

Mentoring for Inclusive Reform: Understanding the Identities and Agency of Special Education

Induction Mentors

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Abstract

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Inclusion has been a major component of educational reform for nearly four decades. However, educational systems continue to struggle with implementing and sustaining practices that create equitable and inclusive educational experiences for all students. Induction mentoring may play a critical role in supporting beginning teachers with developing the necessary skills and ideologies to transform educational discourse and practices that devalue and segregate students with marginalized identities. Mentoring is considered a powerful tool for educational reform; however, little is known about the identities and agency of mentors. This study uses the theory of social identity development and figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998), and a disability studies in education framework to explore the constructed identity and agency of mentors of beginning special education teachers. Specifically, a multiple case study design was employed to

understand (a) how mentors' lived histories influence how they interpret and enact their identities, (b) their conceptualizations of inclusion, and (c) their perceived agency in advancing their conception of inclusion. Data collection methods included in-depth phenomenological interviewing, identity mapping, concept mapping, and artifact analysis.

Exploring the ways that mentors construct and practice their identity and perceive their agency contributes to understanding how mentoring can be used to support beginning special education teachers in either adopting or resisting traditional approaches to special education and inclusion. The results of the study suggest that mentors relied predominately on their lived histories to inform their practices and interpretation of their identity which varied across participants. Their conceptualizations of inclusion surfaced tensions between an idealized vision of inclusion and the dominant approaches to inclusion in their situated contexts, highlighting the influence of context on constructed knowledge and ideologies. These tensions, among several other aspects of their contexts and identities, contributed to mentors' perception of their agency, which was often constrained to the boundaries of traditional approaches to inclusion and special education in their contexts. Implications for induction and mentoring programs and future directions for research are also discussed.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
The Role of a Special Education Teacher.....	3
Beginning Special Education Teachers	5
Induction Mentoring	7
Problem Statement	8
Key Terms.....	10
Organization of the Manuscript	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review	13
Professional Identity	13
Educator Agency.....	15
Identity Construction and Enactment Within the Context of Inclusion and Exclusion	15
Significance and Implications for Understanding Mentor Identities	19
Induction Mentoring	20
Mentors and Their Professional Development	21
Mentoring Roles and Functions	24
Outcomes of Mentoring	25
Mentor Identities	26
Significance and Implications for Understanding Mentor Identities	27
The Concept of Inclusion.....	27

Educators' Conceptions of Inclusion	29
Significance and Implications for Mentors' Conceptualization of Inclusion	37
Conclusion	38
Chapter 3: Research Methods	40
Theoretical and Conceptual Framing.....	40
Theoretical Foundations.....	40
Conceptual Framing.....	45
Strategy of Inquiry	49
Multiple Case Study.....	50
Research Design.....	51
Case Selection.....	51
Participants and Setting.....	52
Data Collection	56
Data Analysis Procedures	67
Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality.....	77
Trustworthiness and Credibility.....	80
Analytic Memoing	80
Member Checks	81
Peer Debriefing	82
Triangulation.....	82

Conclusion	83
Chapter 4: Case Studies	84
Angela	84
History-in-Person	85
Mentoring Worlds	88
Mentor Identity	89
Inclusion Worlds	94
Agency in Advancing Inclusion.....	99
Susan	101
History-in-Person	101
Mentoring Worlds	105
Mentor Identity	106
Inclusion Worlds	112
Agency in Advancing Inclusion.....	116
Holly	119
History-in-Person	119
Mentoring Worlds	124
Mentor Identity	125
Inclusion Worlds	132
Agency in Advancing Inclusion.....	136

Brooke.....	139
History-in-Person.....	139
Mentoring Worlds.....	143
Mentor Identity	144
Inclusion Worlds.....	150
Agency in Advancing Inclusion.....	154
Sarah	157
History-in-Person.....	157
Mentoring Worlds.....	160
Mentor Identity	161
Inclusion Worlds.....	167
Agency in Advancing Inclusion.....	170
Conclusion	173
Chapter 5: Cross Case Analysis.....	174
Identity: Autonomy and the Influence of Lived Experiences.....	174
Role Ambiguity and Autonomy.....	176
Deferring to Lived Experiences	177
Inclusion: Making Sense of Ideal Conceptualizations and Situated Worlds	179
Idealized Conceptualizations	180
Situated Inclusion Worlds.....	182

Mentoring to Advance Inclusion: Creating the Conditions for Agency	189
Mentors' Social Positioning and Perceived Power	190
Positioning of Beginning Special Education Teachers	192
Boundaries of Mentor Practice	193
Beginning SETs as the Initiators.....	196
Constructed Knowledge of Inclusion.....	198
Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications	201
Constructing a Mentor Identity	201
Lived Histories.....	202
Mentoring Contexts	203
Mentor Identity	205
Positionality and Power	206
Enacted Practices	207
Ideologies of Inclusion.....	209
Situated Agency	211
Implications for Induction and Mentoring Programs.....	213
Induction and Mentoring Programmatic Structures.....	214
Study Limitations, Strengths, and Directions for Future Research	219
Study Limitations.....	219
Study Strengths	221

Conclusion	223
References	226
Appendix A: Sample Recruitment Email	247
Appendix B: Participant Screener.....	248
Appendix C: Consent Form	247
Appendix D: Phenomenological Interviewing Protocols	250
Appendix E: Identity Mapping Protocol.....	256
Appendix F: Erin’s Identity Map.....	257
Appendix G: Artifact Recording Procedures.....	258
Appendix H: Concept Map Procedures	259
Appendix I: Sample Pages from Finalized First-Cycle Code Book	260
Appendix J: Research Protocol for Data Collection Activities	261
Appendix K: Sample Code Trees	263
Appendix L: Sample Data Networks	265
Appendix M: Reflexivity Journal Protocol.....	267
Appendix N: Dimensions of Mentors’ Roles.....	268

List of Tables

Table 1: Mentor Cases	54
Table 2: Case Settings.....	55
Table 3: Data Source by Research Question.....	56
Table 4: Data Collection Timeline.....	60

List of Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework	45
Figure 2: Data Collection Events and Average Timeline	57
Figure 3: Data Analysis Procedures.....	68
Figure 4: Factors that Influence Situated Agency in Mentoring Worlds.....	190

Chapter 1: Introduction

The topic of inclusion has been a mainstay in educational reform since the passage of PL 94-142 in 1975. The inclusion movement was founded on principles of social justice and civil rights; however, the associated terminology and subsequent reauthorizations of the law were vague, leaving school systems responsible for local interpretation and implementation (Winzer, 2009). Since its inception, inclusion has been predominately viewed as an educational placement option for students with disabilities (Zigmond et al., 2009). This conception and approach to inclusion established a set of rigid boundaries between general education and special education systems that persist today.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, the implementation of inclusion and special education in schools began to be scrutinized (Zigmond et al., 2009). Scholars (e.g., Gartner and Lipskey, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984) asserted that segregated special education settings did not benefit students with disabilities and questioned the need for a separate educational system. Advocates insisted that federal special education mandates allowed schools to justify the segregation of students with disabilities (see Connor & Ferri, 2007). At the same time, scholars began to criticize traditional approaches to instruction in general education settings, citing current practices as insufficient for meeting the needs of a diverse student population (Zigmond et al., 2009). Despite mounting criticism, reforms aimed at improving both general education and special education systems (e.g., standards-based reforms, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990)) failed to provide the majority of students with disabilities access to the full range of educational opportunities available to most students (Connor & Ferri, 2007). In the last decade, the terminology and conceptualization of inclusion has continued to expand. The term ‘inclusive education’, (e.g., Artiles et al., 2011; Baglieri et al., 2011a; Kozleski & Waitoller,

2010) is increasingly used to conceptualize inclusion as a movement to transform educational structures and cultural practices that reify oppression and perpetuate exclusion. Today, the terminology and concept of inclusion continues to be highly contested, drawing many of the same debates, criticisms, and varied interpretations since the passage of PL 94-142 (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Connor & Ferri, 2007).

While inclusion is conceptualized and described in various ways (Artiles et al., 2006; Oyler, 2011), it is an approach to education rooted in principles of social justice. As a philosophy and practice, inclusive education assumes that all students have the right to access and meaningfully engage in the full range of educational opportunities (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Slee, 2001). It is a process that seeks to transform cultural practices that uphold notions of normalcy while simultaneously stigmatizing students who do not fit the dominant construct of “average” (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Graham & Slee, 2008). However, education systems continue to struggle with understanding and enacting practices that truly advance inclusive and equitable education for all students (Baglieri et al., 2011a). For example, most students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) spend the majority of the school day in segregated settings, and data from the last decade reveals that little progress has been made to increase access to inclusive education for students with these labels (Morningstar et al., 2017). Additionally, students of color who have a disability are often multiply-marginalized and experience higher rates of exclusion, limited access to rigorous academic instruction, and lasting adverse effects from schooling (Artiles, 2003). Current approaches to inclusion, which primarily conceptualize inclusion as a place, reinforce narratives and practices that segregate and discriminate against students with disabilities (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

Providing inclusive educational experiences for all students often requires a total

reconceptualization of traditional concepts of disability and inclusion. Educators must reimagine the rigid structures and systems of schooling and interrogate the cultural norms that are often used to justify segregation (Connor & Valle, 2015). However, educational systems are often resistant to systemic changes, such as shifting from segregated special education services to inclusive schooling (Ryndak et al., 2013). In schools that maintain traditional approaches to inclusion and special education, teachers can play a critical role in the success or failure of inclusive education (Pantić & Florian, 2015; Schlessinger, 2018). Some argue that inclusive reform is best achieved by starting at the grassroots level with teachers challenging and reframing marginalizing practices and narratives (Schlessinger, 2018). In particular, special education teachers are positioned by schools in ways that make them key change agents. They are often the individuals responsible for determining if and how students with disabilities can access inclusive environments (Siuty, 2019a). Therefore, they need the knowledge and skills to navigate complex, sociocultural and historical contexts, and enact practices that advance inclusive education.

The Role of a Special Education Teacher

Special education teachers (SETs) assume roles in schools that are crucial for advancing and sustaining inclusive approaches to education for students with disabilities. At the boundary between special and general education, SETs are predominately positioned as “gatekeepers” of students with disabilities, interpreting the conditions that are necessary for students to access all or some educational opportunities available to the majority of students with dominant identities (Siuty, 2019a, p. 1032). With this social positioning, SETs must understand the politics of their contexts, and be strategic in how they enact practices and narratives that will counter deficit-based assumptions about students with disabilities and create the conditions for inclusive

education. Some SETs report experiencing a high degree of autonomy in making educational decisions for their students with disabilities (Timberlake, 2016). Furthermore, research (Timberlake, 2014; 2016) suggests that special education teachers who primarily teach in segregated settings often rely on their ethics and ideological beliefs about disability and education to make decisions about which students should access general curriculum and inclusive opportunities. This approach emphasizes the need for SETs to develop inclusive pedagogies and agency that allows them to advance inclusion in contexts undergirded by multiple, overlapping systems of oppression.

Inclusive education depends on the capacity of educators to contextualize their practices to meet the needs of students with marginalized identities and provide them with the same intellectual and social capital afforded to students from the dominant culture (e.g., white, middle class, English speaking, abled, cis-gendered, heterosexual). Inclusion requires that teachers develop pedagogical content knowledge to collaboratively create classroom communities that respect and value difference, but also provide instruction that is rigorous and meaningful. SETs must be skilled in leveraging the expertise of families and educational team members to eliminate ideological and environmental barriers to inclusive education and utilize practices that are responsive to students' multiple identities and needs (Graff & Vazquez, 2014; Sullivan et al., 2014). Additionally, teachers need to work with colleagues and families to ensure that the curriculum and classroom interactions build on students' strengths and align with the identities of students in significant ways (Gonzalez & Mulligan, 2014). SETs have to develop a critical consciousness and recognize practices and narratives maintain a "caste-like system" that categorizes students based on the label of disability (Connor, 2013, p. 495). In order to do so, educators must continuously critically reflect on issues of power and privilege that arise from

dominant approaches to education (Furman, 2012). They must have the capacity to navigate and positively influence complex contexts where political, social, cultural, and historical discourses interact to maintain systems that segregate and devalue students (Connor & Ferri, 2007).

Developing the capacity to advance inclusive and equitable education is no easy feat. According to Oyler (2011), “Facilitating access of the most marginalized children and youth and creating pedagogically inclusive learning experiences is no doubt very sophisticated pedagogy and must be approached as a work in progress, and a goal to move toward” (p. 209). Throughout their careers, SETs will need to continuously build their capacity and reconstruct their professional identities as inclusive educators in ways that allow them to continually challenge and transform the systems and structures that reify ableism and other social inequities.

Beginning Special Education Teachers

Many beginning SETs enter the profession with an understanding of the social and academic benefits of inclusion that they learned through their preparation program (Gee & Gonsier-Gerdin, 2018). However, for many, their conceptions of inclusion may be limited to a “superficial and technical understanding” (Kurth & Foley, 2014, p. 274). Beginning SETs often report being ill-prepared for delivering inclusive and equitable practices, such as strategies for meaningfully engaging and teaching students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Chu, 2011; Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007). Few special education teacher preparation programs frame inclusion as a social justice issue, and many beginning SETs enter the profession without understanding the interconnected nature of disability and other historically marginalized identities (Lalvani, 2013). Unfortunately, many beginning SETs enter the field with a limited critical consciousness toward social identity markers aside from disability (Pugach & Blanton, 2012) or the ability navigate a new system to address marginalizing

practices and narratives (Gee & Gonsier-Gerdin, 2018; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013).

Furthermore, many have difficulty applying the theory learned in their preparation programs to the realities of teaching and school contexts (Blanton & Pugach, 2007). Even if beginning SETs enter the profession with the capacity to enact inclusive practices, without a network of support, they are likely to revert to the prevailing practices and discourse of their school when they encounter tensions (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010).

The induction years of a teacher's career are pivotal in shaping their ideologies and the pedagogies that will guide their careers (Billingsley et al., 2009). When beginning SETs enter the field, they are at a critical point in constructing their professional identities as inclusive educators (Rood & Ashby, 2017; Schlessinger, 2018). They can develop the cultural practices that are common in their contexts and become complicit in systems that reify ableism. Or they can develop the skills and ideological commitments necessary for creating and sustaining equitable and humanizing education for students with disabilities. At this crucial point in their careers, beginning SETs' professional identities and agency are greatly influenced by their school contexts. The elements of their contexts that influence identity construction may include their schools' cultural norms and practices, their relationships and interactions with colleagues, and professional development experiences (e.g., Jones, 2004; Naraian, 2010; Rood & Ashby, 2017). Therefore, who they become as educators is largely connected to their school contexts and professional experiences during their induction years.

Beginning SETs often begin their careers in school systems designed to devalue and segregate students with disabilities (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Connor, 2013). Additionally, they are likely to work in schools where their colleagues may hold deficit-based beliefs about students (Lalvani, 2013; Woodcock & Handy, 2017a) and enact practices without considering students'

multiple identities (Chu, 2013). Furthermore, beginning SETs may encounter resistance when their ideals oppose dominant ideologies about students with disabilities and special education (Brown et al., 2016). Therefore, beginning SETs often require support to navigate the politics of their contexts and the tensions that may arise while enacting inclusive practices (Gee & Gonsier-Gerdin, 2018).

Induction mentoring is one mechanism for facilitating beginning teachers' socialization into the profession (Hobson et al., 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Without appropriate and effective mentorship, beginning SETs may be socialized into dominant discursive contexts and adopt the practices and narratives that surround them. Specifically, beginning SETs require support early in their careers to develop their capacity to critically reflect on their professional identity, practices, and the systems in which they work. They must do this all while constructing inclusive pedagogies and building their capacity to act in ways that advance inclusion. Thus, effective mentoring may be essential to their development as inclusive educators.

Induction Mentoring

Mentoring is a widely accepted method for reducing teacher attrition, developing pedagogical content knowledge, and preparing teachers to work within the cultures of schools (Billingsley et al., 2009; Hobson et al., 2009). It encompasses a variety of practices designed to support beginning teachers with developing expertise and learning the intricacies of the profession (Hobson et al., 2009). Because of its potential for increasing teaching quality and improving student outcomes, most states have developed programs that provide some form of mentoring to beginning SETs (Müller & Burdette, 2007). Given their influence in developing beginning SETs' pedagogical content knowledge and supporting their socialization into the

profession (Billingsley et al., 2009), mentors must understand their role and influence in inclusive education.

Problem Statement

Inclusion has been a significant component of educational reform for decades; however, the definition and practice of inclusion continues to be a contentious issue (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Brantlinger, 2006; Connor & Ferri, 2007). In practice, inclusive education has been described in conflicting ways as both beneficial and damaging to students with disabilities (Connor & Ferri, 2007; Gerrard, 1994). The prevailing conceptualization of inclusion includes underlying deficit-based assumptions and narratives that continue to segregate students with disabilities (Baglieri et al., 2011a). Scholars suggest that teachers are well positioned to disrupt patterns of inequities and create inclusive and participatory educational opportunities for all students (Lalas, 2007; Pantić & Florian, 2015). The power and influence teachers have in inclusive reform emphasizes the need for beginning teachers to develop the capacity to recognize and disrupt dominant practices and systems that dehumanize and exclude students with marginalized identities.

Teacher induction and mentoring is an essential method for creating and sustaining critically inclusive schools (Kinsella & Senior, 2008). Many experts view mentoring as a tool for educational reform (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Wang & Odell, 2002). Mentoring can take various forms and serve different purposes and the role of mentors is conceptualized and enacted in multiple ways (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993; Wang, 2001). In a review of the extant literature on mentoring, Wang (2018) identified three key functions of induction mentoring: (a) mentoring in service of professional development, (b) mentoring in service of reproducing existing teaching practices, and (c) mentoring in service of teaching transformation. Therefore, mentors may enact their role in ways that can reproduce the cultural norms and practices of

schools, or use their position to support beginning teachers with challenging the status quo (Stanulis & Brondyk, 2013; Wang, 2018). When viewed as an instrument for transformation, mentoring supports beginning teachers in examining their practices and adopting strategies that challenge the status quo. This approach to mentoring supports beginning teachers and mentors in dismantling and reshaping the cultural practices of teaching (Wang & Odell, 2007).

Mentoring that is in service of transformation is critical for beginning SETs because they often enter school systems designed to sort and segregate students with disabilities (Bagierli et al., 2011a). To transgress traditional systems and provide students with equitable and just education, beginning SETs must build their capacity to critically reflect, recognize marginalizing systems and practices, and adopt practices that disrupt deficit-based narratives and traditional approaches to special education (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). Effective mentoring that focuses on transformation has the potential to support beginning SETs in advancing equitable and just education for students with disabilities. Given their role of facilitating socialization into the profession and developing beginning teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, it is essential that mentors' ideological beliefs and practices advance inclusive education and that they view their role as a mentor in service of transformation.

Sustained, systemic change requires an in-depth examination of the impact of mentoring on school reform. Traditional, hierarchical mentoring relationships suggest that mentors impart their knowledge and expertise onto beginning teachers, which can reproduce social norms and maintain oppressive approaches to schooling depending on the identity of the mentor. Yet, mentoring has the potential to be a “driving force in socializing the transformational leaders being sought by calls for reform” (Cline & Necochea, 1997, p. 147). The ability of a mentor to engage in transformational mentoring is dependent on their ability to recognize their role in

disrupting patterns of inequities. Exploring how mentors interpret and enact their identity, and conceptualize inclusion have implications for how they leverage mentoring to support beginning SETs in reproducing or disrupting traditional conceptions of special education and inclusion.

Study Purpose

There is limited research that explores how mentors of beginning SETs make sense of who they are and what they are capable of impacting as a mentor, particularly within the context of inclusive education. This study sought to understand how mentors interpret and enact their identity, and perceive their agency in advancing inclusive education. Knowledge of mentors' identities, which includes their past experiences and current practices, is the first step in understanding if and how mentoring can be used as a tool for transformation. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do mentors' lived histories influence their interpretation and enactment of their mentor identity?
2. How do mentors of beginning special education teachers conceptualize inclusion?
3. How do mentors of beginning special education teachers perceive their agency in advancing inclusion?

Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following key terms are defined as follows. These terms will also be expanded upon in subsequent chapters.

- *Ableism*: A pervasive system of discrimination and oppression that ascribes value and worth to individuals “based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, excellence and productivity” (Lewis, 2020, para. 1). It is categorized as a form of systemic oppression based on an individual's ability to demonstrate behaviors

congruent with prevailing ideologies of normalcy (Hehir, 2002).

- *Beginning Special Education Teacher*: A person in their first three years of teaching who is certified and employed as a special education teacher (Billingsley et al., 2009). This person may work in or across a variety of contexts and are legally responsible for the design and delivery of specially designed instruction for students with disabilities.
- *Disability*: Disability is an actively constructed social category and identity marker associated with ability. Individuals are either disabled or enabled by social contexts, which includes aspects of the environment, prevailing norms, and values (Varenne & McDermott, 1999). However, the term is predominately conceptualized as conditions of the mind and/or body that deviate from dominant conceptions of normal (Siebers, 2008). Individuals with this identity marker experience it in different ways depending on the sociocultural context, which includes institutionalized norms and practices, interactions with people or the environment, and the opportunities afforded (Varenne & McDermott, 1999). While disability can be experienced differently, it is often situated within sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts, such as schools, that marginalize and segregate individuals labeled with a disability (Zion & Blanchett, 2011).
- *Inclusion/Inclusive education*: This manuscript uses the terms inclusion and inclusive education interchangeably to reflect the language used by both scholars and practitioners concerned with transforming education systems to be more equitable, inclusive, and participatory. While there is a clear distinction between the terms in the literature (e.g., Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011; Baglieri et al., 2011a; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010), participants in this study were situated within contexts where terms

stemming from inclusion (e.g., inclusionary practices, inclusive education, inclusion) were used interchangeably. The concept of inclusive education constitutes a philosophy, relevant ideologies, and cultural practices (Baglieri et al., 2011a). It is the process of creating educational experiences and contexts where all students with marginalized identities are provided with the same intellectual and social capital afforded to students from the dominant culture. It involves (a) continual examination of practices and systems to ensure all students have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities, (b) respecting and honoring difference, and (c) engaging students and families in educational decisions (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013).

- *Special Education Mentor*: An experienced educational professional whose assigned roles include mentoring at least one beginning SET. Mentors are either employed as a mentor, or hold other primary positions that include the responsibilities of mentoring or are in addition to their primary role and responsibilities.

Organization of the Manuscript

The chapters that follow describe how I understand the phenomena of the study and the methodology for examining how mentors make sense of who they are and what they can do within the context of inclusion. Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature to situate the study in the empirical and conceptual knowledge base and expand upon it. Chapter 3 describes the theoretical and conceptual framing of the study and the research methods employed to explore mentors' constructed identities, their conception of inclusion, and their understanding of their agency in advancing inclusive education. Chapter 4 presents the findings from each individual case study and chapter 5 discusses common themes and differences across cases. The dissertation concludes with a discussion and implications for practice and research in chapter 6.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the present study was to understand how mentors of beginning special education teachers (SETs) interpret and enact their identity, conceptualize inclusion, and view their agency in advancing inclusive education. This chapter broadly explores the conceptual and empirical literature related to (a) the constructs of professional identity and agency, (b) induction mentoring, and (c) the concept of inclusion and educator agency within the context of inclusive education. Collectively, the bodies of literature reviewed illustrate the significance and implications of the extant literature in relation to the present study. Furthermore, the reviewed literature was used to guide the methodology of the study.

Professional Identity

There are various definitions of professional identity in the conceptual and empirical literature on teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004). Yet, educational researchers most often apply the theoretical construct of identity used in social sciences (e.g., Erickson, 1959; Holland et al., 1998; Mead, 1934) to understand various aspects of teachers' identities and agency. Through a review of the literature on teacher identity, Beijaard and colleagues (2004) identified several tenets of teachers' professional identities: (a) identity development is continuous and dynamic, (b) identity is situated and therefore shaped by a teachers' professional context, (c) teachers construct multiple identities which they must balance within and across contexts, and (d) professional identity encompasses teacher agency. Additionally, when educators are situated within sociocultural and historical contexts, such as schools, their constructed identities must be viewed through a lens that accounts for their lived histories and the context in which they are situated (Holland & Lave, 2001). These components of identity construction and enactment allow researchers to understand how teachers make sense of and perform their identity within

specific contexts, such as the classroom or broader school context.

Researchers have used the construct of professional identity to understand the identity and actions of pre-service teachers (e.g., Rood & Ashby, 2017; Sugrue, 1997), beginning teachers (e.g., Devos, 2010; Volkman & Anderson, 1998), and experienced teachers (e.g., Cohen, 2008; Thorius, 2016). Because professional identities are multidimensional and situated within contexts, researchers typically explore specific aspects of educators' identities, such as their identity as a cooperating teacher for preservice teachers (e.g., Bullough, 2005), identity in relation to social justice principles (e.g., Boylan & Woolsey, 2015), and pre-service teachers' inclusive educator identities (e.g., Rood & Ashby, 2017). To understand situated identities, researchers often examine participants' narratives because they are considered a reflection and expression of constructed identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Educators' narratives provide insight into internal thought processes and aspects of identity that are not directly observable, such as their assumptions and beliefs about students' identities, that directly influence how they interpret and enact their professional identities.

The construct of professional identity is essential to understanding educator development and actions (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). According to Sutherland et al. (2010), "Teachers' identities are central to their beliefs, values and practices that guide their actions within and outside of the classroom" (p. 459). Professional identities guide educators' commitments, priorities, and dispositions (Hammerness, 2006). Researchers emphasize that by enacting their professional identity, educators develop agency that can empower them to achieve specific goals or transform conditions of their contexts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Therefore, the construct of identity provides a theoretical lens for researchers to understand how educators make sense of issues of education and either participate in or resist deficit-oriented

narratives, and their effectiveness in disrupting patterns of inequities.

Educator Agency

Professional identity and agency are inextricably connected. Agency is an enactment of identity and is conceptualized as an individuals' belief that they are capable of acting within their context and their specific actions (Danielewicz, 2001). Agency manifests in many ways and can have a significant impact on the success or failure of school reform. According to Gourd (2019), agency is "expressed in the choices you make and do not make, the questions you ask, the moments you keep silent and the moments when you raise your voice in advocacy" (p. 9). Teacher resistance to dominant discourses, their actions to transform narratives and practices, and their advocacy for students and families, are all expressions of agency (Peters & Reid, 2008). However, agency is situated within contexts and a product of constructed identities (Beijaard et al., 2004), which can explain variability in teachers' practices and narratives across contexts. Agency is influenced by social positioning, which moderates the degree of autonomy and power that educators have in specific contexts and situations (Archer, 2000). Therefore, the way educators interpret their identity and social positioning influences their perceived agency. Research on educator agency within the context of inclusive education is presented later in this chapter in conjunction with the reviewed literature on the concept of inclusion.

Identity Construction and Enactment Within the Context of Inclusion and Exclusion

The empirical knowledge base on teacher identity within the context of inclusion and exclusion provides an understanding of how teachers' lived histories and elements of their contexts contribute to their constructed identity. I describe four studies to illustrate how teachers situated in sociocultural and historical contexts construct their identities in relation to the concept of inclusion. Collectively, these four studies allow for a deeper understanding of how the extant

literature conceptualizes and examines professional identity.

Jones (2004) studied the identities of 14 special education teachers who taught students with disabilities in segregated settings. By primarily utilizing data from interviews and focus groups, Jones found that teachers constructed their identities by making sense of (a) their teaching experiences and relationships with their colleagues, (b) their experiences and knowledge from their teacher preparation programs, (c) professional development opportunities, and (d) their lived histories. The study's findings underscore the importance of exploring educators' past personal, educational, and professional experiences in order to understand how they make sense of who they are as a professional. In this study, teachers conceptualized their professional identities as unique and entirely different than their perception of general education teachers' identities. Their constructed identity included deep commitments to students and families, the desire to make a difference, and beliefs about the differences between students with disabilities and their peers in "mainstream contexts" (p. 159). According to the participants, the validation they received from other special education teachers reinforced their identity but also contributed to their perception of the differences between special education and general education contexts. However, the teachers believed that people without experience with special education viewed their social status as lower than that of general education teachers. This perception of their social positioning and identity acted to distance them from general education teachers, which reinforced the binary of general and special education. While this study did not directly explore how special education teachers construct their identities within inclusive spaces, it does provide insight into how identity construction within contexts of exclusion contributes to the resistance or reinforcement of segregating practices and narratives. According to Jones, special education teachers' perception of their identity and emphasis on being different

strengthened the discourse and practices that maintained the segregation of special education teachers and their students.

Within contexts of inclusion and exclusion, Siuty (2019a) researched how physical space influenced special education teachers' identity construction. Siuty collected data from interviews and reflexive video analysis of teachers' classroom practices, to understand how special education teachers make sense of their identities and how their practices and narratives supported or challenged ableism within their contexts. The teachers constructed their identities as special educators by making meaning of (a) segregated special education spaces and their role within those spaces, (b) their students' social positioning within the school context, and (c) their social positioning in relation to their colleagues' professional identities. Situated at the boundary of segregated special education and "inclusive" general education settings, the teachers understood their role as a "gatekeeper" (p. 1032). Their identities included the role of determining which students were "ready" for inclusion and facilitating the assimilation of students with disabilities into dominant and abled spaces. While teachers felt their school forced the identity of gatekeeper onto them, it was an integral component of their identities as special education teachers. The findings suggest that while special education teachers recognized problematic discourses and practices, they believed their agency was limited and saw few opportunities to advance critical inclusion. The findings of this study emphasize how teachers' interpretation of their social positioning and the ways they make meaning of their contexts mediate professional identity construction. Additionally, this study provides an understanding of how teachers' constructed identities influence how they perceive their role and agency in disrupting marginalizing narratives and practices in schools.

Naraian (2010) examined how one special education teacher constructed her identity

within the context of a co-taught classroom. Utilizing data from interviews, classroom observations, and artifacts, Naraian found that the teacher's identity and enactment of inclusive practices changed in response to being partnered with a different co-teaching partner. This shift in identity was attributed to the teacher's interpretation of her relationship with her teaching partner and social status. When the teacher changed teaching partners, she advocated for using her dual endorsement to be positioned as the general education teacher in the co-teaching partnership. This positioning, as well as her relationship with a new teaching partner, allowed her to reconstruct her professional identity. As a result, she enacted inclusive practices that removed barriers in the environment to meet students' needs, such as the eliminating the prescribed pacing of the curriculum. The teacher constructed her identity using (a) her professional preparation program experiences, (b) the meaning she made from her dual certification and assigned title, (c) interactions with her teaching partners, and (d) her perceived social positioning. The schools' assigned roles for general education and special education teachers positioned her in a supportive role with lower social status when she was assigned the role of special education teacher. When she was positioned as the general education teacher, she believed that she had more power and agency in enacting inclusive practices. These findings emphasize how social positioning influences how educators interpret and enact their identities, and provide a strong example of how identity mediates agency within the context of inclusion.

Thorius (2016) explored how professional learning around the concept of critical inclusion and related tools shaped special education teachers' identities. Thorius examined teachers' discourse during professional learning opportunities for instances of critical or dominant ideologies and narratives about students with disabilities and education to understand shifts in teachers' professional identity and interpretation of their contexts. The identities of the

special education teachers initially included the roles of remediating and diagnosing student differences. This concept of identity included their belief that students with disabilities deviated from what was considered to be normal. As the teachers engaged in professional learning and integrated new tools into their practice, their identities shifted. Their newly constructed identities included the role of collaborating with their general education colleagues to critically examine practices and co-planning instruction that was appropriate for all learners. Throughout the professional learning experience, special education teachers deconstructed their professional identities and reconstructed their identities in ways that aligned with the role of an inclusive educator. According to Thorius, “inclusive educators look for ways to reframe interpretations of difference as problematic to the problematic ways students are treated in relation to difference, including their own roles in problematic situations” (p. 1338). The findings from this study demonstrate how professional development can mediate identity construction and enacted practices in ways that challenge traditional assumptions about special education and advance inclusive education.

The findings from the four studies provide an understanding of how identity is conceptualized in the empirical literature on professional identity within the context of inclusion and exclusion. Collectively, this research suggests that the construct of identity includes components such as educators’ (a) social positioning, (b) constructed understanding of role, (c) enacted practices, (d) commitments and priorities, and (e) beliefs and assumptions about students and instruction. These studies also identify factors that can mediate educators’ identity construction and enactment, such as lived histories, professional development, and job titles.

Significance and Implications for Understanding Mentor Identities

Understanding professional identity is critical to understanding how educators either

challenge or reinforce marginalizing practices in schools. While much is known about educator identity (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamps & Thomas, 2009), little is known about their interpretation and enactment of other identities as professionals, such as an induction mentor. The concept of mentor identity is largely unexplored in the extant empirical and conceptual literature (Lesham, 2014). Given their potential for influencing beginning teachers' practices and beliefs, a better understanding of how mentors construct their identities and perceive their agency is needed. The next section explores the literature on induction mentoring and mentor identities.

Induction Mentoring

Mentoring beginning teachers is a well-established approach to reducing attrition and increasing teacher quality (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). It encompasses a variety of practices that experienced educators use to support beginning teachers while they develop expertise and learn to navigate the complexities of the profession (Hobson et al., 2009). Research on induction and mentoring programs has increased over the last few decades. Several literature reviews contribute to understanding the topic, but also highlight multiple approaches to mentoring and variable effects. Literature reviews have synthesized the empirical literature on the topics of induction and mentoring for all teachers (e.g., Feiman-Nemser et al., 1998; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wang, 2018), various aspects of mentoring and the effect on beginning teachers (e.g., Hobson et al., 2009; Wang, 2018), and induction and mentoring of beginning SETs (e.g., Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Billingsley et al., 2009; Griffin, 2010). The mentoring literature has examined various aspects of mentoring, such as the elements and structures of induction and mentoring programs (e.g., Gherke & McCoy, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), mentoring practices (e.g., Strong & Baron, 2003; Wang, 2001), the personal and professional characteristics of mentors (e.g., Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017; Whitaker, 2000), and the content or focus of

mentoring (e.g., Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007). Despite the research on mentoring, scholars (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) contend that the extant literature contains various conceptions of mentoring and gaps in knowledge, which have resulted in an incomplete understanding and competing conceptions of effective mentoring.

While it can be argued that mentoring beginning SETs is qualitatively different from mentoring beginning general education teachers due to perceived differences in roles, I situate the proposed study in the broad literature base of induction mentoring. The extant literature on mentoring beginning SETs is often narrowly explored and conceptualized as a tool for retention (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009). The present study assumes that mentoring occurs in complex socio-cultural contexts, where cultural, historical, and institutional factors continually influence how educators develop their professional identities. Therefore, I draw on conceptual and empirical literature on induction mentoring that aligns with the purposes and assumptions of the present study. Specifically, I use the extant literature to provide an overview of who mentors are and their professional development, their role, and the context of mentoring. I conclude by describing the significance of the existing literature in relation to the present study and implications for understanding the identities of mentors.

Mentors and Their Professional Development

School districts typically recruit and assign teacher leaders or experienced teachers to the formal role of mentor (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003). For beginning SETs, there is an increased emphasis on assigning experienced special education teachers as mentors; however, this may not always be possible due to the shortage of experienced special education teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2012). The literature suggests that the experience of mentors of beginning SETs ranges, with studies reporting that mentors had three years of teaching experience (Kennedy &

Burnstein, 2004) to teachers with the highest rank in their district (Israel et al., 2014). Selecting mentors based on years of experience may be problematic depending on how mentors construct their identities as mentors and teachers. For example, Jones and Straker (2006) found that in the absence of training, mentors relied on their knowledge and experience of teaching to guide their mentoring practice. However, scholars suggest that not all experienced teachers are capable of effective mentoring (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012; Wang, 2001). Furthermore, research suggests that some characteristics of mentors and how they enact their roles can have adverse effects on beginning teachers, such as constraining beginning teachers' professional growth (see Hobson et al., 2009). These findings emphasize the need for training and continued support for mentors as they learn their role and develop their identities as mentors.

Not all mentors receive initial training or ongoing professional development in their role. However, research indicates that mentoring-specific professional development opportunities are associated with higher job satisfaction (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012), a deeper understanding of high-quality teaching practices and mentoring strategies (Mathur et al., 2013), and improved beginning teacher practices (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). Several studies (e.g., Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Stanulis & Ames, 2009; Stanulis & Brondyk, 2013) have further explored mentor training to understand its impact on mentors and the beginning teachers they support.

Evertson and Smithey (2000) studied the effect of a four-day mentor workshop focused on training mentors to support beginning teachers with the technical aspects of teaching (e.g., lesson planning, classroom management, and goal setting). The researchers randomly assigned mentors from the same school to either a treatment group in which they received professional development or a control group that did not receive any training. Data suggested that beginning teachers who had mentors that engaged in the training used more effective classroom

management and student engagement practices than beginning teachers who were mentored by mentors in the control group. Additionally, students of beginning teachers whose mentors were in the treatment group had higher rates of engagement than students whose beginning teachers received mentoring from a mentor in the control group. These findings suggest that professional development can improve mentoring practices, which in turn may influence beginning teacher practices and student outcomes. However, the researchers noted that most of the mentors in the treatment group used skills from the workshop, but not all. These findings warrant a closer examination of the impact of mentor professional development on their interpretation and enactment of a mentor identity.

Research has expanded on mentor training to explore how mentors' take up new learning from professional development opportunities and enact new practices. Stanulis and Ames (2009) designed a professional development experience for mentors that focused on practical and conceptual mentoring tools for developing beginning teachers' classroom practices. Their study focused on the experiences and actions of a single mentor. They found that the mentor integrated the professional development experience into her existing knowledge and beliefs, and her interactions with beginning teachers to conceptualize her role as a mentor. She enacted practices that were flexible and responsive to beginning teachers and focused on high-quality instruction. Another study provided mentors with targeted training and coaching in reform-oriented strategies (Stanulis & Brondyk, 2013). While the researchers identified professional growth in both mentors, their enactment of the new knowledge varied. In trying to understand this difference in mentors, the researchers identified that the mentors' identity and agency influenced how they enacted their role and the newly learned practices. The findings in these studies suggest that participation in mentoring-specific professional development opportunities can be valuable

and effective in developing mentors' skillset, but there are factors that influence how mentors integrate new knowledge into their constructed mentor identity and understanding of their role.

Mentoring Roles and Functions

There are various descriptions of mentor roles and functions in the extant literature. Many scholars conceptualize the role as an educative mentor (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Fletcher & Strong, 2009). In this role, mentors support beginning teachers' professional development by engaging in collaborative inquiry with a focus on teaching practices, student work, and engaging in ongoing reflection (Feiman-Nemser, 2011; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Others identify the role as a "buddy," providing emotional support and socializing the beginning teacher into the existing school culture (Fletcher & Strong, 2009). Many experts have identified what the role of a mentor should include, such as (a) supporting beginning teachers to critically reflect on their teaching (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1989), (b) preventing beginning SET attrition (e.g., Bay & Park-Katz, 2009), (c) developing beginning teachers' content knowledge (Achinstein & Davis, 2014), (d) supporting beginning teachers in shifting their perspectives on issues of education (Wang, 2018), and (e) developing beginning teachers' advocacy skills (Achinstein, 2006). These multiple roles can be prioritized, interpreted, and enacted in various ways depending on the identity of the mentor and the context in which they practice.

Research demonstrates that mentoring roles and enacted practices widely vary across programs (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992; Wang, 2001). However, in a synthesis of the conceptual and empirical mentoring literature, Wang (2018) identifies three primary mentoring functions (a) mentoring in service of beginning teachers' professional development, (b) mentoring in service of transmitting existing teaching practices, and (c) mentoring in service of transformation. Wang (2018) offers a critique of each function based on how they are described

in the literature. The critical examination of each function emphasizes the need to understand mentors' constructed identity, including their beliefs, assumptions, experiences, priorities, and interpretation of their role, which will allow researchers and practitioners to better understand how mentoring can either reinforce or disrupt status quo approaches to education.

Outcomes of Mentoring

Little is known about how mentoring influences beginning teachers' development of reform-oriented practices (Ingersoll & Smith, 2011; Wang, 2018). While the empirical literature explores various outcomes of mentoring, research has yet to explore the mentoring conditions that advance equity and inclusion for students. The majority of studies focus on the outcomes of beginning teachers without exploring the broader impact of mentoring on school cultures and student experiences. In the area of special education, attention has been given to how beginning SETs develop technical skills as a result of mentoring, such as writing individualized education programs (IEPs) and understanding special education laws and requirements (e.g., Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007; Gehrke & Murri, 2006; Whitaker, 2000). Yet, beginning SETs often report feeling unprepared for implementing inclusive and equitable practices, such as the skills that are necessary to provide meaningful and effective instruction to students with intersecting marginalized identities (Chu, 2011; Irinaga-Bistolas et al., 2007).

In the broader literature base on induction mentoring, scholars have called for a deeper understanding of how mentoring can influence beginning teachers' abilities to critically reflect on their teaching and consider the complexities and multiple-perspectives necessary for utilizing reform-oriented practices (Wang, 2018). The majority of mentoring outcomes studied focus on beginning teachers' commitment to the profession, technical skills (e.g., lesson planning, classroom management practices), and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

However, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) criticize the empirical literature, noting that “research is uncritical to the outcomes examined” (p. 227). While research has explored some meaningful outcomes of mentoring, it has yet to fully understand effective mentoring and how it can influence practices that contribute to equitable and student-centered education. Additionally, Wang (2018), identifies the research on mentoring in service of transformation is underdeveloped, leading to an incomplete understanding of the outcomes associated with this mentoring function. Furthermore, absent from the literature is research that explores how mentoring influences beginning teacher practices, ideologies, or school cultures in ways that advance inclusive education.

Mentor Identities

Few studies have explored the identities of mentors and how they perceive their role. Research on mentor identity grounds professional identity within sociocultural perspectives and acknowledges the influence that social context and lived experience have on identity construction. This section focuses on two studies that provide a deeper understanding of the factors that influence mentors’ identity construction.

Lesham (2014) examined how mentors’ perception of their role impacted their professional identity. They found factors such as mentors’ perceived social positioning, training, discourse, relationships with other mentors, and their teaching identities influenced how the mentors interpreted their identity. The findings from this study suggest that mentors’ identities influenced their professional growth and self-efficacy as mentors. In another study related to mentors’ constructed identities, Stanulis & Brondyk (2013) sought to understand why mentors who engaged in the same training program enacted mentoring practices differently. In doing so, they indirectly examined the identities of mentors and how their identities mediated practice. The

researchers found that personal history, professional experience, perception of social positioning, and relationships and inherent power dynamics, influenced how they saw themselves as mentors. Stanulis and Brondyk (2013) found that these contextual variables shaped mentors' identities and agency, which influenced how mentors enacted new practices. While mentors' identities are underexplored in the literature, these findings underscore the influence that mentors' identities can have on their practices and agency.

Significance and Implications for Understanding Mentor Identities

The extant conceptual and empirical literature emphasizes the need for a deeper understanding of who mentors are, how they enact their identity, and their priorities in influencing beginning teachers' practices and school culture. However, there is a lack of research on mentors. In particular, little attention is given to understanding how mentors construct their identities (Lesham, 2014) and their perceptions of the politics of teaching and education systems (Achinstein, 2006). Mentoring is situated within complex sociocultural and historical contexts, and research demonstrates how mentors' interpretation of social positioning and contextual factors influence how they interpret their identity and agency (Stanulis & Brondyk, 2013). In exploring how identity is constructed, it is necessary to view identity construction from a sociocultural lens and examine how mentors' interpretations of their contexts shape their understanding of who they are and what they can do as a mentor.

The Concept of Inclusion

Conceptually, the definition of inclusion has multiple and often opposing meanings (Artiles et al., 2006; Oyler, 2011). In practice, research suggests that inclusion is understood and taken up in various ways (Nusbaum, 2013; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017a; Zigmond et al., 2009). Since the passage of PL 14-142 in 1975, scholars and practitioners have struggled to

operationalize inclusion through defining where education should occur, what it should entail, and how it should be delivered (Zigmond et al., 2009). The questions of *where*, *what*, and *how* often provide criteria for conceptualizing inclusion. However, Armstrong et al., (2011) identify additional questions that should be asked to determine if educational spaces are truly inclusive. The questions include: “Who is thought to be in need of inclusion and why? If education should be inclusive, then what practices is it contesting, what common values is it advocating and by what criteria should its success be judged” (Armstrong et al., 2011, p. 30). These questions emphasize the complexities of conceptualizing inclusion within sociocultural, historical, and institutional contexts, such as schools. The questions suggest that conceptions of inclusion should include educators’ ideological beliefs, including their underlying assumptions about students and education, as well as an examination of how educators’ actions challenge or maintain current practices. The definitional boundaries of inclusion are unclear and interpreted in various ways. The concept itself is multidimensional, which poses challenges to researchers and educators trying to understand and create the conditions for inclusive education.

