process reveal institutionalized barriers and harm perpetrated by individual educators. The

legacy of structural Whitepower-Normalcy was evident in each family's counterstory. Each parent described negative perceptions of special education as the process began; the Black community, as they describe it, has little trust of the BI-SPED IDP process and they are aware of the socio-cultural impact of labeling Black children as disabled. The families' resistance and strengths were also revealed as knowledge and power, or CCW (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016). The CCW of Black families, was minimized or absent within the structure of behavior interventions and the initial special education process.

Whitepower-Normalcy ideologies undergird the *common sense* construction of *parent advocacy* as property controlled by White people (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020). This social construction, based in Whiteness, homogenizes parent advocacy, and limits Black parent participation (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020). Using these implicit norms, teachers also are part of social construction, when they form deficit narratives of Black families and their involvement (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). This study further conceptualizes Black family knowledge and power as CCW (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016): overlapping forms of capita such as aspirational, social, familial, linguistic navigational and resistance. Their CCW was positioned within their experiences of the BI-SPED IDP structures. Black families resisted pressure to sign for permission to identify their child as disabled and the failure of schools to share institutional knowledge; Black parents advocated for their child's rights and called out practices of marginalization.

Asymmetrical power relations constructed by special education processes that position educators as experts, given their training and use of scientific data (Harry & Ocasio-Stoutenburg, 2020) are central to Black parent advocacy and their CCW. I frame Black parent

advocacy as care and collective advocacy, and as informed by the CCW of the Black community and Black Womanist thought (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Four Black family portraits of their experiences advocating for their children provide insights into how Black families navigate the asymmetrical power relationships and structures within the BI- SPED IDP that assume shared decision making (Connelly, 2021, in press); this expands understanding of parent advocacy.

Critical Scholars, IRB Ethics Review, and Hegemony

In the article *Ethics Review for Critical Special Education Research: Disqualified or Official Knowledge*, the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) *tacit intentionality* in maintaining boundaries between official knowledge and subjugated knowledges is revealed. Tacit intentionality, as it relates to racial inequalities in educational policy and practice, occurs when "policy makers decide (tacitly, if not explicitly) to place race equity at the margins-thereby retaining race injustice at the centre" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 499). This conceptual describes my experiences as a graduate student and novice critical scholar as I navigated the ethics review process, through the IRB. I requested approval for a critical qualitative study; I was explicit about questioning Whitepower-Normalcy within parent advocacy norms. I intended to construct knowledge for the academy that elevated Black families' advocacy assets and strengths. I use critical theory (McLaren, 2017) and provide examples of structural limitations to critical scholarship as enacted by professional staff and board members.

Within higher education, one of the structures that sorts knowledge is the Institutional Review Board, which has ultimate authority over whether any research study is approved (Hottenstein, 2018). Ultimately, I withdrew the study, after months of attempting to reconcile a research design that included intentional humanizing practices of inquiry with the IRB's rules of

ethical compliance, and started over with a different study. This article interrogates the ways the structures perpetuate the status quo of Whitepower-Normalcy ideology by disqualifying knowledge that may disrupt current thinking or practice (Foucault, 2010). Research that is meant to guide educators, then, perpetuates practices that do not consider the holistic socio-cultural context, or the experiences of BIPOC students and families from their perspective.

The special education structures and practices that currently exist, and produce inequities, continue without disruption, and practices deemed natural and *common sense* are validated. This is cultural hegemony, as theorized by Gramsci (Mayo, 2017), wherein the dominant group who controls cultural institutions disseminates ideas aligned with the dominant ideology, in this case, Whitepower-Normalcy. Furthermore, the hegemonic processes serve to keep the ideology masked, so cultural workers, in this case educators and scholars comply with the norms and do not feel coerced.

RQ 2: How can knowledge of Whitepower-Normalcy and knowledge-power structures within special education practice and scholarship inform transformational resistance in local contexts?