Despite variability in how inclusion is operationalized, there is an extensive empirical knowledge base on the topic. Research has explored aspects of inclusion such as structural and programmatic components (e.g., Alquraini & Gut, 2012), professional development on inclusive practices (e.g., Waitoller & Artiles, 2013), teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of inclusion (e.g., de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996), and the relationship between inclusion and student outcomes (e.g., Choi et al., 2016; Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Ryndak et al., 2010). Despite the broad empirical literature base, research maintains a narrow focus within the concept of inclusion. Empirically, the definitions and practices of inclusion are predominately rooted in the assumption that inclusion refers to a place and is an educational issue focused on

students with disabilities (Artiles et al., 2006; Armstrong et al., 2011; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017b). This dominant conception of inclusion often reinforces the polarity of general education and special education, or inclusionary versus exclusionary contexts. However, the conceptual literature grounded in critical perspectives assumes that inclusion is a process and fundamentally an issue of social justice concerning all students (e.g., Artiles et al., 2006; Baglieri et al., 2011a; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). A critical perspective of inclusion has been used by researchers as an analytic lens to understand how educators' practices and narratives either reinforce or challenge dominant conceptions and approaches to inclusion (e.g., Lalvani, 2013; Rood & Ashby, 2017; Schlessinger, 2018). Given divergent ideological perspectives and notions of inclusion, researchers continue to explore the multiple dimensions of inclusion in different ways to better understand how education systems can advance inclusive reform. The following sections explore the empirical literature to describe how inclusion is conceptualized in research and how teachers' conceptions of inclusion disrupt or reinforce inequities in their contexts.

Educators' Conceptions of Inclusion

One critical component of educators' conceptions of inclusion is their ideological beliefs (Brantlinger, 2004; Nusbaum, 2013; Ware, 2002). Ideologies reflect how educators understand "the social, cultural, and moral parameters surrounding the position of disability in school" (Nusbaum, 2013, p. 1308). Exploring educators' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about inclusion is one method for understanding their ideologies. There is an abundance of research that examines teachers' attitudes or beliefs about inclusion (see de Boer et al., 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). In a review of the literature on general education teachers' beliefs and attitudes about inclusion, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) categorized the research findings into categories such as teachers' willingness to teach students with disabilities, perceptions of effects

that students with disabilities will have on the classroom, and degree of support for inclusion. In a more recent review of the literature on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, de Boer et al. (2011), categorized studies on teachers' feelings and attitudes toward inclusion. While the empirical literature on teachers' attitudes and beliefs is expansive, teacher ideologies also include their assumptions, biases, values, and cultural beliefs about students, learning, and education. Exploring how these aspects of educators' ideologies relate to moral and pedagogical commitments can contribute to advancing a more just and humanizing education system.

Inclusion is multidimensional and embedded within sociocultural contexts, making it difficult to conceptualize and operationalize. Fewer studies (e.g., Kurth & Foley, 2014; Lalvani, 2013; Nusbaum, 2013; Woodcock & Handy, 2017a) have explored beyond teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions to understand how they operationalize inclusion. These studies provide knowledge of dimensions and concepts that are included in educators' definitions of inclusion. This section describes three studies that explored educators' conceptualizations of inclusion in order to understand how this broad and contested topic has been researched and defined.

Kurth and Foley (2014) interviewed preservice teachers, their cooperating teachers, university fieldwork supervisors, and university faculty to understand how they defined inclusive education. The researchers found that preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers predominately defined inclusion as a special education placement option *or* as students with disabilities participating in activities in general education settings. Some preservice teachers conceptualized it as mainstreaming, where students with disabilities were viewed more as visitors in general education settings. The cooperating teachers often used deficit-based language to describe students, citing students' abilities as the reason for exclusion. The university fieldwork supervisors conceptualized inclusion as both an educational placement *and*

participation of students with disabilities in general education classes. The three groups mostly defined inclusion as a technical practice or a federal requirement, ultimately conceptualizing inclusion as a special education issue. University faculty provided the most multifaceted definitions, conceptualizing inclusion as an issue of social justice concerned with all students educated together and their needs being met within the classroom. Their conceptualizations included the assumption that all students can benefit and learn within inclusive contexts. In their responses, they described the ideals of valuing and understanding students and teaching to the needs and strengths of students. The researchers found that definitions of inclusive education were variable across the four roles, but themes pertaining to *where*, *what*, and *how* emerged as parameters of the definitions. These categories provide a lens for exploring both the technical aspects of educators' conceptions of inclusive education and underlying beliefs and assumptions.

Lalvani (2013) studied general and special education teachers' narratives to understand their conception of inclusive education which encompassed dimensions such as (a) who it is for, (b) assumptions about student learning and development, (c) the context for inclusion or exclusion, (d) perceptions of disability, (e) beliefs about special education, and (f) the role of teachers. Teachers' descriptions of inclusion were explored in relation to dominant discourses of special education and inclusion, which provided for a deeper understanding of teachers' ideological beliefs. Lalvani found variability in how teachers described inclusive education, but the majority of teachers described it in ways that were consistent with dominant conceptions of inclusion. Teachers described criteria that were required for students with disabilities to access inclusive education, such as disability labels, abilities, standardized test scores, and student behavior. Teachers reinforced discourses that positioned special education as a location best suited for students with disabilities to receive individualized instruction. Their conceptions were

grounded in the belief that deficits were located in students and that deficits acted as qualifiers for accessing and benefiting from inclusive education. It was predominantly conceptualized as a privilege for some but not all. This belief reinforced the dominant discourse of inclusion being an educational placement option that simultaneously justifies the exclusion for students with disabilities. However, a small group of teachers described competing definitions and ideologies. This group believed that inclusive education benefited all students and was for all students, with the exception of a few. They emphasized that barriers to accessing inclusive education were environmental, and viewed it as an issue of equity. These teachers reflected on the institutional structures and were critical of traditional special education practices and systems, such as IQ testing and segregated spaces. Lalvani's findings provide an understanding of how educators' conceptualizations can be analyzed using a critical lens. This perspective allows researchers to better understand how an educator's conceptualization of inclusive education either reinforces or challenges dominant discourse and ideologies that uphold ableism in schools.

Woodcock and Handy (2017a) used a questionnaire to understand how 120 teachers defined inclusion. The researchers used Fraser's (1997, 2008) framework of social justice as an analytical lens and coded teachers' responses into the categories of (a) resourcing, (b) recognition, and (c) representation of students as learners. They operationalized the concept of resourcing as teachers' comments related to the redistribution of educational resources, specifically looking for teachers' statements that were reflective of equity versus the notion of equality. For example, teachers' comments that defined inclusion as students having their needs met within classrooms with peers, or the idea that inclusion meant that every student is given what they need to learn were coded as resourcing. Recognition was defined as students' social status and the affective dimensions of inclusion. Specifically, teachers' ideas related to how

students felt in inclusive environments were categorized as recognition. Finally, Woodcock and Handy operationalized representation as educators' assumptions about what and how students learn. Within this category, teachers made comments about using and building upon students' strengths, appropriate instructional targets or curriculum, and expectations for students. By using a social justice framework to understand how teachers define inclusion, the researchers were able to use a critical lens to identify teachers' narratives that aligned with the dominant conception of inclusion. This study demonstrates how teachers' statements can be analyzed to understand how they conceptualize inclusion and their underlying ideologies. Additionally, the study provides an understanding of the different components that can be used to understand if educators' conceptualizations align with either dominant or critical conceptions of inclusion. Specifically, Woodcock and Handy suggest that teachers' conceptions of inclusion within an equity paradigm should include ideas that relate to (a) equitable learning opportunities and resources, (b) students' emotional well-being and social positioning, and (c) student-centered approaches to education.

Collectively, the three studies (Kurth & Foley, 2014; Lalvani, 2013; Woodcock & Handy, 2017a) demonstrate that inclusive education is often defined abstractly by educators with few concrete examples of how it is operationalized in classrooms and schools. However, these three studies provide insight into the various dimension or components of conceptions of inclusion that can be explored. For example, educators' conceptions may include ideas related to who inclusion is for and who it benefits (Kurth & Foley, 2014; Lalvani, 2017), how students' needs are met and what they learn through inclusive education (Woodcock & Handy, 2017a), barriers to inclusion (Kurth & Foley, 2014; Lalvani, 2017), how students feel, and what inclusive environments provide (Woodcock & Handy, 2017a). Additionally, Lalvani (2013) and Woodcock and Handy (2017a) demonstrated that when analyzed through a critical lens, educators' conceptions of

inclusion can be used to explore how their understanding of inclusion aligns with or contests marginalizing narratives and practices. However, in order to examine how educators' conceptions of inclusion either uphold or challenge dominant educational discourses, it is necessary to understand the dominant conception of inclusion and its impact on students with identified disabilities. The following section provides an overview of how dominant conceptions of inclusion are conceptualized in the extant literature.

Dominant Conceptions of Inclusion

The prevailing conception of inclusion involves students with disabilities accessing instruction in general education classrooms (e.g., Baglieri et al., 2011a; Lalvani, 2013; Zigmond et al., 2009). In practice, special education teachers are positioned at the boundary between segregated and inclusive classrooms and assume the role of determining who is ready and can benefit from inclusion (Lalvani, 2013; Timberlake, 2014; Siuty, 2019a). Narratives about students with disabilities are deficit-based and expectations for their learning are often limited (Woodcock & Handy, 2017a). Practices are used to assimilate students into general education classrooms that are conceptualized as a “fixed, stable entity with determinate boundaries” (Naraian, 2016, p. 1). Within these rigid spaces, instruction and academic expectations for achievement are designed to meet the educational needs of the dominant culture (e.g., white, able, English-speaking, heterosexual), thereby privileging a construct of normalcy and reifying ableism in classrooms identified as inclusive (Siuty, 2019a). Within this conception of inclusion, special education teachers' identities include the role of remediator, responsible for identifying deficiencies in the student and fixing them so that they can participate in inclusive settings (Thorius, 2016). Practices focus on providing interventions, instead of shifting adult behavior and changing the environment to meet the needs of the student (Thorius, 2016). If unchallenged,

the narratives and practices that uphold dominant concepts of inclusion maintain a pervasive culture of ableism that continues to devalue students with disabilities.

Teacher Agency in Inclusive Reform

Scholars (e.g., Naraian, 2014; Pantić & Forian, 2015) contend that teacher agency is paramount to advancing inclusion and equity for all students. Furthermore, Kurth and Foley (2014) suggest that when educators' conceptions of inclusive education are grounded in principles of social justice, their agency allows them to develop and utilize skills to create humanizing and equitable educational experiences for students. Teacher agency can include the ways educators resist dominant discourses as a means to create equity (Peters & Reid, 2008). Research suggests that this type of agency within inclusive reform can be demonstrated through actions such as interrupting the discursive practices and structures in schools (Broderick et al., 2012); designing and implementing curriculum that is student-centered (Schlessinger, 2018); or creating classroom communities that value differences (Naraian, 2017). However, teacher agency within dominant conceptions of inclusive education can maintain marginalizing narratives and exclusionary practices. For example, research suggests that teachers' silence or complicity in their schools' cultural practices can maintain a system that segregates students (Nusbaum, 2013), perpetuates stigmatizing practices (Lalvani, 2013), or excludes families from participating in their child's education (Naraian, 2017). The present study seeks to understand how mentors perceive their agency in advancing inclusion. This section provides a brief overview of research on teacher agency within the context of inclusive reform. Knowledge of what agency that advances inclusion looks like will allow for an understanding of how mentors' perceived agency in inclusive reform can support beginning teachers' commitment to inclusion.

Several studies have explored teacher agency within inclusive reform (e.g., Broderick et

al., 2012; Naraian, 2014; Schlessinger, 2018). Many studies (e.g., Broderick et al., 2012; Schlessinger, 2018) view teacher agency as a tool for transgressing dominant systems and enacting inclusive practices. The ways teachers perceive and enact their agency can vary depending on the context and the teacher's constructed identity. For example, Broderick and colleagues (2012) explored how teachers resisted dominant discourses by crafting and enacting counternarratives of disability. The teachers cited examples of points of resistance, such as confronting an administrator after a deficit-oriented workshop on disability and offering first-person narratives on autism for future trainings. Research (Broderick et al., 2012; Schlessinger, 2018) suggests that agency often involves teachers interrupting and reframing colleague's deficit-based thinking and narratives about students with disabilities in strategic ways. For example, sharing student work to demonstrate what students with disabilities are capable of as learners (Broderick et al., 2012) or providing colleagues with tools and support for implementing class-wide systems that met the needs of all learners (Schlessinger, 2018). Several studies (Broderick et al., 2012; Naraian, 2017; Schlessinger, 2018) have identified teachers' actions to redesign and implement a curriculum that is student-centered within contexts where the curriculum is often prescribed for the dominant culture. For many teachers, this involved crafting a counternarrative that described the curriculum as disabling (Broderick et al., 2012; Schlessinger, 2018). Finally, research demonstrates that teachers' agency can act in ways that build a classroom community that values difference and appropriately represents the full humanity of all students (Naraian, 2017). The empirical literature (e.g., Naraian, 2017, Schlessinger, 2018) suggests that teachers demonstrated a commitment to advancing equity and inclusion for all students and used their agency to reduce environmental and systemic barriers to inclusive education. These examples of teacher agency emphasize the need for teachers to

recognize deficit-based narratives and practices in order to act in ways that transform them.

The extant literature on teacher agency within inclusive reform (e.g., Broderick et al., 2012; Naraian, 2017; Schlessinger, 2018) provides examples of how teachers use their agency to create more equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for students. Research (Broderick et al., 2012; Sclessinger, 2018) suggests that in order for teachers to disrupt deficit-based narratives and practices, they must be skilled in navigating their school contexts and strategic in how they enact their agency. Beginning SETs must have support as they develop the ability to understand marginalizing discourse and adopt practices that transform dominant cultural approaches to education. Mentors are perfectly positioned to offer this support to beginning teachers as they develop these skills. However, mentors must conceptualize inclusion and understand their roles and perceive their agency in ways that can support beginning teachers with developing the ideological commitments and capacity for implementing inclusive education.

Significance and Implications for Mentors' Conceptualization of Inclusion

Scholars (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017b) identify a lack of research that explores how educators understand the concept of inclusion and the factors that contribute to variability in implementing inclusive practices. The literature offers methods for understanding how educators conceptualize inclusion and their underlying ideological beliefs. This body of literature also demonstrates how educators' conceptions of inclusion relate to dominant notions of inclusion and special education. However, absent from the literature is research on how mentors of beginning teachers conceptualize inclusion and perceive their agency in inclusive reform. Mentors play a critical role in supporting the professional development of beginning teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Hobson et al., 2009). It is necessary to understand how they conceptualize and work towards inclusive reform in their roles as mentors.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to understand how mentors interpret and enact their identities, and how that influences their perceived agency in advancing inclusive education. This review provided an overview of the relevant literature as it pertains to the identities of mentors of beginning SETs. Specifically, this chapter explored the empirical knowledge base on professional identity, induction mentoring, and the construct of inclusion, as a means to situate the study within what is currently known about these topics and to identify gaps in the literature.

Scholars (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sfard & Prusak, 2005) suggest that professional identity, allows educators to develop agency for accomplishing specific goals or changing the conditions of their contexts. Research (e.g., Jones, 2004; Naraian, 2010; Thorius, 2016) suggests that the construct of teacher identity includes perceptions of their role, commitments and priorities, and beliefs and assumptions about students and instruction. The extant literature identifies factors that contribute to how educators interpret their identity and agency, such as (a) past personal, educational, and professional experiences (e.g., Jones, 2004; Naraian, 2010), (b) professional development opportunities (Thorius, 2016), (c) relationships with colleagues (Jones, 2004), (d) social positioning (Siuty, 2019a), and (e) beliefs about students and learning (Thorius, 2016). Research on teacher identity suggests that identities are situated in school contexts where sociocultural, historical, and political factors influence how teachers construct their identities. However, little is known about the constructed identities of induction mentors (Lesham, 2014).

Induction mentors can influence the practices and professional development of beginning teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, mentors can also hinder beginning teachers' professional growth (see Hobson et al., 2009) or reproduce dominant practices and narratives (Wang, 2018). Research (Chu, 2011; Iriaga-Bistolas et al., 2007) identifies a need for supporting

beginning SETs with developing the skills to implement inclusive practices, further establishing the necessity of effective mentoring within the context of inclusive reform. However, the empirical literature has yet to establish an understanding of how mentors influence beginning teachers' practices and ideologies, or school cultures in ways that advance equity and inclusion.

Inclusion is conceptualized and taken up in practice in ways that can either perpetuate ableism (e.g., Naraian, 2014; Siuty, 2019a) or in ways that transform narratives, practices, and contexts to create inclusive learning environments for all students (e.g., Broderick et al., 2012; Schlessinger, 2018). Understanding how educators operationalize inclusion and perceive their agency in supporting inclusive education is imperative to transforming dominant and harmful conceptions of inclusion. Given mentors' roles in supporting beginning teachers, it is necessary to explore how they conceptualize inclusion and act within their conceptions. Yet, little is known about how mentors understand inclusion and perceive their agency in disrupting and transforming problematic narratives and practices.

Given their potential for influencing beginning teachers and school contexts, a better understanding of how mentors interpret and enact their identity within the context of special education and inclusion is needed. The reviewed literature situates identity and mentoring in complex sociocultural contexts that influence how mentors view themselves and practice. Mentoring within contexts influenced by sociocultural, historical, and institutional factors poses significant challenges to researchers trying to understand how mentors conceptualize inclusion and view their role within their mentoring contexts. A sociocultural perspective may be useful in examining mentors' situated identities, including examining who they are and what they do, how they understand inclusion, and what they believe they can accomplish as a mentor within contexts built upon intertwined systems of oppression.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Mentors of beginning SETs may be well positioned to support beginning SETs with developing ideologies and practices to advance inclusive education, however, their ability to do so is contingent on how they interpret and enact their identity, and subsequently perceive their agency. According to Mockler (2011), educators' professional identity can be both "a practical and political tool" that disrupts marginalizing practices and narratives in educational contexts (p. 518). However, professional identity and the enactment of a role can also reify dominant discourses of disability and special education. As established by the previous chapters, additional research is needed in the areas of mentors' constructed identities and agency in order to understand how mentoring can be used as a tool for transformation. Therefore, the goals of this study were to understand (a) how mentors' lived histories influence how they interpret and enact their identities, (b) their conceptualizations of inclusion, and (c) their perceived agency in relation to the concept of inclusion. In this chapter, I describe my theoretical and conceptual framing and methodological approach for accomplishing these goals.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framing

Theoretical Foundations

This study uses sociocultural perspectives of identity construction and disability to understand how mentors construct their identities and understand their role in advancing inclusion in complex mentoring contexts. Special education contexts are shaped by many competing factors, including legal, political, historical, social, and cultural discourses and influences (Connor & Ferri, 2007). Mentors' identities and actions are situated within these multifaceted, sociocultural contexts which influence how they interpret and enact their identities (Holland et al., 1998). Their identities are constructed within contexts where various perspectives

of disability and ideological beliefs about inclusion contribute to how they understand their identity, social positioning, and agency. To explore mentor's constructed identities and agency, as well as their conceptions of inclusion, this study is grounded in the theoretical framing of Holland et al.'s (1998) social identity development and figured worlds and the framework of disability studies in education (see Baglieri et al., 2011b).

Social Identity Development and Figured Worlds

Holland et al.'s (1998) theory on social identity and figured worlds provides a means to understand how identities are constructed within discursive contexts. The theory assumes that identities are continuously refigured and enacted in "historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed 'worlds'" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 7). Within these "figured worlds", identity construction occurs through local practice and includes both how people conceptually make sense of who they are and how they enact their identity (Holland et al., 1998, p. 41). Figured worlds are viewed as theoretically constructed, historical phenomenon and sites of identity construction. As individuals participate in figured worlds, they bring forth their "history-in-person" into practice where it is reproduced in ways that influence identity construction (Holland & Lave, 2001). The term "history-in-person" (Holland et al., 1998; Holland & Lave, 2001) is often used to describe an individual's subjective experiences, lived history, and past concepts of self that are brought forward in practice. Within figured worlds, individuals use available artifacts to enact practices and accomplish goals that are in alignment with their concept of self (Holland et al., 1998). Therefore, individuals' history-in-person, practices, and artifacts allow for a deeper understanding of how they make sense of their identity in historically-produced worlds. Furthermore, as individuals refigure their identities through practice in figured worlds, they interpret their agency in relation to their perceived social

positioning in those worlds (Holland et al., 1998). This theoretical grounding accounts for the complexities involved in identity construction, such as the influence of history-in-person on how individuals interpret and enact their identity through practice, agency that is afforded through perceived social positioning, and subjective understandings of their worlds.

In the present study, the theory of social identity development and figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) provides an analytic lens for understanding how mentors' lived history is refigured through practice within the figured worlds of mentoring and inclusion and how it influences their interpretation of their identity. The theory also provides a tool for understanding how mentors interpret their figured worlds, and how that understanding influences how they make sense of their role and perceived agency. Specifically, the concepts of (a) history-in-person, (b) figured worlds, (c) artifacts, and (d) identity are applied to the present study to understand the phenomenon of study.

Disability Studies in Education

This study also used the perspectives of disability studies in education (see Baglieri et al., 2011b) as theoretical grounding for exploring mentors' ideological beliefs and perspectives of disability, special education, and inclusion. This framing assumes that disability is socially constructed and embedded in sociocultural contexts, such as schools and society (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012). Perspectives of education grounded in disability studies emphasize issues of power, including "who and what gets valued, and who or what gets marginalized" (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 9), as well as who has the power or social positioning to label or exclude.

Disability studies in education perspectives assume that the dominant perspectives of disability are grounded in a medical model, which conceptualizes disability as a fixed biological category (Brantlinger, 2004). The dominant perspective of disability produces deficit narratives

that locate the “problem” within the individual (Davis, 2002). This stance views educators as responsible for mediating the student’s disability so that they can be more like a “typical” child (Baglieri et al., 2011a), which reinforces the ideals of normalcy while simultaneously devaluing those who are viewed as different. In dominant conceptions of inclusion, special education teachers are often positioned in ways where they have power and are responsible for determining which students can access and participate in inclusive education (Siuty, 2019a). In contrast, when viewed through a disability studies lens and a critical stance, disability is seen as a socially constructed phenomenon (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Davis, 2002). The pathology resides in the system as opposed to the individual and disability is viewed as a manifestation of the barriers in the environment and society that prevent people from fully participating in their contexts and being viewed as full members of their communities (Rioux & Valentine, 2006). The social construct of disability requires a critical examination of educational contexts (e.g., physical arrangement, curriculum, instruction, cultural norms) to reduce barriers that prevent students from meaningfully engaging and participating in inclusive education.

Disability studies perspectives scrutinize the assumptions, values, and institutionalized norms that marginalize and exclude individuals with disabilities (Devlin & Pothier, 2006). This perspective assumes that current and dominant models of special education and perspectives of disability are built from the practices of diagnosing, labeling, segregating, and treating individuals with disabilities (Naraian, 2017). Disability studies in education perspectives view the dominant practices of special education as “...dehumanizing and [upholding] visions of normalcy...” (Naraian, 2017, p. 13). In this study, the perspectives of disability studies in education provides an analytic lens for exploring how mentors’ identities and agency either reproduce or disrupt dominant discourse and practices in inclusion and special education. The

framework of disability studies in education also guided my conceptualization and use of the concept of critical inclusion as an analytical tool.

Critical Inclusion. For the purposes of this study, I used the framework of disabilities studies in education to conceptualize inclusion in a critical stance. Critical inclusion is grounded in the social model of disability and interrogates the cultural norms and practices that perpetuate notions of normalcy and deviance as within students' bodies and minds (Siuty, 2019a; 2019b). This conceptualization of inclusion recognizes that our educational systems are designed for and by the dominant culture (e.g., white, middle class, English speaking, able, cis-gendered, heterosexual) and that dominant approaches to education reify interlocking systems of oppression (Zion & Blanchett, 2011). Therefore, critical inclusion seeks to transform the "systems of oppression that pathologize, sort, and relegate students to the physical and social margins of school" (Siuty, 2019b, p. 39).

When viewed critically, the term inclusion embodies philosophies, ideologies, and cultural practices (Baglieri et al., 2011a) and is conceptualized as "a philosophy that challenges ableism" (Connor & Ferri, 2007, p. 64). Grounded in a social justice framework (Fraser 1997, 2008), Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) conceptualize inclusive education as:

A continuous struggle toward (a) the *redistribution* of quality opportunities to learn and participate in educational programs, (b) the *recognition* and value of differences as reflected in the content, pedagogy, and assessment tools, and (c) the opportunities for marginalized groups to *represent themselves* in decision-making processes that advance and define claims of exclusion and the respective solutions that affect their children's educational futures (p. 35).

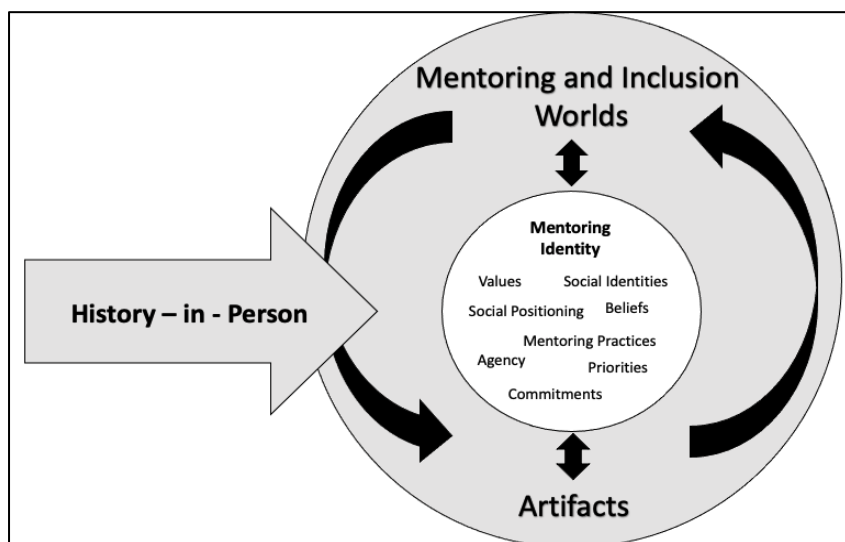
Furthermore, critical inclusion rejects the practice of requiring students to demonstrate readiness for inclusive settings (Naraian, 2017) and instead focuses on the ideological and environmental barriers that prevent students from accessing and meaningfully participating in inclusive education. This theoretical grounding is used as an analytic lens to understand mentors' conceptualization of inclusion and its alignment with dominant or critical perspectives of inclusion, as well as their perceived agency in advancing inclusive education.

Conceptual Framing

Grounded in the framework of disabilities studies in education (see Baglieri et al., 2011b) and Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of social identity development and figured worlds, I use the concepts of (a) history-in-person, (b) figured worlds, (c) artifacts, and (d) identity to conceptually frame the present study. Figure 1 illustrates how these concepts are applied to the study. Specifically, I explored the figured worlds mentors practiced in, the artifacts they interacted with, and their history-in-person, in order to understand how they interpreted and enacted their identity, conceptualized inclusion, and perceived their agency within inclusion worlds.

Figure 1

Conceptual framework



History-in-Person

The concept of history-in-person has significance for understanding how individuals interpret and enact their constructed identity. Individuals refigure their identities as they make sense of the tensions between their lived histories and participation in figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998). History-in-person has been described as “sediment from past experiences” (Holland et al., 1998). It encompasses “...a world of identity, action, contentious practice, and long-term transformative struggles” (Holland & Lave, 2001, p. 30) accumulated through lived experiences and local practice in historically-produced worlds. History-in-person is considered to be a collection of accumulated perspectives as well as symbolic identities (Holland et al., 1998). It is best understood through personal narratives of past experiences and positionality (Holland & Lave, 2001). For mentors of beginning SETs, history-in-person may consist of the meaning they make from experiences with individuals with disabilities, salient aspects of their experiences as a student, and other identities. History-in-person also includes educators’ professional experiences leading up to their current role. This can include aspects of mentors’ professional preparation, compelling experiences as an educator, and participation in professional development. The concept of history-in-person was applied in this study to understand how mentors’ lived histories were refigured through their practice in figured worlds. This knowledge led to a deeper understanding of how mentors interpreted and enacted their mentor identity.

Figured Worlds

Figured worlds are “socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). History-in-person and local practices occur within these worlds and influence how individuals construct contextually-

specific identities. Through identity construction within figured worlds, individuals are recognized as actors with particular priorities, values, and beliefs. Figured worlds also become sites where people learn to relate to others and appropriate artifacts to accomplish specific goals.

I used the concept of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) to frame the contexts in which mentoring occurs and to understand mentors' conceptualization of inclusion. Mentors' identity construction occurs through participation in and across these worlds. Therefore, these sites of identity construction can be used as a tool to understand how mentors' history-in-person is refigured in practice and how context contributes to their understanding of who they are. In the present study, I applied the concept of figured worlds to explore how features of mentors' contexts such as, interactions with beginning SETs, explicit or implicit messaging about their role, and prevailing discourse and practices, influenced how they interpreted and enacted their identity and agency. I also used the concept to understand how mentors conceptualized the abstract world of inclusion.

Artifacts

As individuals carry their history-in-person forward into local practice in figured worlds, they use tools to accomplish certain actions, in doing so, their identity may be refigured (Holland et al., 1998). The use of artifacts within figured worlds reflects how they enact their identity in a particular context (Holland et al., 1998). As individuals use artifacts in the process of constructing and enacting their identities, they also shape the figured world they participate in. Artifacts can be conceptual, symbolic, or material tools with ascribed meaning, such as objects, events, or discourse. For mentors, artifacts may include physical objects such as a template for meeting with beginning teachers, events such as formal observations, or the specific language or syntactic tools they use in mentoring interactions. Artifacts can also include other types of

prevailing discourse that are appropriated in mentoring worlds, such as special education mandates. In this study, the concept of artifacts was applied as an analytic lens for understanding both how individuals make sense of who they are and how they enact their constructed identity (Holland et al., 1998). Specifically, I examined the artifacts that mentors identified as important to their work to understand how they viewed themselves as mentors and enacted their identity.

Identity

The concept of identity is used to understand an individual's concept of self in a particular context and moment in time. According to Holland et al., (1998), people are "composites of many, often contradictory, self-understandings and identities, whose loci are often not confined to the body but 'spread over the material and social environment'" (p. 8). As such, identities are continually refigured through practice in figured worlds, but also shape the sociocultural environments in which they are enacted. Additionally, as individuals deconstruct and reconstruct their identities in figured worlds, they interpret their agency in relation to their perceived social positioning in those worlds. Identity embodies the individual's mindsets, beliefs, and philosophies about who they are in relation to the sociocultural contexts and activities in which they participate (McCormick & Pressley, 1997). The construct also encompasses one's subjectivities around concepts (Holland et al., 1998), such as beliefs about students with disabilities and special education. For the purposes of this study, mentors' identity also includes various aspects of their role including, their interpretation and enactment of their role, their goals and priorities for mentoring, social positioning, and perceived agency. Additionally, because identities mediate agency (Holland et al., 1998), the construct of identity was used as a tool to understand how mentors perceive their agency in inclusion worlds.

In conclusion, my conceptual framing with the theoretical underpinnings of social identity development and figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) and disability studies in education (see Baglieri et al., 2011b) provided analytic tools for exploring the complexities of mentors' interpretation and enactment of their identity. Collectively the constructs used to frame the present study, allowed for a deeper understanding of how (a) mentors' lived histories influence their interpretation and enactment of their identity in mentoring worlds, (b) how mentors conceptualize inclusion in either critical or dominant perspectives, and (c) how they perceive their agency within inclusive worlds.

Strategy of Inquiry

The study's strategy of inquiry was grounded in the lived experiences, actions, narratives, and perspectives of mentors. My epistemological stance was influenced by the sociocultural and historical contexts in which the research occurred, and assumed that during data collection events participants were actively constructing knowledge with me through their narratives rather than in isolation (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). However, regardless of these assumptions and stance, researchers hold positional power in interpreting and constructing knowledge from the voices and wisdom of participants. Recognizing that the relationship between researcher and informant is often subject to power dynamics (Erickson, 2006), it was critical to use methods that truly centered the voices and perspectives of my participants. To honor the lived experiences of my participants and their active construction of knowledge, I grounded my methodological approach in a humanizing stance (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2014). In subsequent sections, I describe the specific methodological decisions I made and tools I used to develop reciprocal relationships with my participants and engage in interactions based in a "discourse of care and listening" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 28).

The complex phenomenon of constructed and enacted identity is situated within sociocultural contexts, where individuals make sense of who they are, their experiences, and their worlds. Identity is understood by and through the study of individual's experiences, practices, and internal sense-making processes. The construct of situated identity is best studied through qualitative methods, which are suited for "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). Furthermore, qualitative methodological approaches allow for an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in relation to the sociocultural and historical context in which it is embedded (Patton, 2015), such as mentors' professional identity, practice, and agency within the context of special education mentoring and inclusion.

Multiple Case Study

A multiple case study (Stake, 2006) was employed to understand how mentors' lived history influenced their interpretation and enactment of their identities, and perceived agency within the figured worlds of special education mentoring and inclusion. This strategy of inquiry is useful for understanding the experiences and perspectives of individuals situated within sociocultural, historical, and political contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A multiple case study approach allows the researcher to understand complex phenomena by examining individual cases and then interpreting similarities and differences across cases (Stake, 2006). Cases are thoughtfully selected in relation to the phenomenon of study and typically bound by a common trait or characteristic (Stake, 2006). Collectively the cases create a "bounded system" for analysis that supports deeper understanding of how a phenomenon performs across various sociocultural contexts (Stake, 2006, p. 2). The phenomenon of study was mentors' interpretation and enactment of their identity and perceived agency within their constructed world of mentoring and

inclusion. Therefore, each mentor of beginning SETs served as a single case situated within their unique contexts. Because the context of special education mentoring and inclusion is constructed by mentors, it was necessary to study multiple cases to understand mentors' identity and agency across interpretations and contexts to make assertions about the constructed identities of mentors. This methodological approach allowed for a broader understanding of who mentors of beginning SETs are and how they perceive their ability to influence the context in which they work.

Research Design

This study occurred during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which influenced the design and execution of the research. All research activities were conducted virtually in alignment with the University of Washington's human subject research policies at the time of the study. The following sections discuss my methodological approaches and data generation tools.

Case Selection

Multiple case study research requires the researcher to strategically select individual cases as the units of study (Stake, 2006). In traditional approaches to case study, each case is bound by common traits or characteristics that are selected a priori (e.g., Stake, 2006, Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013). However, some scholars contend that decisions to bound the case must remain flexible and responsive to "new data that are collected and as a result of emergent analyses" (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2018, p. 2). Mentoring is conceptualized in the literature and practiced in various ways (Bay & Parker-Katz, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). As I engaged in screening activities and surveyed the landscape of induction mentoring within the setting of this study, I broadened my conceptualization of mentors of beginning SETs. Therefore, to allow for a diverse range of lived experiences, I sought to remain flexible in my case selection decisions. I broadly bound my cases by the common trait of participants' role as mentors of beginning SETs and the

data sources used in the study. These criteria, which established the boundaries of my cases, are described in detail in the following sections.

Participants and Setting

In order to account for the many ways that mentoring is defined and the range of roles that include responsibilities for mentoring beginning SETs, I used broad participant selection criteria. To be included, participants had to be (a) employed by a school district; (b) employed as a full-time release mentor, instructional coach, or teacher with district-assigned mentoring duties; and (c) assigned to mentor at least one beginning SET. These parameters for participant selection, allowed me to remain responsive to the vague boundaries of the phenomenon of study while ensuring that the selected cases constituted a “bounded system” (Stake, 2006, p. 2).

Participant Selection and Consenting Procedures

Examining a particular phenomenon depends on the researcher’s ability to select cases that are relevant, diverse, and allow the researcher to gain insight into the complexities of the social contexts and bounded case (Stake, 2006). According to Stake (2006), phenomena are best studied through the lens of multiple contexts and diverse cases. Therefore, I sought to recruit mentors of beginning SETs from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, age groups, professional backgrounds, district types (e.g., size, location, demographics), and years of experience as a mentor. I used purposeful, criterion-based sampling strategies to ensure that I selected diverse, information-rich cases bound by the common trait of mentors of beginning SETs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The predetermined criteria for participants allowed me to adhere to the goals of my study, while maximizing variation across cases with limited resources (Patton, 2015).

Upon approval from the University of Washington Institutional Review Board, I employed several strategies to identify and select cases that provided unique perspectives, lived

experiences, and represented a diversity of contexts. The primary method of purposeful recruitment involved emailing information about the study to individuals who engaged in a professional learning group for mentors of beginning SETs that met the study's inclusion criteria. Secondary recruitment strategies included (a) emails to district induction leaders and special education directors to assist in recruitment; (b) posts about the study on learning management systems for various special education professional networks (e.g., regional special education directors' networks, regional professional learning communities for special education teachers); (c) emails to a network of educational consultants across the state; and (d) word of mouth across various professional networks, and former and current colleagues. All recruitment emails and posts described (a) the study, (b) criteria for participant inclusion, (c) time commitment, and (d) possible benefit (see Appendix A for a sample). Additionally, emails and posts included a link to an electronic screener that asked for demographic information such as race/ethnicity, age, and gender (see Appendix B) of the interested participant. The screener also asked individuals to provide information about their district and school, certification(s), professional background, mentoring context characteristics (e.g., educational setting, grade level). The screening instrument allowed me to determine: (a) if the participant met the inclusion criteria, (b) if their case provided sufficient experience with the phenomenon of study, and (c) if the case would contribute to a diversity of cases (Stake, 2010).

I contacted all interested participants via email who either responded to a recruitment email or completed the screener to schedule a brief telephone call. During the call, I verified that each interested participant met the participant inclusion criteria, described the research activities, possible benefit, and time commitments, and answered any questions about the study. If interested participants indicated that they wanted to participate, they were emailed the consent

form (see Appendix C) to review and asked to schedule a meeting with me to review the consent form prior to data collection. Consent forms were completed and returned electronically. Upon receipt of the consent form, I digitally signed the form and emailed a copy to each participant for their records. All completed consent forms were stored in a password protected electronic file. In total, eight individuals who met the inclusion criteria indicated interest and six completed the consent form. I completed all data collection activities with the six consented participants. However, one participant was ultimately excluded from the study after completing all data collection activities due to limited interactions with their beginning SET mentee.

Participants

Five mentors of beginning SETs from across one state in the Pacific Northwest were included as cases in the present study. Table 1 describes the participant demographics and experiences. The participants' experiences with mentoring were somewhat diverse, ranging in the number of years in the role, the number of beginning SETs they mentored, and the contexts in which they mentored (see Table 2). Additionally, professional preparation and certification, and years of professional experience in school-based settings varied across cases. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of each case, which includes a thorough discussion of participants' lived history and social identities.

Table 1

Mentor Cases

Mentor Name	Age ^a	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Certification	School-based Professional Experience ^b	Mentoring Experience ^c
Angela	53	white	F	OT; Admin	19	1
Susan	41	white	F	K-12 Special Ed.	12	3

Holly	36	white	F	K-12 Special Ed.	11	1
Brooke	31	white	F	SLP	5	3
Sarah	32	white	F	K-12 Special Ed.	6	1

Note. ^a Age in years. ^b experience in years. ^c years of experience mentoring beginning SETs. F = female. OT = occupational therapist. Admin = administrator certificate. Ed. = education. SLP = speech and language pathologist.

Case Setting

Participants were geographically located within a state in the Pacific Northwest. Table 3 provides an overview of setting information for each case. The case settings were broadly defined by the participants' district locale type, educational settings for mentoring, and the number of beginning SETs they were assigned to mentor. Chapter 4 provides a thorough description of the case settings through a discussion of participants' mentoring worlds.

Table 2

Case Settings

Mentor Name	District Locale	Number of Beginning SETs ^a	Mentoring Educational Settings
Angela	Urban	3	Resource room (push-in and pull-out)
Susan	Rural	1	Self-contained (cross categorical)
Holly	Suburban	14	Self-contained (cross categorical); Resource room (push-in and pull-out); Co-taught classrooms; Integrated classroom ^b
Brooke	Suburban	1	Resource room (mostly pull-out)
Sarah	Rural	1	Resource room (mostly pull-out)

Note. ^a number of assigned beginning SETs. ^b an inclusive setting taught by a teacher endorsed in special education and general education.

Data Collection

My methodological decisions and choice of tools were guided by my conceptual framework, research questions, and strategy of inquiry. I collected data across cases through interviews, artifact collection, identity maps, and concept maps. I relied on primary sources of data from mentors who had just completed a full year of mentoring. Primary sources of data include any data that was produced or recounted by someone with direct experience of the phenomenon of study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); therefore, mentor narratives, the products they produced through data collection activities, and the artifacts they shared were considered primary sources of data. Collectively the data set included various data sources that contributed to a deeper understanding of mentors' interpretation and enactment of their identity and perceived agency within the figured worlds of mentoring and inclusion. Table 3 outlines each data source in relation to the research questions, which will be described in detail in subsequent sections.

Table 3

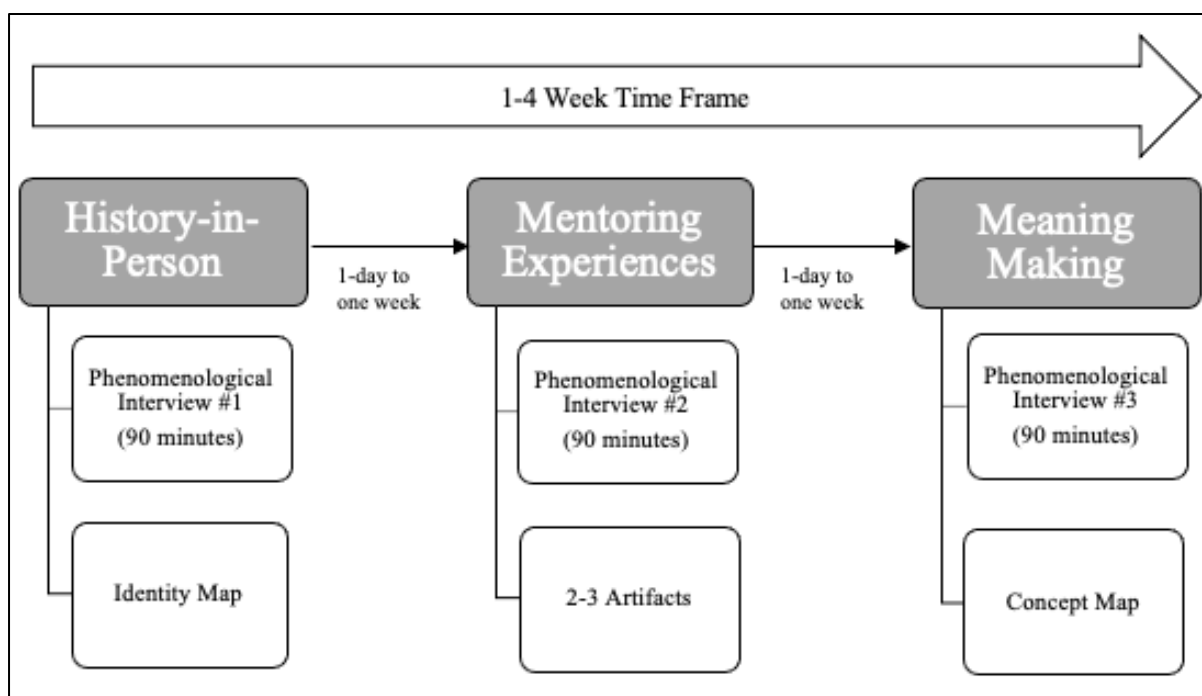
Data Source by Research Question

Research Questions	Data Sources			
	Mentor Interviews	Identity Map	Artifacts	Concept Map
How do mentors' lived histories influence their interpretation and enactment of their identity?	X	X	X	
How do mentors of beginning special education teachers conceptualize inclusion?	X		X	X
How do mentors of beginning special education teachers perceive their agency in advancing inclusion?	X		X	X

Data collection occurred at the end of a school year. Mentors were asked to reflect on their current experiences, as well as a full year of mentoring activities and participation in their constructed mentoring and inclusion worlds. I collected individual case data over a period of one week to one month depending on the participants' availability and preference. Figure 2 provides an overview of the focus of each data collection event, the included data sources, and the average time between data collection events in each case. Table 4 illustrates the data collection timeline by participant.

Figure 2

Data Collection Events and Average Timelines



Note. This figure shows the data collection methods and data sources organized by the focus of each data collection session.

Data Collection Events

I used phenomenological interviewing as a methodological tool because it allows researchers to reconstruct participants' lived experiences and understand how they attribute meaning to their experiences (Seidman, 2019). Phenomenological approaches allow researchers

to study how an individual's history and context have influenced their experiences with a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014), such as the interpretation and enactment of a constructed identity. I used a phenomenological approach to interviewing that focused on mentors' lived experiences and enacted practices, and the meaning they made from their situated practice in relation to their identity and agency.

During data collection events, I followed Seidman's (2019) approach to phenomenological interviewing. This method uses three, focused, in-depth interviews to gain rich data on mentors' lived experience and ascribed meaning within their professional contexts. Each focused interview served a specific purpose and used a flexible structure. The flexible protocols for the interviews were developed based on the intended focus of the interview and also incorporated information from previous interviews to develop an individualized interview protocol for each participant (see Appendix D for protocols). In Seidman's (2019) approach to interviewing, the first interview focuses on the participant's life history in relation to the phenomenon of study. The second interview typically asks participants to describe their activities and experiences situated within specific contexts. The final interview in Seidman's approach to phenomenological interviewing engages participants in the process of reflecting on their lived experiences and describing the meaning that those experiences hold for them. During each interview, I took notes to inform subsequent interviews or serve as prompts for follow-up questions to ensure that I was adhering to the purpose of each interview and collecting data to inform an in-depth understanding of each case. I used my notes to either inform probing questions to gain clarity on the participant's responses (Patton, 2015) or to formulate questions for subsequent interviews if a topic or question was better answered within the focus of another interview. The development of each interview protocol was guided by my theoretical and

conceptual framing, with specific attention given to the concepts in my conceptual framework. For example, in the first interview, the concepts of identity and history-in-person informed interview questions that allow me to understand how mentors' past personal and professional experiences influenced their interpretation of their identity. In the second interview, the concepts of artifacts and figured worlds from Holland et al.'s (1998) theory on social identity and figured worlds, allowed me to understand how mentors enact their identity through situated practice and conceptualize their mentoring worlds. The third interview used the concepts of figured worlds and identity to understand how mentors made meaning from their experiences to inform their perception of their identity and agency within their inclusion and mentoring worlds. While each interview had a specific focus, they progressively built on each other and were interconnected. This approach yielded data that provided a rich description of mentors' experiences and practices that contributed to their interpretation and enactment of their identity, and perceived agency within their figured worlds.

I audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews verbatim. I attempted to schedule interviews using Seidman's (2019) recommendations for spacing interviews 3-days to one week apart. This spacing typically affords time to the researcher to review notes and develop the protocol for the next interview. It also provides participants with enough time to reflect and maintain continuity between the interviews (Seidman, 2019). However, due to participants' availability, the data collection events occurred anywhere from one-day to two weeks apart (see Table 4). In one case, data collection events occurred one day apart. For that case, I developed the next interview protocol immediately following the conclusion of each interview to ensure protocols were individualized and I was collecting a detailed account of the mentor's lived experiences and perspectives. For all other cases, I reviewed the transcripts from previous

interviews before conducting the next interview with the participant. In one case, data collection events occurred two weeks apart, therefore, I reviewed the transcripts from previous interviews multiple times to inform the next interview protocol and refresh my memory of the previous interview. Before each interview, I reviewed the notes from prior interviews. This helped ensure that each interview built on previous responses and was responsive to the participants' experiences.

Table 4

Data Collection Timeline

Date	Mentor	Data Collection Event	Duration of Event ^a
June 3, 2020	Brooke	History-in-Person and Identity Map	91
June 10, 2020	Sarah	History-in-Person and Identity Map	89
June 15, 2020	Brooke	Mentoring Experiences and Material Artifacts	100
June 17, 2020	Holly	History-in-Person and Identity Map	107
June 23, 2020	Brooke	Meaning Making and Concept Map	93
June 24, 2020	Sarah	Mentoring Experiences and Material Artifacts	56
June 25, 2020	Holly	Mentoring Experiences and Material Artifacts	114
June 29, 2020	Angela	History-in-Person and Identity Map	84
June 30, 2020	Angela	Mentoring Experiences and Material Artifacts	83
June 30, 2020	Sarah	Meaning Making and Concept Map	120
July 1, 2020	Angela	Meaning Making and Concept Map	124
July 1, 2020	Susan	History-in-Person and Identity Map	67
July 3, 2020	Holly	Meaning Making and Concept Map	132
July 8, 2020	Susan	Mentoring Experiences and Material Artifacts	65

Note. ^a Duration of data collection event in minutes.

In an effort to ground my research in a humanizing stance (Paris, 2011), I attempted to use interviewing techniques and methodological tools that established “discourses of trust, care, and ethics that become reciprocated across ‘researchers’ and ‘participants’” (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 28). For example, I used my interview protocols flexibly to guide a conversation with participants in an attempt to establish a comfortable space for participants to share their experiences and perspectives. I shared my own lived experiences when they related to what participants shared to break down “artificial boundaries or binaries of research/subject” and build trust with mentors (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 32). I affirmed mentors’ responses and validated the emotions they expressed when recounting memories of past experiences or voicing concerns about the future. Additionally, I began and ended each interview with informal conversations about their personal worlds and made connections to my experiences and worlds. I also invited participants to ask me questions about my lived experiences and current professional worlds. Through dialog during data collection events, I sought to humanize the research process and create spaces for mentors to actively construct knowledge and share their worldviews.

History-in-Person and Identity Map: Phenomenological Interview #1. The first interview focused on the concept of history-in-person from my conceptual framework (see Appendix D). This interview guided mentors through a process of sharing and reflecting on their lived history, specifically salient past experiences in their personal and professional lives that contributed to their sense of self as a mentor of beginning SETs. During the interview, I asked mentors to describe how they came to be mentors. Asking *how*, instead of *why*, framed the task in a way that allowed participants to refigure meaningful experiences concerning the

phenomenon of study instead of simply recalling events (Seidman, 2019). According to Seidman (2019), “By asking ‘how?’, we hope to have [them] reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events in their past family, school and work experience that provide a context for exploring their participation in [current contexts]...” (p. 22). I used questions that prompted mentors to describe their lived history and how they believe it relates to their identity as a mentor to beginning SETs. The information that mentors shared allowed for a deeper understanding of how their lived histories influence their interpretation and enactment of their identity in mentoring and inclusion worlds.

Prior to the interview, mentors were asked to create an identity map to share during the interview (see Appendix E). Phenomenology assumes that the human experience is temporal and constantly evolving. Accordingly, it is difficult to capture the interconnectedness of experiences and complexities of identity construction and enactment through interviews because it is continually refigured, and often not sequential or concrete. Identity maps can serve as a tool for focusing mentors on the process of recalling their lived experiences in relation to becoming the mentor they currently identify as. Identity maps have been used as a methodological tool for capturing an individual’s shifting identities over time, space, and social relations (Futch & Fine, 2014). Mapping allows mentors to select and narrate abstractions that they may not have the ability to describe through an interview without symbolic representation. According to Futch and Fine (2014), “As a mediational method, mapping invites respondents to narrate and represent their varied relations to place, people and time; to visualize the tension of agency and structure; and to document shifts, contradictions, continuities and rupture within self over time and space” (p. 44). The process of creating and sharing visual narratives centers the mentors’ voice and experiences, therefore providing mentors with authority and ownership of their data (Futch &

Fine, 2014). The process of identity mapping allowed mentors to engage in reflection about who they are and what contributed to that sense of self prior to the interview. During the interview, the completed identity map provided a means for mentors to visually narrate their histories that contributed to them becoming a mentor of beginning SETs and author their own story.

To complete the identity mapping activity prior to the first interview, mentors were asked to map the experiences in their personal and professional life that contributed to who they are as a mentor to beginning SETs. Each participant received the written prompt via email roughly one week prior to the first scheduled interview. The prompt for this task was adapted from the identity mapping procedures outlined by Fine and colleagues (2005) and Futch and Jaffe-Walter (2001). They were given creative freedom to draw, create a flowchart, or somehow symbolize the lived history that shaped their identity as a mentor. The identity mapping procedures are included in Appendix E. I also created an identity map to share during the first interview (see Appendix F). By engaging in an aspect of the research process with them, I sought to minimize power differentials, establish trusting relationships, and co-construct knowledge about how lived experiences contribute to our identities (Erickson, 2006). During the interview, I invited mentors to share their maps first to avoid influencing their identity map narration. At the end of the interview, I collected mentors' identity maps for further analysis and wrote an analytic memo summarizing each identity map.

I began each interview with the identity maps, which allowed me to use the information that the mentor shared to guide the questions and conversation for the remainder of the interview. Appendix D includes the interview protocol that was used as a guide to ensure that the interview adhered to the intended purpose and goals outlined by Seidman (2019) and aligned with the research questions. However, I used this protocol flexibly to remain responsive to the mentors'

visual narratives and formulate questions that were most relevant to mentors' description of their lived history in relation to their identity.

Mentoring Experiences and Material Artifacts: Phenomenological Interview #2. The second interview built on mentors' responses in the first interview and was designed to elicit responses about their current activities and experiences with mentoring (Seidman, 2019). This interview relied on the concepts of identity, figured worlds, and artifacts to understand how mentors made sense of their figured world of mentoring and their situated practice. Interview questions were designed to prompt mentors to describe their everyday work as a mentor within their figured world of special education mentoring. During the interview, mentors were asked to describe their daily activities as a mentor in concrete details such as specific actions and observations of their environment (Seidman, 2019). For example, I asked mentors to describe a typical mentoring interaction from beginning to end. Questions prompted mentors to reconstruct recent mentoring events with beginning SETs by focusing on their actions, content of the interaction (e.g., instruction, behavior management, case management), and the language and tools they used with beginning teachers. The information mentors provided in this interview provided insight into how mentors made sense of their sociocultural contexts and social position. Their narratives also allowed for a deeper understanding of how they interpret and enact their identity in multiple mentoring worlds. The protocol for this interview was loosely structured to ensure that the interview yielded data that aligned with the intended focus of the interview and research questions. Appendix D outlines the general structure of the interviews; however, an individualized interview protocol was developed for each participant based on the information they shared in the previous interview. Mentors' individualized interview questions are also included in appendix D.

In preparation for the interview, mentors were asked to bring two to three artifacts that they routinely use in mentoring. The process of self-selecting artifacts with limited outside influence, ensured that mentors selected artifacts that they believed to be most relevant to their everyday work as a mentor. Artifacts are a representation of culture and as such, must be interpreted in relation to the context of use (Hodder, 2003). Therefore, mentors were asked to describe the origin and intended purpose of the artifact, how they use it in mentoring, and with whom they use it. I used a protocol for documenting this information for each presented artifact (see Appendix G) and electronically collected the material artifact or a photo of it for further analysis. According to Hodder (2003), material representations of culture, or artifacts, can provide a deeper understanding of the meaning that individuals ascribe to their experiences and lives. The artifacts that mentors presented during the interview served as contextualized representations of their everyday practice as a mentor and also provided evidence of how they interpreted and enacted their identity.

Meaning Making and Concept Map: Phenomenological Interview #3. Similar to the design of the second interview, the structure of the third interview built on mentors' responses in previous interviews. The third phenomenological interview was designed to gather information on how mentors ascribed meaning to their experiences and activities as mentors (Seidman, 2019). I asked mentors to reflect on their experiences mentoring beginning special education teachers, their purpose as a mentor, and how their mentor practices contributed to advancing their conception of inclusion. The general protocol and individualized protocol for this interview is included in Appendix D. While other data collection activities yielded data that hinted at how mentors conceptualized inclusion, I relied on the third interview and mentors' concept map to understand if mentors used dominant or critical lenses to conceptualize inclusion and make sense

of their agency.

To further understand mentors' figured worlds and their perceived agency, mentors were asked to conceptualize inclusion during this interview. The words and phrases that educators use to describe inclusion are artifacts that serve as representations of their values and beliefs about historically marginalized groups of students. Mentors' conceptualization of inclusion can have implications for how they use their agency to either reproduce or disrupt dominant discourse and practices that stigmatize and exclude (Baglieri et al., 2011a). Because inclusion is complex and embodies both abstract and concrete components and relationships, it can be difficult to define in detail. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of how mentors conceptualize inclusion, I employed the methodological tool of concept mapping.

Concept mapping is a method that allows participants to visually represent complex relationships between abstract and concrete ideas (Novak & Gowan, 1996; Trent et al., 1998). Concept maps serve as representations of participants' knowledge, beliefs and biases, and understanding of complex topics (Kinchin & Hay, 2000). Prosser and Loxely (2008) argue that this method is particularly useful in producing data when articulating thoughts about the topic is difficult, or there are differences in the level of expertise on the topic between the researcher and participant. Prior to the third interview, I asked mentors to develop a concept map that represented their understanding of inclusion. I emailed participants the protocol for developing their concept maps immediately after our second interview (see Appendix H). The concept map prompt was intentionally vague to ensure mentors' responses were not constrained or influenced by external ideas. Some mentors used different means to represent their thoughts, such as prose or a presentation slide, rather than a traditional concept map.

During the third interview, I asked mentors to share and explain the concepts in their

map. I intentionally chose not to engage in this aspect of the research process with mentors out of concern that my ideological beliefs about inclusive education and disability may influence their narratives throughout the interview. I wanted to center the perspectives of mentors and ensure that I was deeply listening without judgment to understand their ideologies and experiences. Mentors' visual narratives provided insight into their figured world of special education mentoring and inclusion. After sharing their concept map, I asked mentors to explain their role and influence within their conception of inclusion, which provided a deeper understanding of their situated-identity and agency within their figured worlds. From their responses, I gleaned knowledge of how mentors perceived their agency in advancing inclusion and an understanding of how their practices could potentially reinforce or transform the traditional narratives and practices that devalue students with disabilities.

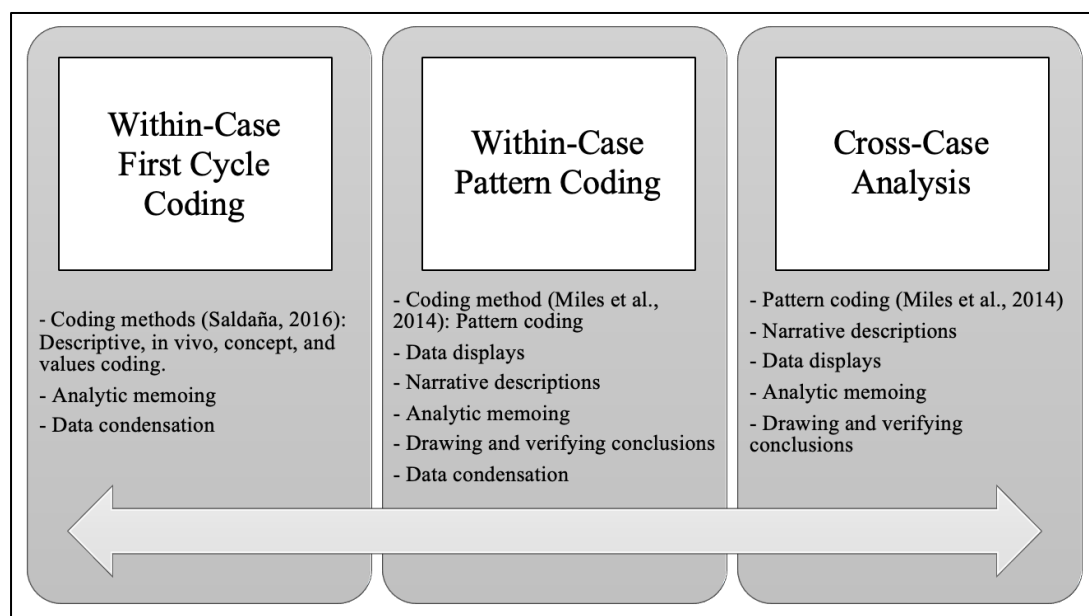
Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is the process of making meaning from participants' narrative accounts, or the material products they share or produce through research activities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Analysis occurs concurrently with data collection to allow the researcher to interpret data as it is collected, refine thinking, and develop strategies for collecting new data (Miles et al., 2014). My analysis was guided by Miles et al.'s (2014) process for data analysis, which includes the continuous activities of (1) data condensation, (2) data displays, and (3) drawing and verifying conclusions. These three activities are described in detail in the sections below. Throughout data collection and analysis activities, I engaged in ongoing, iterative data analysis using three main cycles of analysis: (1) within-case first cycle coding, (2) within-case second cycle pattern coding, and (3) cross-case analysis. Figure 3 provides an overview of the analysis procedures across each cycle of analysis. These cycles did not occur in a linear fashion but

instead were continually revisited as new data was collected and my interpretations of the data evolved. All data sources were coded using the same procedures; however, each data source was separately analyzed prior to combining it with other sources of data within cases for further analysis. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I wrote analytic memos to develop descriptive summaries of the data, document my conceptual understanding of the cases, and track assertions (Miles et al., 2014). Finally, I kept a detailed codebook with definitions and excerpts from the data (see Appendix I for a sample page). As my codes developed and changed, I revised the codebook to ensure consistency in coding and increase trustworthiness and credibility of the analysis. Appendix J includes a protocol for each research activity and analysis procedure during data collection; this protocol ensured that I was completing analytic memos, engaging in analysis procedures, revising my codebook, and updating interview protocols throughout data collection.

Figure 3

Data Analysis Process



Analysis Activities

Data Condensation. According to Miles et al. (2014), the process of data condensation occurs throughout the research study. During data condensation, the researcher makes decisions to distill the entire data set into the data that is most relevant based on the research questions, conceptual framework, and cases. Data condensation occurs throughout analysis as the researcher makes decisions about coding, generates categories, writes analytic memos, and creates data displays (Miles et al., 2014). This process of transforming the data organizes it in a way that allows the researcher to make final assertions and draw conclusions. In this study, I engaged in data condensation through coding the data, creating data displays, analytic memoing, and writing narrative descriptions and case summaries.

Data Displays. Data displays are a critical component of rigorous qualitative analysis and are used across all phases of analysis (Miles et al., 2014). According to Miles et al. (2014), data displays allow the researcher to draw supported conclusions or make decisions about moving to the next phase of analysis. Data displays can take various forms, but they all serve the function of representing and organizing the data in a way that is immediately accessible and easily understood by the researcher. Data displays typically take three forms (a) matrices, (b) networks, or (c) graphics (Miles et al., 2014). Throughout analysis, I used data displays in multiple ways. For example, I represented connections between codes in individual cases through data networks, I created matrices to display excerpts and codes by components of my conceptual framework and research questions for each case, and created matrices to describe themes with supporting evidence for cross-case analysis. Throughout all stages of analysis, I continuously revised or reconstructed data displays as I added new data until I was able to draw and verify assertions using the evidence collected.

Drawing and Verifying Conclusions. Qualitative researchers use several tactics throughout analysis phases to substantiate assertions and draw verifiable conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). Throughout analysis, I used the strategies of (a) noting patterns/themes, (b) clustering as initial methods for organizing and grouping emerging themes, (c) subsuming particulars into the general, and (d) building a logical chain of evidence (Miles et al., 2014). Noting patterns/themes is a way of finding reoccurring and similar evidence throughout analysis. When using this strategy, the researcher must scrutinize emerging patterns to determine if that theme occurs elsewhere in the data or if there is counterevidence (Miles et al., 2014). I also used the strategy of clustering during data analysis. Clustering allows the researcher to categorize or conceptualize items that have similar characteristics into single categories, such as grouping the specific mentoring duties or responsibilities that mentors described under the category of “perceived function”. Or clustering codes such as, “mentoring content” and “district messaging” into the category of “mentoring worlds”. This strategy relies on the process of aggregating data and searching for similar characteristics across coded items or objects. Noting patterns/themes and clustering are both strategies for sorting and organizing first-level data so that the researcher can then use additional strategies to move to higher levels of abstraction.

In order to move to higher levels of data abstraction and substantiate assertions during within-case and cross-case data analysis, I used the strategies of subsuming particulars into the general and building a logical chain of evidence (Miles et al., 2014). Miles et al., (2014) describe subsuming particulars into the general as “a conceptual and theoretical activity in which you shuttle back and forth between first-level data and more general categories that evolve and develop through successive interactions until the category is ‘saturated’” (p. 282). This strategy is similar to clustering in that the researcher groups evidence into categories; however,

subsuming particulars into the general uses more abstract and general categories. For example, statements that mentors made about their practices, artifacts, and interactions were often grouped by themes within each case, such as “building connections” and “balancing emotional support with problem solving”. I documented this process of moving from concrete data to more abstract categories through data matrices that included excerpts with the first-level code and the general category used to describe the emerging theme. I continually revisited and revised general themes as disconfirming evidence was discovered to ensure that abstract or general categories accurately reflected the data. This strategy is one step in the process of moving from initial coding to conceptual understandings in the analysis. Finally, I used the strategy of building a logical chain of evidence during the later stages of the within-case and cross-case analyses. This strategy involves gathering evidence in order to substantiate assertions (Miles et al., 2014). While building an evidence chain, researchers must verify each piece of evidence that supports an assertion. According to Miles et al. (2014), this occurs through two cycles. In the first cycle, the researcher identifies numerous pieces of evidence or data that appear to be connected. In the second cycle, the researcher tests their assertions and searches for counter-evidence that might constrain generalizability (Miles et al., 2014, p. 287). I moved through this process by creating claims pyramids which were data matrices consisting of assertions and supporting evidence. I continued to refine these claims pyramid in the second cycle of coding as I discovered counter-evidence and triangulated data. Through this process, researchers are able to draw conclusions and identify supporting evidence. While the strategies described in this section appear linear, they were used cyclically through each cycle of analysis as new data was collected, new themes or assertions were identified, and assertions were disproved.

Analytic Memo Writing. Analytic memos are researcher narratives that track the

progression of their conceptual understanding of the data (Miles et al., 2014). Analytic memos are typically a quick method for recording thoughts throughout the research process and can be written on a variety of topics (Saldaña, 2016). I used analytic memoing as a method for capturing my assertions and reflecting on the data analysis process. Specifically, I used analytic memoing to develop descriptive summaries, document code choices and definitions, and to document my ideas about emerging categories and themes (Saldaña, 2016). I engaged in analytic memoing immediately following each data collection event to capture my reflections, initial understanding of the data, and document items or statements that were particularly salient during the interviews. I used analytic memos to summarize and describe mentors' identity maps and concept maps. I also wrote analytic memos throughout analysis to describe the analytic strategies and my thinking as I developed assertions. Additionally, I documented memos through voice memos and notes on my cell phone when they occurred throughout the day to ensure I was capturing my sense making throughout analysis. The analytic summaries of participants' identity and concept maps were analyzed using the procedures described below. All memos were included in the data corpus and were continually revisited through the analysis and writing phases.

Analysis Cycles

I engaged in iterative data analysis using three main cycles of data analysis: (1) within-case first cycle coding; (2) within-case second cycle pattern coding; and (3) cross-case analysis. These cycles were iterative and continually revisited as new data was introduced or assertions were disproven. The following section describes each cycle in detail.

Within-Case First Cycle Coding. First cycle coding can occur in a variety of ways, depending on the purpose of the coding approach (Miles et al., 2014). During this cycle of analysis, I engaged in first cycle coding procedures as described by Saldaña (2016). I combined

several coding methods to interpret the data from multiple perspectives. Through this initial process of coding, I remained close to the data and used short codes to organize and make sense of the data. I determined a number of codes *a priori* using the extant literature, my research questions, and my conceptual framework. However, throughout first cycle coding, I remained flexible in my coding methods and incorporated new codes as I identified them during analysis. As I identified new codes, I revisited previously coded data to apply the new code as necessary.

I engaged in deductive and inductive coding using the following coding methods described by Saldaña (2016): (a) descriptive coding, (b) in vivo coding, (c) concept coding, and (d) values coding. Descriptive coding is a process for assigning a short code for basic topics, such as practices, training, or job responsibilities. In vivo coding uses participants' language as codes and often uses phrases that are repeated by participants. This method is a way of honoring a participant's voice and reducing researcher bias (Miles et al., 2014). Concept coding is used to segment data into more abstract codes, such as thoughts or ideas. Specifically, I used this coding method to document segments of the data that were evidence of critical or dominant inclusion. Finally, I used values coding to assign codes to segments of the data that pertained to mentors' ideologies or values. Throughout the process of first cycle coding, I used simultaneous coding methods (Saldaña, 2016) to assign multiple codes to statements or content as appropriate. This approach to coding allowed me to remain open to multiple interpretations of the data during the initial stages of coding and analysis. Throughout the process of first cycle coding, I engaged in analytic memo writing to document my coding decisions. Additionally, I kept a codebook that I continuously edited as I revised codes and refined my thinking (see Appendix I for a sample page).

Within-Case Second Cycle Pattern Coding. According to Saldaña (2016), the goal of

pattern coding is to “develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of first cycle codes” (p. 149). During this process, first cycle codes are reanalyzed and reorganized into categories or broader themes as a means to begin to build a larger schema for understanding the data (Miles et al., 2014). Second cycle pattern coding is the foundation for cross-case analysis because it allows the researcher to identify themes within each case (Miles et al., 2014). Pattern codes typically fall into four interconnected groups: “(1) categories or themes, (2) causes or explanations, (3) relationships among people, (4) concepts or theoretical constructs” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 80). Pattern coding occurs by first searching for commonalities across codes and the segments of coded data, and then organizing common codes and excerpts into superordinate codes. I used pattern coding methods for all data sources within a case. By engaging in pattern coding, I developed code trees or hierarchies of codes (see Appendix K for examples). For example, I used the pattern code of “positional power” to encompass the subcodes of “positionality” and “social positioning”. During this process, I routinely moved to higher levels of abstraction and it was necessary to re-examine and recode data that was coded during first cycle coding.

During this cycle of analysis, I mapped pattern codes and segments of the data using data networks to show the interconnectedness of codes (see Appendix L for a sample). This process allowed me to see how segments of the data connected (Miles et al., 2014). While engaging in this process, I developed narrative descriptions (Miles et al., 2014) to elaborate on the pattern codes which appeared to demonstrate utility in answering the research questions. Narrative descriptions are brief written passages that describe pattern codes in detail using the codes from first cycle analysis with supporting evidence from the data (Miles et al., 2014). Narrative descriptions allowed me to begin to develop initial assertions using evidence and move toward

writing my case summaries. According to Miles et al., (2014), assertions are “a declarative statement of summative syntheses, supported by confirming evidence from the data, and revised when disconfirming evidence or discrepant cases require modification of an assertion” (p. 93). For each case, I organized tentative assertions with the supporting evidence into data matrices organized by my conceptual framework. Before adding an assertion to a data matrix, I tested the plausibility of the assertion by searching the coded data for disconfirming evidence. Throughout the process of moving iteratively between data networks, narrative descriptions, and data matrices, I revisited written memos and wrote new memos to document my understanding of the relationship between pattern codes, evidence, and assertions. The data matrices and data networks for each case, allowed me to begin to craft case summaries using initial assertions and supporting evidence from the data. This process of developing multiple data displays, crafting narrative descriptions, and writing case summaries was iterative and ongoing. This continuous process allowed me to build initial chains of evidence while remaining diligent in searching for counter evidence in multiple stages of the analysis. Second cycle analysis procedures allowed me to substantiate assertions about how each mentor’s lived experiences influenced their interpretation and enactment of their identity within their mentor worlds, their conceptualization of inclusion, and perception of their agency in their inclusion worlds.

Cross-Case Analysis. Cross-case analysis occurred after within-case first cycle and second cycle analysis. During cross-case analysis, I conducted an in-depth review of the data displays and case summaries of each case. As I reviewed, I looked for similarities and differences in themes or assertions across cases. For example, I noted similarities in how two participants discussed their self-efficacy in initiating conversations about race with their assigned beginning teachers, but how those two cases differed from the rest of the cases where there was

notable silence on the topic of race or racism. In some instances, I assigned new pattern codes, such as “positioning of beginning SET” and “balancing roles”, to group similar themes and develop new narrative descriptions of initial assertions with evidence from across cases (Miles et al., 2014). While searching for commonalities across cases, I noted atypical cases or assertions within cases and searched for evidence that would either disprove cross-case assertions or substantiate claims about differences across cases.

I organized similar assertions and themes into a data matrix with supporting evidence from cases by research question. The data matrix allowed me to organize evidence from across cases into broader units that related to the three research questions. As I assembled the data matrix, I searched for disconfirming evidence across cases to test each assertion. I documented and continuously revisited my emerging thinking through analytic memoing. Through this process of organizing and consolidating the data, I identified common and reoccurring themes related to how mentors come to understand and enact their identity, and perceive their agency (Miles et al., 2014).

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS). CAQDAS software has become a prominent analytic tool used by qualitative researchers (Seidman, 2019). CAQDAS software allows researchers to import and condense multiple sources of data, use a variety of coding methods, assign various levels of codes, and display data in multiple configurations (Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, most CAQDAS software creates an audit trail throughout analysis, which creates transparency of the analysis process (Seidman, 2019). During analysis I used Dedoose[®], which is a web and app-based program for qualitative analysis. All data sources were uploaded into the web-based platform as they were received or created to allow for ongoing analysis throughout the study. I also uploaded my analytic memos so that they could be included

in ongoing and iterative analysis. This software was primarily used in the first cycle of coding and aided in the process of creating an audit trail of my analysis procedures. Following first cycle coding for all data sources within cases, I downloaded spreadsheets of all excerpts and applied codes for each case. I used these spreadsheets to complete second cycle coding for each case and across cases, which allowed me to easily build and manipulate data matrices throughout the rest of the analysis.

Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality

An underlying assumption of qualitative research is that data is intertwined in real-world contexts and can only be understood through the iterative process of interpretation (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Through this process, the researcher acts as the instrument for both data collection and analysis; therefore, researchers must engage in ongoing reflexive practices to reduce researcher subjectivity and bias (Creswell, 2014). This process includes ongoing critical reflection of subjectivities but also an examination of the relationship between the researcher and participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). In qualitative research, data is collected through interactions with participants and is subsequently influenced by the nature of the relationship between the researcher and participant. Therefore, a qualitative approach to research requires that the researcher understand how power, positionality, representation, interpretive authority, and ownership of the data influence how data is collected and interpreted. I attempted to center the voices and experiences of my participants and examine their perspectives in relation to the sociocultural and historical context in which they were situated. I attempted to humanize the relationship between researcher and participant and honor their multiple world views (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2014). However, because qualitative research is interpretive and never free from human bias, it was necessary to continually engage in

reflexive activities to make sense of and attend to the influence of my positionality and relationship with participants on my interpretation of the data.

As a researcher, I entered the research context as an outsider. In the present study, my situated identity included my interpretation of self and my positionality, and also the mentors' interpretation of my identity and social positioning. I identify with dominant social constructs such as white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, middle class, and abled identities. In addition to the privilege associated with my intersecting identities, my educational history and professional role afford me power and social status in educational contexts. While this status may have provided access to research participants and knowledge of participants' professional contexts, it undoubtedly influenced the relationships I developed with the mentors, their comfort with the research process, and the information they shared. Additionally, our shared experiences and differences with the phenomenon of study likely influenced their level of trust, my methodological decisions, and my interpretation of mentors' lived experiences and narratives. For example, like the participants, I have mentored beginning SETs. Some of our experiences as mentors, the past events and life experiences that led us to mentoring, and our beliefs about mentoring were similar. However, unlike my participants, I was never employed as a district mentor and instead assumed the role of an informal, colleague mentor. Our shared experiences but also my lack of experience as a formal mentor may have contributed to how mentors perceived my positioning and what they chose to share with me. Furthermore, I acknowledge the ways my constructed identity as a researcher creates the subjective lenses in which I viewed and interpreted the data. My researcher identity includes representations of my assumptions about the social construction of disability, conceptions of inclusion, and views on the systemic nature of segregation and marginalization in special education. My researcher, personal, and professional

identities include a sense of purpose and commitments to transforming practices and narratives in order to create just and humanizing educational experiences for all students. I also remain committed to educators and recognize that the path to transforming educational systems, structures, and practices must involve partnerships with those who are positioned to directly influence the experiences of students and families.

Throughout the research process, I engaged in ongoing reflexive activities to maintain awareness of and attend to the subjectivities that may have influenced my interactions with mentors and my interpretation of their data. This occurred through multiple methods throughout the study. For example, I kept a reflexivity journal during data collection as a means to reflect on the ways my biases, assumptions, values, and priorities may have impacted my interactions with the mentors and the data collection methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Immediately following each interview, I used a structured journaling protocol to capture my reflections (see Appendix L). Specifically, I identified commonalities and differences in my and the mentors' experiences that surface during interviews (Lietz et al., 2006). I also documented the questions and concepts that I emphasized or avoided, reactions or emotional responses I noticed, and the initial thoughts I had about mentors' responses (Berger, 2015). When journaling, I attempted to identify why I experienced a noticeable emotional response or reaction, which allowed me to critically reflect on my beliefs and assumptions. These responses also signaled to me that I needed to be diligent in searching for confirming or disconfirming evidence if making assertions connected to topics that evoked an emotional response. I used reflexive journaling to document the personal information and experiences that I disclosed to participants during interviews. Reflecting on this aspect of my interactions with mentors allowed me to identify if and how I may have been projecting my experiences and imposing my beliefs on mentors during interviews (Berger,

2015). Through journaling, I engaged in critical reflection to identify ways in which I may have influenced mentors' responses or ways that my own subjectivities were misconstruing the voices and experiences of mentors. I also routinely engaged in peer debriefing to discuss potential issues or emotional responses that occurred during data collection activities and make sense of the interactions. When I noticed my own biases or assumptions about a participant emerge, I flagged questions in drafts of my case summaries for my dissertation chair to look for instances where I did not adequately substantiate my assertions or claims. These reflexive strategies allowed me to identify and attend to my subjectivities throughout the research process.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Trustworthiness can be conceptualized as “the accuracy of the findings based on the participants' realities and the degree to which the account was credible to them” (Tan & King, 2019, p. 1006). To make the findings of a study trustworthy and credible, researchers engage in specific actions to reflect on their assumptions and interpretations of the data throughout the study. I established trustworthiness and credibility of my findings using strategies identified by multiple researchers (e.g., Brantlinger et al., 2005; Merriam & Tisdell, 2014; Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 2006). Specifically, I engaged in the activities of (a) analytic memoing, (b) member checks, (c) peer debriefing, and (d) triangulation. Each of these activities is described in the following sections.

Analytic Memoing

Following each data collection event, I wrote memos to document my reflections of first impressions and assumptions about the data collected and the mentors, connections between the literature and mentors' narratives, and my methodological decisions. Throughout the analysis process, I used ongoing analytic memoing to track my conceptual understanding of the data,

themes, and assertions. I reviewed memos throughout analysis as a method for reflecting on my bias and verifying that my interpretation of the data were grounded in the mentors' narratives and data sources. I highlighted segments in the memos where my own biases and beliefs were evident, which signaled me to return to the data and review my interpretation or clarify information with the mentors during subsequent data collection events. By writing ongoing analytic memos and engaging in reflexive journaling, I routinely reflected on the influence of my experiences, biases, and assumptions on the interpretation of the data.

Member Checks

The data collection process included multiple member checks to confirm the accuracy of the data collected during interviews and verify my interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checks involve asking participants to review and confirm summaries of initial interpretations of the data (Stake, 2006). I engaged in formal member checks by sending an electronic summary of each interview to mentors immediately following the data collection event. I organized these summaries into areas based on the focus of each interview and the research questions (e.g., lived history and enacted role, conception of inclusion, interpretation of their agency). I asked mentors to provide comments, edits, or additional information to ensure that my initial interpretation of the data accurately represented who they are and their experiences. I also engaged in informal member checks throughout the data collection process. At the beginning of the second and third interviews, I debriefed the previous interview with the mentor and asked them to confirm my initial understanding of their experiences or clarify the information they shared. This also presented an additional opportunity for me to ask mentors to verify the accuracy of the formal interview summary I emailed to them. During interviews, I often paraphrased what mentors said and asked for them to verify the accuracy of my

paraphrasing. This served as an additional informal strategy to verify their accounts and perspectives. I used these strategies to ensure that I accurately represented the voices and experiences of my participants.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is an activity where the researcher engages a colleague or someone familiar with the phenomenon in the process of reviewing summaries of analysis and providing critical feedback (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Throughout all stages of the study, I participated in peer debriefing with my dissertation chair. This process allowed me to refine my research design to ensure rigor, make methodological decisions that improve the credibility of the findings, reflect on my biases and assumptions throughout the study, and revise my thinking throughout all stages of the development and execution of this study. During the analysis phase, I participated in weekly peer debriefing with colleagues who are trained and actively engage in qualitative research. When meeting with my colleagues, I discussed methodological decisions, emerging understandings and claims, and reflected on the research process. At times, colleagues read drafts of my case summaries and identified areas where I needed to strengthen my claims and provide more evidence. Critical feedback throughout the research process ensured that my interpretations remained true to the narratives and experiences of my participants.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a method of using multiple and varied sources of data to confirm findings (Miles et al., 2014). Triangulation should occur throughout analysis as a means to test initial assertions and verify overall findings. Triangulation can occur by using multiple: (1) data sources, (2) investigators, (3) theories, and (4) methods (Denzin, 2001). In this study, I primarily used data source and investigator triangulation. In doing so, I used multiple and varied sources of

data (i.e., interviews, identity maps, and concept maps) and multiple cases (Stake, 2019). Additionally, the activity of routine peer debriefing is considered triangulation by investigators (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Throughout my analysis, I used the strategy of triangulation to search for similarity and discrepancy in the data and verify my overall findings.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methods of the present study. In summary, an in-depth, multiple case study was employed to collect a variety of interconnected data sources related to the phenomenon of study across five participants. This robust data set allowed me to understand how mentors' lived histories influenced their interpretation and enactment of their identity, their conceptualization of inclusion, and their perceived agency in advancing inclusive education. I present the findings from the individual cases in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

This chapter provides a detailed account of each of the five mentor cases based on my interpretation of the data and member checking activities described in chapter 3. To answer my research questions, each case explores the relationship between mentors' lived history and their interpretation and enactment of their mentor identity, their conceptualization of inclusion, and their perceived agency in advancing inclusion. Drawing on my theoretical and conceptual framing, each case contains a description of mentors' (a) history-in-person, (b) mentoring worlds, (c) mentor identity, (d) concept of inclusion, and (e) agency. While phenomenological interviews served as the primary source of data, each mentor also created an identity map to present their lived history as it related to their mentor identity and a concept map to illustrate their conception of inclusion. Mentors also presented various artifacts they ascribed value to in their mentoring worlds. Due to copyright issues and an inability to digitally share some artifacts, they are described throughout this chapter but not visually represented. Finally, mentors described their mentoring activities and roles in great detail. This chapter describes the most common themes identified in the data. A table that details the various dimensions and full breadth of each mentors' role is provided in Appendix N.

Angela

Angela is a white, 53-year-old woman. At the time of data collection, she had just completed her 19th year in her school district. Throughout her school-based career, she has held several roles including certified occupational therapist assistant (COTA), occupational therapist (OT), and district specialist. At the time of the study, Angela had just finished her first year of mentoring and her professional identities included district specialist, intern administrator, and induction mentor.

History-in-Person

Angela's identity map and narratives included key stages of her life (e.g., "Childhood years", "College years", "Work years" (Angela Identity Map)), each consisting of influential experiences and salient memories that contributed to her mentor identity. She shared many aspects of her past that contributed to her professional knowledgebase and skillset, beliefs and values, and work ethic, all of which she felt shaped who she was as a mentor. I will highlight three themes I identified from her history-in-person that demonstrated strong connections to her mentor identity, specifically her experiences that contributed to (a) a constructed helper identity, (b) a constructed mom identity, and (c) defining a career path.

Constructing a Helper Identity

Angela's identity map included a concept of self that formed early in life that she labeled, "a giver and support person". Her childhood was marked with memories and experiences that positioned her as a helper and contributed to her understanding of that identity. Her family includes several individuals with identified disabilities, including a brother with an intellectual disability and father with dyslexia and dysgraphia. Reflecting on her childhood, she spoke about learning to support her family members. Her helper identity was further reinforced by her faith. Reflecting on what drew her to mentoring, she described, "It's that helper mentality. It's that giver, it's that, I'm a servant...Growing up in a religious household, right, it's a part of that servant mentality we have" (Angela Interview 1). Angela reflected on the influence of her upbringing on her mentor identity:

I think that a lot of the early childhood, teenage years, family activities that I had to do was to learn how to observe, learn how to listen, learn where it was appropriate to interject and to be able to quickly switch between all of those activities. So, I could listen

to my, you know, my brother and try to figure out where it was that he needed help, listen to my mother of how she supported him and helped him and then tried to integrate that into my own ability (Angela Interview 1).

These skills became a part of how Angela interpreted and enacted her helper identity in future roles. Angela identified other experiences that contributed to seeing herself in a role that supports others, such as “Leadership roles in schools” and “Working at [a camp] as an aquatics support for people with significant disabilities”, and “Being an older student for second round of college where other students asked me for advice and support” (Angela Concept Map). Each experience strengthened her interpretation of her helper identity, which she associated with observing and listening to others without preconceived notions to determine how to provide support. Angela refigured this understanding of her helper identity in mentoring worlds to support beginning SETs.

Constructing a Mom Identity

Angela’s formation of an identity as a mom began before she had children of her own and can be traced back to her earliest work experiences. During college, she worked at a camp for individuals with disabilities. She recalled being positioned by others in either one of two familial roles, a mother or a daughter. This nurturing aspect of her identity included mentoring and supporting staff, families, and campers with concerns and issues, for example “addressing parent and camper fears” (Angela Identity Map). Her personal experiences as a mother to two children, one of whom identifies as having a disability, further strengthened and shaped her identity as a mom. Describing this identity, she shared “As a parent, you have some general management of your kids and you learn how to support them without telling them what to do” (Angela Interview 1). Making a connection to her professional worlds, Angela used the word “mentoring” (Angela

Interview 1) to describe her approach to parenting and supporting her children. Her identity as a mom in her personal and professional worlds included guiding others without explicitly telling them how or what to do, which influenced how she positioned herself and enacted her identity as a mentor in her professional worlds.

Defining a Career Path

Angela's work ethic and values facilitated her ability to advance professionally and define her career path. In her early career, she independently gained expertise in assistive technology (AT), and advanced her career by "Advocating for [an] AT district position" (Angela Concept Map) and serving in that role. As district specialist, she advocated to attend mentor trainings and to be recognized as an induction mentor by identifying a SET she coached who qualified for the district's induction program. Angela cited additional examples throughout her career of gaining the necessary knowledge and identifying leadership opportunities to elevate her status and contributions to the profession. Examples included, "Recognizing need to return to school multiple times", "Advocating for increased professional development" (Angela Identity Map), becoming an intern supervisor, and securing several administrator internship opportunities. Her continual self-advocacy and self-initiated learning allowed her to develop into a leader and use her role to support others. These experiences also reinforced her values, which she described as:

My two highest values, one is in learning and that you're always a learner. You're never not a learner, even if I'm 85 years old, I still need to be learning something. And my second one is the resiliency that it takes to be a learner, but the resiliency that it takes to be able to do anything (Angela Interview 1).

She attributed much of her professional success and advancement to these values, which allowed

her to define her career and fulfill various leadership roles.

Angela's history-in-person, which included constructed identities and her professional experiences and values, set her on a path to seeing herself as a mentor. Describing the connection between her past and her identity, she said:

What I do, I do because it is me. Because the teacher in me, the servant in me. The therapist in me is just who I am. I will always do this type of job. And while I might not be a teacher, I have enough experience working in education to be a teacher and to me, I'm a teacher of adults. I'm not a teacher of children" (Angela Interview 1).

Angela believed that she was meant to be a mentor and teacher and that her lived history contributed to who she was personally and professionally. Specifically, her identities as a helper and mom, and professional experiences and values, were significant aspects of her mentor identity. The following sections explore the connections between these aspects of her lived history and her interpretation and enactment of her mentor identity.

Mentoring Worlds

Angela was situated in her mentoring worlds as both a district specialist and mentor, and at times an intern administrator. She never paused to think about the role she enacted and utilized similar artifacts, describing "It all melds together...We're mentoring, and mentoring itself is just a skill" (Angela Interview 1). As she interacted in and across professional worlds, she interacted with little information that helped her clearly define the induction mentor role. Aside from the recommended number of formal observations and check-ins with beginning SETs, Angela summarized her perception of the district's messaging as "go forth and be a mentor" (Angela Interview 2). With limited support or messaging on mentoring, Angela refigured her lived history into practice to construct her mentor identity.

Angela was paid to mentor one SET, however, she identified as a mentor for three early career SETs. Her mom identity drove her decision to mentor teachers outside of the district's mentoring program; she described her motivation as, "There's kind of two distinctions, there's the official distinction that I am official and therefore I am paid to, and then there's the unofficial, you know, mom in me" (Angela Interview 1). When discussing mentoring, she described her role in relation to the three teachers. Angela interacted with the SETs primarily through informal check-in conversations and drop-in visits. However, she recognized the time constraints associated with her multiple roles, stating "I support 60 schools and all the staff that are in those schools. I may not be able to get over to support my mentee on a monthly basis, right, but I'm in [their] building often enough, and I'm talking to [them] on the phone" (Angela Interview 3). She often positioned herself as a helper in the mentoring relationship, asking beginning SETs how she could support them and allowing them to select the focus of the interaction. The following section describes her perceived and enacted mentor identity.

Mentor Identity

Angela described her identity through narratives about her enacted role. Her descriptions of her practice and interpretation of her role were filtered through the lens of her perceived social positioning and built upon her history-in-person. Her constructed mentor identity included her social positioning, beliefs and values, and mentor practice.