Knowledge-power structures I have chosen to interrogate include (a) the privileging of data gathered using evidence-based practices of behavior (EBPs-B), (b) the knowledge from parents within the special education identification process, and (c) the ethics review board process required for knowledge production in higher education. Each of these educational institutional structures construct asymmetrical power relations between people, impacting the day to day decision making and practice of cultural workers. To support educators and scholars in understanding the intent and consequences of Whitepower-Normalcy, a *sociology of knowledge*, or a concern with what people know and the connection to their actions, is valuable

(Guess, 2006). Furthermore, connecting knowledge to cultural work explicitly reveals what is accepted as reality; this is the *common sense* knowledge, constructed within cultural processes and ideologies (Guess, 2006). Guess goes on to discuss connections between knowledge and social construction; I extrapolate this to Whitepower-Normalcy ideology.

Structural Ideology

Sewell (1992) describes structures as shaping people's actions, as well as the ways in which people's actions shape structures; within this dynamic relationship, knowledgeable actors, such as educators and scholars, are able to transform the structures. Sewell (1992) acknowledges that power and knowledge are related. Structural oppression is undertheorized in special education scholarship, and is underutilized as a guide for teacher practice (Gorski, 2016). Institutional racism is so ubiquitous in US society that is invisible to White people (Omi & Winant, 2014). Structural intersectionality serves to racialize disability (Connor, 2013; Connor et al., 2019) and reify boundaries of Normalcy (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). This discussion of structures supports the development of Gorski's (2016) *structural ideology*. Educators who have a structural ideology, then, are able to recognize and respond to the ways that educational structures curtail access and opportunity; they work towards changing the system, rather than their students and their families. This counter-ideology names disparities in educational outcomes as the "logical if not purposeful outcomes" of structures and processes that distribute access and opportunity (p. 383).

Intentional critical questioning, self-reflection and discomfort, and active interrogation of the structures that constrict daily practice and interactions has the potential to change mindsets.

Directly Engaging with the Politics of Knowledge

The politics of knowledge (Said, 1993) are enacted in each of the articles within this dissertation: power and knowledge are not separate, and the ideologies that hide power imbalances (Brantlinger, 2006) are also present. For example, these articles exemplify the role of practices of measurement within educational structures. Recognizing how measurement serves the measurer and the system is warranted; measures make deficits real, justify differential treatment, and allow the measurer to evaluate themselves as *better than* (Brantlinger, 2006). Furthermore, these articles exemplify the apartheid of knowledge within the US, wherein systems discredit and devalue knowledge from non-normative cultures and races (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2016). The Whitepower-Normalcy ways of knowing and understanding the world are invisible, yet legitimate (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2016); scholars have opportunities to make that dominant way of knowing visible and legitimize other knowledge.

Transformational Resistance

Transformational resistance involves challenges to the dominant ideology and working towards social justice; issues of racism, intersectional oppressions, and marginalization are central (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Furthermore, people's lived experiences are valued as meaningful knowledge; knowledge is constructed from multiple perspectives and disciplines. Transformational resistance would reframe educators' daily practices so strengths-based thinking is prevalent, disrupting the current pathologization of difference for BIPOC youth (Annamma, 2017) and disrupting the dehumanization of BIPOC students. For scholars, critical

scholarship that centers lived experiences is part of transformational resistance, as well as questions involving the hidden agendas behind educational structures and practices.

Knowledge for Transformational Resistance

As Gorski (2016) states, all inequities have one thing in common: they are not caused by the people experiencing the inequity, they exist because structural injustices exist. Therefore, the three articles of this dissertation disrupt narratives and practices that construct Black students as disordered, Black families as non-caring, and critical scholarship centering structures of normalism and racism as *disqualified*. Understanding knowledge-power dynamics in the context of daily practices replaces educators' and scholars' questions of *how* with critical questions of *why* the structures that harm BIPOC students and families persist. In this way, this dissertation facilitates praxis, the cycle of simultaneously reflecting and acting towards justice (Freire, 2018). Centering educators as political actors moves them towards praxis, conscientization, and acts of transformational resistance. When educators are equipped with knowledge of structural inequities and the social construction of deficit identities, they are prepared to be transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 2011).