Social Positioning

Angela perceived her identity as a "teacher of adults" (Angela Interview 1), hinting at an awareness of the impact she could have on teachers. Informed by her belief that adult learners must come to decisions on their own in order to improve practice or build knowledge, she often described her approach as "guiding" or "coaxing" (Angela Interview 3). When working with

SETs who needed support to address challenges, she understood her role as such:

I have to guide them there...Another favorite movie of mine is 'Inception' and in some ways I have to inception them and say you are good at what you do, and to, you know, help them get there, but I have to do it without them actually realizing that we've done that (Angela Interview 1).

Angela's interpretation of her role suggested that she had the ability to influence beginning SETs decisions and actions, and recognized her positional power.

Angela's positionality also influenced her social positioning in mentoring worlds; however, she did not discuss its impact. During the interviews, her reflection on her social identities and positional power was limited, stating:

I can't really not be white. Right? I can't not be a woman. I can't not be a mom. But I can try to look and listen to all the other perspectives that are out there and...I can try to integrate it as much as I can into my own knowledge bases (Angela Interview 1).

While Angela was open to incorporating others' perspectives, she did not acknowledge how her own dominant identities (e.g., white, English-speaking, heterosexual) influenced her positional power, biases, and practices. She did not discuss her positionality in relation to the students she served, the teachers she worked with, or the system she was a part of.

Enacted Identity

While discussing her practice, Angela made connections between components of her lived history, such as her mom and helper identities and professional values and experiences. Broadly describing her role, she stated "I think a mentorship role is a large leadership role. And you need to be able to listen. As well as to be able to support without telling them what to do" (Angela Interview 1). While her narratives suggested that she enacted her identity in various

ways, the following sections discuss three functions of her role that were identified and were supported by her descriptions of artifacts: (a) facilitating professional learning, (b) shaping reflective practices, and (c) balancing emotional support and problem-solving.

Facilitating Professional Learning. Angela refigured her professional values of continual learning and resilience into her mentor practice to support SETs' professional growth. She believed that effective approaches to professional growth involved choosing one area and gaining a deep understanding in the area before moving to a new learning focus. She described this approach to learning as a "resiliency strategy" (Angela Interview 3) and she integrated it into her practice. At the beginning of the year, she asked the SETs to select one area of professional growth and connect their learning throughout the year to that area. She described an example of what this looked like in practice:

If you want to know about...How to do better assessment, let's say...Then you can branch off from assessment in the middle. And it just means that everything that you look at, you're looking at it through the lens of assessment. But you can look at restorative justice and think how would I assess that a student understood what they were doing? How would I assess their ability in being resilient and dealing with the next challenge that they run into? Even though what I'm learning about is restorative justice, my brain is still cycling around assessment (Angela Interview 3).

Angela supported beginning SETs with making connections between their learning and the area they selected. It appeared that artifacts, such as the professional development plan she discussed, allowed her to support beginning SETs with building their pedagogical content knowledge through the process of integrating new knowledge into existing schema.

Rooted in Angela's approach to mentoring were her past professional experiences and

beliefs about learning and growth. According to her, “What you know, you can't unlearn, you gotta keep moving forward with it” (Angela Interview 3). She reiterated this belief about learning several times. Her quotes seemed to suggest that her assumption was that knowledge was gained and built upon as educators interacted with it, and did not include the process of deconstructing and transforming existing knowledge. Her use of artifacts and narratives did not include information about supporting beginning SETs with critically examining knowledge and skills that were newly acquired or a part of existing schema. Angela was positioned to support beginning SETs with this process, yet it was unclear if she enacted her identity in this way.

Shaping Reflective Practices. Angela personally used reflective practices as a mechanism for learning and as a resiliency strategy. Refiguring her professional values and practice of reflection into her mentor identity, she used artifacts to shape beginning SETs' reflective practices. As a reflective partner, Angela described her goal as, “I try to get my mentees to look back on what they've done and say, ‘So now that you've done this, how did it make you feel, how did it go, now what are you going to do?’” (Angela Interview 1). She used several artifacts to accomplish this goal, including supporting beginning SETs with technical aspects of documenting reflective practices and new knowledge, as well as using coaching dialogues to guide beginning SETs to reflect on their practice.

She coached beginning SETs to develop a system for capturing items such as notes from their meetings, information about curriculum, research articles, and their accomplishments and successes. She referred to this organizational tool as a “note catcher”. Describing its utility, she stated, “It helps them by giving them the knowledge of how they should reflect, as opposed to me telling them how they should reflect” (Angela Interview 2). Angela also used coaching dialogs with the note catcher to support SETs with reflecting and identifying new learning. She

relied on her preferences to shape her conversations with SETs, which she described as:

I always write down what are my next steps...I always go into every activity that I do with what did I learn from that activity....Every conversation that I have with all of my personal mentors...Every class that I take, even if I've already taken that class 20 times, I'm going to come out of it with some little nugget of information. And I'm going to say, how do I use that piece of information for my next steps. So, I encourage [beginning SETs] always to think about those next steps. What did you learn from our conversation? What are you going to take away from this conversation? What are you going to do tomorrow differently because of this conversation? (Angela Interview 2).

Angela seemed to recognize that her reflective conversations with beginning SETs could influence their practice. However, her practices seemed to focus more on identifying next steps and beginning SETs' immediate reactions to instruction. It did not appear to include a deeper examination of the beliefs and assumptions that may guide practice and impact student learning.

Emotional Support and Problem-Solving. Angela's identities of helper and mom were reflected in her approach to balancing emotional support with problem-solving. She saw her refigured mom identity as a strength, and enacted her identity to be a calming presence and a form of support. She shared the belief that "Sometimes [beginning teachers] just need the mom" (Angela Interview 3), a role that she felt comfortable fulfilling in mentoring worlds. The nurturing aspect of Angela's mentor identity was evident in the artifacts she utilized, a cup of coffee, chocolate bar, or personalized note to show appreciation and provide encouragement.

She enacted her mentoring role by balancing emotional support and utilizing artifacts to create a positive and safe space for productive problem-solving. During check-in meetings with beginning teachers, she often employed questioning strategies to get them to identify a focal area

that she could assist with. She described what this looked like in practice:

Let's try to hone in on something, because if I open it up it becomes more of a bitch session. I don't want it to be a bitch session, I want it to be productive and if it starts going down that bitch session road, then I try to rein it back in and say, 'So I hear you. I understand this as an issue and let's keep that on the back burner for next time or for a follow up conversation. But right now, how can I help you with what's going on this week?' (Angela Interview 2).

This strategy required her to deeply listen to SETs to understand the issue and identify the best method to support them. Drawing on her professional history and knowledge of the district, she frequently supported problem-solving by providing suggestions, resources, or connecting mentees to others who could support them like specialists or instructional coaches.

Angela refigured her values, and past identities and experiences into her enacted practice and identity in mentoring worlds. In interpreting her identity, she understood her role as a position that had an indirect impact on students and one where she had the ability to shape teachers' professional growth and practice. She enacted her identity in several ways that had the potential to influence the beliefs and practices that beginning SETs adopt and integrate into their pedagogical content knowledge. Her constructed mentor identity and lived history had implications for how she understood inclusion and enacted her role to support the concept.

Inclusion Worlds

Angela identified that her conceptualization of the abstract figured world of inclusion was constantly shifting. Her narratives and concept map reflected both critical and dominant conceptions of inclusion. She applied the term expansively, thinking about inclusion as a set of ideological beliefs and practices that applied to all settings (e.g., schools, workplaces, society)

and all people regardless of social identities, group membership, or social positioning. When describing an ideal vision of inclusion, Angela tended to describe components grounded in disability studies; however, when operationalizing inclusion, she surfaced several contradictions.

The Language and Ideals of Inclusion

Angela was critical of dominant, deficit-based language and her understanding of disability reflected aspects of disability studies. She identified discourse that she felt was problematic, such as “normal”, “self-contained”, and identifying students by academic level (e.g., low, medium, or high ability grouping) (Angela Interview 3). Additionally, she defined the term disability as such: “To have [disabilities], call them different abilities, different...differences. Strengths, challenges. We all have strengths, we all have challenges. And we don't have to have that as our identity” (Angela Interview 3). Her fluid conception of disability as a type of natural human variance suggested ideological beliefs aligned with sociocultural perspectives. Her quote also hinted at a rejection of cultural norms that often restrict ability to a binary, disabled or abled, or assume that disability is a monolithic identity. While Angela viewed disability as socially located, she did not acknowledge the role that sociocultural settings play in the construction of disability.

Angela's ideal concept of inclusion hinted at an understanding of how school conditions and contextual factors can facilitate inclusion and create equitable educational opportunities for students. She took issue with a bifurcated system of education, stating:

And how inclusive is special ed? If we could just call it all education and called it all universal design and that we give kids the accommodations and people the accommodation that they need and would benefit from...Golly, wouldn't it be a different world” (Angela Interview 3).

In her ideal inclusive world, special education would be dismantled and a single system would exist, she described this as: “In my perfect world, we wouldn't actually have self-contained special ed classrooms, we would have supports that are available to students when they needed it” (Angela Interview 3). In her idealized world, roles would be fluid and paraeducators and staff would not be designated as special education or general education staff. Additionally, spaces would be used flexibly with appropriate learning activities for each student. Angela’s narratives suggested that she ascribed to a vision of inclusion that countered dominant conceptions of inclusion by decoupling disability from educational placement (Naraian et al., 2020). She used phrases such as, “Offering ideas and thoughts - not being judged”, “Universally designed for access”, “Appropriate and rigorous curriculum”, and “May be individualized” (Angela Concept Map) to describe aspects of the environment that constituted her ideal vision of inclusion. While her narratives of a “perfect world” (Angela Interview 3) and her concept map were reflective of disability studies perspectives of inclusion, when operationalizing inclusion through the lens of her participation in education worlds, competing beliefs and practices surfaced.

Operationalizing Inclusion

Angela was situated within discursive contexts that were most often focused on students with disabilities and special education services. Given her ideal vision of inclusion, it was likely that she encountered competing narratives and practices grounded in the belief that inclusion is fundamentally about students with disabilities accessing general education settings. As Angela shared examples from practice, she surfaced personal and systemic beliefs that related to the dominant conception of inclusion.

While Angela’s ideal vision of inclusion was expansive, she recognized the complexities and challenges of operationalizing it. When asked how inclusion may apply to students with

intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), Angela's ideal conceptualization of inclusion faltered, stating "So to me, students with those more larger challenges should still be...in, so they might be served...Again, in a separate setting, at specific times for their needs. Um...it's difficult, it's, um, complex, totally complex" (Angela Interview 3). Angela appeared to have a difficult time imagining a world without segregated special education settings. When asked if she felt there were any benefits to separate special education settings, Angela responded:

We're always going to have to have it for a couple of reasons. One, on the financial side, we have to have it, because if we don't have IEPs, then we're not getting IDEA (Individuals with Disability Education Act) funding...And I think also that sometimes it's the most appropriate place" (Angela Interview 3).

Her quotes countered the ideal vision of inclusion she described where spaces and practices were flexible for students to access the supports and instruction that were most appropriate. Instead, her quotes reflected dominant conceptions of inclusion that view spaces as fixed and inaccessible for some, and use procedural compliance as a method to justify the exclusion of students with disabilities.

As Angela provided examples from her professional worlds, her narratives reflected beliefs and practices that were embedded in the dominant contexts she participated in. For example, she surfaced beliefs that contradicted her ideal vision, stating "I think that students should have a seat in each classroom, that's why I'm really not a big fan of self-contained classrooms, but on the other hand, I recognized that sometimes that's where their identity is" (Angela Interview 3). Angela elaborated on this belief by sharing past memories of a student with a disability who she believed preferred segregated special education settings because they were "so challenged with their general ed classroom content" and "couldn't make a bond with

anybody in their general ed classroom” (Angela Interview 3). When recalling these examples, she did not question dominant norms, such as the curriculum and cultural practices, that acted in ways to devalue and push the student with a disability to the margins of the classroom community. Her examples and quotes hinted at the paternalistic belief that segregated settings were appropriate for some students because they shield them from harm and academic failure in inclusive learning environments. Providing another example of a student in her professional worlds who was educated fully in segregated settings, Angela talked about how the IEP team was thinking about instruction and educational placement, describing “If [they]¹ need to be included in a general ed classroom setting, because that’s the content that’s going to be [their] most rigorous, appropriate materials, then we do that” (Angela Interview 3). The example she provided, suggested that Angela perceived the general education setting as a fixed curriculum and set of instructional practices only accessible to students who could access it. While she ascribed to an ideal vision of inclusion, at times her narratives and examples suggested that her constructed knowledge of inclusion was shaped by the dominant discourse and practices of special education.

Angela’s conception of inclusion illustrated the tensions of an inclusive ideal and the operationalization of inclusion in contexts where dominant narratives and practices uphold notions of normalcy and justify the exclusion of some students. Her narratives highlighted challenges associated with reconciling a concept of inclusion that forms through participation in professional figured worlds with ideal visions of inclusion. The contradictions that Angela surfaced suggested that she was deeply situated in contexts that ascribed to dominant concepts of

¹ All pronouns used by participants to describe students and teachers have been changed to they/them/their or “beginning SET” throughout the manuscript. These individuals were not included in the study; therefore, their pronouns could not be verified.

inclusion and did not recognize how her situated worlds perpetuated ableism. Her conceptualization, including her competing beliefs and practices, had implications for how she perceived her agency in advancing inclusion in and across her mentoring worlds.

Agency in Advancing Inclusion

Angela's perceived agency was derived from her interpretation of her identity and social positioning. As a special education mentor, she believed her impact was "specifically within the special education realm" (Angela Interview 3). She identified as a teacher of adults and felt she was positioned to influence SETs' practices and mindsets. However, she acknowledged the complexity of supporting teachers to examine their beliefs and expressed awareness of her own potential biases:

Teacher beliefs...it's sometimes about coaxing and trying to help them, um...So I may give them an article...we may have quality in depth discussion about it, but it's really about coaxing them into thinking differently. But on the other hand, I'm not going to believe that what my beliefs are are correct. And I have to be open to other people's beliefs and inclusion, it just happens to be one of those real challenging...inclusion and equity are very challenging, multifaceted pieces and there is no one definition and there's no one right way" (Angela Interview 3).

Angela frequently refigured her beliefs as she interacted with new knowledge or had conversations about inclusion, stating "Oh, my beliefs tend to shift around often, um, they still have a big taproot" (Angela Interview 3). She seemed to be aware of this and used artifacts to "coax" beginning teachers into reflecting on their practices and mindset, without forcefully imposing her own conception of inclusion or ideological beliefs.

Angela's agency was mediated by several cultural artifacts in her mentor worlds. For

example, she often utilized coaching dialogs to guide beginning SETs' reflection with a focus on universal design for learning (UDL; Rose & Meyer, 2006). She asked teachers to identify how activities were universally designed and how students felt included; however, these conversations focused on instruction in segregated special education settings. When encountering deficit-based beliefs about students' abilities, she used student assessment data to gently challenge teachers to examine their assumptions. Angela also used individualized education programs (IEPs) to support beginning SETs with aligning IEP goals to grade-level standards. This allowed her to reframe teachers' beliefs and ensure that students had access to grade-level content.

Angela's gentle approach to conversations about beliefs, may have been limited by her interpretation of her mentoring identity. While she felt it was within her role to engage in conversations about inclusion at both the district level and in mentoring, she stated:

There are times ...when I'm having that conversation, when I'm thinking about that conversation, it's always in the back of my head, but I'm really cautious of not beating it into somebody else's head. Right, again back to [people] have to come to it themselves" (Angela Interview 3).

Her hesitation to engage in conversations about equity and inclusion was reflective of her belief that adult learners have to "find that nugget of information" (Angela Interview 3) for themselves in order to build knowledge and have ownership of future actions. Therefore, she used various artifacts to guide SETs into discovering new information and building their teaching practice, while continually refiguring her own ideological beliefs about inclusion.

Angela's enacted mentor identity included facilitating professional learning, shaping reflective practices, and balancing emotional support with productive problem-solving. Her

interpretation of her social positioning as a teacher of adults and mom, provided her with positional power and relational capital in her mentor relationships. Her understanding of her identity suggested she was positioned to support beginning teachers with building the capacity to recognize and disrupt marginalizing and inequitable practices and create the conditions that were more in line with her ideal vision of inclusion. However, it seemed as if Angela's agency in advancing inclusion was limited by her social positioning in the broader system and lack of acknowledgement of her own power in her situated worlds. Additionally, her ability to enact her mentor identity to disrupt and transform the dominant narratives and practices of her professional worlds may have been constrained by her constructed knowledge of inclusion and how the worlds she participated in contributed to ableism.

Susan

Susan is a 41-year-old, white female who had just finished her 12th year of teaching and was in her third year as an induction mentor at the time of data collection. In her main role as a teacher, Susan taught in a middle school self-contained special education classroom setting. She balanced this full-time teaching role with her duties as a colleague mentor to beginning SETs.

History-in-Person

The aspects of Susan's past history that informed her mentor identity centered on pivotal moments in her teaching career that allowed her to develop commitments and identities as a teacher and mentor. She categorized her professional experiences into two stages which she labeled: (1) "Nowhere near the right frame of mind or having the expertise to be a mentor", and (2) "Through my growth in managing adults in my program I start to feel like I could help other people grow in this profession" (Susan Identity Map). The lived history she shared in these defined stages of her career shaped her professional purpose, her identity as a competent special

education teacher, and early iterations of her mentor identity.

Developing a Professional Purpose

Susan was motivated to become a teacher after observing several marginalizing practices in schools. As a substitute teacher, she noticed that many of the Indigenous students she knew from the community were identified for special education services. She recalled “I was shocked when I went into the schools at how many kids were identified as being in special education” (Susan Interview 1). While she tried to make sense of what was likely evidence of a racialized special education system, she also directly observed problematic adult-student interactions.

Describing an example and her motivation to enter the profession, she stated:

There was another time at another school where there was a boy who was just bawling his eyes out and he was from the reservation and the teacher was just on top of him yelling at him. And, so, I just, I wanted to go into special ed to kind of make sure that that didn't happen, so that these kids who were getting identified in school...how they need to be treated better (Susan Interview 1).

These early experiences motivated Susan to become a special education teacher and informed her professional purpose to respect, value, and advocate for all students. Susan’s brief narratives about former and current students reflected her purpose and suggested that she built strong relationships with students, created positive and supportive classrooms, and recognized student strengths. At the heart of her work was a commitment to be an advocate for students, describing it as “her most important job” (Susan Interview 1). Susan’s commitment to advocacy shaped her identity as a teacher and mentor.

Constructing an Identity as a Competent Special Education Teacher

Susan’s teaching identity was continually refigured throughout her 12-year career and

influenced by pivotal experiences. For example, she identified an informal mentor, who she described as both an “advocate” and “protector” (Susan Interview 1), as influential in her professional growth and understanding of the school context. Additionally, the process of becoming a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) was instrumental in her career; she described its importance as, “National Boards process/cohort helped me become a competent teacher” (Susan Identity Map). Susan believed that this experience allowed her to develop the pedagogical content knowledge that was required to be a “well-rounded teacher” and “to do [teaching] well” (Susan Interview 1). These experiences allowed Susan to recognize her depth of knowledge and identify as a competent SET. Her twelve years of teaching special education across multiple settings reinforced her interpretation of that identity and understanding of the SET role (e.g., “allies with families”, “a lot of content knowledge”, “coach role” (Susan Interview 2)). Susan’s understanding of the SET role and skillset was a component of her SET identity and informed her work with the adults in her professional worlds.

There were several experiences that allowed Susan to develop the skills she felt were necessary to use her identity as a competent SET to coach and mentor adults. She first focused on developing her ability to collaborate and effectively communicate through her work with paraeducators. She described this stage in her career as, “Move to a program where I am managing multiple adults...first and second year grow and learn to become an effective leader in my program” (Susan Identity Map). Susan's identity as a competent SET and leader was also recognized by others. She was presented with opportunities that allowed her to coach and mentor adults, such as being asked to coordinate a NBCT cohort and mentoring a preservice SET. She described how these experiences influenced her self-efficacy:

I feel like I have a lot to learn and to grow...but I feel like just these last few years, I'm

starting to feel like I'm competent in my ability to help other people grow in this profession. I was nowhere near that frame of mind for a long time, and it took me up until now...I'm like, year 12 into my teaching and now I'm finally like...I can help people and not do more harm (Susan Interview 1).

Susan's identity as a competent SET included an awareness of her knowledge and skills, and also the potential impact of her work with adults. This identity and understanding of the SET role served as the foundation of her constructed mentor identity.

Early Iterations of a Mentor Identity

Susan's constructed mentor identity included past iterations of her interpretation of her mentor identity and pivotal professional learning experiences. She recalled what it was like to first assume the role, describing "I didn't really know what my role was. It was just like, 'Will you mentor [them]?' And I'm like, 'Sure'. And then that was it" (Susan Interview 1). Without knowledge or experience, her role enactment was constrained. During her second year of mentoring, Susan began attending professional learning opportunities specific to mentoring. These experiences were a turning point in her understanding and enactment of her mentor identity. She reflected on her interpretation of the role before and after the training, stating, "I feel like I did a lot of 'I know you're going to need help with this, so here you go.' But now...I'm thinking, it should be more mentee driven" (Susan Interview 3). As Susan participated in trainings, she began to transform her interpretation and try new approaches. She described one example of trying something new and learning from the experience, stating:

I started realizing I needed to have more regular contact with my mentee. And so [the second year], like halfway through the year, I put on my calendar to email [them] on a weekly basis...I'd just send [them] an email, 'How are you doing, do you need help with

anything?’ But [they were] always like, ‘Oh, I’m fine’, or, you know, things like that. So actually going into [their] classroom and then having something to start the conversation, I learned from the [training] and it was really helpful (Susan Interview 2).

Through participation in professional learning and trying new methods of interacting with beginning SETs, Susan actively deconstructed and reconstructed her mentor identity. Her training experiences and past interpretation of her identity carried into her third year of mentoring where she continued to actively refigure her mentor identity.

Susan’s lived history can be conceptualized as the stages of her career that helped her develop professional purpose, identify as a competent SET, and begin forming an identity as a mentor. Collectively, her past professional experiences informed different aspects of her perception and enactment of her mentor identity.

Mentoring Worlds

Susan’s district provided mentoring throughout the first three years of teachers’ careers and all mentors were also full-time teachers. District messaging or structures to support mentors were largely absent from the worlds she participated in. Reflecting on the information she received from the district, she said “There’s nothing until we did [the mentor trainings] and then I was like, ‘That’s what I’m supposed to be doing?’” (Susan Interview 2). With limited support or guidance, Susan constructed her mentor identity by refiguring her lived history and making sense of her dual role as a teacher and mentor in mentoring worlds.

Susan’s mentoring worlds consisted primarily of the interactions with the beginning SET she mentored and the artifacts she used. At the time of the study, she mentored one beginning SET and they had just completed their second year of mentoring, which did not include release time for mentoring activities. Susan and the beginning SET both taught in self-contained special

education settings but at separate buildings. At times, her mentor activities were constrained by her dual role and the district mentoring structure. Citing one example, she described:

...Because [they] get out a little bit later, I went over a couple of times to be able to go and observe in [their] class, but it was really hard, because [they're] across town and you know...we both had school. So, I could only catch [them] at the end of the day, I couldn't see the other parts of [their] day (Susan Interview 2).

Susan relied on weekly emails, a few classroom visits, and additional district activities and meetings to provide mentoring. These interactions and the tools she utilized defined her mentoring worlds and the site of her enacted identity.

Mentor Identity

Susan felt that she was just coming to understand her mentor identity and recognized the magnitude of her teaching identity. When asked if her teaching identity was a component of who she was as a mentor, she responded, "I think that's my whole identity as a mentor...I'm just now kind of discovering the mentor side of it" (Susan Interview 2). Her identity as a colleague mentor included her role, and therefore, her identity as a teacher. Additionally, her mentor identity included her perceived social positioning, her refigured professional history, and the meaning she made from participation in mentoring worlds in her dual role.

Social Positioning

Susan's role as a colleague mentor contributed to her perception of her social positioning and identity. She sought to position herself as a colleague and collaborator. She recognized the significance of their shared roles as SETs in their relationship, describing "It's been really helpful, so like [the beginning SET] can see that I have the same struggles that [they do]...I think that seemed to be important" (Susan Interview 2). Susan leveraged her role as a teacher to

normalize the challenges that the beginning SET encountered and to strengthen their relationship. She also viewed their mentoring relationship as reciprocal, noting several examples of learning from the beginning SET. However, Susan's identity as a mentor also included her identity as the experienced teacher in their mentoring relationship. She routinely reflected on her positional power, stating "I become a lot more reflective about, am I talking over [them]? Am I talking about what I think is important, instead of just letting [them] talk? So, I've tried to get better about that, but it's really hard" (Susan Interview 2). Susan used her dual role to relate and build a positive relationship with the beginning SET while attempting to remain conscious of the inherent power dynamics in the relationship.

Susan recognized the role that individual experiences play in identity formation and relationships. However, she did not demonstrate an awareness of how positionality interacts with contexts in ways that unevenly distribute power and contribute to the dominant practices and discourse in schools. When asked how her social identities contributed to her mentor identity, she focused on the mentoring relationship, stating, "I have a bias because of things that have happened in the past or whatever, you know, I think it would be important to provide that experience for new teachers that have similar backgrounds and ethnicities and gender" (Susan Interview 1). While recognition of implicit bias is an initial step to understanding how marginalized practices are reproduced, Susan did not directly acknowledge how her dominant identities (e.g., white, English-speaking, heterosexual) interacted in her worlds or describe her positionality in relation to student identities. It was unclear from her narratives if she understood how educators' positionalities shape practices and beliefs about students.

Enacted Identity

Through her lived history, such as mentor trainings and past iterations of her mentor

identity, Susan formed the belief that a mentor's primary function was to provide support in areas the beginning SET identified. She summarized her perception of the role:

I think the purpose of a mentor is to provide support to those new teachers who might be struggling more than you realize...you're a support, a safe support....so they can feel like they're in a safe environment to vent or, you know, do whatever they need. So, I would just say you're there to support...and I am not necessarily there to lead (Susan Interview 3).

Grounding her interpretation of her role in this belief, Susan enacted her mentor identity in various ways including: (a) boosting teachers' self-efficacy, (b) building a network of support, and (c) fostering a sense of agency.

Boosting Self-Efficacy. Susan's SET identity informed her pedagogy and understanding of the teaching role. She used this as a lens to provide feedback to boost the beginning SET's self-efficacy and counter negative messages in the teacher's worlds. When asked about the significance of her enacted practice, Susan described "I was trying to say, even though you have this negative feedback that you're getting...look at all these good things that you are doing" (Susan Interview 2). To accomplish this purpose, she relied on two tools to provide feedback, a running record of direct observations and a template for making connections between an observed practice and the theory behind it, both of which she gained from past mentor trainings. During observations, she recorded what she heard or observed related to an area of focus the beginning SET selected. At the end of an observation, Susan would use her running notes to complete the observation template. The template asks mentors to name observed, effective practices and explain how the practice positively impacts student learning. While using the template, Susan made connections to the district's teacher evaluation rubric. She described her

approach as, “Just to show [them], you are meeting these things that you're evaluated on even if your evaluator's saying you're not. And this, this is the evidence of that” (Susan Interview 2).

Susan shared both artifacts with the beginning SET after observations to encourage self-reflection, but did not facilitate reflective practices with the teacher.

Susan's professional purpose and competent SET identity uniquely qualified her to understand effective and appropriate instructional practices for students with disabilities who are most often educated in segregated settings. She was positioned to support SETs with developing pedagogical content knowledge and humanizing practices. However, due to the constraints of her dual role, Susan was only able to observe a few times and only at one specific time of the school day, which occurred entirely in a segregated setting. By focusing on instruction in this context and limiting feedback to positive comments and connections to the evaluation system, it was unclear from Susan's narratives and use of artifacts if this particular enactment of her identity reinforced dominant special education discourse and practices or prompted the beginning SET to question the systems and practices that legitimize the exclusion of students with disabilities.

Building a Network of Support. One of Susan's priorities included providing support and addressing individual teacher concerns. She refigured her identity as a competent SET to utilize tools such as suggestions, questioning strategies, and lived experiences, to support the beginning SET with identifying solutions to perceived challenges. Susan provided a few examples of her mentor practice, describing:

We were talking about, you know, are you holding weekly meetings, are you providing an agenda, are you brainstorming these concerns so that everybody's on the same page? You know, things like that is how I was addressing [their] concerns. We talked about different ways to go about managing behaviors, because, I mean, there's lots of different

ways...and so, I would just share some experience that I've had recently with some severe behaviors that have been extinguished using a certain program (Susan Interview 2).

While Susan used individual interactions and discourse to provide assistance, she also enacted her identity in ways that created a broader system of support for the teacher.

Susan's experiences as a self-contained special education teacher allowed her to recognize the isolation that teachers experience and create points of connection, she shared "It feels like you're very by yourself, but really we're all struggling with the same thing" (Susan Interview 2). To broaden support beyond what Susan could provide, she worked with the beginning SET to create a shared electronic drive for all of the self-contained SETs in the district to share resources. She also initiated regular meetings with this group of SETs for the purposes of "talking about how similar our struggles were and things that we could do to make it better" (Susan Interview 2). The group meetings prompted deeper conversations between Susan and the beginning SET. Reflecting on the significance of the network of support, she stated:

So, to meet as a whole group and then [the beginning SET] and I would continue that, you know, discussion and problem solving. I think that might have been where we both felt like, okay...we felt like we had a path or something to focus on, not on a wall (Susan Interview 2).

The district-wide meetings focused the content of their mentor interactions and assisted Susan and the beginning SET with developing actions to actively address challenges unique to their roles and segregated settings. Susan used artifacts and events, such as shared electronic drives and job-alike meetings, in ways that created a system of support and ongoing collaboration that would extend beyond mentoring.

Fostering a Sense of Agency. Drawing on her past relationship with an informal mentor

and teaching history, Susan interpreted her role as an advocate for beginning SETs. Acting in alignment with her interpretation, she used interactions with administrators, to cultivate the beginning SET's sense of agency. Susan was invited to attend several meetings with administrators to support the beginning SET with advocating for system-level changes (i.e., safety protocols, program structure). These events provided opportunities for Susan to use strategies to support the SET with naming actionable steps and engaging in self-advocacy. Susan shared several examples of her practice. For example, she described a meeting where she used purposeful questioning to focus on incremental changes that the beginning SET and administrators could take to shift current practices. Susan recalled, "And so I said, 'So, what are some small things that we can do to help with safety in [their] room?'" (Susan Interview 2). The question created space for the SET to voice ideas and engage in dialog with administrators about necessary changes. In another example, Susan crafted an email about the goals and focus of self-contained special education programs as a method for educating the beginning SET's administrators about special education. Susan's examples suggested that she leveraged her identity as a competent SET and positioning as a mentor to create better working relationships and conditions for the beginning SET to effectively support students.

Reflective of her professional purpose and understanding of the SET role, Susan used her advocacy to provide opportunities for the beginning teacher to build the capacity to navigate the system and initiate change. When reflecting on her impact, Susan shared:

I feel like [the beginning SET] started some change. And I would hope that my support helped [them] with that...And my hope is that I made [them] feel empowered enough or like [they] knew that [they were] doing enough to be that change...And I supported [them] through those meetings and things like that. So...I'm hoping that I helped give

[them] that voice (Susan Interview 3).

Susan's comments suggested that she perceived her role and mentoring activities as supporting the SET with seeing themselves as capable of transforming structures and practices. Enacting her identity in this way demonstrated the potential influence that her mentor identity could have on empowering teachers and working with them in collaboration to reshape entrenched practices.

As Susan interacted in mentoring worlds, she actively refigured her lived history and integrated her understanding of her dual roles as a colleague mentor into her mentor identity and enacted practice. Specifically, her professional purpose, identity as a competent SET, and professional development experiences and past mentor identities, all contributed to the ways she understood and practiced her mentor role, which are reflective of her stated goal:

I hope that [they] feel competent...that [they] feel like [they] can ask questions if [they] need to but that [they] also can find solutions on [their] own and become competent in those essential skills that we need, the advocacy, the coaching...the, you know, all about the teaching (Susan Interview 2).

Susan used artifacts and enacted her identity in alignment with her goals as a mentor and perception of the SET role. Her mentor identity was also situated within inclusion worlds and included her understanding of inclusion and perceived agency within the context of inclusion.

Inclusion Worlds

Susan did not offer many concrete examples of the ideological beliefs and practices that constituted her conceptualization of inclusion. She primarily spoke about inclusion from her perspective as a competent SET. Her narratives and concept map reflected beliefs and assumptions about disability and inclusion that were most likely shaped by her past history and participation in a dominant education system. She held the belief that schools were designed for

some but not all and her conceptualization demonstrated an emerging understanding of how the education system works in ways that are detrimental to learners who deviated from the norm.

However, her narratives were often grounded in dominant conceptions of inclusion.

Acknowledging Flaws in the System

Susan's narratives and concept map included concepts that suggested an emerging understanding of how traditional approaches to education privileged those who fit the profile of a "typical student". She defined inclusion in terms of all students and discussed how many students are excluded or disadvantaged by current approaches to education. She believed that the education system is designed specifically for "People with math/science inclinations" and "People with linguistic inclinations" (Susan Concept Map). She identified that people with strengths and abilities that differed from those traditional academic learner profiles (e.g., "People with artistic inclinations", "People with exceptional needs" (Susan Concept Map)), were often on the margins of the education system. However, Susan did not name other historically marginalized identities that are often disadvantaged and pushed out by the system. Including all students in her conceptualization, she stated "It doesn't mean just dropping everybody into all gen ed classes because inclusion means providing access, which means providing different ways for people to learn" (Susan Interview 3). Recognizing that a one-size fits all curriculum and instructional approach isolates some students, Susan included practices in her conceptualization that hinted at a need to transform current practices, such as "Providing multiple ways to demonstrate mastery", "Multiple ways to access [curriculum]", and a need for teachers to shift "away from the status quo - the paper and pencil and the textbook" (Susan Concept Map; Interview 3). However, when applying inclusion to her teaching and mentoring worlds, Susan's situated conceptualization of inclusion most often reflected dominant discourses and ideologies.

Applied Concept of Inclusion

Susan recognized the benefits of inclusion, but also the complexities of shifting mindsets and practices to provide inclusive education to all. Her conceptualization included acceptance of differences and she cited examples of practices that create inclusive communities. One example included talking to the student body about disability in an attempt to normalize disability and foster peer relationships. She described these events as, “I talked to them a lot about you know, [students with disabilities] are just like everybody else in the school and they just want to be included” (Susan Interview 3). Her conceptualization included components such as “teachers being willing to collaborate”, “educated administrators”, and “the open mindedness to work together to figure out new ways to do things that work for [teachers’] environment” (Susan Interview 3). While Susan had the best of intentions for fostering inclusion, when applying her conceptualization of inclusion to her professional worlds, she often identified individual student needs versus aspects of the system as barriers to inclusion.

Central to Susan’s conceptualization of inclusion was a student’s need to feel safe and valued. She believed inclusive learning environments resembled, “a community that fosters change and fosters collaboration and fosters where people feel safe enough to give things a try” (Susan Interview 3). Susan further described, “Inclusion is about providing those safe spaces where [students with disabilities] feel secure and comfortable, but then taking those steps to push them out of their comfort zone to build tolerance to new environments” (Susan Interview 3). In Susan’s teaching and mentoring worlds, this meant creating a supportive and positive, yet segregated, learning environment for most students and providing opportunities for them to learn the skills that were necessary to access and participate in inclusive opportunities. She provided an example of a progression or multiple points for students to access inclusive settings, writing in

her concept map: “Providing opportunities at multiple levels to meet students at their comfort level. Walking in hall → inclusive PE → visiting elective classes”. The term “visiting” hinted at the belief that students with disabilities were guests and not necessarily full members of the classroom and school communities. Her narratives and concept map predominately reflected dominant beliefs about disability with the focus on deficits in the individual and not the sociocultural conditions that uphold ideals of normalcy and disable individuals. Describing the role of segregated settings, Susan stated:

I think really with the [self-contained] program you're focusing on those environments. It's not necessarily about the reading, and the writing, and the math. It's about can you function...In the hallway? Can you function around your peers? Can you function in a lunchroom? Can you function on a sidewalk? Can you function in a grocery store? And I think that's inclusion, because that's the bigger picture. It's not just about being included in a school” (Susan Interview 3).

While Susan recognized the value of inclusion and actively worked to support students with accessing inclusive opportunities, her use of the term “function” suggested a belief that students with disabilities deviated from a norm, a dominant belief that reinforces ableism. In general, Susan’s examples and perspectives suggested that she believed the expectation was for students to adapt in order to access opportunities instead of an expectation for environments that commonly restrict access to change. Her examples reflected the system she was a part of and highlighted systemic issues where discourse and practices uphold standards designed to marginalize and exclude students who don’t fit conceptions of normalcy.

At times Susan’s conceptualization of inclusion hinted at a recognition of barriers to inclusion that are inherent in dominant educational approaches. Speaking in general terms, she

stated, “And so there's a systemic thing going on too where there needs to be a shift in thinking to remove the barriers to inclusion” (Susan Interview 3). However, she provided few concrete examples of how systemic barriers stigmatize and devalue students with disabilities. As a teacher, Susan was socialized into a bifurcated education system built on a deficit framework of disability. Her constructed identity as a competent SET and understanding of her role was influenced by the discourses and practices of her contexts. As a self-contained special education teacher, segregation was likely the norm and her role included locating inclusive opportunities for her students and “advocating to make sure that kids who are going into gen ed classes are getting the accommodations that they need” (Susan Interview 2). Situated in dominant discursive contexts, it is no surprise that Susan had difficulty reimagining traditional and binary (i.e., general education and special education) spaces and roles to address the flaws in the system she surfaced. Her socialization and participation in an institutionalized system likely contributed to her constructed knowledge of inclusion and perception of her situated agency in special education worlds. Despite her commitment to advocacy and affirming learning environments, she may not have recognized how her understanding and application of inclusion contributed to the prevailing discourse and practices that perpetuate ableism and inequities in schools.

Agency in Advancing Inclusion

Susan's agency in advancing inclusion was influenced by her interpretation of her mentor identity and social positioning, and constructed knowledge of inclusion in her special education mentoring worlds. She perceived her agency to be mainly limited to interactions with the beginning SET. As a colleague mentor, she tried to diminish power dynamics and allow the beginning teacher to identify the focus of interactions. Her perception of her role also applied to the topic of inclusion. However, she identified that the topic was common in her mentoring

worlds, stating “I don't think we use the term inclusion, but I think that's all it is. It is, it's all inclusion. So...I think even though we don't say it, I think we talked about it the majority of the time” (Susan Interview 3). Susan connected their conversations about students to her conceptualization of inclusion where students access general education settings. Her narratives positioned SETs as responsible for mediating the practical challenges of facilitating inclusion into rigid and normative general education settings. When reflecting on her practice, she described:

I mean, really, it's about individual student need and ability and what they can handle and what is, um, where they're at, meeting them at that comfort zone...So, a student needs this, so this is how we can support them, but this other student is out in these classes and this is how we can support them. So, I think it really revolves around those individual student needs (Susan Interview 3).

Susan believed that all of her mentoring conversations about student individualization were connected to inclusion. While individualization is a critical component of inclusion, it was unclear if she provided support in other ways or on other topics to assist the beginning SET with identifying and challenging the ideologies and structures that maintain ability-based segregation in their worlds. Her quotes suggested she was positioned to influence the experiences of students and the ways in which the beginning SET adopted practices to advance inclusion. However, it seemed that her enacted identity and perceived agency aligned with dominant conceptions of inclusion and disability. By focusing solely on student needs or ability as means to determine what students accessed, Susan's mentoring interactions may have inadvertently reinforced special education narratives and practices that uphold normative notions of knowing and being.

When asked about her perceived agency beyond the beginning SET's worlds, Susan felt

that her agency was dependent upon the teacher's requests. She identified one thing in her sphere of influence, stating "I could advocate for maybe those conversations and the collaboration with gen ed to better define inclusion and to provide opportunities that meet student needs" (Susan Interview 3). Recognizing her identity as a competent SET and mentor, Susan felt like she may be able to use her positional power and expertise to affect change in that way. However, she recognized the boundaries of her role and immediately stated, "If that's what the mentee needs. I mean, or like what the mentee asked for. I think you have to be careful not to say, 'Okay, we're gonna do this'" (Susan Interview 3). Acknowledging that her agency was dependent on the beginning SET, she reflected on her practice and felt she was able to affect change at a system level. She described, "I think I've been able, not leaps and bounds, but I think at least I've gotten [the beginning SET's administrators] to think about what inclusion is and in a different way" (Susan Interview 3). Susan was aware of her positional power in her dual role and actively strived to ensure she was not forcing her "own agenda" or "micromanaging" during mentoring interactions (Susan Interview 2). However, her interpretation of her agency suggested that if there were opportunities to discuss inclusion, she thought it was within her role to advocate for students and lead those conversations in alignment with her constructed understanding of inclusion.

Susan's interpretation and enactment of her mentor identity had the potential to shape beginning SETs and administrators' conceptualization of inclusion, as well as the practices and discourse used in educational worlds. She interpreted and enacted her role in ways that could influence SETs' understanding of effective practices, self-efficacy, and agency. However, her perceived agency was constrained by her interpretation of her role and social positioning, and therefore reliant on presented opportunities to discuss inclusion. Furthermore, her agency was

likely situated in worlds that viewed inclusion as students with disabilities accessing rigid general education settings which influenced her enacted mentoring practices. Her mentoring interactions had implications for how dominant special education narratives and practices are reproduced or disrupted in her situated worlds. While Susan's professional purpose reflected a commitment to advocating for students and honoring their dignity, it was unclear from her narratives if she recognized how her constructed knowledge of inclusion and participation in her professional worlds maintained ableism in schools.

Holly

Holly is a 36-year old, white woman who had just completed her first year as an induction mentor. Unlike the other participants, Holly's position as a full-time mentor was dedicated entirely to mentoring beginning teachers. Prior to becoming a mentor, she was an elementary special education teacher in the district for 10 years.

History-in-Person

Holly conceptually organized her history-in-person into three stages of her life: (a) childhood experiences, (b) post K-12 school, and (c) professional experiences (Holly Identity Map). Each stage included influential experiences and relationships that shaped her interpretation and enactment of her identity. While Holly described and included many past experiences on her identity map, I present three main themes: (a) making sense of inclusion, (b) access and connections, and (c) constructing knowledge of the system and teacher agency.

Making Sense of Inclusion

Holly's life was marked by exposure to the concepts of disability and inclusion through various lenses as a child and adult. She described formative experiences involving classmates with disabilities as a child, including volunteering in an elementary special education classroom,

her fifth-grade class which she described as “half students, you know, typically developing students and half students with disabilities” (Holly Interview 1), and various memories of “inclusive settings” (Holly Identity Map). She described how these early experiences influenced her identity:

[Inclusion] was just normalized...it wasn't like all of a sudden, you know, sometimes you're put in a situation that's new or with people who are different from you and you sort of like hesitate to do something because you like have all these lenses and like awareness, but when you're a kid, you just, 'Oh yeah, okay, great', like you, you have no filter...Um, so I think it allowed us when we were older to just know how to be inclusive because it was modeled for us as kids (Holly Interview 2).

Holly's participation in inclusion worlds continued in her undergraduate program. She recalled memories of a student with a disability in her cohort and reflected on how their cohort shared a collective responsibility for implementing accommodations and supporting their access. Her early experiences seemed to normalize disability and serve as the foundation for how she understood inclusion as she navigated various educational contexts as a professional.

When Holly entered the teaching profession as a self-contained special education teacher, she became increasingly aware of how the system she was a part of marginalized students with disabilities and critically reflected on her role, stating:

I became very protective of [my students with disabilities] because many of them came to me having, in a sense failed K-3 and that system wasn't working for them and it wasn't adapting to meet their needs. And so, there's a part of me that once they were with me of like, 'No, we're going to create that environment here, because that's what we know how to do' and so...it was a balance too of like, 'Oh, am I causing problems by self-

containing my students with me?’” (Holly Interview 2).

While Holly’s early schooling experiences normalized inclusion and disability, her professional experiences contributed to an awareness of how education systems exclude and devalue students with disabilities. Her past experiences not only contributed to her conceptualization of inclusion and ideological beliefs, but they also influenced her perceived agency as a mentor.

Access and Connections

Holly summarized her childhood as “colorblind led to being blind about systemic racism and white privilege” (Holly Identity Map). As she described other stages of her life, she referenced experiences that contributed to what she described as “waking-up” and “more realization of different systemic structures” (Holly Interview 1). She seemed to be aware of her positionality and used the term “privilege” several times to describe her ability to access opportunities and easily navigate systems (Holly Interview 1). She also described relationships and resources that supported her in every stage of her career. For example, (a) a team of educators who mentored her as a paraeducator and encouraged her to become a teacher, (b) access to a grant to earn her master's degree and teaching certification for free, and (c) colleagues who mentored her through the National Board Certified Teacher process. She described how these connections and opportunities influenced her mentor identity:

What I continue to see through all of this is like, wow, I had so many connections and people and access to things and rarely did I face a barrier. It was really more of here's all of these options available to you, which path do you want to go down versus you now need to like take a machete and dig this path because no one's going to create one for you. So, yeah, thinking about mentoring folks through that process and how they're showing up for students in that way (Holly Interview 1).

Holly seemed to demonstrate an awareness of how institutionalized systems and structures disproportionately create barriers for some but not all. Transferring these experiences and beliefs into her professional worlds, she recognized the significance of relationships and access to resources on a teacher and student's ability to successfully navigate systems.

Constructing Knowledge of the System and Teacher Agency

Holly recalled professional experiences and memories that shaped her understanding of the systems SETs operate within and the conditions that impact their ability to be effective and resilient in the profession. As a new teacher, she was hired to teach in a new program and provided a mentor without a special education background. She used the words “frustrating” and “overwhelmed” (Holly Interview 1) to describe some of her experiences as a beginning SET. She summarized the impact of her early career working conditions, as “Just being left alone, being isolated, not being told what to do. It also made me have that feeling of well I guess I do just have to do it all by myself” (Holly Interview 3). Discussing SETs' working conditions, Holly named the deficit-based discourse that contributes to what she described as SETs' “cynicism” (Holly Interview 3) and self-efficacy. She cited examples she encountered, such as, “Oh, [special education's] just such a difficult job”, and “Oh my gosh, are [students with disabilities] going to disrupt the learning of every other kid in that classroom, it's going to take away from all those other students” (Holly Interview 3). As Holly progressed in her career, she formed an understanding of the system she worked in and its impact on teachers, which she described as:

The problems continually are the grown-ups that run the systems, which was similar to when I was in the classroom, right, like my families, my kids, if it was just me and them all the time, you know, it'd be fine. But then you bring all the other things into play and that's when it gets really difficult to do at times (Holly Interview 2).

Holly's teaching experiences seemed to shape her beliefs about the conditions that contribute to a SETs' ability to continually perform their role in ways that positively impact students.

As a SET, Holly operated with an awareness of the rigidity of the system she was a part of and exercised her agency in ways that circumvented systemic barriers, such as "finding teachers I could really collaborate with" to create inclusive environments and "teaching families how to challenge a system" (Holly Interview 1). She also tried to impact the broader system by becoming a union representative and participated in contractual negotiations for SETs. Holly's past professional experiences seemed to contribute to a working understanding of how SETs can exercise agency within a fixed and dominant system. These experiences also contributed to her beliefs about transforming practices and systems, which she summarized as:

You have to center the student and the community, right, so it's not about what's best for teachers. It's not about what's best for a system. It's okay, well, what are we here all to do in the first place, right, what benefit is this bringing to the student or group of students in front of us and so... I think if we always have them as our grounding point it's going to lead to conversations that challenge certain things that aren't working for them (Holly Interview 3).

Holly's past experiences and subsequent beliefs and assumptions about the system that SETs operated within served as a foundation for how she interpreted her mentor identity and agency.

The narratives and identity map that Holly shared were rich and highlighted her awareness of the influence of her lived history on how she interpreted her mentor identity. In particular, her (a) experiences with inclusion, (b) access and connections, and (c) constructed knowledge of the system and teacher agency, contributed to how she understood her purpose as a mentor and enacted her identity.

Mentoring Worlds

As a full-time mentor, all of Holly's interactions and participation in her professional worlds were through the lens of her role as a mentor. She formed her understanding of the role from various sources, including district messaging, participation in ongoing professional development, and her fellow mentor colleagues. Aside from contract language outlining the minimum employment requirements for mentors, Holly did not recall any other formal messaging about her role. She relied on other district mentors to understand "what the job is, what do we do, who do I go to" (Holly Interview 1). She also participated in ongoing professional learning opportunities on mentoring and coaching. While much of her participation in these worlds was self-initiated, she felt that her involvement allowed her to continually reconstruct her understanding of her specific role. For example, she described her ongoing participation in a professional learning specific to mentoring as the "most helpful thing for me to realize, 'Oh, this is my job'" (Holly Interview 2). While she received some messaging related to her role through various sources, she primarily constructed her mentor identity from her lived experiences through participation in figured worlds with beginning SETs.

Holly mentored 13, first-year SETs from across all grades and the continuum of special education settings, and one elementary general education teacher. Her caseload included teachers finishing their special education teaching endorsement and fully certified teachers. She tried to have face-to-face contact every other week and described her typical day as:

I'm heading to three or four different sites...So then there'd be those kinds of check in meetings where we were just meeting one-on-one. And then there would be the ones where I'm going to a specific class, a specific session, and doing observations or even just for lack of a better term hanging out in the class to like learn more, you know, get a better

sense of the teacher, have the students get really comfortable with me being there (Holly Interview 2).

Holly identified that district mentors tried to schedule eight instructional observation cycles with beginning teachers, however, due to the COVID-19 school facility closures, she was unable to complete eight cycles for each teacher and instead shifted to more virtual meetings. In addition to observations and routine meetings, she would answer questions as needed and send a weekly electronic newsletter with resources and reminders. She described her interactions as follows:

It was really all about letting them lead, like...learning the types of questions I needed to ask to get them to figure out what they wanted to do versus me having some idea of what I think they needed to work on (Holly Interview 2).

Holly relied on questioning strategies and artifacts to guide their conversations as mechanisms for supporting teachers with determining the focus of their interactions. The artifacts she used and her interactions with beginning teachers primarily constituted her mentoring worlds. It was in these figured worlds that she refigured her history-in-person into her mentoring practice and constructed identity.

Mentor Identity

Holly discussed her mentor identity primarily through narratives about enacted practices and descriptions of her mentoring worlds. Her narratives primarily focused on her actions and reflections of her practice. She shared that she was continually learning and reconstructing her understanding of her role and concept of self as she participated in professional learning opportunities and learned from the SETs she mentored.

Social Positioning

As a teacher for 10-years and a full-time mentor, Holly was positioned as an expert in the

mentoring relationship as opposed to a peer. She acknowledged her positional power stating, “We’re given a lot of responsibility within these buildings to like lead the instructional focus and practice of our schools” (Holly Interview 2). Her mentoring worlds included frequent access to special education leaders, and she described her positioning as “being the feedback loop to the leadership group around what’s working, what’s not working” (Holly Interview 3). She was occasionally asked by administrators to work with experienced teachers whom they perceived as needing additional instructional support, which signaled that leaders in the district also positioned her as an instructional leader. Holly was aware of the potential impact of her social positioning, stating “And so now having access to district level things, what am I doing to actually either disrupt or, you know, advocate or not just simply going about business as usual” (Holly Interview 2). Holly perceived her role as a leader with the potential to disrupt some of the systems and conditions she experienced as a SET.

Holly demonstrated recognition of the significance of her positionality and was the only mentor to include her social identities on her identity map (e.g., “white, middle-class, not religious but Christianity adjacent, cis (cis-gendered), hetero-ish, female” (Holly Concept Map)). Reflecting on her dominant identities, she stated, “I still need to be learning and doing and changing” (Holly Interview 1). Her narratives suggested that she critically reflected on her positionality and power in relation to the beginning teachers she mentored. For example, she reflected on the beginning teachers’ known identities and the potential impact of her positionality on her mentoring relationship, stating:

Then thinking about when I’m working with teachers of color or with Black teachers, how am I going to approach that as their white mentor, you know, like what are the ways in which I can demonstrate that I’m a safe, for lack of a better word, like safe person to

explore [race] with but then also know how to connect them to other folks that are going to have shared experiences and know when I'm not the right one for it (Holly Interview 1).

Holly also expressed a desire to be perceived as a colleague who beginning teachers felt comfortable discussing issues of race with. She was actively trying to improve her ability to center the topic in her mentoring interactions. However, she shared that she was still developing her own knowledge and mentoring skills in this area, stating: "I think right now I'm thinking more about like how do I put [race] at the forefront, but also have it not be forced or inauthentic" (Holly Interview 1). Her quotes suggested an awareness of the power derived from her positionality and the importance of building trusting relationships with beginning teachers so they could have substantive conversation about race, intersectionality, and oppression. Her narratives also suggested that she was able to critically reflect on her positionality and recognized her need to continue to do her own identity work as a mentor.

Enacted Identity

Holly identified several purposes of her role, including helping beginning SETs build relationships across different parts of the system, supporting them with envisioning who they wanted to become and taking steps to get there, and creating a space for teachers to express concerns and frustrations. Her narratives hinted at an awareness of the influence of mentoring on beginning SETs' professional growth and future teaching identity. Discussing how she enacted her identity to accomplish her purposes, she described her mentoring as a form of "gradual release" (Holly Identity Map):

I think that the purpose of mentoring is similar to that of like a scaffolding approach to instruction, where, you know, you put the supports in place when they're needed and then

slowly take them apart so that the person can move forward on their own or know how to put their own scaffolds into place (Holly Interview 3).

While she described many perceived functions of her role and the ways she enacted her identity in response to the SETs in her mentoring worlds, I discuss three main themes: (a) facilitating connections to resources, (b) socializing teachers into the profession, and (c) fostering resilience.

Facilitating Connections to Resources. Holly recognized the impact of her relationships and access to resources on her ability to become the professional she wanted to be. These aspects of her lived history appeared to be refigured into her mentor identity in the ways she connected teachers to resources that were responsive to their needs or goals. She described her approaches as, “trying to plug them into everything” (Holly Interview 1) and making sure that “they are connected to the system” (Holly Interview 3). She used various artifacts to determine the best resources for individual SETs, such as a check-in meeting protocol. The protocol structured their conversation around the SET’s successes and challenges, and next steps for the beginning SET and the mentor. While moving through these topics during their conversations, she often used an artifact acquired through mentor trainings. The artifact consisted of words and phrases that could be linked into a question to support teachers with clarifying information about the topic they were discussing. Artifacts, such as the form for check-in meetings and question stems, supported her in understanding how to connect teachers to the right resources.

Holly drew on her extensive experience in the district to connect beginning SETs to district specialists, experienced colleagues, or resources that she interacted with in the past. Highlighting the significance of her past professional experiences, Holly stated “I have this web now of like resources” (Holly Interview 2) that she could connect to in mentoring. When facilitating interactions between SETs with district specialists or experienced colleagues, she

scaffolded her support, which she described in the following way, “Usually, it would be me modeling how I could ask for help and cc’ing the mentee. And then once the chain got going, then being like, ‘I’m no longer needed, you guys talk to each other’ kind of thing” (Holly Interview 2). Holly’s use of artifacts allowed her to structure mentoring interactions and support beginning teachers with creating their own web of resources that supported their practice.

Socializing Teachers into the Profession. Holly seemed aware of the significance of beginning teachers’ socialization into the profession. She described her role as, “We’re setting up the foundation of who we want teachers to be in the district and how we want them to show up for students” (Holly Interview 2). Refiguring her lived history into practice, she enacted her identity to support the socialization of new SETs into the profession. During mentoring interactions, she used artifacts, such as classroom observation cycles and templates, to support teachers with developing the skills and pedagogical content knowledge that Holly felt were best for students. She also modeled instruction, provided feedback on lesson plans, and facilitated reflection with beginning SETs as methods for shaping their practices.

Holly also leveraged her role to expose beginning SETs to positive examples of teachers and strong instruction. Describing her positioning and significance, she said:

I can think about who they get exposed to first, right, because sometimes that can be some of the most powerful things you hold on to as some of the first things that are told to you or that you see (Holly Interview 3).

At times, Holly arranged for beginning SETs to observe experienced teachers who demonstrated expert instruction. Other times, she positioned beginning SETs as instructional leaders and arranged for beginning teachers in similar roles to observe and learn from each other. She accompanied teachers to observations to support them with reflection and applying what they

observed to their own practice. She described her role as a reflective partner to “process what we're seeing” and ask “what opportunities do you see applying that in the next few months of instruction?” (Holly Interview 3). Drawing on her past relationships and experiences as a SET, she described her role as “a matchmaker of sorts” (Holly Interview 3). She enacted her identity to expose beginning SETs to colleagues who could positively impact their perceptions of effective special education practices.

Fostering Resilience. Holly’s past teaching experiences allowed her to develop an understanding of SETs’ working conditions and role. Recognizing the challenges SETs face in navigating their role and the system, she described her mentor identity as, “Someone who’s going to support you in developing the resiliency necessary to make this a career choice” (Holly Interview 2). This meant supporting beginning SETs with developing self-efficacy and the skills to “keep going and keep improving their practice” (Holly Interview 2). To accomplish this purpose, Holly used mentoring interactions to prompt teachers to reflect on their successes in the classroom and areas where they felt confident. When teachers faced adversity, she aimed to help them move forward productively:

It becomes an exercise in...Let's talk about what all the barriers are, doing the whole spheres of influence control activity, and then being like, is there any one you're willing to devote some energy to moving from out of your control or influence and moving it to that place, you know, so that way...you're not constantly admiring the problem” (Holly Interview 2).

Holly used artifacts such as a problem-solving protocol to help teachers see their agency. The protocol contained prompts to support the beginning SET with articulating the perceived problem, identifying contributing factors, and generating a potential solution. Additionally, she

thought that mentoring provided a confidential space for beginning SETs to release frustrations and she created trusting relationships where mentoring interactions could be used for that purpose. She described these interactions as the “therapeutic rapport” (Holly Interview 3) that allowed teachers to get through their first year of teaching.

Holly also leveraged her positional power to positively influence beginning SETs’ working conditions. With access to special education leaders, she often asked the beginning SETs if they had feedback on district-wide procedures and practices that they wanted her to share anonymously with leaders. Holly’s social positioning allowed her to see how district decisions impacted teachers and she worked collaboratively with leaders to better support teachers. She recalled an early conversation she had with district administrators:

I’m going to bring up a lot of issues and I wouldn’t ever bring up an issue I’m not willing to do the work for, right, so.... I’m not here to just complain about things that are wrong, I’m here to do the work to change them (Holly Interview 2).

Holly also influenced beginning SETs’ working conditions by continuing to serve on the union’s bargaining committee in her mentor role. Her positional power in the district allowed her to influence the policies, procedures, and union contracts that shaped SETs’ professional worlds and influenced their ability to focus on serving students and families.

Holly’s narratives and artifacts suggested that her interpretation of her identity included multiple functions, and she enacted her identity in many ways that influenced SETs’ abilities to effectively perform their roles. Her lived history and beliefs about the education system were reflected in her practices that supported beginning SETs with accessing resources, socialized them into special education worlds, and influenced their working conditions and resiliency to overcome barriers. Her history-in-person and interpretation of her identity contributed to her

conceptualization of inclusion and perceived agency in improving equity and inclusion.

Inclusion Worlds

Holly's participation in mentoring worlds continued to impact how she conceptualized inclusion. She described her year of mentoring as: "the biggest learning year for me of changing some of my thoughts around [inclusion]" (Holly Interview 3). She attributed the shifts in her thinking to participation in various educational settings and having a "wider lens" (Holly Interview 3) due to her social positioning. Her participation in mentoring worlds and lived history continued to shape her conception of inclusion, which often reflected aspects of critical inclusion.

Inclusion as a Values System

Writing "Systems values drive system design" on her concept map, Holly expressed a belief that educational institutes needed to collectively adopt inclusive values before systems, structures, and practices can transform. Her conceptualization of inclusion was grounded in an asset-based mindset and concerned with the experiences of all students and adults in the system. She defined inclusion by a set of values, including, "seeing children as full human beings as they are", "collectivist mindset" (Holly Interview 3), and "A lens for all decisions - 'How will this impact [the] most vulnerable students?'" (Holly Concept Map). She defined inclusion as follows:

I think it would all come down to like what students and staff perceptions are about their sense of belonging and like that they are an essential member of the community. And if that's something that is expressed by folks that are there then I think that would be an example of inclusion that had worked (Holly Interview 3).

Recognizing that her conceptualization of inclusion would be difficult to assess, she discussed the importance of using qualitative approaches to understand students' experiences and to

determine if what they were accessing was meaningful. Holly's conceptualization of inclusion as a set of values reflected critical perspectives of inclusion by describing ideological beliefs that are humanizing and prioritize a collective responsibility for the experiences of all learners.

Holly did not appear to associate her conceptualization of inclusion with a particular location or the polarity of inclusion versus exclusion. Instead, her statements reflected a sociocultural grounding and she focused on collective values, contextual flexibility, and centering students' experiences. For example, she stated:

I think because we're human and we're variable and you can't automatize us, like context is always going to matter, because even if you have a system where the individuals all believe in this inclusive approach there's going to be situations where it doesn't match the kids (Holly Interview 3).

She provided concrete examples of instructional approaches that reflected her concept of inclusion in any context. For example, her concept map included phrases such as “multiple points to access, engage, and demonstrate - no means is ‘less than’ any other”, “allocating resources”, and “strength-based planning”. Her narratives and concept map seemed to reflect asset and need-based pedagogies as the driving force for inclusion (Ashby, 2012). For example, she emphasized the importance of teachers building relationships with students and families to design instruction that centered students. She also felt that teachers needed to prioritize planning for students who require individualized supports to access the environment and instruction because that level of planning benefits all students. She saw the value of explicit instruction but believed it should not be tied to a specific location or student population, stating “I do think [direct instruction] has its place and it has a place in gen ed” (Holly Interview 3). Holly also conceptualized the role of special education teachers in inclusive reform, describing “[special

education teachers] are the resource and hopefully experts on how to do certain things, but the initiative has to be from the center of the system” (Holly Interview 3). Her conceptualization included values and practices that are often associated with critical inclusion and contradict the ways in which educators predominantly define and enact inclusion. However, also present in her narratives was a recognition of the realities of her situated inclusion worlds.

A Critical Examination of Professional Worlds

As Holly spoke about inclusion, she critically reflected on her participation in professional worlds and appeared to demonstrate an understanding of how the current systems and structures countered her conceptualization of inclusion. For example, she viewed disability as socially-located, describing the concept as “a thing that is not inherent in you, it is something the world around you does to you” (Holly Interview 3). However, she felt that a medicalized grounding of disability was necessary because of the way society is structured. Describing this contradiction as “murky” (Holly Interview 3), she said that she often relied on a dominant conception of disability “for the purposes of making sure a person has all the rights that they should have, you know, as if they were a person without disabilities” (Holly Interview 3). It seemed that while Holly grounded her personal definition of disability in a sociocultural model, she felt obligated to adopt and reinforce the dominant discourse of her worlds to ensure that students with disabilities were granted rights and protections.

Holly appeared to be aware of the ways educational systems marginalize some while granting power to others. As she described the system she was a part of, she said “We have these expectations that [students] should be a certain way and follow some normative idea and don't, and then therefore like a response is to then like push aside and other them in some way” (Holly Interview 3). Holly's quote hinted at a recognition of ableism in the system without explicitly

naming it. Additionally, she demonstrated an awareness of how dominant conceptions of inclusion reinforced norms and the positional power of those without an identified disability by stating, “To think that a person with disabilities somehow will always benefit by proximity to a person without disabilities somehow elevates that person’s status as being what is expected” (Holly Interview 3). Elaborating on this comment, she described how she felt that an approach to inclusion grounded in integration upholds the belief that “proximity to whiteness” will benefit all students (Holly Interview 3). Holly’s narratives seemed aligned with critical inclusion and questioned how traditional ideologies uphold white, dominant norms and power while devaluing those who are perceived as different.

Holly’s narratives and concept map appeared to ground her conceptualization of inclusion in critical perspectives and she criticized the systems she participated in. Her past experiences left her feeling that inclusion was often driven by individual special education teachers and that there was not collective responsibility or accountability. She reflected on her own agency and participation in this system:

I think in the last three years, what I started thinking more about was like my ability to become this person who could help a student manage those transitions between environments so that they were getting what they needed, when they needed it, and be in the places they wanted to be (Holly Interview 3).

Holly’s reflection suggested that she was resigned to working in a rigid system that conceptualized inclusion as a place and she enacted her role within the constraints of the system to center students and prioritize their needs, versus challenging and disrupting aspects of the system.

Agency in Advancing Inclusion

Holly's past professional experiences seemed to contribute to an awareness that her mentoring worlds were shaped by discourse and practices that conceptualized inclusion as a place and contributed to the marginalization of students with disabilities. In the absence of a system of values and the practices she described in her ideal conception of inclusion, she primarily enacted her identity to advance inclusion at the individual teacher level. She recognized that her social positioning provided her access to administrators and instructional specialists, however, she felt her agency was limited to developing relationships and initiating conversations about inclusion in the hopes that they could enact change in other areas of the system. She exercised her agency to support teachers with building resilience to navigate dominant systems while doing what was best for students. She felt this approach to mentoring could foster an inclusive mentality that "continues on and starts a sea of change" (Holly Interview 3).

Holly enacted her identity in two main ways that she felt advanced inclusion within a dominant system. She used her social positioning as a mentor to equip teachers with the skills to advocate for their students and address barriers to inclusion, and leveraged her connections to support teachers with creating inclusive environments. Describing her agency in supporting beginning SETs with addressing barriers, she stated:

It was that dance of seeing, 'what are you willing to advocate for right now knowing that you feel like as a teacher in the profession you have very little status, right, you have very little power, and you definitely are concerned about your job, like what are you willing to go for right now?' (Holly Interview 2).

She tried to use mentoring interactions to support SETs with seeing what was within their sphere

of influence and identifying what they could leverage to ensure that their students were viewed and treated as full members of the school community. Providing examples of the types of questions she would use to support SETs with exercising their situated agency, she stated “What are your priorities? What advocacy would you like to do? What capital would you like to try to use? What do you feel like you have to use?” (Holly Interview 3). Often Holly tried to focus mentoring conversations on how to meet the needs of students with available resources. Depending on what SETs identified, she scaffolded her support as they tried to enact change. For example, she reviewed SETs’ instructional plans for modifying general education environments so that their students could access the instruction and provided ideas for them to consider. She also talked through various decision points a SET could make to advocate for master schedule revisions so that their students could access the instruction and support they needed, and provided suggestions for how a SET could give feedback to their general education colleagues. Holly acknowledged that her ability to enact her identity to advance inclusion was dependent upon the barriers that beginning SETs identified and how they perceived their agency, stating “And in the end, you have to let them be the one that decides” (Holly Interview 3). However, her past professional experiences and constructed knowledge of the worlds SETs participated in seemed to provide her with the skills and knowledge to mentor teachers to exercise their agency in ways that addressed barriers that were detrimental to students.

Holly’s perception of her agency also encompassed her ability to build connections that supported teachers with creating inclusive environments. However, her ability to enact her identity to accomplish this purpose depended on her access and relationships with teachers. She provided several examples of how she connected teachers from her various professional worlds and supported them in developing a relationship that would benefit students. For example, she

facilitated meetings between the beginning general education teacher she mentored and the beginning SET in their building, where the three of them would focus on “problem-solving around a particular student” (Holly Interview 3) that they shared. She also introduced the idea of supporting a student with transitioning to a more inclusive setting and connected two beginning SETs who could facilitate the process and advocate for the student. She credited her ability to support inclusion in this way to her “access to two important players” (Holly Interview 3) and access to a special education leader to move the conversation to a system-level and support the process. Beyond creating connections to other people to advance inclusion, Holly connected beginning SETs with resources to build their understanding of the system and capacity to advocate. For example, when beginning teachers surfaced issues related to intersectionality and disproportionality, she engaged in conversations around their sense making and connected them to readings and tools to further understand systemic racism in special education. While Holly was able to leverage her personal relationships and knowledge of resources to support beginning SETs with advancing inclusion, her impact was limited to her mentoring worlds and whatever momentum she could spark through individual interactions.

While Holly’s narratives and concept map demonstrated a grounding in critical perspectives of special education and inclusion, it seemed that her constructed knowledge of the system’s approach to inclusion and interpretation of her mentor identity constrained her ability to make substantial progress towards her conceptualization of inclusion. Drawing on her personal experiences and salient memories of inclusion, she felt that she knew what it meant to be inclusive but it seemed that she did not see herself as capable of transforming the systemic barriers in her situated worlds. She used her social positioning and access to leaders to share feedback from her mentoring worlds with those who were positioned to transform systems.

However, she admitted that her positional power was limited, stating, “I think that piece that’s the hardest too is, like, all right, I’m using my voice, but where can I point to things that have changed based on that level of like access that I have” (Holly Interview 2). Given her perceived ability to impact the broader system and her constructed knowledge of the barriers within the system, she focused on enacting her agency to foster inclusion situationally. She enacted her identity in ways that fostered teachers’ resilience to continue working in worlds that often devalued them and their students, and supported them with navigating barriers to advance inclusion at an individual-student and teacher level.

Brooke

Brooke is a 31-year-old, white woman who had just completed her third year as a mentor to beginning special education teachers. She was employed as a district specialist specializing in assistive technology and supported the delivery of special education services in multiple buildings. Brooke is also a certified speech-language pathologist (SLP) and mentors clinical fellows completing their SLP licensure. While she had multiple roles in her district, this case focuses specifically on her perception of her identity as a mentor to beginning SETs.

History-in-Person

When reflecting on her lived history that contributed to her mentor identity, Brooke named several mentors that contributed to her construction of multiple professional identities. Additionally, she shared past personal, educational, and professional experiences that influenced how she understood her mentor identity, which included her professional commitments, knowledge, and values. I identified three main themes from her narratives and identity map: (a) developing commitments to social justice, (b) constructing a speech-language pathologist identity, and (c) becoming a mentor to teachers.

Developing Commitments to Social Justice

Brooke's personal history consisted of her earliest memories of discrimination, particularly racism and classism. Her past experiences, as well as her ongoing learning, contributed to what she identified as her "commitment to racial and ethnic equity" and "a strong sense of social justice" (Brooke Interview 1). As an adult, she was consciously aware of how her upbringing in the south required her to examine and unlearn some of her biases:

I also grew up in like a pretty white segregated area, but it was also a really...we were affluent, even for the white people around us, like the white people around us were very poor, the city was rural...so it wasn't just like racial prejudice, there was also a lot of class prejudice that I was raised with that like slowly over time I've had to undo (Brooke Interview 1).

Brooke discussed how her commitments to social justice developed over time and acknowledged the ongoing personal work needed to uphold her commitments. Her process of making sense of her past and unlearning her biases was what she described as having to "unpack and face, and change in myself" (Brooke Interview 1). While she continued to critically examine her past experiences and learn about various forms of discrimination, her commitments to social justice influenced her mentor identity.

Constructing a Speech-Language Pathologist Identity

Brooke's first professional identity was her SLP identity which was shaped by her educational training, various mentors and teachers, and early career experiences. Her undergraduate degree included a concentration in linguistics which had implications for her future career. Reflecting on her undergraduate experience, Brooke stated "Just doing linguistics, that was like the thing that came most naturally to me was just being able to go in and analyze

language” (Brooke Interview 1). She earned her graduate degree in Speech and Language Pathology and eventually completed her SLP licensure. While she only worked one year as a school-based SLP, her identity influenced how she enacted other professional roles. In particular, her past experiences and education as an SLP contributed to the significance she ascribed to discourse. She described “Being a speech-language pathologist, I know the power of language and the structure, that the way that a sentence is structured and the way that certain vocabulary is used, like I understand the impact of those small things” (Brooke Interview 2). Her propensity for language and constructed knowledge of discourse were components of Brooke’s SLP identity that were refigured as part of her mentor identity.

Becoming a Mentor to Teachers

Brooke’s professional experience as a district specialist encompassed several components that influenced her concept of self as a mentor to teachers (e.g., “Daily job experiences”, “Job requirements”, “Mentor and leadership training”, and mentors’ names (Brooke Identity Map)). Brooke was first assigned to mentor a beginning SET three years ago. She reflected on her initial reactions, describing “I guess it was some of those feelings of just like I don't know how teachers do what they do, so how am I going to mentor someone becoming a teacher?” (Brooke Interview 2). Without a teaching background, she gained knowledge of instruction and special education compliance through her daily job experiences. For example, learning instructional strategies from district induction program meetings and from her colleagues who were former special education teachers. Reflecting on her learning, she identified one of her acquired areas of strength as meaningful and compliant individualized education programs (IEPs). However, her lived experiences contributed to an awareness of the boundaries of her professional knowledge, which she described as follows:

Like there's no way I'm going to catch up on the pedagogical content knowledge. There's no way, I'm not going to try, but the techniques ...being able to like see and name what good teaching is, that is something that I've been able to pick up on more by going to the induction meetings like where they're talking about teaching techniques and teaching strategies” (Brooke Interview 1).

As Brooke engaged in professional learning on the topic of mentoring, she shifted her understanding of the role. She described a turning point in her understanding, stating “I found all of this mentoring stuff and I'm just like, ‘Oh my God’. I feel a weight off my shoulders because I don't have to know and do and solve everything” (Brooke Interview 2). She continued to reconstruct her mentor identity through participation in mentoring worlds for three years.

Brooke’s professional experiences also included influential mentors who contributed to the professional values that guided her work. Reflecting on one mentor, she stated:

It's definitely something I'll take with me into the future that [they] showed me, which was just like, even when you're tired, there's still a standard and it's more respectful to hold people to that standard than to say like, ‘Oh, it's okay, I don't think you can do this right now’ (Brooke Interview 3).

Brooke felt that her mentors showed her an example of what it meant to have strong professional ethics and accountability. To Brooke, this meant doing what was best for students and not just what was required for special education compliance, and having high standards for professional practice. Through her professional experiences as a district specialist, Brooke began to understand her identity as a mentor to teachers.

Brooke’s lived history influenced various aspects of her professional identities, such as her commitments and interests, and an initial understanding of her identity and role in relation to

teachers. As Brooke participated in mentoring worlds, these aspects of her history-in-person were refigured into her mentoring practice and interpretation of her identity.

Mentoring Worlds

As a district specialist, Brooke supported multiple schools with special education service delivery, worked with teachers across the district as an assistive technology specialist, and at the time of data collection was assigned to mentor one beginning SET. Brooke felt it was difficult for her to separate her mentoring role from her district specialist role, particularly because she was assigned to support all special education teachers in the beginning SET's school as the building's special education coach. She described, "I'm just never wearing one hat, especially mentoring, because at the buildings that I'm at...I'm just, I'm never wearing one hat" (Brooke Interview 2). Because of her dual role in the beginning teacher's school, she interacted with her assigned beginning SET in several professional contexts in both of her roles. For example, in her role as district specialist Brooke attended the special education team meetings which included the beginning teacher and occasionally facilitated professional learning for the team or whole school. During the interviews, Brooke tried to focus her narratives and data collection activities specifically on her mentor identity, and mentoring activities and contexts; however, it is possible that her narratives were reflective of interactions with other teachers she coached or mentored.

Brooke's mentoring worlds primarily consisted of her individual interactions with the beginning SET who worked in a middle school resource room setting. Summarizing their interactions, she stated "Self-directed, yeah it's mostly meetings, I did a few observations. But I was just, there's just so many balls in the air and juggling, but like a lot of times I forgot to do observations and then [they've] also got a university mentor" (Brooke Interview 2). In addition to as-needed-support, Brooke tried to meet with the beginning SET twice a month and allowed

the beginning SET to determine the content of their interactions. Brooke's mentoring worlds primarily consisted of mentoring conversations. Given Brooke's SLP identity, she often relied on discourse as a tool for shaping their interactions, she described, "Something I use a lot is really, you know, the pause, paraphrase, all of those communication tools" (Brooke Interview 1). As Brooke interacted with the beginning SET and utilized various artifacts, she refigured her past history into practice and her understanding of her mentor identity.

Mentor Identity

Brooke perceived mentoring as an assigned duty and not necessarily a separate identity. She described mentoring as, "It's part of my...it's...they make me, they made me. It's my job description" (Brooke Interview 1). However, she acknowledged her professional growth in mentoring. Viewing mentoring as more of a skill, she felt she "really warmed up to mentoring" and "really appreciated the skills" (Brooke Interview 2). While she did not make explicit connections to a separate mentor identity, she was able to share artifacts and narratives that provided evidence of who she was as a mentor that reflected aspects of her lived history.

Social Positioning

As a mentor to beginning SETs, Brooke strived to build positive relationships and diminish power dynamics that may have arisen from her title and role as district specialist. When discussing her relationships with beginning SETs, Brooke said, "I try not to make it like a power dynamic. I try to make it friendly. Um, you know, with my mentee this year it's pretty respectful" (Brooke Interview 2). Brooke described tensions in separating her dual roles and participation in multiple professional worlds that involved beginning SETs. She had the most difficulty interpreting her social positioning when situations arose between beginning SETs and administrators. For example, if a beginning teacher shared information about a situation and then

their administrator spoke to Brooke about the same situation but expressed different concerns.

Brooke reflected on her social positioning in these situations:

That was one thing that came up because of my role as both building person and mentor.

I was just like, I'm mentoring but I'm also supporting the program, and I'm also supporting the building...which means I'm supporting the [building] admin and I'm also serving the sped [administrators]. And so, I was just like, ahhhh, you know (Brooke Interview 2).

While Brooke participated in many overlapping professional worlds and roles, she consistently maintained confidentiality with the beginning SET and tried to position herself as a coach, and not a mediator or informant. She used words like “consultative role”, “coach”, and “guide” (Brooke Interview 1) to describe her perceived positioning in relation to beginning SETs.

However, her narratives suggested that she was aware of how her job title and roles afforded her a level of power that she actively sought to minimize in her mentoring worlds.

Brooke's narratives about the personal work she needed to do to “undo”, “unpack”, and “change” (Brooke Interview 1) suggested a level of awareness of her dominant identities (e.g., white, English-speaking, heterosexual) and potential to inadvertently reinforce systems of oppression. She seemed aware of how educators' subject positionalities influence practice and could point to examples, such as a past incident where she felt like she observed a racialized interaction between a white teacher and students of color. Additionally, she suggested that teacher-student interaction data be discussed and viewed through “the lens of race” (Brooke interview 2) as a method to support teachers with understanding how implicit bias may manifest in classroom practices. Brooke's positionality as a white, female educator afforded her power in school contexts and her narratives suggested that she had an understanding of how marginalized

identities are often discriminated against in education systems. However, she critically reflected on experiences and participation in dominant systems, stating “And there were some times that like I was silent about something because I couldn't figure out the way to bring it up... You know, it's difficult to point [to], like when race isn't named” (Brooke Interview 2). This was something she grappled with in constructing her mentor identity, suggesting a tension between her commitments to social justice and understanding of her role.

Enacted Identity

Brooke was conscious of her lack of experience as a teacher and that was reflected in the ways she understood and enacted her role:

Something that I just keep coming back to that idea that they talk about in the [mentor] training, which is that, you know, the guy who's coaching the Olympic gold medal winner is not an Olympic gold medal winner...and that's something that I've just grown in each year is trying to just think about that, that it's not my job to be the person I'm trying to coach that it's just to guide them in being their best self (Brooke Interview 1).

She was aware of her strengths and limitations, and adapted her mentoring accordingly to support beginning SETs in their professional growth. She focused on areas where she had knowledge and experience, which she identified as, “I know what good sped looks like, I know what best practice looks like in serving students with disabilities, and IEP writing, and taking data” (Brooke Interview 1). Her lived history and constructed knowledge also informed her mentoring priorities, describing them as “I guess my priority is mainly, imparting that equity lens and holding people accountable to doing their best” (Brooke Interview 3). Brooke enacted her identity in ways to accomplish this purpose by using compliance to create a culture of high expectations, creating the conditions for independent problem-solving, and centering equity.

Using Compliance to Create a Culture of High Expectations. Brooke's past experience allowed her to develop professional values and an expertise in procedural compliance, which was refigured and enacted in ways that fostered a culture of high expectations. To Brooke, this meant holding beginning SETs to a professional standard they were capable of achieving. Her examples were related to special education compliance, citing instances of present levels in an IEP and "paperwork" (Brooke Interview 1). She described her mentoring approach as:

I've had to have a talk with myself about like it's not a compliance issue, but it is a best practice issue. And am I going to hold this person to best practice or am I just going to hold them to the minimum? And I'm holding them to best practice because that's what they deserve to be held to. And to express that, like 'I don't mean for this to be harsh but I believe in you, and I believe in your instruction, and I believe in your ability to meet the standards that we expect and if I didn't, I wouldn't say anything'" (Brooke Interview 3).

While compliance was an entry point to discussions about practice, it allowed Brooke to encourage SETs to focus on instructional design. Providing an example of how she addressed gaps between compliance and pedagogy, she described questions she used to prompt SETs to connect to instruction: "How are you actually going to measure, like what is this actually going to look like in the classroom...is it really...what's best for the student?" (Brooke Interview 1). Her quotes suggested she was positioned to understand how IEPs were enacted in practice and she used her social positioning to support teachers with thinking about instructional design and centering students in the IEP process. She enacted her identity in alignment with her professional values to socialize beginning SETs into a culture that equated high expectations with consistency between legal requirements and students' educational experiences.

Creating the Conditions for Independent Problem-Solving. Brooke enacted her mentor identity and used artifacts in ways that were reflective of aspects of her lived history to support beginning SETs with independently resolving issues. She had formed beliefs about supporting teachers through previous experiences, such as:

They have to be the ones doing the thinking and the doing and I can support, but like I can't be the one doing it for them because...they won't do it, it won't be sustainable, like they have to have some ownership of it (Brooke Interview 1).

Brooke used artifacts to support beginning SETs with verbally processing and identifying appropriate solutions to perceived problems. She described this approach to mentoring as “really prompting that thought process and that problem solving” (Brooke Interview 1).

Through participation in professional learning, Brooke learned tools that were described as tools that create “the conditions for thinking” in mentoring interactions (Lipton & Wellman, 2018, p. 68). She shared two examples of discourse she routinely used, “syntactical substitutions” and “plurals” (Lipton & Wellman, 2018). She identified that the tools allowed her to pause and think about what she was saying to ensure that she was prompting teachers to independently generate possible solutions and determine action. Providing an example of what these tools looked like in her practice and what they accomplished, Brooke described:

Instead of like ‘what is the way’, you use ‘what are some ways’....Instead of saying like, ‘what is a way that you think you could approach this’, you say, like...‘what are some things that might be contributing’. And so, you use plurals to open up the possibility of multiple options which like opens up brain paths to thinking of multiple options, rather than what is one way or what is the way (Brooke Interview 2).

When using the verbal tools, she grounded conversations and SETs’ thought process in student

learning, which she described as “Bringing it back to [SETs’] personal ethics regarding student learning, right, so, like, how do we bring this back to the kids?” (Brooke Interview 2). Brooke saw the connection between the tools she used and her SLP identity, stating “Which, like, of course I’m an SLP, I understand language and communication and like what it activates in the brain” (Brooke Interview 2). Brooke’s use of artifacts, such as syntactic substitutions and plurals (Lipton & Wellman, 2018), allowed her to use mentoring to support teachers with building the capacity to independently problem-solve and center students in their decision-making process.

Centering Equity. Brooke identified that one of her goals as a mentor was “imparting that equity lens” (Brooke Interview 1), but admitted that she was still developing the skills to navigate t conversations about ideologies while maintaining positive relationships. She believed her role included naming “racism and ethnocentrism” (Brooke Interview 3) when she could identify instances of it. When asked what this might look like in practice she said:

It looks like, you know, kind of sitting there and listening for ways to jump in and ways to counteract, you know, like just have a conversation and question some of the beliefs that come up that might be reflective of ingrained racism that we all have. And learning, you don’t want it to be accusatory, you want it to be like a learning opportunity (Brooke Interview 2).

However, she couldn’t recall many incidences where this came up in practice. Instead, she used artifacts to bring the topic of equity into mentoring interactions. For example, she tried to make connections during interactions with SETs to the district-wide equity goals, as a mechanism for centering equity without pushing her “personal agenda” (Brooke Interview 3). She also used artifacts from past professional learning opportunities, such as Hattie’s (2008) meta-analyses on student achievement and learning, as a way to use research to challenge teachers’ deficit-base

beliefs about students and prompt them to expand their thinking. Brooke also used a template to highlight equitable practices during classroom observations. In one example, Brooke used the template to name culturally responsive practices she observed, making an explicit connection between pedagogy and practice for the teacher. However, when asked if she and her current beginning SET had conversations about biases and ideologies, Brooke stated “As far as like examining those deep conversations with beliefs. I just don't know if I've developed enough of a rapport with my mentee to go...you know, that takes a lot of trust and vulnerability” (Brooke Interview 2). While Brooke used artifacts, such as the district equity goals, research, and observation templates, to bring the topic of equity into mentoring interactions, her quotes suggested that she did not feel equipped or confident to support teachers with engaging in the critical reflection needed to build and sustain equity pedagogies.

Brooke refigured aspects of her history-in-person, such as her professional commitments, knowledge, and values into her constructed mentor identity. Her past experiences and identities were reflected in the ways she enacted her mentor identity to foster a culture of high expectations, create the conditions for independent problem-solving, and center equity. Her lived history and participation in mentoring worlds also contributed to the ways that she conceptualized inclusion and perceived her agency in inclusion worlds.

Inclusion Worlds

Brooke expressed her conceptualization of inclusion through narratives and prose instead of a concept map. She believed that inclusion was what was best for all students and cited decades of research on the influence of inclusion on student outcomes. However, she did not explicitly ground her conception in principles of social justice. While her conceptualization at times was grounded in critical perspectives and ideals of inclusion, her narratives of special

education and disability reflected the dominant and separate education system that she was likely a part of as a mentor to beginning SETs.

Expansive Perspectives of Inclusion

Brooke conceptualized inclusion as fundamentally about all students, citing examples of students with historically marginalized identities, such as emerging bilingual students and students with disabilities. Her prose and narratives reflected a belief that students are excluded because instruction is predominantly designed for “mythical average students” (Brooke Prose). She conceptualized inclusion as providing access to instruction and meaningfully engaging “students with disabilities or students who have just traditionally been excluded from the general environment” (Brooke Interview 3). To Brooke, exclusion included instruction in segregated settings, but also included situations when students were physically present in classrooms but the instruction was not appropriately designed for them or they were working on separate content. Her quotes hinted at an awareness of how dominant ideologies and cultural practices shape norms. When describing the mindset that was needed to facilitate inclusive education, she stated, “Yeah, just kind of opening your mind, opening our like collective cultural lines about like who can achieve and what achievement looks like for different people” (Brooke 3). Her quotes aligned with aspects of critical inclusion and suggested that inclusion required educators to examine and transform normative notions of mastery and student learning.

Brooke provided several examples of components of inclusion. Identifying the beliefs that are required to create inclusive cultures, she wrote “It's the opposite of a deficit mindset, students are seen for the assets they bring and aren't viewed as a liability” (Brooke Prose). She discussed examples that create the conditions for inclusion, such as “Planning to have diverse learners”, “Everyone gets the support they need and are welcome”, “A culture of high

expectations and a belief that all students can learn at high levels”, and “Mistakes and differences being expected and honored” (Brooke Prose). Respect, acceptance, and valuing diversity were central to her ideal conceptualization and resembled ideologies grounded in disability studies in education. Additionally, when asked about the benefits of inclusion, she stated “Learning about the dignity of people, like learning about respecting human dignity” (Brooke Interview 3).

Brooke’s idealized vision of inclusion included the beliefs, culture, and approach to instruction that were necessary for humanizing, inclusive education for all students.

The Role of Special Education in Inclusion

As Brooke spoke about the role of special education in inclusive education, her quotes suggested that her understanding of special education had been influenced by the educational system she was socialized into as a professional. She described that inclusion required people to, “think more flexibly about what special education can look like” (Brooke Interview 3) and identified that it was necessary to leverage the expertise of special educators and position them as true partners. Her quotes suggested a recognition that dominant and fixed notions of special education spaces and roles need to be transformed to facilitate inclusive education. However, her narratives on the purpose of special education services and disability were grounded in dominant perspectives. Defining disability, she stated, “I guess it means...you know, some sort of impairment that like prohibits you from engaging in an activity that a majority of people are able to engage in easily” (Brooke Interview 3). Additionally, when asked about the purpose of special education, she responded “to attempt to equalize the playing field, you know, to help remediate or teach people to compensate for that disability so they can function and be members of society” (Brooke Interview 3). Brooke felt that pull-out special education services could be appropriate if the purpose was to “build up skills so [students] can go out” (Brooke Interview 3). Her quotes

suggested that SETs and services in segregated settings served the purpose of remediating disability so that students could access environments versus ideological, environmental, or system changes to remove barriers to access.

Brooke was situated in worlds where federal and state special education mandates contributed to the discursive context and likely influenced her constructed knowledge of inclusion. At times, she associated inclusion with the least restrictive environment (LRE) mandates and continuum of alternative placements provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004). She felt that the most restrictive settings in schools (i.e., self-contained classrooms) were inappropriate, stating “I just feel like it’s so segregated” (Brooke Interview 3). However, she viewed instructional time in other segregated settings, such as a special education resource room, as a form of inclusion for students who are predominately educated in self-contained special education settings for the majority of the school day. While the situation Brooke described is legally defensible if the IEP team determines the placement to be the most appropriate for the student, students with disabilities are still excluded from accessing the full range of educational opportunities available to the majority of students. Additionally, one of the unquestioned assumptions of the LRE and the continuum of alternative placements requirements (IDEA, 2004) is that students with disabilities must demonstrate normative standards of intelligence and/or behavioral expectations to access inclusive educational opportunities. It was unclear from Brooke’s narratives and prose if she recognized how these components of IDEA (2004) could be applied in ways that inadvertently reproduce narratives and practices that uphold notions of normalcy and justify ability-based segregation.