Power-Knowledge Relationships, Special Educators, and SPED Teacher Educators

This study informs a critical understanding of the myths of society, a demystification of *common sense* narratives (Watkins, 1999). The articles outline the ways in which educational structures construct hierarchies and reify deficit constructions of people using technical practices and expertise knowledge. The articles within this dissertation further the understanding of "technologies of social structure and cultural formations" that are constantly mediating the understanding (McLaren, 1994) of SPED Ts and SPED PREP educators. Each article

informs Freire's conscientization, the critical understanding of how cultural workers are situated within an education system that is at all times political; pedagogy that challenges the status quo and power-access differentials can be normalized (Sleeter et al., 2004).

As cultural workers within the structures of power-knowledge, educators are positioned to transform how marginalization of people occurs and how knowledge is normalized or excluded (McLaren, 1994). Educators need access to emancipatory knowledge, which transcends the privileging of technical knowledge to understand power and privilege within social relationships (McLaren, 2004). Furthermore, there are multiple forms of knowledge to incorporate into critical complex teacher education: (a) normative, which uncovers hidden ideologies and ethical questions, (b) critical, which involves the understanding of power relationships, (c) ontological, which affords recognition of the educator's place within the cultural institution and society as a producer of knowledge, (d) experiential, which reminds educators there is more than one way to practice, and (e) reflective-synthetic, which supports humility and encourages self-awareness and adaptability (Kincheloe, 2017).

This dissertation provides knowledge to support *critical complex teacher education* by placing educators in context of the power-knowledge relationships constructed by special education structures. Kincheloe (2017) theorizes a *critical complex* teacher education, which explicitly engages the cultural and political nature of teaching. This critical complex knowledge is then accessed when educators are in positions of explaining teaching to non-educators on the behalf of marginalized students and families, another form of politics. Differentiating structural racism, ableism and *goodness* norms from individual bias and prejudice is an essential step towards critical practice. Furthermore, educators who recognize their role as political and

their responsibility as actively working towards justice are positioned to change practices as well as the system; thus, schools can then be inserted into the political sphere where questions of power and its' connection to curriculum and pedagogy are answered (Giroux & McLaren, 2018). As a result, discussion of socially constructed educational inequities such as the overrepresentation of BIPOC students as EBD or the erasure of Black family knowledge are made essential, rather than optional.

Power-Knowledge Relationships and Scholars

Educators and scholars who are aware of the boundaries of official knowledge and structural barriers to critical scholarship are able to ask different questions and reflect on their role within educational structures, in a structural ideology (Gorski, 2016). As cultural workers, the knowledge and power gained by using this lens has the potential to support their individual agency. Educators and scholars are agentic, capable of using their knowledge and power to innovate, and transform structures (Sewell, 1992). Understanding the ways in which structures constrain or enable agency (Sewell, 1992) informs transformational resistance. However, the status quo enables scholars to succumb to “normative discourses that inscribe thought and script actions” (Brantlinger, 2006, p. 243). The status quo of knowledge production will not support transformative practices.

Erevelles (2000) also states a need for “intellectual tools to render visible material structures and ideological discourses that have differential effects” on people who have been constructed as *other* (p. 47). Educators and scholars must be intentional about their critical cultural work, to explicitly challenge systems of knowledge-power that fail to address issues of social justice or question moves away from democratic values (Apple, 2014). By so doing,

counter-hegemony, can occur, when power relationships are challenged and the perspectives of people previously marginalized can be centered (Darder, et al., 2017; Horton, 2019). Horton (2019) describes three steps for White scholars working towards antiracism: confession, conversion, and collaboration. Each of these involve recognizing power, structural oppression, and working within inclusive, positionally diverse spaces. Furthermore, conversion occurs only when the standpoint of marginalized people is studied with deference and humility.

Scholars who value the act of questioning itself are positioned for resistance; interrogating structures of harm contributes to scholarship even if there is no immediate practice implication (Haarlammet et al., 2017); all truth claims from educational systems should be questioned (Darder, et al., 2017). Starting points include any idea or practice that has been so normalized as to be common sense. Questions of the process of inquiry are also valuable, such as how much can actually be known?, what is the purpose of inquiry?, what is the role of the researcher, and how can we come to “understand the social situatedness of the knower” (Gottesman, 2016, p. 111). Self-reflexivity is also a form of questioning, and can support transformational resistance (Kumashiro, 2000). I provide a model of self-reflexivity when I make my research design, implementation, and dissemination decisions transparent in the Black Parent Advocacy article. An example of my attempts to disrupt the academy’s norms of research is provided with critical questions and culturally sustaining (Paris, 2017) practices in Chapter 6. *Ethics Review for Critical Special Education Research: Disqualified or Official Knowledge*. I review that article briefly below.