Brooke’s conceptualization of inclusion included some beliefs that were reflective of

critical inclusion, such as the beliefs that dominant approaches to education traditionally exclude students with marginalized identities and the need to transform cultural norms. For the most part, her conceptualization focused on the culture and ideals of inclusion and was reflective of aspects of UDL (e.g., providing multiple methods of demonstrating mastery, proactive instructional design, expecting and accepting learner variability (Rose & Meyer 2006)). However, Brooke's narratives also surfaced tensions between her conceptualized ideological vision of inclusion and her situated professional worlds, suggesting that her constructed knowledge of inclusion in practice was influenced by the dominant system she was a part of.

Agency in Advancing Inclusion

Brooke's perceived agency was influenced by her interpretation of her mentor identity and social positioning, which she described as, "I really try to be more of like a support role" (Brooke Interview 3). She enacted her identity and described her agency in ways that were reflective of her constructed understanding of the purpose of special education and her role within that system. She felt she had agency to advance inclusion by utilizing familiar artifacts, such as discourse and IDEA compliance, to support beginning SETs with facilitating inclusion when she had the opportunity.

Brooke identified that she frequently enacted her identity to support teachers with reframing deficit beliefs that served as barriers to inclusion. When asked about the types of beliefs that were common in her mentoring worlds, she described:

Never like they didn't believe in inclusion, but more like they didn't believe their students could do it, or they didn't believe that other teachers would be accepting of it, or that they would get admin support for it. That was more of the beliefs I had to confront and challenge a little bit (Brooke Interview 3).

Brooke often used discourse to pause conversations and guide SETs to reflect on their role in supporting students. Providing an example of the language she used, she said “I use the word ‘yet’ a lot, um, and then from there, say you know ‘He doesn’t do this yet, how can we build a plan for him to get there?’” (Brooke Interview 3). Additionally, she described her perceived agency as “helping [beginning SETs] think through how to approach inclusion and helping them problem-solve what is in their control when they’re encountering barriers and resistance” (Brooke Interview 3). She used verbal tools discussed in previous sections and enacted her identity to create the conditions for beginning SETs to problem-solve when they initiated the topic of inclusion. For example, she discussed her role in supporting beginning SETs with identifying general education teachers who may be open to the inclusion of students with disabilities or advocating for a less restrictive, yet still segregated, special education setting for some students. Brooke’s examples of her agency suggested that her mentoring worlds predominantly conceptualized inclusion as a place for students with disabilities to access and she enacted her identity in ways that challenged deficit beliefs about students. However, at times her mentoring practices may have inadvertently reinforced dominant conceptions of inclusion.

Brooke felt confident and comfortable using special education compliance as a tool to initiate conversations about inclusion. Describing an example from an IEP, Brooke stated “Pointing out inconsistencies, like ‘hey in this LRE statement you say [they] joined specialist with gen ed peers, but like you definitely don’t...how can I support you...what do you need to do that?’” (Brooke Interview 3). Furthermore, she used the IEP and the special education re-evaluation processes to pose questions about educational placement decisions to ensure that teams were appropriately applying the LRE mandates (IDEA, 2004) based on student data. If teams were advocating for more restrictive settings, Brooke offered suggestions of “evidence-

based practices” to encourage SETs to reflect on their behavior by posing questions such as, “Are you watching your body language? Are you watching your tone of voice?” (Brooke Interview 3). Her quotes suggested that she used procedural compliance in an attempt to enforce LRE mandates in ways that supported beginning SETs with facilitating inclusion in alignment with dominant conceptions of inclusion. It seemed as if her agency was limited to special education worlds where the onus for facilitating inclusion belonged to SETs and dominant general education settings and roles remained unchanged despite IDEA (2004) requirements.

Brooke’s agency was tightly connected to her understanding and enactment of her identity and her situated worlds of inclusion. For example, she used procedural compliance to initiate conversations about inclusion and create a culture of high expectations for teachers’ practices that was beyond symbolic compliance. She also enacted her identity to create the conditions for SETs to independently problem-solve barriers to students accessing general education settings. However, Brooke felt that her influence as a mentor was limited. When asked what mentoring meant to her, she responded:

I think, as I get better at it, it might be a way to influence. I don't feel like I influence much...But that's not really how I think of it, as like a personal way to influence and in some ways it is just kind of something I have to do for my job. But yeah, I mean, I think of it more as like a way to support (Brooke Interview 3).

She recognized her limited agency. For example, she shared a past mentoring interaction where she felt a beginning SET did not have the self-efficacy or collegial and administrative support to facilitate inclusion, recalling “Um, I didn't fight that battle. No, I thought... I worked...I tried to work with [them] on more like increasing communication and structure in the room. So, I didn't fight the inclusion battle” (Brooke Interview 3). Reflective of her interpretation of her role as a

form of support, Brooke acknowledged that at times it was difficult for her to not insert her “personal agenda” or “the direction I think things should go” (Brooke Interview 3). The perceived constraints to her agency may have been related to her own self-efficacy or interpretation of her situated identity and positional power. Furthermore, it is possible that her perceived situated agency and constructed knowledge of inclusion in her worlds limited her ability to enact her social justice commitments in ways that supported beginning SETs with interrogating the dominant procedures and practices of special education as a means to interrupt ableism.

Sarah

Sarah is a white, 32-year old woman who had just completed her first year as an induction mentor. She balanced her mentor role with a part-time, special education teaching position. She had six years of special education teaching experience and most recently taught in an elementary resource room setting.

History-in-Person

Sarah’s identity map included names, professional experiences, and the words “values” and “rise up” (Sarah Identity Map). The connections between these items signaled the significance of her past mentors and professional experiences on the development of her values and ability to overcome challenges. Her lived history contributed to how she interpreted and enacted her mentor identity and understood her purpose as a mentor. Three main themes were identified in her history-in-person: (a) establishing a career path, (b) discovering the importance of mentorship, and (c) rebuilding self-efficacy.

Establishing a Career Path

Sarah's career in special education was sparked by her personal connection to disability. She briefly discussed memories of growing up with her sister with an intellectual disability. Now in her adult life, she occasionally assumes the role of primary caregiver for her sister. Reflecting on her family experiences, she described "That just kind of led me into working with people who have disabilities and trying to understand more about the culture and just my awareness in general" (Sarah Interview 1). Her first job involved working as a respite care provider where she learned from individuals with disabilities and made connections to her family experiences. The next steps in her career path included earning an undergraduate degree in special education and entering the teaching profession as a resource room teacher with strong commitments to families. When asked how her experiences with the concept of disability contributed to her mentor identity, Sarah described what she hoped to impart on beginning SETs. This included values and dispositions, such as being "humbled and compassionate towards the families", "bringing non-judgment" to the work, and seeing the value of "collaborative conversations with families" (Sarah Interview 1). Sarah's experiences and connections to disability informed her commitments to the special education profession and values she sought to instill in new teachers.

Discovering the Importance of Mentorship

After three years of teaching in a resource room setting, Sarah moved to a new district and accepted a position as a self-contained SET. Her experiences navigating a new district, position, and staff were career-altering and informed her beliefs about the role and importance of a mentor. She admitted to feeling like a beginning teacher again, describing "I was really out of my realm of expertise" (Sarah Interview 1). She struggled to establish relationships and learn the new role. In reflecting on her negative memories of the experience, she summarized the impact

as “I wasn't sleeping. I wasn't eating. I had lost myself completely and my confidence as a teacher was shattered” (Sarah Interview 1). After three months, she left the position and district feeling insignificant and a sense of failure. She attributed her attrition to being disconnected and unsupported. She was able to grow from the experience, and shared a key learning:

At that point in my life, I realized how important mentorship really was and that connection to have another person, someone to connect with and to feel a sense of belonging within a district, especially when you are someone who is brand new (Sarah Interview 1).

Learning from her past, she sought to prevent beginning SETs from experiencing what she had.

Rebuilding Self-Efficacy

After Sarah left her teaching position early, she was able to return mid-school year to her previous district and resource room position. She credited her ability to regain her self-efficacy and “rise up” (Sarah Interview 1, Sarah Concept Map) to various mentors and professional learning opportunities. Referencing the names of mentors on her identity map, Sarah stated “I fully believe that I would not be where I am, as a teacher today if I didn’t have amazing mentors and the connection within the district” (Sarah Interview 1). As Sarah rebuilt connections and began to feel a sense of belonging, she sought out opportunities to gain knowledge and skills in new areas. For example, she engaged in a professional development workshop focused on training teachers to use social-emotional learning strategies and yoga to center the health and wellbeing of themselves and their students. She also enrolled in a master’s program focused on mindfulness. Her professional learning and education allowed her to develop skills in self-care and compassion, and to “learn how to be a person that had the self-worth that could navigate the educational system” (Sarah Interview 1). Her past teaching experiences, mentors, and

professional learning contributed to her self-efficacy and professional identities. Recognizing the potential impact of her professional identity, she described “I was an amazing resource room teacher, and you know, still am, and I could give that experience to my new mentee” (Sarah Interview 1). Sarah refigured her self-efficacy and concept of self in mentoring worlds to influence the early career experiences of SETs.

Sarah believed her lived history contributed to her core values of “compassion, connection, and courage” (Sarah Interview 3). Her history-in-person reflected these values, such as commitments to leading with empathy and compassion when partnering with families, her ability to develop self-efficacy once she felt reconnected, and her professional learning in mindfulness and self-compassion. Sarah’s past experiences and values contributed to how she interpreted and enacted her identity as a mentor to support beginning SETs and prevent them from experiencing the feeling she once felt as a teacher.

Mentoring Worlds

Sarah’s teaching role was part-time, providing her with one day off each week which she used for mentoring. She could not recall receiving messages from the district about the role, and only remembered messaging about the recommended number of observation cycles from a required mentor training. Without specific information about her role, Sarah carried her history-in-person into mentoring worlds where she reconstructed her identity through interactions with the beginning SET she mentored.

The beginning teacher that Sarah mentored did not work in her building, however, Sarah fully immersed herself into the beginning SET’s context. She volunteered in classrooms and sought out mentoring from a self-contained SET in the building so that she could continue to learn from her brief experiences as a self-contained SET. Sarah’s mentoring worlds were nested

within her participation in other worlds in the beginning SET's building, and she often leveraged her connections across the building to support the beginning SET with building a network of support.

Sarah's mentoring worlds consisted of her interactions with the beginning SET, enacted practices, and the artifacts she used. They shared similar teaching positions as elementary resource room SETs and the beginning SET was in the process of earning an endorsement in special education. In addition to weekly check-in meetings, Sarah spent half a day in the beginning SET's classroom about three times a month at the beginning of the school year. When she felt that the teacher did not require as much support, she spent half a day once a month in the SET's classroom and eventually, only met with the SET once a month. She described a range of mentoring activities, including observations, co-teaching, modeling instruction, and meetings. To determine the content of their mentoring interactions, Sarah facilitated conversations to understand the teacher's priorities and the areas they wanted support. Given the beginning SET's emergency certification and the amount of time Sarah spent in the SET's classroom, it seemed that many of their interactions revolved around instruction, such as "modeling how to have a group together, but yet still differentiate for certain kids", "progress monitoring", "direct instruction model", and "positive praise" (Sarah Interview 2).

Mentor Identity

Sarah seemed to establish a firm boundary between her teacher and mentor identities. This distinction was supported by using her day off from teaching to enact her identity as a mentor. When asked about her dual identities, Sarah stated, "there's definitely a differentiated line that I think that we need to have because I don't want to just instill all of what I believe in [the beginning SET]" (Sarah Interview 2). Sarah defined her mentor identity by her values, social

positioning, and enacted practice. Illustrating the connections between her values, lived history, and interpretation of her role, she stated:

I need connection and I need compassion. Those are my two values. And I feel that's what mentorship holds. Not only do we hold a space for social and emotional feelings of a new teacher, but we also give them a way to connect. And to connect in a way that when they fall there is always a way to rise back up, it always gets better. So that no other teacher leaves in November, not sleeping, not eating, not having any self-care and having the confidence that they can no longer be a teacher and are shattered. And that's really what I want to bring forth in my work (Sarah Interview 1).

She used her history-in-person and values to form the foundation for a mentor identity that she felt prevented beginning SETs from experiencing a sense of failure, isolation, and burn out.

Social Positioning

Sarah was positioned as both a mentor and “mentee” in her mentoring worlds. She received mentoring from a self-contained special education teacher in the beginning SET’s building while mentoring the beginning SET. As a teacher in the district, Sarah was naturally positioned as the beginning SET’s colleague and held a similar teaching position. She described her positional power and perceived social positioning as, “It wasn’t me bringing all my knowledge and power to [their] classroom. It was really about working collaboratively with [them] and bringing in the humility that I was learning and learning with [them]” (Sarah Interview 1). She maintained this positioning by working alongside the beginning SET and engaging in “collaborative discussions” (Sarah Interview 2) that also allowed her to learn. She positioned herself as a colleague with equal status and cited several examples of things that she learned from the beginning SET, such as new curricula and approaches to solving complex

problems. Sarah's interpretation of her social positioning contributed to her interpretation and enactment of her mentor identity.

Sarah demonstrated an emerging understanding of her positionality in relation to sociocultural contexts. When asked about the relationship between her positionality and mentor identity, she stated, "I'd like to say with all the racial injustice conversations as of late that it makes a difference, but I really haven't seen it, which probably tells me I just have a lot of privilege" (Sarah Interview 3). She recalled several of her own identities which provide her with power in educational contexts (e.g., white, heterosexual, female, education level) and stated, "It doesn't mean that I don't have compassion for the inequity, but I don't personally feel it" (Sarah Interview 3). She briefly reflected on her positionality in relation to the beginning SET she mentored noting that they shared similar identities. She also made a few vague comments during the interviews which hinted at an awareness of institutionalized racism in the system (e.g., "you know, the racial ramifications around our practices in special education" (Sarah Interview 1)). However, she did not elaborate on her beliefs or demonstrate a deeper understanding of the relationships between intersectionality, power, and marginalization. While Sarah could identify how her positionality related to privilege and described empathy for people who are subject to systemic inequities, she did not discuss how her positionality influenced her relationships, practices, or beliefs within her professional worlds.

Enacted Identity

Sarah described her enacted identity through narratives about her beliefs, and examples of artifacts and practices she used in mentoring worlds. She viewed mentoring as a mechanism for helping teachers "come into themselves as teachers and find their own identity teaching" (Interview 2). She drew on her values and lived history, such as her experiences feeling

disconnected and unsupported, her past mentors, and her professional learning in mindfulness, to enact her role. She approached mentoring holistically and her narratives surfaced three key functions: (a) building professional relationships, (b) sharing strategies, and (c) supporting the whole person.

Building Professional Relationships. Reflective of her past experiences and her value of connection, Sarah identified that she enacted her identity to support beginning teachers with establishing trusting relationships with colleagues. By connecting with the beginning SET and facilitating connections to the broader school and district community, Sarah felt that she was contributing to a “culture and climate that will keep their teachers” (Sarah Interview 3). She prioritized building a positive and collaborative relationship with the beginning SET, stating “I think that has to be your first value...that connection with your mentee” (Sarah Interview 2). Because Sarah and the beginning SET shared similar teaching positions, they often collaborated on topics such as curricula, virtual learning strategies during COVID-19 school facility closures, and progress reporting. As both a teacher and mentor, Sarah used her identity as a mentor to establish a professional relationship with the beginning SET where they could collaborate, collectively problem-solve, and learn from each other.

Sarah also enacted her role to support the beginning SET with building relationships beyond their mentoring worlds. She leveraged her role as a volunteer in classrooms in the SET’s building to facilitate connections. She described, “Because I was connecting with people in the same building [they] were in, then I could form connections with [the beginning SET] and the other people” (Sarah Interview 1). She also used events to foster these connections, such as initiating a gift exchange for teachers in the school and organizing weekly social events for SETs in the district. Sarah supported the beginning SET with using these events to build social

relationships with colleagues in their building and the district. Sarah's use of artifacts, such as organized events, and her narratives suggested that she enacted her role to foster connections and contributed to the beginning SET's sense of belonging and membership in multiple communities.

Sharing Strategies. In describing how she interpreted her identity, Sarah stated that mentoring is “not about you, it's not about your experience, it's not about what you do in your classroom, but it's about what [beginning SETs] need” (Sarah Interview 2). When the beginning SET expressed a need for support or posed a question, Sarah shared ideas or strategies from her teaching worlds but ultimately sought to use mentoring to support the beginning SET with “developing who [they] are and what [they] believe through their own experiences” (Sarah Interview 2). During mentoring interactions, Sarah often asked a broad question, such as “How are things going?” (Sarah Interview 3) and posed additional questions to support the beginning teacher with narrowing the conversation and identifying areas that were most relevant or important, which provided Sarah with opportunities to suggest potential strategies.

Sarah presented artifacts that she shared with the beginning SET that they then adopted and adapted in their practice. Sarah shared artifacts, such as a template for facilitating IEP team meetings and meetings with paraeducators, a mindfulness curriculum that she created for social emotional learning, and her monthly newsletters to families. She also used events, such as co-teaching or modeling to demonstrate instructional practices for the beginning SET to consider in their practice. The beginning SET also observed Sarah in her classroom for a full day. Reflecting on that event, Sarah described that the beginning SET took strategies they observed “back to [their] classroom and took from me what [they] wanted to try” (Sarah Interview 2). Sarah's narratives suggested that she offered or demonstrated a range of strategies, but enacted her identity to support the beginning SET with having autonomy in decisions about their practice.

Supporting the Whole Person. Sarah approached her mentoring relationship holistically and enacted her identity to support the beginning teacher with developing skills in self-care, advocacy, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. She described one of her goals as, “I really want to instill in all mentees that the biggest self-worth power they have is in their voice and also in how they look and give themselves self-compassion when things don’t go right, or when something doesn’t go exactly how they expected” (Sarah Interview 1). She used her constructed knowledge from graduate courses and professional learning on mindfulness to share self-care and advocacy strategies. For example, Sarah shared an artifact she interacted with in past trainings and transferred to her mentoring worlds. The artifact was a flow chart outlining a 4-step communication protocol to use when conflict arose or the beginning SET needed to advocate for themselves. The communication protocol supported the beginning SET with clearly communicating their feelings and making requests of others when there is the potential for conflict. Sarah felt the tool could support the beginning SET with internalizing and using a communication method to effectively advocate for their needs and the needs of their students, while maintaining healthy professional relationships.

Recognizing that SETs are more prone to compassion fatigue and burnout, Sarah enacted her identity to support the beginning SET with balancing the demands of their role. For example, she described sharing her personal self-care strategies and working with the beginning SET to shorten meetings and manage responsibilities so that they were not staying late at school. Sarah also described her role as, “Your weight is not just yours to carry anymore, I’m walking alongside you, and I’m saying, ‘hey, let me carry some of that’” (Sarah Interview 3). Reflective of her beliefs about her role, Sarah provided examples of (a) co-teaching so that the teacher could focus on one aspect of her instruction while Sarah shared the responsibilities of instruction,

(b) helping the teacher pack up their classroom at the end of the year, and (c) demonstrating interest and compassion towards the teacher's personal life. Sarah saw her mentoring as a form of social-emotional support that contributed to the teacher's ability to attend to their wellbeing and advocate for themselves. Describing the beliefs that influenced this aspect of her identity, she said "[Beginning SETs] can't give if they don't put themselves and their self-worth first" (Sarah Interview 1). Sarah refigured aspects of her lived history and knowledge of mindfulness strategies into her constructed mentor identity to go beyond the technical aspects of teaching and support the emotional demands of teaching.

Sarah's lived history was reflected in how she interpreted and enacted her mentor identity. For example, she transferred artifacts from past professional learning opportunities and her teaching worlds into her mentoring worlds to share strategies and encourage self-care. She also refigured her memories of a career-altering professional experience to enact her identity in ways that built connections for the beginning SET and provided emotional support. Her values of connection and compassion were also deeply integrated into how she understood and approached mentoring. Sarah's history-in-person and values also shaped how she understood the concept of inclusion and enacted her mentor identity to support it.

Inclusion Worlds

Sarah's conceptualization of inclusion was abstract with few concrete examples of the practices or ideological beliefs that create the conditions for inclusion. She focused primarily on the climate and culture of inclusive environments. Her narratives were often critical of current approaches to inclusion and the general education system. While she recognized that dominant approaches to inclusion and exclusion perpetuated marginalization, she did not acknowledge special education discourse, practices, or the system as additional harmful factors.

Culture and Climate of Inclusion

Sarah's concept map focused on characteristics and values related to the culture and climate of classrooms and schools. She conceptualized inclusion as students with disabilities receiving education within a general education environment. According to Sarah, inclusive environments create the conditions for "connection", "safety", "love", "vulnerability", and "acceptance" (Sarah Concept Map). Expanding on her concept map, she described that inclusion builds "this sense of compassion and love for who [students with disabilities] are, who the person is, the humanness that connects us" (Sarah Interview 3). Her quotes suggested that her conceptualization of inclusion included worlds where students could be seen as their full selves. She focused on the ideals of inclusion but only offered vague descriptions of inclusive practices. For example, she listed "flexibility", "training", and "relationships" (Sarah Concept Map) as the approaches and practices that foster the conditions for inclusion. She also reimaged the role of special education teachers, seeing them as coaches working with general education teachers to create inclusive learning environments. While Sarah's narratives and concept map reflected values and ideals that create caring and affirming educational environments for students with disabilities, her conceptualization was somewhat limited. She offered few observable practices or a description of the ideological beliefs needed to drive practices.

The Harm of Inclusion

While Sarah envisioned inclusion as a safe and welcoming environment for all students, she recognized that it was not typically a reality in her professional worlds. She used words like "reform" and "radical" (Sarah Interview 3) to describe what it would take to move to a model of inclusion that was aligned to her conceptualization. Acknowledging the gap between her ideal conceptualization of inclusion and the ways it is predominantly practiced, she spoke about

negative impacts of inclusion on students with disabilities. Her concept map included a photo of a fish, half goldfish underwater, and half shark above the water. She used this as a metaphor to describe how inclusion in her professional worlds impacted students, stating:

You have to put on a pretty good show that you can adapt to all the environments that are expected of you. And when your expectations exceed your ability to adapt to a new environment, you come out as a shark...you're ready to just explode because you just don't have the skills to do what is being expected of you (Sarah Interview 3).

While her quote hinted at beliefs aligned with a deficit view of disability, she appeared to be cognizant of how inflexible, normative expectations harm students. Sarah seemed aware of how her professional worlds reinforce the polarity of inclusion versus exclusion which ultimately marginalizes students. For example, she stated “The more that you’re in that separate setting, the more you start to identify the fact that you are different and the more that you are culturally being ostracized from your community” (Sarah Interview 3). She expanded upon her belief, associating segregated settings with increased instances of restraint and isolation, and fewer opportunities for social interactions. Sarah’s narratives and concept map illustrated an awareness of how dominant approaches to inclusion further dehumanize students with disabilities.

Sarah seemed to recognize the challenge in moving to a concept of inclusion that more closely aligned with her vision of inclusion. When asked what it would take to reach her idealized conception, she identified technical pieces such as “money, and time, and smaller class sizes” (Sarah Interview 3). She spoke very little about the ideological beliefs that were necessary to shift to her ideal conceptualization of inclusion. Without identifying specifics, she stated “I really do think that until we have reform for our general education population, you’re not going to change the segregation of special education” (Sarah Interview 3). Throughout the interviews,

she rarely questioned the discourse, practices, or beliefs in both special education and general education worlds that devalue and justify the exclusion of students with disabilities. In a rare example, she briefly touched on teacher narratives and beliefs stating:

I often hear from gen ed teachers ‘This student can’t do this’...‘The student can’t make it in my classroom’, ‘The student can’t access my material’. That’s not true, it’s just simply not true. Kids can and kids rise and they’re resilient (Sarah Interview 3).

Sarah was critical of some dominant assumptions about students with disabilities that she believed were common in general education worlds, but did not discuss additional beliefs or practices that contributed to ableism. While Sarah surfaced her complicity in the system, she did not seem to view her participation in special education worlds as a factor that contributed to the devaluation of students. Sharing her beliefs, she stated “I honestly believe that by segregating kids you’re doing so for the safety of the kid themselves and for them to be able to have a learning community that is accepting and loving” (Sarah Interview 3). However, she did offer additional reflection or commentary on how this paternalistic belief may inadvertently justify the exclusion of students with disabilities. Sarah appeared to fault the general education system for creating the conditions that opposed her ideal conceptualization of inclusion and perpetuated harm against students with disabilities. She did not seem consciously aware of how her role and participation in special education worlds also contributed to reifying ableism.

Agency in Advancing Inclusion

Sarah perceived her agency in advancing inclusion as limited in her situated worlds, and admitted to not having a fully formed understanding of how she could leverage her mentor identity to transform the marginalizing approaches to inclusion she identified. She seemed to struggle with reconciling her beliefs about her role with what may be necessary to productively

engage the beginning SET in dialog and actions related to inclusion. When asked how her role influenced inclusion, she said:

Well, I feel like this is an area that I have not adequately addressed with [them]. I think mainly because I am trying to shield [them] from the parts of this that are so unbelievably frustrating and that can take your joy as a new teacher (Sarah Interview 3).

Sarah focused on a holistic approach to mentoring, often enacting her identity to provide emotional support and assist the beginning SET with learning strategies to reduce job-related stress. It was unsurprising that she wanted to protect the beginning SET from aspects of their role that add complexity, challenge, and often frustration that arises from working within inflexible education systems. While Sarah enacted her teaching identity to transform detrimental approaches to inclusion in her teaching worlds, these were strategies she felt the beginning SET was not yet ready for. For example, she identified co-teaching as an approach she used to ensure that students with disabilities were successfully included in general education class, but felt the beginning SET did not yet have the skills or knowledge needed to utilize co-teaching in their worlds. Preferring to only address issues related to inclusion when the beginning SET initiated conversations about the topic, their mentoring interactions focused on technical aspects, such as discussing behavior support strategies for a student with a disability who accessed general education environments. Sarah's narratives suggested that she prioritized enacting her mentor identity to reduce the number of cognitive and emotional demands in the beginning SET's worlds. In the act of protecting the beginning SET from what Sarah described as the "dark side of inclusion" (Sarah Interview 3), it seemed that she assumed a role of determining if and when a beginning SET was ready to engage in mentoring interactions focused on inclusion and equity.

Recognizing that her agency was limited, Sarah chose to enact her identity in ways where she modeled the values included in her inclusion concept map (e.g., connection, safety, love, vulnerability, acceptance) within the beginning SET's segregated special education setting:

I can model the value of connection and I can connect [the beginning SET]. I can model the value of love and building relationships with [their] kids...I can model how we speak to kids and how we teach them that they can take their armor off at your door and that you are a safe space for them. I can help [them] to feel safe in [their] own environment and then in turn help [them] to make sure kids feel safe in [their] environment (Sarah Interview 3).

Through modeling, Sarah hoped that the beginning SET would see those values and beliefs in practice and integrate them into their own pedagogical approaches. She saw her agency related to inclusion as confined to the beginning SET's special education setting, despite her connections with administrators, teachers, and students throughout the beginning SET's building. Instead of leveraging mentoring interactions to talk about inclusion, Sarah only engaged in the topic when the beginning SET brought it into their mentoring worlds. It is possible that given her constructed knowledge about the dominant approaches to inclusion in her worlds, Sarah could not see how her participation in special education worlds could transform the practices that devalue students with disabilities. Given her inability to recognize and reflect on the role that special education practices and discourse play in reifying ableism, she may not have understood the potential impact of her situated identity. Thus, she focused her agency on modeling ideal values of inclusion in segregated settings.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed description of each mentors' interpretation of their constructed identity and enacted practices, conceptualization of inclusion, and their perceived agency in advancing inclusive education. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, each mentor had unique lived histories that contributed to their interpretation and enactment of their mentor identity, and therefore, their perceived agency. The following chapter will discuss common themes across cases in the concepts of (a) identity, (b) inclusion, and (c) agency.

Chapter 5: Cross Case Analysis

This chapter presents the thematic results from across the five mentor cases. Specifically, I discuss commonalities and differences across cases in three key concepts from my theoretical and conceptual framing: (a) identity, (b) inclusion, and (c) agency. The section on identity broadly explores themes related to how mentors constructed their identities and made sense of their role. I then discuss how mentors' narratives and concept maps surfaced tensions between their ideal conceptualization of inclusion and their situated worlds of inclusion. I conclude by exploring the factors that contributed to mentors' perceived agency and ability to enact practices that contribute to inclusive reform.

Identity: Autonomy and the Influence of Lived Experiences

Reflective of the demographics of the majority of educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), the study's sample included five, white, female mentors, none of whom disclosed a disability. Mentors named additional dominant identities, such as heterosexual, cis-gendered, and English speaking. However, their willingness or ability to examine their positionality, power, and privilege in relation to students and beginning special education teachers (SETs) was limited. While some discussed sharing similar identities (e.g., white, female) to their assigned beginning teachers (i.e., Sarah and Susan), Holly was the only mentor to deeply reflect on the impact of her positionality on the teachers she mentored. For example, she discussed one of her mentoring relationships with a teacher of another race:

And there's this part of me that thinks, 'Oh...what am I doing that is causing this disconnect?' And maybe there are some cultural blind spots I have that is making it so I don't seem to be either a safe or trusting or useful person for this new teacher to want to engage with (Holly Interview 2).

Holly, Brooke, and Sarah were aware of the racial inequities within special education. For example, Holly recalled conversations about disproportionality in special education with beginning SETs, Brooke enacted her identity to bring the topic of racial equity into mentoring interactions, and Sarah named “the racial ramifications around our practice in special education” (Sarah Interview 1). However, none of the mentors discussed their dominant identities and positional power in relation to the student population they ultimately served.

As discussed in Chapter Four, mentors’ lived histories encompassed a range of personal and professional experiences that influenced their interpretation and enactment of their identities. Their professional credentials and experiences highlighted differences in how districts select mentors for beginning SETs. For example, Brooke and Angela did not have certifications or experiences as classroom teachers. Some mentors self-advocated for their role as mentors (i.e., Angela, Sarah), Susan was asked by an administrator, it was an assigned duty of Brooke’s role as a district specialist, and Holly applied and interviewed for her full-time mentor position. Regardless of their pathway into mentoring, mentors were positioned and enacted their identity in ways that had the potential to influence the instructional practices and ideologies of beginning SETs (see appendix N for mentors’ functions). For example, mentors enacted their identity to (a) serve as reflective partners (e.g., Angela, Holly), (b) develop pedagogical content knowledge (e.g., Angela, Sarah, Holly), (c) facilitate problem-solving (e.g., Brooke, Susan, Angela), and (d) collaborate on content or lesson plans (e.g., Susan, Sarah, Holly). Their descriptions of enacted practices emphasized the significance of their identity and roles in special education worlds. I identified several commonalities in how they interpreted their role, including the presence of role ambiguity and autonomy, which resulted in mentors deferring to their past experiences and participation in professional learning to make sense of their role and enact practices.

Role Ambiguity and Autonomy

Mentors' discussed experiences of entering their positions with little district support or messaging that clearly defined their role and responsibilities. They used phrases to describe their onboarding, such as "It's go forth and mentor" (Angela Interview 2), "There's nothing..." (Susan Interview 2), and "Do I know where [the job description] lives? No" (Holly Interview 2). Many described their district expectation in terms of the number of required classroom observations (e.g., Brooke, Holly, Sarah) or the amount of release time available to beginning teachers or mentors (i.e., Sarah, Susan). However, mentors did not provide additional examples of formal district messaging that influenced how they enacted their identity. Additionally, mentors' narratives suggested that they received limited feedback or supervision in their mentor role. For example, Susan described a situation where she was notified in June that she was eligible to receive a stipend for a teacher that she did not know she was responsible for mentoring and, therefore, did not interact with during the school year. Holly described the supervision she received, stating "It was also really hard when we had a new supervisor come in who was out of district and has had to lean on all the experienced mentors to figure out, 'Well, what is this program? What do you do?'" (Holly Interview 2). Furthermore, when asked about the performance feedback they received, only Holly described a formal method of receiving feedback through an anonymous survey that solicited beginning teachers' perspectives on their induction experiences. With few structures to onboard or supervise mentors, the participants' roles were often ambiguous and open to a degree of individual interpretation.

Mentors' narratives suggested a high degree of autonomy in determining how to enact their identity. For example, while Angela's district provided her with recommendations for the number of observations and frequency of contact with beginning SETs, she described:

I feel like I'm working with teachers who are in slightly different roles than what, you know, the recommendations of the mentor program. It's really designed for the general ed teacher. I'm working with a different population and I'm going to differentiate that in the way that I need to do so (Angela Interview 2).

Brooke could not recall the exact recommendations for frequency of contact with beginning SETs, but thought that it might be weekly. When reflecting on the role's requirements, she stated "I don't know if there's a requirement or anything, I haven't gotten in trouble for not doing once a week yet, so I feel like if it was getting flagged [by the program] then someone would say something to me" (Brooke Interview 2). Sarah also described how she went well beyond the district expectations by using her day off from teaching to mentor and volunteer in her assigned beginning SET's building. With the autonomy to determine how and when to mentor, it seemed that mentors could defer to constructed knowledge or what they perceived in their mentoring worlds to form and enact their identities.

Deferring to Lived Experiences

In the absence of mentor program supports and structures, participants seemed to rely fully on their lived experiences and other identities to form their interpretation and enactment of their mentor identity. As discussed in depth in Chapter Four, mentors' professional experiences in previous or current roles significantly contributed to how they understood and performed their identity. For example, Sarah, Susan, and Holly refigured past experiences and salient memories from their teaching careers into the practices they enacted to accomplish their perceived purpose of the role. Brooke's daily experiences as a district specialist contributed to her constructed knowledge of effective special education practices and approach to mentoring. Mentors also relied on enduring identities, such as Angela's mom and helper identities, Brooke's speech and

language pathologist identity, and Susan's competent SET identity, which influenced the artifacts they used and their mentoring practices. Given the unique past experiences and identities of participants, there was variability in how mentors performed their roles (see appendix N for overview of mentor functions and Chapter Four for detailed descriptions).

All of the mentors identified the significance of mentoring-specific professional learning opportunities on their practice. Several shared artifacts they acquired from trainings, such as Brooke's use of syntactical substitutions or plurals (Lipton & Wellman, 2018), the template Susan used for classroom observations, and the problem-solving protocol that Holly brought into her mentoring worlds. Each mentor described the positive impact of their professional development experiences, using phrases like, "really informs the actual technical side of how I'm entering [interactions]" (Brooke Interview 1) and "it gave me a whole lot of background" (Angela Interview 1). When discussing how training in mentoring practices and approaches influenced their understanding of their role, mentors identified various skills they used that allowed beginning SETs to drive their mentoring interactions. For example, Holly described the skills she learned from the training, stating "I could structure those conversations so that I'd have them identify things that they were interested in zooming in on...Where you know it was really all about letting them lead" (Holly Interview 2). Susan described her take away from trainings as, "What I've learned that has been really helpful from the [training], it's yeah, you need to stop micromanaging and just let [them] talk about what [they] need and help [them] with that" (Susan Interview 2). As mentors deferred to what they learned through professional development, they used practices that allowed beginning SETs to determine the content of interactions and enacted their identities in ways that were responsive. Beginning SETs identified topics, such as (a) relationships with colleagues (i.e., Angela, Brooke), (b) procedural compliance (i.e., Sarah,

Susan, Brooke), and (c) specially designed instruction (i.e., Holly, Sarah). Mentors' narratives and artifacts emphasized the influence of professional development on how they positioned beginning SETs to lead the focus of mentoring.

Across cases, themes of ambiguity and autonomy in mentors' roles were prevalent. As they interacted with beginning SETs, they deferred to their lived histories and knowledge from mentoring-specific trainings to co-construct their mentoring worlds with SETs and enact their identities. Most mentors acknowledged the indirect impact their mentoring could have on students, but centered beginning SETs in their purpose, describing it as a form of emotional or instructional support to beginning SETs. They used phrases to describe their role and purpose, such as: (a) "a safe support" (Susan Interview 3), (b) "to come alongside, to walk with, to inspire" (Sarah Interview 3), and (c) "you're that person beside them" (Angela Interview 3). Only Brooke and Holly discussed how mentoring could be used as a tool to socialize beginning SETs into desired cultural practices and discourse. For example, Brooke described her goal as "imparting that equity lens" (Brooke Interview 3) and Holly stated, "We're setting up the foundation of who we want teachers to be in the district and how we want them to show up for students" (Holly Interview 2). Mentors relied on their constructed knowledge of effective special education practices (e.g., instruction, inclusion, procedural compliance) to fulfill the perceived purpose of their role. The ways that mentors made sense of their role, and interpreted and enacted their identity had implications for their perceived agency in advancing inclusion.

Inclusion: Making Sense of Ideal Conceptualizations and Situated Worlds

Mentors' narratives and concept maps highlighted the challenges that educators face in reconciling ideal vision of inclusion with the realities of dominant systems. Their concept maps tended to illustrate a conceptualization of inclusion that reflected perspectives of disability

studies and critical inclusion. However, the mentors' narratives about their situated worlds surfaced practices or beliefs that countered their ideal conceptualization (see Chapter Four for a full discussion). This was likely due to their inability to imagine a system that could be transformed to support their conceptualizations. Furthermore, aside from Holly, most mentors were limited in their ability to critically reflect on their role within systems that reify ableism. Their narratives suggested that they had difficulty placing themselves within the system and consistently identifying how special education discourse and practices reinforce notions of normalcy and rationalize ability-based segregation.

Idealized Conceptualizations

Mentors most often described components of their conceptualizations that reflected sociocultural perspectives of disability and critical inclusion. While everyone described expansive views of inclusion that included all students and adults in the system, very few named marginalized identities aside from disability in their definition. The mentors seemed aware of how "status quo" teaching (Susan Interview 3) or the inflexible structures and practices of general education settings contributed to the normative academic and behavioral expectations that served as barriers to inclusion in their situated worlds. Everyone identified how traditional approaches to education "push aside and other" (Holly Interview 3) students who do not fit within the constructs of normalcy. For Brooke, this included any student who did not present as "mythical average students" (Brooke Prose), naming marginalized groups, such as emerging bilingual students and students experiencing homelessness. Susan included students who did not fit traditional academic notions of normalcy, such as "people with artistic inclinations" and "people with exceptional needs" (Susan Concept Map). While the other mentors spoke broadly of students without identified disabilities who are labeled as "different" or "odd" (Holly

Interview 3). While their description of the “who” of inclusion hinted at an awareness of the interlocking systems of oppression that push students to the margins of educational spaces and opportunities, no one explicitly named forms of oppression, such as ableism and racism.

Mentors’ conceptualizations of inclusion tended to focus on inclusive values and cultures; however, few were able to articulate specific practices or structures that were necessary to foster the values and ideologies they described. Mentors described components of their ideal conceptualization, such as: (a) acceptance of differences (e.g., Angela, Brooke, Sarah), (b) full membership in communities (e.g., Holly, Susan), (c) strengths-based instruction (e.g., Holly, Brooke), and (d) a culture of high expectations for learning and achievement (e.g., Brooke, Sarah, Angela). Most mentors provided vague descriptors for inclusive instruction, such as “flexibility” (Sarah Concept Map), “appropriate” (Angela Interview 3), and “providing different ways for people to learn” (Susan Interview 3). However, almost all of the mentors either named Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or described instructional approaches that reflected principles of UDL (Rose & Meyer, 2006). By naming or describing principles of UDL (Rose & Meyer, 2006), such as “multiple points to access, engage and demonstrate – no means is ‘less than’ any other” (Holly Concept Map), mentors grounded their conceptualization of inclusion in the belief that barriers to inclusion are created by sociocultural contexts, and are not located within the minds and bodies of students.

Mentors’ idealized conceptualizations of inclusion were varied, with many citing additional components that were reflective of critical inclusion. For example, Brooke seemed to interrogate dominant cultural norms by identifying that inclusion required schools to transform “collective cultural lines about who can achieve and what achievement looks like” and “changing our idea of what it means to meet standard” (Brooke Interview 3). Holly and Sarah

both identified that within inclusive education, students' full humanity is centered and valued. Additionally, Angela discussed how students should be represented in the decision-making processes about the support they receive, stating "give kids the accommodations...that they need and would benefit from because they recognize from their own self advocacy that that's something that they need" (Angela Interview 3). Brooke echoed a similar sentiment, describing that inclusion involves teaching students how to make decisions about their own learning. Also reflective of critical inclusion and the belief that school resources, educational opportunities, and decision must be equitable, Holly included components such as "Resource allocation", "Master scheduling", and "A lens for all decisions - 'how will this affect the most vulnerable students?'" (Holly Concept Map). While mentors' idealized conceptualizations reflected sociocultural perspectives of disability and critical inclusion, very few mentors named families and communities as essential partners in inclusive education. Additionally, no one discussed inclusion as ideologies and cultural practices that directly counter ableism or other forms of oppression.

Situated Inclusion Worlds

While mentors' concept maps generally illustrated conceptualizations of inclusion that appeared to decouple inclusion from place, their descriptions of their situated worlds seemed to suggest that they participated in worlds that conceptualized inclusion in a dominant stance. Their narratives highlighted the polarity of inclusion versus exclusion, and general education versus special education. Given that participants were situated almost entirely within special education worlds where segregation was the norm, their constructed knowledge of inclusion included their perceptions and understanding of traditional approaches to inclusion and special education.

While all mentors discussed flexible educational spaces and practices within their ideal

conception of inclusion, the majority of the mentors seemed unable to reimagine the rigid boundaries of general education and special education spaces and roles within their situated worlds. For example, while Sarah envisioned flexible educator roles and classroom spaces, she described the shift as, “It’s radical, it’s really radical”, highlighting the juxtaposition between her situated worlds and an idealized vision. Some mentors seemed to inadvertently justify ability-based segregation as they described inclusion within the established structures and practices of their situated worlds. For instance, Brooke’s ideal conceptualization included expanding normative notions of academic achievement, countering deficit-based mindsets, accessible and abundant learning support, and “getting people to think more flexibly about what special education can look like” (Brooke Interview 3). However, when applying her conceptualization, she tended to describe inclusion within ability-based segregated spaces, such as expressing support for segregated settings if the intent was to “build up skills so they can go out”, and stating “And for self-contained, sometimes inclusion means inclusion in the resource room as like a step to inclusion in the gen ed” (Brooke Interview 3). Highlighting the rigidity of spaces and curriculum, Angela described a general education setting as the right “form of inclusion” if it offered the “content that’s going to be [the student’s] most rigorous, appropriate material” (Angela Interview 3). Susan seemed to question the inflexible structures and practices of her worlds, but could only envision a solution with their existing structures. She discussed the limited opportunities provided to students with disabilities in her worlds, stating:

Like my kids only get music, art or social studies, if they can make it to that class. If they can’t make it to that class, then why can’t we think a different way? And why can’t those teachers be coming to my class? (Susan Interview 3).

These quotes and additional narratives illustrated the pervasive nature of the dominant and rigid

structures, practices, and ideologies that reify ableism and were most likely common in mentors' situated worlds. The oppressive systems in which they were situated appeared to mediate their constructed knowledge of inclusion in practice.

As mentors discussed their situated worlds of inclusion, they described working within systems filled with both technical and ideological barriers that maintain the historical chasm between inclusion and exclusion in educational systems. They identified barriers to their conceptualization of inclusion, such as a lack of: (a) training (e.g., Susan, Sarah, Angela), (b) time (e.g., Angela, Susan, Holly), (c) classroom sizes (e.g., Susan), (d) rigid curriculum (e.g., Susan), and (d) financial resources for staffing (e.g., Sarah, Brooke). Many reflected on their frequent encounters with deficit-based ideologies used to deny students with disabilities access to the opportunities available to students identified as abled. For example, Angela spoke about the "special ed stereotype", which included SETs expressing beliefs that students with intellectual disabilities were not capable of accessing grade levels standards. Brooke described encountering low expectations imposed on students with disabilities traditionally educated in self-contained special education classrooms and justifications for exclusion, describing:

It's this idea of, like 'Oh they can't handle the rest of the environment', but it's like, 'Well, I guess we're not going to teach them', and there's just this idea of like 'Oh, they're over there, they do their thing' (Brooke Interview 3).

Holly and Sarah echoed similar themes, sharing memories of teachers expressing concerns about students with disabilities disrupting the learning environment or not being capable of learning in inclusive settings. All of the mentors identified teacher mindset as a barrier to their ideal conceptualizations of inclusion. Susan made the connection between mindsets and teacher resistance to transformation, stating "I think people just get in these stuck mindsets...I see

teachers doing that, they have a mindset and it's not going to change" (Susan Interview 3). The mentors were able to easily point to issues within their system that served as barriers to inclusion, each of which seemed to be reflective of ableism within the system. Given their perspectives, it seemed as if they were unable to imagine their role in confronting and transforming the dominant structures, practices, and ideologies they surfaced.

Reflecting on their situated special education worlds, mentors also recognized the constraints of the bifurcated system they were a part of. Holly described a barrier to progressing towards her ideal conceptualization, stating:

It's this like special ed...initiative. Why would it come from there? Like again, that's not inclusive, like we are the resources and hopefully experts on how to do certain things, but the initiative has to be from the center of the system and it definitely doesn't feel that way (Holly Interview 3).

Holly's quote seemed to reflect the dominant conception of inclusion as a special education issue and pointed to a boundary between general education and special education systems. Several mentors reinforced this idea of inclusion being driven solely by special education professionals and systems. For example, aside from Angela, everyone spoke of special education teachers as responsible for "finding" general education teachers who were willing to collaborate and include a student with a disability into their classroom. Reflecting the belief that ideal conceptualizations of inclusion were not possible within her current system, Sarah said "I really do think that until we have reform for our general education population, you're not going to change the segregation of special ed" (Sarah Interview 3). Mentors' narratives seemed to reflect worlds where there were hard boundaries between special education and general education systems and spaces, with special education bearing the responsibility for inclusion within fixed systems and structures. It

seemed that given their participation in their situated worlds of inclusion, many had difficulty imagining a system where there was collective responsibility for creating the conditions that fostered their ideal conceptualization of inclusion.

Complicity in the System

While mentors identified barriers that constrained their ideal conceptualizations of inclusion, most of them were unable to reflect on their complicity within a system that countered their ideal conceptualizations. Some mentors described how they worked within their rigid systems to create a sense of belonging and affirm students with disabilities. However, aside from Holly, these mentors did not seem to recognize how their discourse and practices inadvertently reinforced dominant notions of normalcy. For example, Susan described her role as a special education teacher in ways that suggested she was responsible for teaching students with disabilities to assimilate into general education environments and the community, using phrases like “building tolerance to new environments” and teaching students to “function” across environments (Susan Interview 3). Brooke described the purpose of special education as, “To attempt to equalize the playing field, you know, to help remediate or teach people to compensate for that disability so they can function and be members of society” (Brooke Interview 3). Susan and Brooke’s quote hinted at the belief that deviance is located within students with identified disabilities. Sarah also may not have recognized how her participation within the system may contribute to ableism. She realized that practices of segregating students reinforced the idea that they are somehow “different”, but rationalized it for the purposes of protecting students from the marginalizing practices and discourse of dominant approaches to inclusion. Some mentors’ narratives and descriptions of practices reflected dominant special education ideologies which were likely common in their worlds. Most of the mentors did not critically reflect, question, or

appear to grapple with how their narratives may inadvertently uphold the very notions of normalcy they identified as barriers to inclusion. They seemed unaware of how their participation in special education worlds, even with the best of intentions for supporting students with disabilities, could inadvertently reinforce ableism.

Both Brooke and Angela equated inclusion with the continuum of services provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), which reinforces the dominant conception of inclusion as tied to fixed environments. Angela described that in order to advance towards her ideal conceptualization of inclusion, the continuum of services must be more than a legal provision, stating “you have to have repeated conversations about it and it has to become part of your mission” (Angela Interview 3). Angela repeatedly used the term “appropriate” to describe how decisions about the “right form of inclusion” should be made within a continuum of services (Angela Interview 3). Brooke’s narratives resembled similar themes, for example she described inclusion in terms of students’ least restrictive environment (LRE; IDEA, 2004) and level of independence in learning. While Angela and Brooke, saw these legal provisions as a tool to facilitate inclusion and reframe teacher beliefs, they did not reflect on their potential complicity in special education discourse that reinforces the beliefs that students need to demonstrate the ability to meet normative standards to access certain environments and opportunities. As actors within dominant special education worlds heavily influenced by the legal provisions of IDEA (2004), they may not have been able to recognize how special education policies and procedures designed to ensure students have equitable access to high-quality instruction and individualized support can be applied in ways that inadvertently reinforce ableism.

Only Holly seemed to deeply critically reflect on her complicity in the system. She

appeared to ascribe to sociocultural perspectives of disability and criticized the dominant cultural norms and practices that devalue students with disabilities, but recognized the constraints of her system and society, stating:

The way that [society] is currently designed is more that it's designed for this bell [curve] and if you're on either side of it, *you* are having to accommodate, *you* are having to do things to get to here, versus things being designed in a way that inherently allow you access [emphasis supplied] (Interview 3).

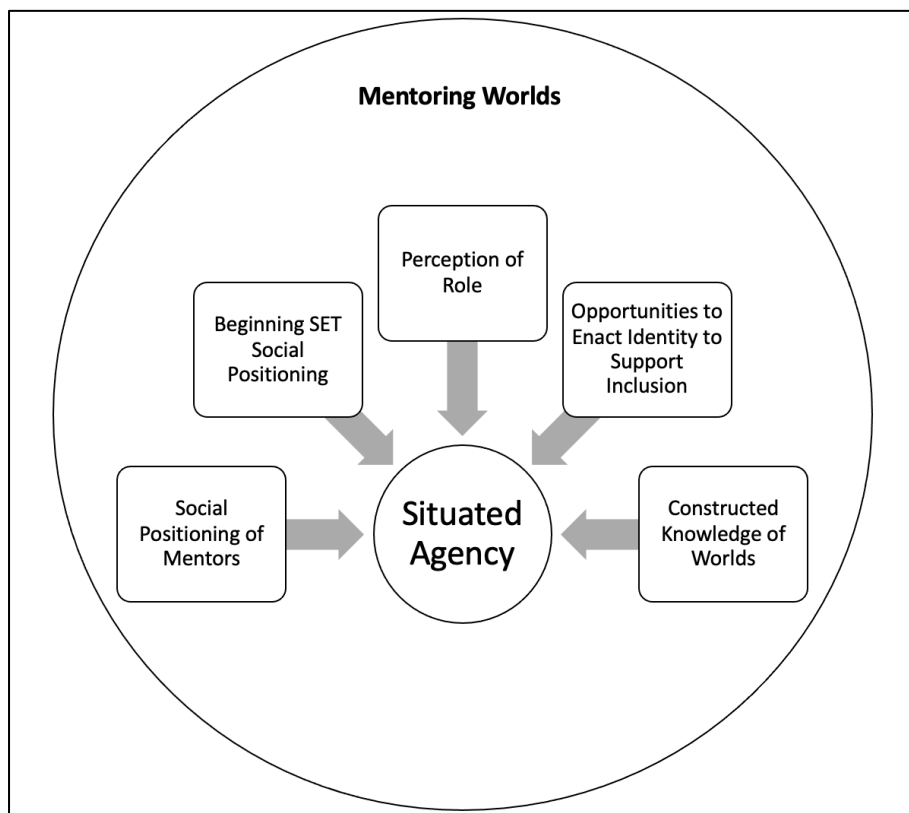
She described limited agency in transforming the dominant cultural ideologies and practices that frequently deny individuals with disabilities their full humanity and rights. Instead, she felt her role was to work within the constraints of the system to ensure individual students' academic and emotional needs were met, and that they had some sense of autonomy. However, she critically reflected on her experiences with inclusion as a teacher and mentor. For example, describing her tendencies as a teacher to segregate her students with disabilities for the purposes of protecting them from general education environments that often failed and devalued them, she interrogated her practice, stating: "Oh, am I causing problems by self-containing my students with me?" (Holly Interview 2). While Holly was able to reflect on how her actions and decisions may inadvertently reinforce the systems and structures that perpetuate ableism. Her narratives suggested that as an individual, she felt limited in her ability to impact systemic change.

The themes across cases emphasized the challenges of imagining, let alone transforming, a system capable of embodying the ideologies and practices that create a just and humanizing educational system for all students. Mentors could conceptualize inclusion as a set of practices and philosophies that counter dominant approaches to education by tailoring educational experiences to be accessible, affirming, and participatory for all. However, it seemed as if they

were situated within dominant worlds of inclusion and special education, and could not conceive of their systems transforming to facilitate a vision of inclusion that aligned with their ideal conceptualizations. While they could name specific barriers, many did not critically reflect on their participation in the systems or seem to recognize how dominant special education discourse and practices uphold notions of normalcy and contribute to ableism.

Mentoring to Advance Inclusion: Creating the Conditions for Agency

Given ambiguity and autonomy in their roles, mentors primarily used their lived histories to construct their identity and agency within mentoring worlds. These worlds were shaped by interactions, artifacts, and cultural practices and norms. There seemed to be multiple factors operating simultaneously within mentoring worlds that influenced mentors' agency and ability to impact the ideologies and practices of their situated worlds. These factors were often interdependent and appeared to create multiple decision points for mentors during their interactions with beginning SETs. Figure 4 illustrates the factors that appeared to constrain and facilitate mentors' agency and ability to advance inclusion within their mentoring worlds. This section further discusses specific themes across these factors, namely: (a) mentors' social positioning and perceived power, (b) positioning of beginning SETs, (c) boundaries of mentor practice, (d) beginning SETs as the initiator, and (e) constructed knowledge of inclusion.

Figure 4*Factors that Influence Situated Agency in Mentoring Worlds***Mentors' Social Positioning and Perceived Power**

With little support or messaging from their districts, mentors guessed at how their district would describe their role or position them. Holly and Brooke thought their district would describe them as a support for new teachers, with the goal of mentoring to retain effective teachers. Susan described her perception and potential influence as, “You’re coming into a situation where people are valuing your opinion and your skills because you’re in that mentor position” (Susan Interview 3). However, when asked if that was how she was positioned by the district, she stated:

I don’t know if that’s how the district has seen the mentor program and I haven’t heard of it talked about that way, it’s more about making sure that those new teachers don’t quit,

and that they feel like they have what they need, and their questions answered (Susan Interview 3).

Given the ambiguity of their role and autonomy, mentors constructed their own understanding of their social positioning within their mentoring worlds.

Without defined goals or descriptions of their districts' mentoring program, some mentors entered into schools where they did not have established relationships with administrators or teachers, or a working knowledge of the school's culture. Holly reflected on her experiences, stating:

It's just weird to go into these new building and like not know anything, and not know the culture. I need to be better and I think I'll have a better understanding of different spaces...how to navigate them and become more comfortable with getting to know the people and the culture" (Holly Interview 2).

For Susan, this played out in ways where she felt limited in her ability to support her assigned beginning SET with navigating the school context to establish relationships with their colleagues to facilitate inclusion. While Holly was able to support teachers with facilitating meaningful inclusion for students with disabilities, it required access to "the two important players" (Holly Interview 3) and was, therefore, limited to connecting beginning teachers on her caseload and providing support as they collaborated. Brooke and Angela mentored in schools where they interacted with other teachers and the administrators through their primary role. However, they did not discuss leveraging these relationships to support their assigned beginning SET with fostering inclusive education. Mentors' perceived power to influence inclusion appeared to be constrained to beginning SETs' classroom contexts and caseloads.

As mentors participated in mentoring worlds within a broader school context and made

sense of their identity, they formed an understanding of their social positioning in relation to the beginning SET. They seemed to focus on relationship building and tried to diminish power dynamics in their relationships with beginning SETs (see Chapter Four for a detailed description of social positioning). Aside from Holly, mentors did not appear to recognize their positionality as a component of their positional power in educational contexts. Mentors most often saw themselves as having limited power or influence. For example, while Angela positioned herself as a teacher to beginning SETs, she said, “I don’t think I have power over anything, I think it’s totally up to [teachers] to change their career to change their whatever” (Angela Interview 2). While Holly thought that her access to district administrators afforded her opportunities to advocate at the systems level, she couldn’t name examples of where her advocacy shifted system practices or procedures. Given their imposed and perceived social positioning and power, mentors believed their agency was restricted to influencing beginning SETs’ practice and peripherally the experiences of individual students in their classrooms.

Positioning of Beginning Special Education Teachers

Mentors enacted practices in ways that positioned beginning SETs as the lead in determining the focus of mentoring interactions. Additionally, their perceptions of beginning SETs also contributed to how they positioned beginning SETs and interpreted their role. Many mentors seemed to view beginning SETs as in a state of survival throughout their first year. For example, Angela described:

In that first year, they’re in survival mode. They’re really not thinking so much about their students. They’re trying to, but they’re being thrown at with all these different curriculum pieces and how do I engage with fellow staff members. That kind of stuff (Angela Interview 3).

Along similar lines, Holly discussed how beginning SETs were often bogged down by compliance issues, leaving them with little time to focus on improving their practice and in a constant state of “treading water (Holly Interview 3). Susan described her role as supporting teachers “who might be struggling more than you realize” (Susan Interview 3). The perception that beginning SETs were often in a perpetual state of survival or struggle seemed to position them as not having the capacity to take on additional emotional or cognitive demands, or focus on the intricacies of instruction. Recognizing the challenges of being a first-year teacher, Sarah actively sought to reduce the cognitive and emotional demands that her beginning SET experienced. This meant attempting to shield them from what she described as the “dark side of inclusion” (Sarah Interview 3). This positioning of beginning SETs appeared to influence how mentors thought about enacting their identities to proactively engage teachers in conversations about inclusive ideologies and practices, and how they responded to beginning SETs’ requests related to inclusion.

Boundaries of Mentor Practice

Mentors’ perception of their role seemed to establish boundaries for their practice. Viewing mentoring as a form of emotional and instructional support, they often described using various practices to support beginning SETs with constructing their own knowledge and determining actions in the areas SETs identified. For example, Sarah offered instructional strategies and tools to the beginning SET, but recognized that the teacher needed to make their own decisions about which strategies to adopt to construct their teaching identity. Brooke described using discursive tools, such as syntactical substitutions and plurals (Lipton & Wellman, 2018), to support beginning SETs with generating their own solutions to perceived challenges. Angela used phrases like “coax” and “guide” (Angela Interview 1 and 3) to describe

the practices she used to support beginning SETs with constructing knowledge or determining action. Mentors seemed to enact their identities in ways that were responsive to beginning SETs and had the potential to influence their pedagogical content knowledge, but were careful not to impose their own beliefs or practices, which at times limited their influence.

Many mentors seemed to believe that their role should not include transferring practices and beliefs to beginning SETs. Recalling instances of observing veteran teachers directly teaching outdated practices to beginning SETs, Sarah stated “I just don’t want mentors to be instilling all their beliefs in their teachers, I want their teachers to be autonomous” (Sarah Interview 3). Brooke and Susan discussed how their role should not involve pushing their own “agenda” (Brooke Interview 2; Susan Interview 2), meaning the ways that they thought things should be done. Reflecting on her mentoring experiences, Holly described, “I think that the times I’m most uncomfortable as the mentor is honestly when they straight up asked me, ‘Well, what do you think I should do about XYZ’, like trying to get that sort of more subjective feedback” (Holly Interview 1). Most mentors seemed to enact their identities in ways that allowed beginning SETs to develop their own beliefs and commitments, and adopt the strategies and practices they felt were best for their students and contexts. While this approach to mentoring allowed beginning SETs to construct their own teaching identity and pedagogy, it limited mentors’ ability to proactively shape beginning SETs’ inclusive commitments and pedagogies.

Creating Opportunities to Examine Ideologies

Mentors seemed to have various perceptions about their role in engaging beginning SETs in meaningful conversations about ideologies and supporting them with critical reflection. For example, Sarah recognized systemic inequities, but described: “I keep a lot of my inequity concerns to myself because...I don’t want to taint [the beginning SET], I don’t want to give

[them] the wrong impression of a district by showing [them] all the darkness to it” (Interview 3). Sarah felt she was protecting the SET; however, her constructed knowledge could have been skillfully leveraged to support the SET with learning to recognize and resist the marginalizing discourses and practices of their context. Angela felt it was within her role to engage teachers in conversations about their beliefs about inclusion, but described equity and inclusion as, “very challenging, multifaceted pieces” (Angela Interview 3) and was cautious in initiating and negotiating these conversations.

While Holly thought her role included leading conversations about systemic racism, she was learning how to initiate and meaningfully engage beginning SETs in those conversations. Reflecting on a conversation initiated by a beginning SET who noticed evidence of disproportionality, she described “It made me always think of like, okay, how do I, in an authentic way bring up these issues where it’s not just feeling like either an accusation or a box to check” (Holly Interview 1). Brooke discussed trying to improve in her ability to name “racism and ethnocentrism” (Brooke Interview 3) in practices and discourse, but recognized that her approaches were often reactive and she occasionally struggled to tactfully initiate conversations with beginning SETs about racism. She discussed her hesitancy at times, stating: “[Conversations about race] are delicate and you have to think of the way to approach that without having their guard go up, which is really hard, because that’s such a fragile topic” (Brooke Interview 3). Similarly, when asked if she ever supported her assigned beginning SET with critically reflecting on their ideologies, Brooke described that she didn’t yet feel confident leading those conversations with the teacher. While limited in their self-efficacy to consistently and skillfully negotiate conversations about race, Holly and Brooke were the only mentors whose narratives suggested that they believed their role included leading conversations about racism.

Some mentors discussed additional reactive approaches to engaging in conversations about ideologies, such as interrupting and reframing deficit-based beliefs about students with disabilities when they encountered them in their mentoring worlds (e.g., Brooke, Angela). In the examples provided, mentors discussed reframing narratives about students' abilities and shifting conversations to look at what students were capable of and determining instructional approaches that would support them with gaining the skills that were expected across various contexts. However, none of the mentors described enacting their identities in ways to support beginning SETs with developing the skills to routinely engage in critically reflective practices or name inequities. It seemed that while mentors were positioned to support beginning SETs with learning to recognize and disrupt narratives and practices that reify oppression, only a few mentors recognized this as a component of their role or attempted to enact their identities in this way.

Beginning SETs as the Initiators

Mentors' narratives suggested that they associated opportunities to have substantive conversations about inclusion with topics related to students with disabilities accessing general education environments. Acting within the perceived boundaries of their role, they typically used strategies to support beginning SETs with determining the focus of mentoring interactions and enacted practices in response to their requests or identified areas of focus (see Chapter Four for a detailed description). Positioning beginning SETs in this way seemed to create conditions where mentors deferred to the beginning SETs to initiate conversations related to inclusion. For example, when asked how she talks to beginning SETs about inclusion, Brooke responded with, "It depends on the classroom and the teachers" (Brooke Interview 3). She provided examples of some beginning SETs bringing the topic into mentoring worlds and others who did not and

instead focused on instruction within their segregated special education classrooms. Susan imagined a world where mentoring could be used to support collaboration between a beginning SET and a general education teacher, but stated, “If that’s what the mentee needs...or like what their mentee asked for” (Susan Interview 3). If beginning SETs did not initiate conversations related to inclusion, most mentors seemed to be limited in their ability to enact practices to support the beginning SET with developing inclusive commitments and pedagogies. Angela was one of the few mentors to discuss her agency as the practice of consistently embedding reflection questions about UDL (Rose & Meyer, 2006) into her interactions with beginning SETs to proactively shape their pedagogies. However, it seemed that for the most part, the ways mentors deferred to beginning SETs to initiate the topic of inclusion constrained their ability to exercise their agency in support of inclusive reform.

When beginning SETs identified topics related to inclusion as mentoring priorities, some mentors described enacting practices to support teachers with developing inclusive practices. For example, Holly described an example of a beginning SET who wanted to learn more about co-teaching practices. She arranged for the SET to observe a teacher who was knowledgeable and skilled in co-teaching and served as a reflective partner to support the beginning SET with applying what they learned to their practice. Angela described being able to support her assigned beginning SET with reconciling competing ideologies to provide an “appropriate” form of inclusion for their students. She attributed this to the teacher not being in first-year “survival mode”, describing: “[They] didn’t have as much of that crisis mode, [they] were very involved in ‘how am I going to get students’ going?’” (Angela Interview 3). Brooke and Sarah also described examples of supporting beginning SETs with problem-solving around technical component of inclusion, such as communication and collaboration, when their beginning SETs initiated the

topic. While mentors were able to meaningfully engage in mentoring focused on inclusion, it seemed reliant on the beginning SET's capacity and desire to use mentoring for that purpose.

Constructed Knowledge of Inclusion

Mentors' narratives suggested that they were situated in worlds that predominately viewed inclusion as a general education placement option for students with disabilities capable of meeting the normative expectations of the environment. When the topic of inclusion was brought into mentoring worlds, they exercised their agency in ways that reflected their constructed knowledge of inclusion within their contexts (see Chapter Four for a detailed discussion). Recognizing the many barriers to achieving their idealized conception of inclusion, most mentors seemed to support beginning SETs with using practices to facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities into inflexible environments. At times, some mentors' constructed knowledge of inclusion appeared to contribute to their use of mentoring practices that reinforced ableism, such as supporting a beginning SET with looking at students' abilities to determine which inclusive opportunities were most appropriate for the student (e.g., Susan). While some mentors seemed to use their knowledge of the ideological and environmental barriers to inclusion to support beginning SETs with navigating around those barriers, such providing feedback on a lesson plan to improve the accessibility of the instruction in a co-taught classroom (i.e., Holly) and coaching a beginning SET to suggest changes to the general education instructional environment (i.e., Sarah). However, across cases, aside from interrupting deficit-based narratives about students' abilities, the findings suggest that mentors did not consistently use their agency to support beginning SETs with interrogating the narratives and practices within their contexts that maintain notions of normalcy and sanction ability-based segregation.

As illustrated by the cases, mentors' perceived agency and ability to advance inclusion

was contingent upon many contextual and individual factors that shaped their mentoring worlds. The ambiguity and positioning by their districts contributed to mentors' autonomy but created ambiguity in their role in relation to inclusion. Not being positioned by their district as leaders appeared to influence mentors' perceived positional power and contributed to them not seeing how their agency could impact the broader system. Holly was the exception, noting that each teacher equipped with inclusive commitments could contribute to a "sea of change" (Holly Interview 3). Their positioning of beginning SETs seemed to create conditions where mentors deferred to beginning SETs to initiate conversations about inclusion and informed mentors' beliefs about what beginning SETs were capable of accomplishing or learning in their first-year. Additionally, mentors' perception of their role created boundaries to their practice that may have limited their ability to intentionally use mentoring as a tool to shape beginning SETs' inclusive pedagogies. Furthermore, their constructed knowledge of inclusion appeared to influence the degree to which their enacted practices reinforced the traditional concept of inclusion in their contexts or built their capacity to recognize and address barriers that devalue and segregate students. The findings highlight the influence of mentors' context and past professional learning experiences on their agency, and contribute to a deeper understanding of how sociocultural and historical contexts mediate identity and agency.

The thematic findings suggest that mentoring to advancing inclusion is complex, situational, and reliant upon many factors. It appeared that in order for mentoring to be used as a tool to support beginning SETs with developing the skills to transform dominant ideologies and practices within existing dominant systems, many contextual and individual factors needed to align. Without the right conditions, mentors were limited in their capacity and ability to use interactions with beginning SETs for substantive conversations about ideologies and to

interrogate the systems, policies, and practices that reify ableism. The findings emphasize the significance of constructed identities and figured worlds on mentors' perceived agency and ability to advance inclusive education.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand (a) how the lived histories of mentors of beginning special education teachers (SETs) influence their interpretation and enactment of their identity, (b) how mentors conceptualize inclusion, and (c) how mentors perceive their agency in advancing inclusion. Grounding this study in sociocultural perspectives through the use of Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of social identity and figured worlds and the perspectives of disability studies in education (see Baglieri et al., 2011b), allowed me to (a) examine how mentors used their past experiences and knowledge to construct their identities through practice, (b) explore how their contexts influenced their perception of their identity and agency, and (c) understand their perspectives on inclusion, disability and special education. By centering the experiences, actions, narratives, and perspectives of mentors through a multiple case study design, I learned about the complexities of negotiating ambiguous roles in discursive contexts dominated by cultural norms and practices that maintain politics of polarities (i.e., inclusion versus exclusion, special education versus general education). The findings underscore how dominant educational systems, structures, and discourse can influence the identity and agency of actors situated within these contexts. In this chapter, I situate the finding from this study within the extant literature on mentoring, educator agency, and inclusive education. I then discuss implication for induction and mentor programs. I conclude with a discussion of the study's limitations and strengths, and recommendations for future research on mentoring as a tool for inclusive reform.

Constructing a Mentor Identity

The process of identity construction is dynamic and complex. Sociocultural perspectives on identity formation (Holland et al., 1998; Lave & Holland, 2001) and research on SET

identities (e.g., Jones, 2004; Naraian, 2010) emphasize that identity is continually constructed through the interactions of lived histories and contextual elements (e.g., interactions with actors or policies, features of segregated or inclusive settings). Contributing to the literature on professional identities, the findings from this study demonstrate the influence of mentors' lived histories and sociocultural contexts on their interpretation and enactment of their mentor identities. The following sections discuss the findings in conjunction with the existing literature.

Lived Histories

The findings demonstrate how mentors' lived histories shaped their interpretation and enactment of their identity. Participants commonly described past professional experiences related to special education and enduring aspects of their past, such as commitments, values, and other constructed identities, as influential in how they viewed themselves as mentors. As evidenced by mentors' identity maps and narratives, they made clear connections between their lived histories and aspects of their identities such as their enacted practices, perceived purposes, constructed knowledge of special education, and ideological beliefs. While little research has been done on the identities of induction mentors (Lesham, 2014), there is some evidence that support these findings that suggests that mentors often rely on their experientially constructed professional knowledge in their role as mentors (Jones & Straker, 2006). Extending the literature on SET identity, the results of this study align with research that has identified mediators of identity construction, such as (a) professional development (Jones, 2004; Thorius, 2016); (b) professional preparation experiences and certifications (Naraian, 2014); and (c) past personal and professional experiences (Jones, 2014). The findings from this study in relation to the literature demonstrate how powerful mentors' lived histories and constructed knowledge are in guiding their practices and interactions with beginning SETs. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the

importance of careful mentor selection to ensure that mentors' past experiences have equipped them with the commitments, knowledge, and skills to support beginning SETs with learning to teach in just and humanizing ways.

Across all cases, participants described the significance of their past participation in mentoring-specific professional learning. Their narratives suggested that their participation in trainings allowed them to develop skills that were specific to how they structured their mentoring interactions, including deferring to their beginning SET mentees to determine the focus of mentoring. However, mentors did not discuss gaining skills, knowledge, or commitments from professional learning opportunities that support beginning teachers with developing equity pedagogies, such as skills to support beginning teachers' critical reflections, a self-awareness of assumptions and biases, or commitments to using mentoring to address inequities and advance reform (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). Research on mentor professional learning (e.g., Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Stanulis & Ames, 2009; Stanulis & Brondyk, 2013) and findings from this study suggest that participation in mentoring-specific professional learning can influence how mentors understand and perform their role. While mentoring-specific professional learning mediates mentors' identities and enacted practices, the content and focus of trainings are integral in shaping the commitments and practices of mentors.

Mentoring Contexts

In the absence of explicit messaging from their district or induction program structures, mentors predominately relied on their past experiences and constructed knowledge of special education and mentoring to enact their identities through individual interactions with beginning SETs. The data suggests that mentors entered into mentoring worlds where their roles were not clearly defined, nor was their professional status. They guessed at how their districts would

describe the purpose or goals of mentoring and formed their own understanding of their positional power in their mentoring worlds. These findings are consistent with research (Washburn-Moses, 2010; Whitaker, 2000) that suggests that a lack of formal mentoring policies or guidance, and poorly articulated roles is common. Some scholars (e.g., Washburn-Moses, 2010) argue that ambiguity in mentors' roles and induction programs is further complicated by the complexities of mentoring within special education contexts. The findings on mentors' contexts in relation to their constructed identity, are strengthened by research on SET identities (e.g., Naraian, 2010; Siuty, 2019a) that suggests that messaging about roles and social positioning, both in how educators interpret their social positioning and how they are positioned by colleagues, mediate identity construction. This study extends the existing literature by further exploring how mentors interpreted their contexts and took up practices within these complex, sociocultural contexts.

The majority of the extant literature on mentoring (see Wang, 2018), suggests that mentoring occurs within beginning teachers' classroom context and largely disregards the broader sociocultural and historical contexts in which those mentoring worlds are embedded (Wang & Odell, 2002). This study was grounded in sociocultural perspectives to further understand the relationship between context and situated identity. The findings from the present study align with existing research (see Wang & Odell, 2002) in that mentoring occurred primarily through one-on-one interactions with beginning SETs within their classrooms and rarely included additional contexts; however, mentors' narratives provided insight into the broader sociocultural context in which their mentoring worlds were situated.

Across all cases, mentors described being situated within systems that conceptualized inclusion as students with disabilities gaining access and assimilating into general education

classes. They often interacted with beginning SETs in segregated special education settings. Their interpretation of their contexts appeared to influence how they used mentoring to support inclusion. For example, some mentors discussed using tools, such as procedural compliance, coaching conversations, and student data to determine student needs and educational placement, which was often associated with their ideas of advancing inclusion. The results of the study demonstrate how sociocultural, historical, and politically influenced contexts contributed to the artifacts, practices, and discourse mentors enacted to support beginning SETs with learning to facilitate inclusion. The narratives mentors provided about their situated context of inclusion are consistent with the literature that suggests that educators are situated within multifarious institutions that give rise to ideologies, discourse, and practices that marginalize and exclude students who do not fit within the constructed boundaries of normalcy (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Connor, 2013; Leonardo & Broderick, 2007). The data also reflects research on SET identities (e.g., Naraian, 2014; Siuty, 2019a) that illustrate how the prevailing narratives, cultural norms and practices of situated contexts can complicate the construction of inclusive educator identities and agency. The influence of mentors' sociocultural and historical context on their identity and perceived agency will be explored further in subsequent sections.

Mentor Identity

Beginning SETs entering into dominant contexts and systems are at a pivotal point in developing their identities as inclusive educators (Rood & Ashby, 2017; Schlessinger, 2018). As demonstrated by this study and research on mentors of beginning SETs (see Billingsley et al., 2009), mentors are well positioned to influence the pedagogical development of beginning SETs. This social positioning can be leveraged as a tool to support beginning SETs with developing the commitments, pedagogy, and agency to identify and disrupt marginalizing practices and

narratives. However, the ability to do so is dependent upon how mentors interpret and enact their professional identity.

Positionality and Power

This study included five, white, female mentors, none of whom disclosed a disability. With students of color comprising over half of the school-aged population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) and a disproportionate percentage of students of color identified for special education services (Artiles, 2019; Connor, 2017), special education teachers and mentors will undoubtedly impact the educational experiences of students with multiply-marginalized identities. Reflective of the educator workforce demographic majority (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), most mentors described sharing similar racial identities with the beginning SETs they mentored. As the data from this study indicates, very few mentors demonstrated an awareness of how their own dominant educator identities (e.g., white, female, heterosexual, abled, English-speaking) could impact their decision-making, pedagogy, ideologies, or the practices of beginning SETs. There has been very little research on how mentors enact their identities to support beginning teachers with developing pedagogies and the agency to address systemic inequities. However, as Achinstein and Athanases (2005) noted from their research on mentors and induction leaders committed to using mentoring as a tool to develop beginning teachers' equity pedagogies, "Without confronting one's own positions and prejudices, mentoring for equity gets undermined" (p. 853).

The findings from this study are consistent with literature that suggests that educators within dominant systems are often unaware of how their positionality and ideologies may disproportionality impact students with multiply-marginalized identities (Artiles et al., 2010, Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). Furthermore, it is common for special educators to be complicit in

structures that afford them power to label, sort, and determine what students with disabilities can access without questioning the lenses they use to make decisions (Baglieri et al., 2011a). As the findings from the present study demonstrate, most mentors did not discuss their identities or positional power in relation to the system they worked in or express awareness of how their positional power may be used to either reify or resist the oppressive forces within their contexts. Reflecting on positionality in sociocultural worlds is an important component of critical inclusion, it allows educators to reflect on the biases and assumptions that influence their practice and guide their decisions (Kozleski & Waitroller, 2010). Awareness of power and privilege are imperative if mentoring is to be used to influence beginning SETs' inclusive commitments and pedagogies.

Enacted Practices

Mentors' enacted their identities in multiple ways to support beginning SETs with their professional learning and socialization. They used their constructed knowledge of special education and context to address beginning SETs' emergent needs by connecting them with relevant resources, fostering connections to broader networks for support, providing emotional support, and guiding beginning SETs through the process of problem-solving. Mentors used artifacts and enacted practices to support beginning SETs with developing the skills that the SETs identified as most pressing or relevant. Mentors' enacted identities included practices such as observation and feedback, facilitating reflection, modeling practices, and supporting beginning SETs with making connections between professional learning opportunities. Common across all cases was the belief that mentoring should be used in response to the areas that beginning SETs identified for mentoring support, versus predetermining an agenda or focus.

There was scant evidence from mentors' narratives about their enacted practices of

substantive discussions with beginning SETs about ideologies and systemic inequities, or critically reflective practices. In the present study, only one mentor discussed the importance of having conversations about power, privilege, and positionality with her beginning SETs. Two mentors were able to reflect on the need to use their positioning to interrupt oppressive narratives or practices, or initiate conversations about multiply-marginalized students with their beginning SETs. However, both expressed the need to develop additional skills and confidence to do so effectively in practice. The findings suggest that most mentors' conceptions of their role did not include leading conversations about the impact of oppressive ideologies on the educational experiences of students with marginalized identities. The mentors that understood this to be a function of their role, acknowledged their own lack of self-efficacy in doing so.

The findings from this study on mentors' enacted practices is reflective of the practices that Wang (2018) describes as mentoring in service of beginning teachers' professional growth. This approach typically involves mentors tending to the needs of beginning teachers and supporting them with building their capacity to clearly articulate and solve problems, and gain confidence in their teaching (Norman & Ganser, 2004). When using this approach, mentors are encouraged to use practices that allow beginning teachers to be autonomous and construct their own pedagogies (Kemmis et al., 2014; Wang & Odell, 2002), which aligns with the practices described by mentors. Research on mentoring (see Wang, 2018) has demonstrated that this approach supports beginning teachers with learning to navigate new systems and their roles, fulfills immediate needs, and reduces their stress. However, it can be argued that this approach limits mentors' abilities to actively use their knowledge of systems and pedagogy to influence beginning teachers' practice and may not ensure that beginning teachers learn the practices that are needed to effectively teach to students' multiple-identities (Wang, 2018). Many beginning

SETs enter the profession with a superficial understanding of reflective practices; they can recall events from an individualist perspective but have difficulty analyzing the impact of their practices and instructional decisions on all of their students (deBettencourt & Nagro, 2018). In order to truly use mentoring for the purpose of transforming dominant systems and practices, mentors must consistently use practices to engage beginning SETs in ongoing critical reflection and critique their contexts (Cochran-Smith, 2001, Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). Using the existing literature (see Wang, 2018) as a lens for the data from this study, the results demonstrate that most mentors did not consistently enact their identities in ways that supported beginning SETs with building the capacity to identify and challenge the marginalizing practices and narratives in their worlds.

Ideologies of Inclusion

Mentors' conceptualizations of inclusion allowed for a deeper understanding of their inclusive commitments and ideologies. Most mentors described aspects of an idealized conceptualization of inclusion that reflected critical inclusion (Siuty, 2019a; 2019b) and sociocultural perspectives of disability (see Baglieri et al., 2011b). This was particularly evident through their rejection of the inflexible general education structures and spaces that marginalize students who do not fit dominant conceptions of normalcy. They described values and a culture of inclusive education that accepts and affirms multiple ways of knowing and being, fosters a sense of belonging and equal membership in the classroom community, and centers the strengths and needs of every student. However, none of the mentors conceptualized inclusion as the active resistance of dominant and oppressive systems, policies, and practices that justify the use of exclusionary and dehumanizing tactics. Additionally, none of the participants described inclusion as a form of social justice.

Mentors idealized conceptions were often in opposition to their situated concept of inclusion which surfaced competing ideologies. While almost all of the mentors discussed how they frequently encountered deficit-based discourse about students with disabilities in their contexts, many participants reified ableism through their description of inclusion in their situated worlds and their agency. For example, some used deficit-based language that suggested that students with disabilities needed to demonstrate the ability to successfully participate and access learning opportunities in general education settings. Additionally, none of the mentors seemed to question the power that special education professionals hold in making determinations about the opportunities that students can access. The findings suggest that most mentors had difficulty seeing themselves as part of the system or naming how special education discourse and practices contribute to upholding cultural norms that privilege some while simultaneously devaluing students with marginalized identities.

To date, research has not examined the inclusive ideologies of induction mentors. Scholars (Connor & Valle, 2015) have noted that it is not uncommon for educators to adopt ideologies that fall somewhere along a continuum of dominant versus sociocultural perspectives of inclusion, disability, and special education, which the data from this study corroborates. The findings are also reflective of existing research (Naraian, 2010; Naraian, 2014; Siuty, 2019b) on teacher agency that emphasizes the complexities of enacting identities as inclusive educators within contexts that maintain rigid boundaries between special education and general education systems, roles, and spaces. The findings from the present study contribute to existing research (Naraian, 2010; Naraian, 2014) that illustrates that educators often struggle to resolve contradictions between their ideals and constructed knowledge of special education to fully enact identities as inclusive educators.

The findings from the study also illustrate the power and potentially cascading effect of educators' socialization into dominant special education discourses and practices. As mentors situated within systems designed to segregate and devalue students based on ability (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Connor, 2013), it is likely that they were socialized early in their professional careers into contexts dominated by deficit-based beliefs about students with disabilities (Lalvani, 2013; Woodcock & Handy, 2017a) and devoid of practices that consider students' multiple identities aside from disability (Chu, 2013). When cultural norms and practices are a natural component of the context, it may be difficult for educators to recognize their complicity in a system that reifies ableism (Baglieri et al., 2011a). The results shed light on how mentors' identities and agency are mediated by the discourse, practices, and cultural norms that dominate educational systems.

Situated Agency

The findings from this study surfaced several factors that influenced mentors' perceived agency in advancing inclusion. These factors included their (a) interpretation of their social positioning, (b) perception of beginning SETs' positioning, (c) understanding of their role, (d) opportunities to enact their identity to support inclusion, and (e) constructed knowledge of inclusion. The factors identified in the study are consistent with sociocultural perspectives of identity (Holland et al., 1998), which view agency as a result of interactions with complex and interdependent individual and contextual factors, such as "personal and professional beliefs and dispositions, degrees of autonomy and power, and interactions with other actors within the social context in which they work" (Pantic, 2015, p. 760). Most mentors seemed to associate their agency with a narrow view of inclusion grounded in the conception of inclusion as a special education placement option. Their constructed knowledge of inclusion and interpretation of their role often meant that mentors were reliant on beginning SETs to initiate the topic in order to use

their positioning to have substantive conversations about inclusive ideologies and practices. As they considered their social positioning, their perception of beginning SETs, understanding of their role, and inclusion within their contexts, all of the mentors expressed that their agency and ability to influence inclusion was limited.

Research has yet to closely examine mentors' perceived agency in relation to inclusion. However, the existing research on teacher agency that counters dominant approaches to inclusion suggests that agency often manifests as resistance to marginalizing discourse and practices, such as providing counternarratives that shift the focus of deficit-based language to the disabling environmental conditions (Broderick et al., 2012; Schlessinger, 2018), surfacing inequities and ideological barriers with colleagues and administrators (Siuty, 2019b), creating inclusive classroom environments that center the full humanity of students (Naraian, 2017), or using procedural compliance to force changes in the rigid structures and practices of general education settings (Schlessinger, 2018). The findings suggest that there were isolated examples of mentors using their agency in alignment with this research (e.g., Broderick et al., 2012; Naraian, 2017; Schlessinger, 2018; Siuty, 2019b), but these practices or foci of mentoring were not embedded throughout mentors' interactions with beginning SETs. Examples included using mentoring to (a) connect and support a beginning SET and general education teacher with designing student-centered, inclusive environments, (b) coaching a beginning SET to confront a colleague about the disabling instructional approaches in a general education setting, and (c) strategically challenging deficit ideologies. These examples were reliant on the right conditions for mentors to use their agency in ways that pushed against the status-quo practices and narratives of their contexts, such as having access to a beginning SET and a beginning general education teacher in the same building, beginning SETs initiating conversations about ideological or environmental

barriers, or mentors' knowledge and ability to identify and challenge oppressive narratives.

The findings suggest that mentors' agency was constrained by factors either within their context, their interpretation of their situated identity, or their constructed knowledge of inclusion in their worlds. The results are reflective of research that illustrates that teacher agency to advance inclusive education is often reliant on the right combination of contextual factors (Schlessinger, 2018) or agents' abilities to resolve competing discourses, pedagogical beliefs, and priorities to enact inclusive commitments and pedagogies (Naraian, 2014). In particular, the data are consistent with research (Naraian, 2010; Siuty, 2019b) that suggests that enduring identities as special educators can often impede educators' abilities to resolve pedagogical and ideological contradictions in order to advance conceptions of inclusive education. The findings in conjunction with existing research (e.g., Naraian, 2014; Schlessinger, 2018; Siuty, 2019b) emphasize the significance of the interactions between context and professional identity on mentors' perceived agency.

Implications for Induction and Mentoring Programs

Little is known about the identities of mentors (Lesham, 2014), and research has yet to understand how mentoring can contribute to inclusive reform. This study contributes an initial understanding of who mentors of beginning SETs are and how they practice their role in special education contexts. Using inclusion as a lens to explore mentors' constructed knowledge and agency provided insight into aspects of constructed identities and contexts that may facilitate or constrain mentors' abilities to contribute to advancing inclusive education. While this study did not explore the influence of mentors' identities and agency on beginning SETs' practices or ideologies, the findings have implications for how districts structure and implement mentoring as a transformative tool.

Mentoring that is grounded in the purpose of transforming practices and inequities is underexplored in the empirical literature (Wang, 2018). However, in a review of mostly conceptual literature on mentoring, Wang (2018) describes that mentoring in service of transforming status-quo practices relies on the assumptions that (a) existing practices contribute to inequities, (b) beginning teachers must use inquiry to continually deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge about teaching, and (c) practices must be examined in conjunction with the broader social, historical and political contexts. In order for mentors to use their agency to advance a vision of inclusion more closely aligned to critical inclusion, mentors' identities would have to include: (a) the beliefs that dominant approaches to special education contribute to the devaluation and segregation of students with disabilities, (b) practices that support beginning SETs with using a critical lens to examine the practices and narratives of their contexts, and (c) constructed knowledge of how educational practices are an extension of and reinforce structural and institutionalized oppressions in society. The study's results surfaced several factors that may mediate the identities and enacted practices of mentors that should be considered in induction and mentoring program design. Using the findings from this study and Wang's (2018) framing for mentoring in service of transformation, this section discusses implications for designing induction and mentoring programs aligned with inclusive reform within dominant contexts.

Induction and Mentoring Programmatic Structures

As demonstrated by the findings, mentors were provided little support or guidance from their districts. This led to mentors assuming ambiguous roles and attempting to make sense of their purposes, positioning, and roles through practice, often while balancing other primary roles. They actively integrated their lived experiences into their interpretation and enactment of their identities and the cases illustrated the various ways identities were enacted in response to the

complex interactions of aspects of contexts and constructed identities. Given their potential to influence the ideologies and practices of beginning SETs, the study emphasizes the need for adequate resources and protected time for mentoring activities. Additionally, based on the results of the study and extant literature, I discuss induction and mentoring programmatic considerations for: (a) establishing a clearly defined purpose, (b) mentor selection, and (c) mentor training.

Establishing a Clearly Defined Purpose

The findings demonstrate that without clear messaging from their districts, mentors formed their understanding of their purpose by making sense of their lived histories. Participants guessed at how their district would articulate the goals or purpose of their roles and how their district would position them in relation to the other actors in their mentoring contexts. Most thought that their district would describe mentoring as a tool for retention and support of beginning teachers, which is consistent with the research on mentoring beginning SETs (see Billingsley et al., 2009). Furthermore, mentors often felt that their social positioning contributed to their limited agency or influence on inclusion. The findings have implications for how districts conceptualize the purpose of mentoring and position mentors, as a mechanism for mediating their constructed identities and enacted practices.

Scholars (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000) emphasize the need to make explicit links between mentoring and school reform initiatives. This requires that districts develop and clearly communicate goals for mentoring, and position mentors as key agents of change within systems. However, little research has been done to guide practice (Wang, 2018). Districts should consider developing goals for induction and mentoring programs that support school or district-wide equity and inclusion goals (American Institute of Research, 2019; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). Mentoring should be integrated into school and district improvement plans as a key lever for

making progress towards creating equitable educational opportunities. Finally, programmatic goals and defined mentor roles should be clearly communicated across school communities (American Institute for Research, 2019) as a mechanism for positioning mentors as key instructional leaders (Billingsley et al., 2009; Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012).