Researcher (and Educator) as Instrument

Prior to beginning this dissertation writing, I spent time intentionally reflecting on personal goals and identities. Also, through extensive questioning, reading, and practicing, I learned from an interdisciplinary group of critical scholars, colleagues, and community members focused on my central problem: educators and scholars who have power and privileged positions that can be leveraged to effect change may not be aware of the cultural work of educators. Therefore each of the studies were designed to address context and outcomes related to the different roles I fill within the cultural institutions of education: preparer of special educators, teacher, and scholar. My grounding came from critical scholars such as Said (1993), who said:

Great antiauthoritarian uprisings make their greatest advances not by denying the humanitarian and universalist claims of the general dominant culture but by attacking the adherents of that culture for failing to uphold their own declared standards, for failing to extend them to all, as opposed to a small fraction, of humanity. (p. 313)

I recognize the paradoxes of educational structures that help some people whose impairments should not limit their access to knowledge and power. Additionally, I value the ethical standards of not harming research participants. However, transforming systems requires that we understand how they work. My goal was to provide foundational understanding of education's complex cultural processes and Whitepower-Normalcy ideological agendas that impact daily practice.

Still, there is room for a stronger critique of structural harms to Black families and students perpetrated within the structures of special education. Currently, structures comfort those people in power, including White-Normal educators; being in positions of comfort may block learning and change (Applebaum, 2017). Conversely, this dissertation informs educators

who are intentionally practicing discomfort and vulnerability (Applebaum, 2017). This dissertation challenges authority, and the status quo; I own that I experienced discomfort in the process of investigating subjugated knowledge and warranting the argument that special education operates from a Whitepower-Normalcy framework. However, I move forward more prepared to accept the *unknowability* that comes with power differentials and interactions with people constructed as other (Kumashiro, 2000); and “a constant vigilance and willingness to change oneself” (Applebaum, p. 870).

By sharing insight into my own experiences, as well as deep descriptions of Black parents’ Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016), I provide information that can be used for the common good, pushing for educators and scholars to be active agents in creating critical experiences within educational structures so wisdom can follow. As Tatum (2007) discusses, wisdom necessary for social justice work cannot be gained by reading, it is gained through experiences and practice. This experience of completing this dissertation, then, earned me some wisdom, as well as knowledge.

Conclusion

The chapters of this dissertation expand special educators’ and scholars’ understanding of institutional forces and *common sense* structures that affect day to day practice to support more humanizing practices (Taylor, 2019). With the knowledge of how structures serve hidden ideologies, critically conscious SPED Ts can then resist the dehumanization of BIPOC students and families that may come from special education structures of hyper-surveillance and overly technical practices (Annamma, 2017; Thorius, 2019). Furthermore, when scholars and educators are able to recognize their work as cultural work within political institutions, a

structural ideology (Gorski) facilitates work towards social justice. Examples of power-knowledge (Foucault, 2010) relationships constructed by educational structures provide language and starting points for normalizing open discussions of how Whitepower-Normalcy ideology shapes beliefs, pedagogy, and practice.

All people have the capacity to produce knowledge and resist domination and marginalization (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001); this *truth* should be evident in structures, discourse, and daily practice. Therefore, educators and scholars need to engage with the politics of knowledge so our practice is inclusive and leads to shared understanding. By centering knowledge-power relationships in this dissertation, educators are given contextualized examples of how different forms of knowledge are shaped within special education and higher education structures. Furthermore, this dissertation supports those who want to transform structural oppression and power differentials within educational institutions. The agendas and hidden ideologies are revealed, providing entry points for *critical complex* teacher education (Kincheloe, 2017), including explicit questioning and overt acts of transformational resistance.

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