Mentor Selection

The data indicate that most mentors were either assigned their role or volunteered, and only one mentor went through a formal process for obtaining her role. The data from this study suggests that mentors were most often selected based on availability or primary role in the district. Research on effective special education mentor characteristics and skills is under-researched and little is known about the knowledge and skillset needed for mentors to influence beginning SETs practices (see Billingsley et al., 2009). However, the findings of this study offer an initial understanding of mentors' identities and highlight the significance of their lived histories and constructed professional knowledge on their practices and perception of their purpose. The study's findings offer guidance for how districts select mentors of beginning SETs.

The results of the study support recommendations for districts to develop rigorous mentor selection processes (Moir et al., 2009; New Teacher Center, 2016). Research emphasizes the importance of ensuring that beginning SETs are matched with mentors who are experienced SETs (Billingsley et al., 2009) and this study contributes to an understanding of additional criteria that should be explored when selecting mentors of beginning SETs. Specifically, programs should consider how potential mentors' past personal and professional experiences inform how they view themselves as a professional and mentor. When selecting mentors, programs should consider educators' past special education professional experiences, experiences with mentoring, and conceptions of effective special education practices. Induction

and mentoring programs need to also ensure that potential mentors recognize relationships between positionality, power, and privilege, and educational contexts in order to enact their identities in ways that support beginning SETs with critically reflecting on their assumptions and practices. Additionally, given the impact of mentors' constructed knowledge of inclusion on their practices, programs need to consider how potential mentors understand the concept of inclusion and purposes of special education. While mentor selection is not enough on its own to ensure that mentors construct identities that can be used to shape beginning SETs' inclusive commitments and pedagogies, the results of this study illustrate how lived histories and constructed knowledge can be powerful mediators of mentor identities and enacted practices.

Mentor Training

The findings of this study suggest that mentoring-specific training mediates how mentors interpret and enact their identities. Across the cases, mentors discussed how participation in professional learning focused on mentoring skills influenced the practices and artifacts they used. The participants also identified the training as a source of information that contributed to their understanding of their purpose and how they positioned beginning SETs. The results contribute to existing research (e.g., Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Stanulis & Ames, 2009; Stanulis & Brondyk, 2013) that illustrates the significance of training on mentors' practices and has implications for the ways that professional learning can be used to shape mentors' practices.

Mentoring is a complex endeavor, it requires "bi-level and multi-domain knowledge-base" in order to use mentoring as mechanism for focusing beginning teachers on equity and inclusion (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005, p. 842). Scholars (Carver & Feiman-Newmser, 2009) recommend that mentors receive ongoing trainings that contribute to developing foundational knowledge about mentoring and instructional practices, and also provides opportunities for

mentors to explore problems of practice. State, regional, and local systems should consider leveraging professional learning opportunities as a method for supporting mentors with deconstructing and reconstructing their mentor identities and practices.

Professional learning opportunities should be aligned with goals for using mentoring as a transformative tool and clearly articulate the purpose of mentoring. Specifically, for mentoring to be used as a tool to advance critical inclusion, training should consider developing mentors' critical consciousness to identify ways in which their actions and the actions of beginning teachers relate to interlocking systems of oppressions (Annamma & Morrison, 2018), and build their capacity to support beginning SETs with using critical inquiry to deconstruct and reconstruct their pedagogy (Wang, 2018). As a mechanism for developing mentors' critical consciousness, professional learning should support mentors with developing the abilities to: (a) identify dominant assumptions, accepted norms, and widely held beliefs; (b) examine how dominant identities are privileged by cultural norms and practices, and recognize those who are not; and (c) understand how historical marginalization and segregation manifest in educational systems (Jemal, 2017). Additionally, mentors need ongoing training and support to use interactions as a "strategic site for focusing new teachers on diversity and equity" (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005, p. 850). This includes using training to develop mentors' abilities to initiate and lead conversations about ideologies and systemic inequities, and guide beginning SETs to use critically reflective practices. Lastly, mentors should receive targeted professional development in supporting beginning SETs with using inclusive practices (e.g., partnering with families, universal design principles, strengths-based planning, integrating disabilities studies into curriculum, differentiating curriculum, engagement strategies; Valle & Connor, 2011).

Study Limitations, Strengths, and Directions for Future Research

Study Limitations

There are several limitations of this study that may be used to inform future research on the identities of mentors of beginning SETs. First, there were limits to the scope of data collected due to the constraints of the dissertation timeline, available resources, and the global COVID-19 pandemic which restricted data collection activities to virtual methods. Due to some of these constraints, data was collected at the end of a school year and into the summer, which may have impacted participants' ability to recall the intricacies of their mentoring interactions.

Additionally, virtual data collection and timelines may have contributed to the level of trust that I was able to establish with participants, which may have influenced the information that they shared. In an attempt to mitigate these issues, I grounded my strategy of inquiry in a humanizing stance (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2014) and used phenomenological interviewing (Siedman, 2019) to conduct three, in-depth interviews with each participant to understand how their history and context shaped their understanding of their situated identity and practice. I also used identity mapping and concept mapping protocols to support participants with reconstructing past experiences and making connections to their interpretation of their identity, and recalling their ideological beliefs and constructed knowledge of inclusion. Lastly, I examined artifacts from their practice. Together, my data set included multiple sources of data that were used for triangulation and strengthened my findings. However, future research on mentors' identities should consider the use of ethnographic methods to further explore mentors' enacted practices and constructed mentor identity. Additionally, ongoing data collection throughout the school year may yield more detailed reconstructions of mentoring interactions and contribute to an in-depth understanding of mentors' situated identities.

Secondly, this study did not include the perspectives of beginning SETs, a key actor in mentors' situated contexts. While the unit of analysis was mentors of beginning SETs, by bounding my case to formal mentors, I created limitations to my analysis. Without multiple perspectives, I could not confirm or deny the validity of mentors' statements about their identity or agency. Additional perspectives may have aided in the analyses by producing more disconfirming or confirming data, or expanding my analysis to consider other aspects of mentors' identities. Furthermore, this study did not explore the influence of mentors' identities on beginning SETs or students. To my knowledge, this is the first study to explore the constructed identities and agency of mentors of beginning SETs. Given the lack of research in this area, I was interested in first exploring the perceptions of mentors and the nuances of their interpretation of their constructed identities. Future research should include additional perspectives on mentors' identities, practices, and agency to build on the results of this study and contribute to a broader understanding of how mentors' lived histories and contexts influence their identities and impact in special education and inclusion worlds.

A final limitation of this study is that all of the included mentors were white, female educators. While the participants' demographics are reflective of the majority of educators in the United States (U.S Department of Education, 2016), the inclusion of participants with other social identities (e.g., race, ability, gender, first language), could contribute to a more complex understanding of mentors' identities and agency. Additionally, while each participant had different lived experiences and constructed knowledge, they all had professional experiences working within the boundaries of special education systems. Future research that explores the identities of mentors with diverse, multiple identities and lived histories may lead to a deeper understanding of how mentors lived histories influence their interpretation of their constructed

identities and mentoring practices.

Study Strengths

A strength of this study is that it contributes knowledge about facets of mentoring that are under-researched. Little is known about the identities of induction mentors (Lesham, 2014) and research has not explored the impact of context on mentors' constructed identities. Furthermore, to date, research has not examined mentoring in relation to inclusive reform. This study contributes knowledge about the identities of mentors of beginning SETs and how they make sense of their role and agency in advancing inclusion. It is important to understand mentors' situated identities because their roles can significantly influence the practices and habits that beginning teachers establish and carry forward in their careers (Billingsley et al., 2009; Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012). They are well positioned to support beginning SETs with developing inclusive commitments and pedagogies, and mentors have been viewed as a mechanism for transforming existing rigid and inequitable systems and practices (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2002). However, this study should only be the beginning of research that explores the complexities of mentors' identity construction and their influence on supporting beginning teachers with identifying and transforming marginalizing discourse and practices. Future research should continue this line of research, exploring similar and also more nuanced questions about mentors of beginning SETs, such as: (a) How do mentors' enacted identities and agency reify or disrupt ableism? (b) How do mentors' interpretation of their identities change through participation in their contexts? And (c) How do beginning SETs describe the influence of mentors on their inclusive commitments and pedagogies?

An additional strength of this study is the theoretical and conceptual framing that grounded the research and results. Leveraging sociocultural perspectives on identity (e.g.,

Holland et al., 1998) and disability (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012) allowed me to explore the influence of sociocultural, historical, and politically produced contexts on mentors' interpretation of their identity and agency. This lens contributed to identifying contextual and historical factors that mediated mentors' constructed identity, which included their constructed knowledge and ideologies of inclusion. The continual and dynamic process of identity construction does not occur within a vacuum, it is refigured and enacted in "historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed 'worlds'" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 7). As the findings from this study and research (e.g., Naraian, 2010; Naraian, 2014) on educator agency demonstrates, prevailing discourse, cultural norms, and practices are powerful mediators of inclusive identity and agency. Context and identity construction are inextricably connected. Future research should continue to explore how mentors' identities are mediated through participation in sociocultural contexts. Future research questions, might include: (a) How does training in inclusive practices and ideologies mediate the identity construction and agency of mentors? (b) How do mentors and beginning SETs co-construct inclusive identities and agency through mentoring interactions? And (c) How do mentors describe the influence of mentoring within inclusionary versus exclusionary contexts on their identity and enacted practices?

Continued research in this area is needed given the dearth of empirical knowledge on mentors' identity (Lesham, 2014) and the potential influence of mentors' identities on beginning teachers' pedagogies (e.g., Billingsley et al., 2009; Hobson et al., 2009). This section provided several recommendations for future research and emphasizes the many ways that research could continue to contribute to an in-depth and complex understanding of mentors' identities, enacted practices, and agency for inclusive reform. While this study focuses specifically on the identities of mentors of beginning SETs, these recommendations apply broadly to induction mentors given

their positioning and potential for contributing to inclusive and just education systems.

Conclusion

Teacher induction and mentoring is an essential component of creating and sustaining inclusive practices and school communities (Kinsella & Senior, 2008). Beginning SETs often begin their careers in contexts that uphold and privilege conceptions of normalcy, while labeling and segregating students who are viewed as different (Baglieri et al., 2011a; Connor, 2013). These new teachers are often hired and placed within a system where segregation is the norm and educators with the power to label and make decisions about what students can and cannot access rarely recognize their complicity in reifying ableism (Baglieri et al., 2011a). As beginning SETs enter into these worlds, they are at a critical point in forming the inclusive commitments and pedagogies that they will carry forward in their careers (Rood & Ashby, 2017; Schlessinger, 2018). Situated in contexts that have struggled to disrupt and transform the interlocking oppressive structures and ideologies that the education system was built upon, induction mentors may play an essential role in tipping the scales towards true educational transformation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Wang & Odell, 2002). Positioned to support beginning SETs with recognizing the entrenched, marginalizing discourse and practices of special education and the broader school context, mentors' practices may be a powerful tool for supporting beginning SETs with disrupting patterns of inequities and oppression.

This study contributes an initial understanding of who mentors of beginning SETs are and how they enact mentoring practices to a nascent literature base on mentor identity and agency. As the findings illustrate, mentors of beginning SETs have strong commitments to supporting beginning SETs with navigating complex sociocultural contexts, developing their teaching identities, and remaining resilient in the profession. However, mentors were often alone

in interpreting their social positioning, role, and priorities as mentors. They relied almost exclusively on their lived history and constructed knowledge of their context to enact their identities to address the priorities of their assigned beginning SETs. As mentors with professional knowledge and lived experiences in special education worlds, they drew on their constructed knowledge to support beginning SETs with learning to teach within inflexible systems, roles, and spaces.

Despite mounting calls for mentoring to be positioned and practiced as a tool for transformation (e.g., Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Wang, 2018), many mentors acknowledged limited agency. Furthermore, they could not seem to imagine a system capable of transforming in ways that aligned with their ideal conceptions of inclusion that reflected aspects of critically inclusive education (Siuty, 2019a; 2019b). Their constructed knowledge of their situated worlds of inclusion and special education was a mediator for the practices they enacted to support beginning SETs with facilitating inclusion of students with disabilities into inflexible general education settings. Deeply situated within contexts that seemed to embody a conception of inclusion that reinforced the boundaries between special education/general education, inclusion/exclusion, normal/different, and schools/families, mentors did not seem to see themselves as key agents of change. The findings from the study emphasize how the rigid and traditional structures and discourse of education systems constrain mentors' agency and ability to make meaningful progress towards a critically inclusive education system.

In the present study, I used a critical lens to examine the narratives and practices of mentors. While mentors were the unit of study, my critical analysis of the data emphasizes the need to transform the oppressive structures and discourse that shape the agency and practices of educators and ultimately impact students' educational experiences and outcomes. Throughout the

interviews, mentors deeply reflected on their practice, noting areas where they wanted to continue to learn and grow. Several described the data collection process for this study as a powerful tool for their continued learning and professional growth. I am left inspired by the commitments of mentors to support beginning SETs and their students with disabilities. I also remain hopeful about the prospects of mentoring as a tool for transforming the oppressive structures and ideologies embedded within educational systems given the results of the study. This study contributes to an initial understanding of the factors that mediate mentors' identities and agency. These factors may be key leverage points in supporting mentors to develop the knowledge and skills to use their identities as a tool for inclusive reform.

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Appendix A: Sample Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Erin Stewart and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Washington. I would like to inform you of an exciting opportunity to participate in my dissertation study on mentors of beginning special education teachers. The purpose of this study is to better understand the identities of mentors of beginning special education teachers and how they describe their role in advancing inclusion. I hope that this research will inform multiple stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, state and local education leaders, higher education faculty, etc.) of the importance of mentors of beginning special education teachers. If you know a mentor of a beginning special education teacher who may be interested, please forward this email to them. If you are mentor of beginning special education teachers and are interested in participating, please continue reading for additional information.

If you would like to participate in this study, I will ask to interview you three times. Each interview will last about 60-90 minutes and can be done either virtually or in-person. I will work with you to schedule interviews at a time and place it is convenient and comfortable for you. Additionally, I will ask you to create a visual representation, like a timeline or drawing, of the experiences in your life that have made you the mentor you are today. I will also ask you to complete a concept map on the topic of inclusion. Finally, I will ask you share with me 2-3 artifact that are important in your work as a mentor, such as a feedback template or paraphrasing guide you use with beginning teachers. All personally identifiable information collected during the study will be removed to maintain your confidentiality.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please complete the Google form ([linked here](#)). Alternatively, we can schedule a virtual or in-person meeting to complete the screener. Please email me with any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Stewart, M.Ed

Appendix B: Participant Screener

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. If there are questions that you would prefer not to answer, please leave those fields blank.

Name: _____

School District: _____ **Age:** _____

Job Title: _____ **Gender Identity:** _____

Race/Ethnicity (Please check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
☐ Asian
☐ Native American or Alaska Native
☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander | ☐ Black or African American
☐ Non-Hispanic, White
☐ Other: _____ |
|--|---|

Highest Level of Education

- ☐
- Bachelor's degree
-
- ☐
- Master's degree
-
- ☐
- Specialist degree
-
- ☐
- Doctorate

Certification areas: _____

Years of experience as an induction mentor: _____

Type of mentor:

- ☐
- Full-time release mentor
-
- ☐
- Part-time release mentor
-
- ☐
- Colleague mentor

Current Special Education Mentoring Assignments:

Educational Setting (e.g., self-contained, resource room, general education)	Grade level(s)

Briefly describe your past teaching background (e.g., years of experience, grade levels, and subject areas):

Briefly describe your past personal or professional experiences with individuals with disabilities:

Appendix C: Consent Form

MENTOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Mentoring Beginning Special Education Teachers

Erin Stewart, M.Ed
 Doctoral Candidate
 Email: emstew@uw.edu
 206-619-8836

Faculty Advisor:
 Carly A. Roberts, Ph.D.
 Assistant Professor
 College of Education
 Email: carober1@uw.edu

Dear Educator,

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to better understand the identities of mentors of beginning special education teachers and how they understand their role in inclusive reform.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. All data collection activities will occur either in-person or virtually depending on your preference and local and state health guidelines and recommendations. If you choose to be in this study, I would like to interview you three times. Each interview may be up to 60-90 minutes in length. Some examples of questions might include:

- *How have your past educational experiences shaped who you are as a mentoring to beginning special education teachers?*
- *How do you describe the impact you have on beginning special education teachers? What does that look like in your role as a mentor?*

During the interviews, I will be exploring how you developed your identity as a mentor, and how you describe your role and impact as a mentor. For the first interview, I will ask you to complete an identity map that visually represents the events and experiences that shaped who you are as a mentor to beginning special education teachers. I will ask you to describe your identity map during our interview. For the second interview, I will ask you to bring two to three artifacts that you routinely use in practice. This could be a feedback or lesson plan template, resources you share with teachers, or anything that you think supports your mentoring. I will ask you to describe how you use these artifacts in your work. For the last interview, I will ask you to complete a concept map to help me understanding how you define the concept of inclusion and your role in advancing it. I will ask you to email a photo or electronic copy of your identity map,

artifacts, and concept map, or give them to me in-person for further analysis. All items will be stored in a secure location that only I can access.

During the study, I will ask you to review a summary of our interviews and my initial interpretation of what you have shared. You will have the opportunity to clarify or add information if you would like. This will allow me to ensure that I am accurately representing your story and what you have shared with me. You will also be offered a written summary of my initial interpretation of what you share during the data collection activities.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interviews so that I can have an accurate record of our conversation. I will transcribe each audio record without any identifiable information (e.g., names, district, school, etc.). You may request a copy of your transcribed interviews. Audio records and transcripts will be kept in a secure location that only I can access. Upon completion of the study, I will destroy all audio records.

How long will I be in the study?

The entire study will last approximately 2-8 weeks depending on your availability and preferences for interviews.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There is minimal risk to you for participating in this study. As with all research, there is always a minor chance that your identity could be revealed. To prevent this, I will assign you a pseudonym and the link between that pseudonym and your name will be kept in a separate, secured location. Your assigned pseudonyms will be used on all research materials and all data will be de-identified using the pseudonym as soon as it is collected. The link between your pseudonym and your name will be destroyed after the records retention period required by state and/or federal law. Additionally, consent forms, screeners, and data will be stored in a secure location that only I can access. All data, consent forms, and screeners, will be securely stored until six years after the close of the study, at which point everything will be destroyed. Personally identifiable information will not be used in any written or oral reporting of the research. Additionally, research activities will not be discussed with anyone outside of my dissertation committee.

Some people may feel uncomfortable providing information for the purposes of research or having their responses audio recorded. During interviews, there is always a slight chance that questions could elicit an emotional response for participants. If you become uncomfortable at any point during the interviews, we can move to the next question or stop the interview.

Are there any potential benefits?

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, I hope that this research will inform multiple stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, state and local education leaders, higher education faculty, etc.) of the importance of mentors of beginning special education teachers. I hope that this process will also allow you to reflect on the meaningful work you do.

Additionally, upon completion of the study, you will receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study, if you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. To withdraw from the study, please contact me directly.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, please contact me (emstew@uw.edu; 206-619-8836).

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please contact the University of Washington's Human Subjects Division (hsdinfo@uw.edu; 206-543-0098).

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the study explained to me. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been adequately answered. I understand that the findings from the study may be used for research purposes and shared with other researchers. I give my consent to use my de-identified data for research purposes. I will be provided a copy of this consent form.

Please check one:

- ☐ Yes, I agree to participate in this study
- ☐ No, I do not agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Name

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix D: Phenomenological Interviewing Protocols

(Seidman, 2019)

Phenomenological Interview #1: History-in-Person and Identity Mapping

Preamble

The purpose of this interview is to understand your past personal and professional experiences that have contributed to who you are as a mentor to beginning special education teachers. I will ask you to describe significant experiences in the past that have made you who you are today as a mentor. We will start with identity mapping to help you reflect on those past experiences and how they shaped your identity as a mentor. The overarching question for today's interview is: How did you come to be a mentor of beginning special education teachers?

Guiding Questions

- How have your past life experiences shaped who you are as a mentor to beginning special education teachers?
- How have your past educational experiences shaped who you are as a mentor to beginning special education teachers?
- How have your past professional experiences shaped who you are as a mentor to beginning special education teachers?
- How do your social identities/positionality contribute to who you are as a mentor to beginning special education teachers?
- How did you become interested in mentoring?
- Tell me about a time that was significant for you deciding to be a mentor to beginning special education teachers. How has this impacted the way you see your role?
- How have your past experiences shaped the way you think about your role as a mentor?
- How did your preparation program/education shape your mentoring?
- How have your relationships with your colleague contributed to who you are a mentor or how you think about your role?
- How has the training you received with the district or in your role contributed to who you are as a mentor?
- Specific questions tailored to participant's identity map.

Probing Questions

- What was it like for you?
- What did that look like?
- How did that make you feel?
- How did that impact the way you understand your role as a mentor?
- How did that impact the way you mentor beginning special education teachers?
- How did that shape your understanding of your role as a mentor?
- How would you describe...?

Phenomenological Interview #2: Current Experiences and Artifact sharing

Preamble

The purpose of this interview is to understand your current experience as a mentor. I'll ask you to describe in detail your typical workday and describe mentoring episodes with the beginning special education teachers you mentor. During the interview I'll ask you to share and explain some of the things that you use routinely as a mentor to beginning special education teacher. The overarching question of today's interview is: what is it like for you to be a mentor to beginning special education teachers?

Guiding Questions

- Describe in detail a typical day for you as a mentor? If I was observing you throughout the day, what would I see?
- If I was observing a mentoring episode between you and a beginning special education teacher what would it look like? What would it sound like? What does it feel like?
- What are your relationships with your mentee like? How do you interact?
- What is it like to mentor at ____ school?
- Describe your job expectations. How do they align with what you do every day?
- What experiences help you understand how you are doing as a mentor?
- What kinds of interactions do you have with your mentee (e.g., emails, observations, phone calls, etc.)? How often do you have contact with them?
- What topics do you and your mentees typically talk about?
- How do you and your beginning teachers typically talk about student learning and support? What topics related to instruction do they typically bring up?
- What types of things do you "look for" when you are observing in a beginning teacher's classroom?
- What experiences help you understand how you are doing as a mentor?
- How would you describe your goals as a mentor?
- Given what you've shared, what is it like for you as a mentor of beginning special education teachers?

Probing Questions

- How do you think that daily experiences influence who you are as a mentor?
- What is that like for you?
- How does that influence your mentoring?
- How does that make you feel about your role as a mentor?
- How do you navigate...?
- Can you describe what that looks like?
- How does that experience contribute to who you are as a mentor?

Table D1*Phenomenological Interview #2 Individualized Questions*

Mentor	Interview #2 Individualized Questions
Angela	• Tell me a bit more about your experience as an OT. How do you relate that to your role as a mentor? • How do your daily experiences as a district specialist inform your mentoring? • What is it like to have two different roles in the district? • How does what you do as a mentor change when you work in different buildings? • How would you describe the difference between induction mentoring and mentoring experienced staff in your specialist role? (e.g., topics, methods, “look fors”, resources, etc)
Susan	• How would you describe the role of a special education teacher? • How does your identity as a special education teacher connect to your identity as a mentor? • How do you balance your teaching role and mentoring role?
Holly	• In our first interview, you spoke about some early memories of inclusion when you were a K-12 student and volunteering in a self-contained special education classroom, how do you feel like those experiences influence who you are as a mentor or how you think about mentoring? • In your first interview you talked about how your social location or positionality is something that you are increasingly aware of, how do you think that plays into your relationships with mentors or how you think about mentoring? • Can you describe the different settings you mentored in this year? How does your mentoring change across settings? What is it like to mentor across various special education settings (e.g., inclusive classrooms, co-taught classrooms, general education, special education)?
Brooke	• What was your earliest memory of an individual with a disability? • In your last interview, you talked a bit about your experiences with race and various forms of discrimination (e.g., racism, classism) that you continue to reflect on and “undo”. Do you feel like those experiences, impact your mentoring in any way? • You talked about being assigned the duties of mentor and it was not necessarily a choice, how did that feel in that moment? • You mentioned that one of your mentees last year did not have a contract renewed and that really hurt and was the toughest thing for you as a mentor - how do you feel that experience contributed to how you view yourself as a mentor right now? • How do you think your role as a mentor differs when mentoring beginning special ed teachers versus clinical fellows?

- Sarah
- How did your teacher preparation program contribute to who you are as a mentor?
 - How does your experience having a family member with a disability shape how you view your role as a mentor?
 - Do you feel like there are differences between your teacher identity and your mentoring identity? What carries over from one setting to the other?
 - You spoke about the belief that mentors can gain knowledge from their mentees. Describe an example of something your mentee has taught you or a skill you've gained by working with them?
 - How do you think your teaching identity shows up in your mentoring practices?
 - You talked about how [social emotional health workshop] helped you develop the self-worth to be able to navigate the education system - what does that look like in your mentoring work?
-

Phenomenological Interview #3: Meaning Making and Concept Map

Preamble

The purpose of today's interview is to learn about how you understand your role as a mentor to beginning special education teachers. Specifically, I'm interested in learning about how you see your role impacting teachers, students, and the school. During the interview, I'll ask you to complete a concept map so I can understand how you define the concept of inclusion. This will help me understand how you see your role in relation to inclusion. The overarching question for today's interview is: how do you understand your role in advancing inclusion?

Guiding Questions

- How would you describe the purpose of a mentor? How do you think the district would describe the role of a mentor? What does being a mentor mean to you?
- How do you describe the impact you have on beginning special education teachers? What does that look like in your role as a mentor?
- How do you describe the impact you have on students? What does that look like in your role as a mentor?
- How do you describe the impact you have on schools or the district? What does that look like in your role as a mentor?
- How do you define inclusion/inclusive education? How do you define inclusion/inclusive education for students with disabilities? How do you define inclusion/inclusive education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities? How do students' other social identities factor into your definition (e.g., race, first language, gender, etc.)?
- What does inclusive education look like, sound like, feel like?
- How would you describe who inclusion is for?
- How would you describe the barriers to inclusion?
- How would you describe the facilitators to inclusion?
- Describe a significant experience with inclusion that has shaped how you define it.
- What are the main benefits of inclusive education? What are the benefits of a separate special education classroom? Who benefits from general education placements versus separate classroom placements?

- What does the term “disability” mean to you? How would you describe the purpose of special education?
- How does your vision of inclusion align with your district’s mission and policies on equity and inclusion? How do you talk about this with your mentee?
- What type of support do you provide to your mentees around inclusion?
- How do you support your mentee in making decisions about students accessing inclusive education?
- How do you describe your role in advancing inclusion and equity? What does that look like?
- What is one thing you feel you can advocate for within your sphere of influence to improve students’ school experiences?
- Specific questions tailored to participant’s concept map.

Probing Questions

- What does that mean for your work as a mentor?
- How does that belief impact what you do as a mentor?
- Describe what that looks like in practice.

Table D2

Phenomenological Interview #3 Individualized Questions

Mentor	Interview #3 Individualized Questions
Angela	• You spoke of a couple of examples in your career of feeling like people maybe doubted or underestimated your expertise and skills (e.g., COTA, district specialist being told you don’t need to know instruction, being told that you don’t have to go to BEST mentoring academy because you are not part of the instructional team, etc.). In all of those examples you made a clear connection to your value of resiliency and being self-driven to learn the skills and demonstrate competence - Is that something that shows up in your mentoring? How?
Susan	• How do you collaborate with other mentors in the district? • When someone from the district first approached you about mentoring, do you remember how it was presented or framed? What did it feel like? • You’ve talked a lot about the how mentor-specific training you attended has helped you understand your role and reflect. What components and strategies really resonated with you? How do you transferring them to mentoring?
Holly	• In the first interview, you talked about how your own induction mentoring as a beginning teacher impacted the way you see yourself as a mentor. How does it related to how you see yourself as a mentor? • You mentioned that you have teachers that you mentor and teachers you consult with, how does your role differ between the two? • You mentioned mentoring a gen ed teacher - how did that come about? How is it different than mentoring beginning special education teachers?

- Brooke
- You talked a little bit about wanting to develop a scope and sequence for mentoring, what would that look like?
 - How do your personal and professional values show up in mentoring?
 - How do you think your personal ethics influence the way you think about mentoring?
 - How do you think the type of special education setting you are mentoring in impacts your mentoring?
 - You mentioned John Hattie's visible learning work as a guidepost for identifying effective teaching practices, is that something the district uses and trains staff in?
 - You spoke last time about how sometimes it's difficult to take your ego out of the strategies you use with mentors, can you describe an example of how your ego may show up in mentoring?
- Sarah
- In the last interview, you talked about how you thought that collaborative conversations in mentoring are more valuable than formal feedback. What does a collaborative conversation look like and sound like?
 - How do you think your personal and professional values and ethics show up in your mentoring?
 - How do you feel your beliefs about student learning show up in your mentoring?
 - Do you think there is value in being both a teacher and a mentor at the same time?
 - How would you describe your beliefs about student learning and the purpose of special education?
 - How do you think your own social identities or positionality factor into your mentoring?
-

Appendix E: Identity Mapping Protocol

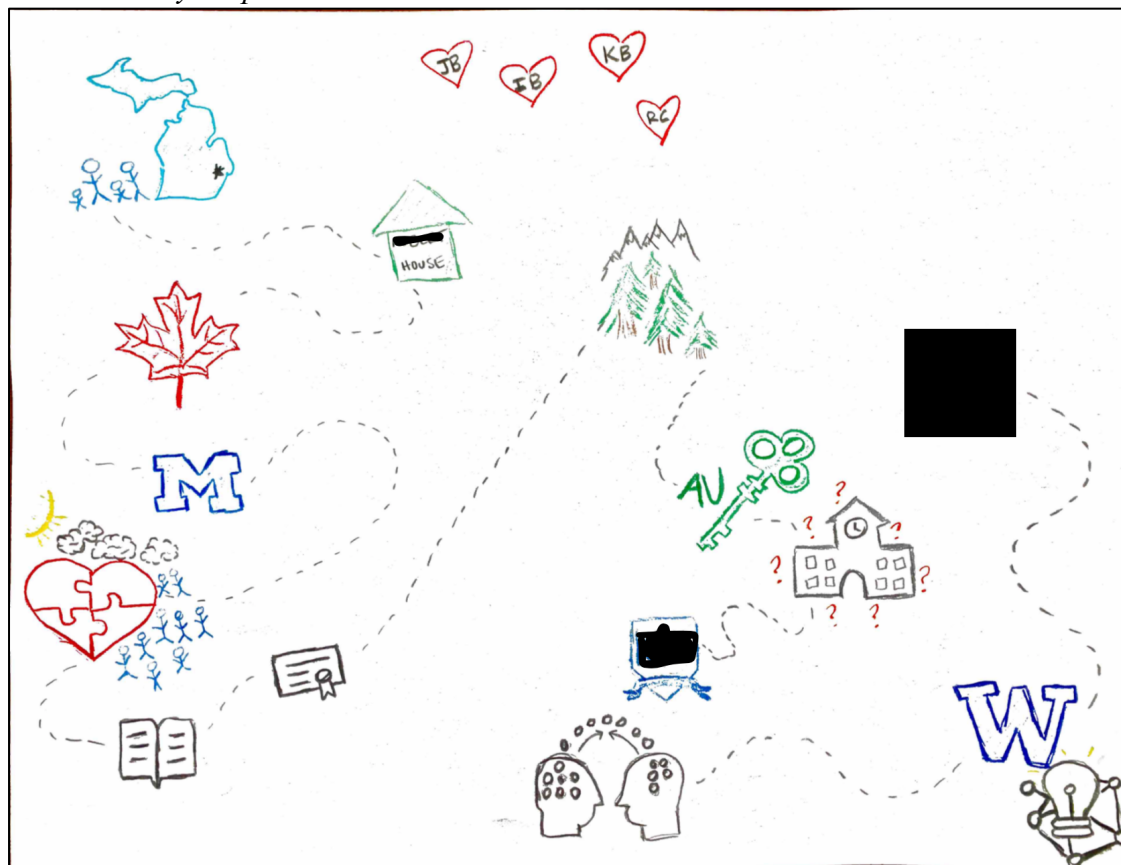
The purpose of an identity map is to help people reflect on and share the experiences that contributed to their identity, in this case your mentoring identity. I'm asking you to create an identity map to share during our next interview. During the interview, I will ask you to describe your identity map and the meaningful experiences that helped shape who you are as a mentor to beginning special education teachers

Before our next interview, map your journey to becoming the mentor you are today. Specifically, identify your past personal and professional experiences that have shaped who you are as a mentor to beginning special education teachers. You may choose to include things like meaningful childhood, school, or professional experiences, events, or people who have influenced your identity as a mentor. There are no rules, be as creative as you like and use whatever materials you want. For example, you can draw, make a Powerpoint slide with images, or create a flow chart or web to show how your past has contributed to who you are as a mentor. Your identity map does not need to be perfect; you will only be using it to help describe your past experiences. Please don't spend more than about 20 minutes on your identity map. After our interview, I will ask you to take a picture of your identity map and send it to me, or electronically share it in some other way.

I will create one as well, and during the interview we will talk through what we created and discuss how the experiences we identified contribute to who we are as professionals today.

Appendix F: Erin's Identity Map

Figure F1

Erin's Identity Map

Appendix G: Artifact Recording Procedures

Participant:

Date:

Name or Title of Artifact (as described by participant):

- Description of Artifact (e.g., what it is, what does it look like?)
- Intended audience (e.g., mentor, mentee, administrator, student, etc.):
- Intended purpose (e.g., why do you use the artifact as a mentor, what does it accomplish?):
- How it is used:

Additional Questions or Researcher Notes:

Appendix H: Concept Map Procedures

Inclusion is complex. There are many definitions and ideas about what inclusion is and is not. A concept map is a way to visually represent ideas and relationships associated with multifaceted topics such as inclusion. Before our next interview, please create a concept map that represents how you define and understand inclusion. This is meant to be a quick activity and does not need to be perfect because I will ask you to describe your concept map and thinking during our next interview. Please set a timer for yourself for about 10 minutes, and complete what you can of the concept map within that timeframe. At the end of the interview, I will ask you to take a picture of your concept map and email it to me.

Appendix I: Sample Pages from Finalized First-Cycle Code Book

Figure I1

Sample Page of Code Book: History-in-Person

Level	Code	Definition	Type of code
1	History-in-person	An individuals lived histories (i.e. past personal and professional experiences) (Holland et al, 1998)	Deductive, descriptive
2	Personal Experiences	personal narratives of past experiences and positionality (Holland & Lave, 2001). For example experiences with individuals with disabilities and their resulting beliefs about disability, salient aspects of their childhood, and other impactful events in their personal lives, or personal relationships that contribute to their mentoring identity.	Deductive, descriptive
2	Professional Experiences	Personal narratives of past professional experiences leading up to their current role (Mockler, 2011).	Deductive, descriptive
2	Past Educational Experiences	Personal narratives of past K-12, undergrad, or graduate experiences that contribute to how they describe their identity as mentors	Deductive, descriptive
2	Past Professional Relationships	Personal narratives of past professional relationships with individuals that contributed to how they describe their identities as mentors (e.g., former mentors, instructors, colleagues)	Deductive, descriptive
2	Professional Development/Training	Professional training or learning opportunities that have contributed to how they describe their identities as mentors	Deductive, descriptive
2	Positionality	Ways that participants describe their social identities in relation to their social and political contexts	Deductive, descriptive

Figure I2

Sample Page of Code Book: Artifacts

Level	Code	Definition	Type of code
1	Artifacts	conceptual or material tools with ascribed meaning, such as objects, events, or discourse related to mentoring episodes with beginning teachers	Deductive, descriptive
2	Discourse	Specific language or communication structures used with beginning teachers	deductive, descriptive
2	Events	Occurrences or planned episodes with beginning teachers	Deductive, descriptive
3	Formal Observations	Observation cycles that occur between a mentor and beginning SETconsisting of a pre-observation meeting, observation with some type of note taking, and post-observation meeting.	inductive, descriptive
3	Check-ins	Informal attempts to communicate with a beginning teacher (i.e. informal meetings, emails, or phone calls)	inductive, descriptive
2	Material objects	Physical objects used in mentoring (e.g., observation templates, books, note taking template)	Deductive, descriptive

Appendix J: Research Protocol for Data Collection Activities

Interview #1

Before Interview

- ☐ Email signed consent form for their records
- ☐ Email questions, identity map protocol, and Zoom link
- ☐ Create interview question doc
- ☐ Review demographic information
- ☐ Fill in participant demographic information to google sheet

After Interview

- ☐ Complete reflexivity journal protocol
- ☐ Download audio file and transcript
- ☐ Analytic memo for participant identity map and upload to Dedoose
- ☐ Clean transcript - de-identify, transcribe where necessary, condense transcript
- ☐ Upload transcript to Google Folder and Dedoose
- ☐ Write a high-level summary of interview and send to participant
- ☐ Upload high-level summary of interview to Google folder
- ☐ Write a research memo
- ☐ Write an initial analytic memo
- ☐ Add to code book
- ☐ Delete audio file and transcript from Zoom
- ☐ Fill in data tracker
- ☐ Add to methodological decisions tracker as necessary
- ☐ Create interview #2 protocol

Interview #2

Before Interview

- ☐ Email questions, information about artifacts, and Zoom link
- ☐ Review interview #1 analytic memos
- ☐ Modify interview question doc (add unanswered questions for interview #1)

After Interview

- ☐ Complete reflexivity journal protocol
- ☐ Download audio file and transcript
- ☐ Complete artifact debrief protocol for each artifact shared
- ☐ Clean transcript - de-identify, transcribe where necessary, condense transcript
- ☐ Upload transcript to Google Folder and Dedoose
- ☐ Upload artifacts to Google Folder
- ☐ Write a high-level summary of interview and send to participant

- ☐ Upload high-level summary of interview to Google folder
- ☐ Write a research memo
- ☐ Write an initial analytic memo
- ☐ Add to code book as necessary
- ☐ Delete audio file and transcript from Zoom
- ☐ Fill in data tracker
- ☐ Add to methodological decisions tracker as necessary
- ☐ Create interview #3 protocol

Interview #3

Before Interview

- ☐ Email interview questions, directions for concept map, and Zoom link
- ☐ Review Interview #1 and #2 analytic memos
- ☐ Modify interview question doc (add unanswered questions for interview #1 and #2)

After Interview

- ☐ Complete reflexivity journal protocol
- ☐ Download audio file and transcript
- ☐ Clean transcript - de-identify, transcribe where necessary, condense transcript
- ☐ Analytic memo for concept map
- ☐ Upload transcript and concept map analytic memo to Google Folder and Dedoose
- ☐ Upload concept map to Google Folder
- ☐ Write a high-level summary of interview and send to participant
- ☐ Upload high-level summary of interview to Google folder
- ☐ Write a research memo
- ☐ Write an initial analytic memo
- ☐ Add to code book as necessary
- ☐ Delete audio file and transcript from Zoom
- ☐ Fill in data tracker
- ☐ Add to methodological decisions tracker as necessary

Appendix K: Sample Code Trees

Figure K1

Sample Code Tree: Inclusion

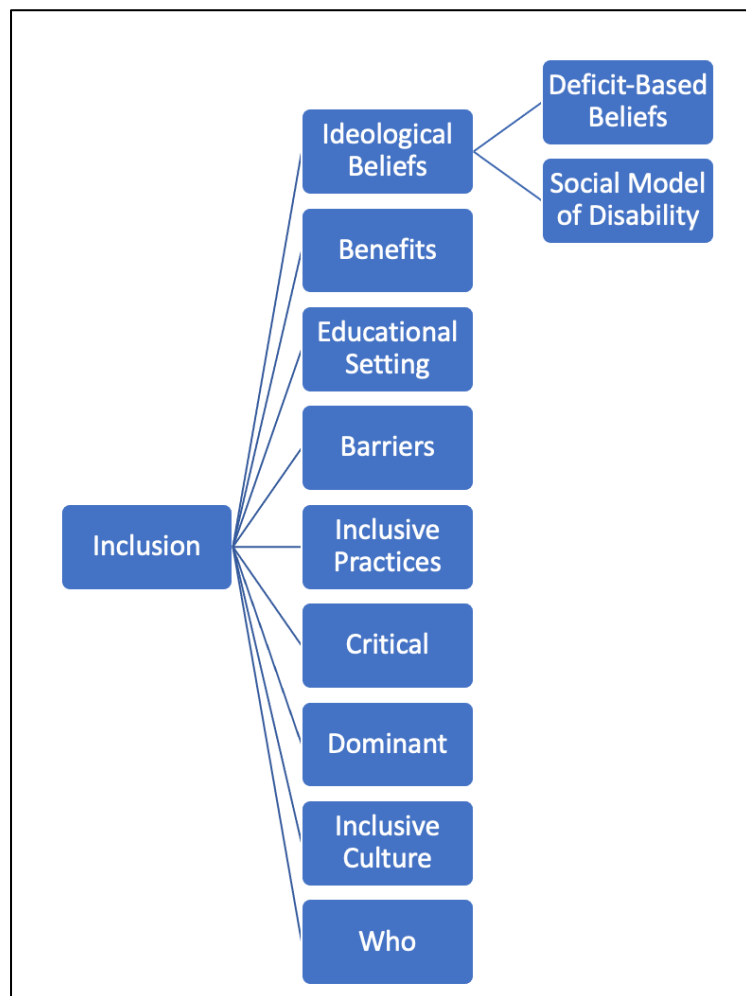
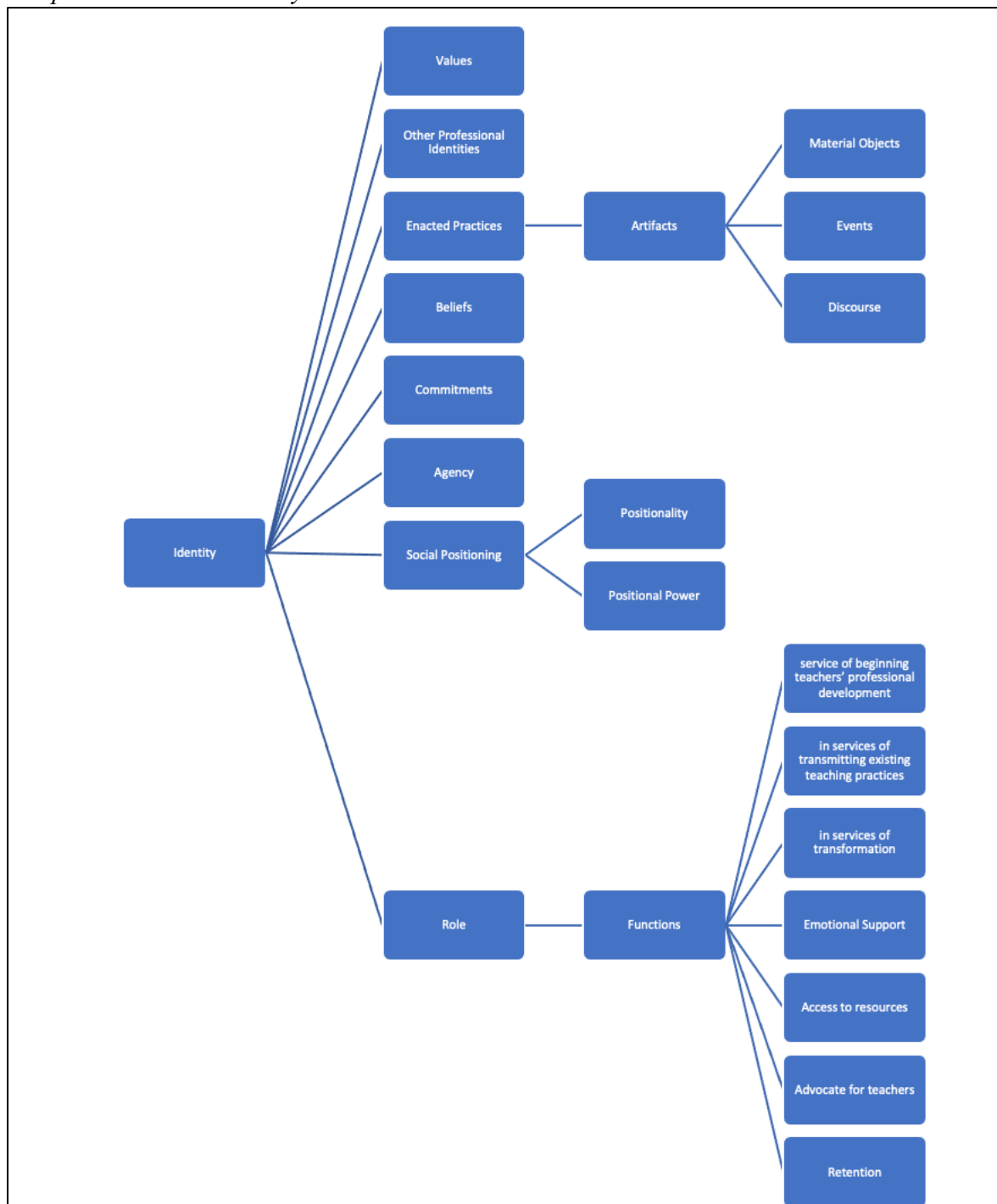


Figure K2*Sample Code Tree: Identity*

Appendix L: Sample Data Networks

Figure L1

Second Cycle Pattern Coding Sample Data Network: Angela

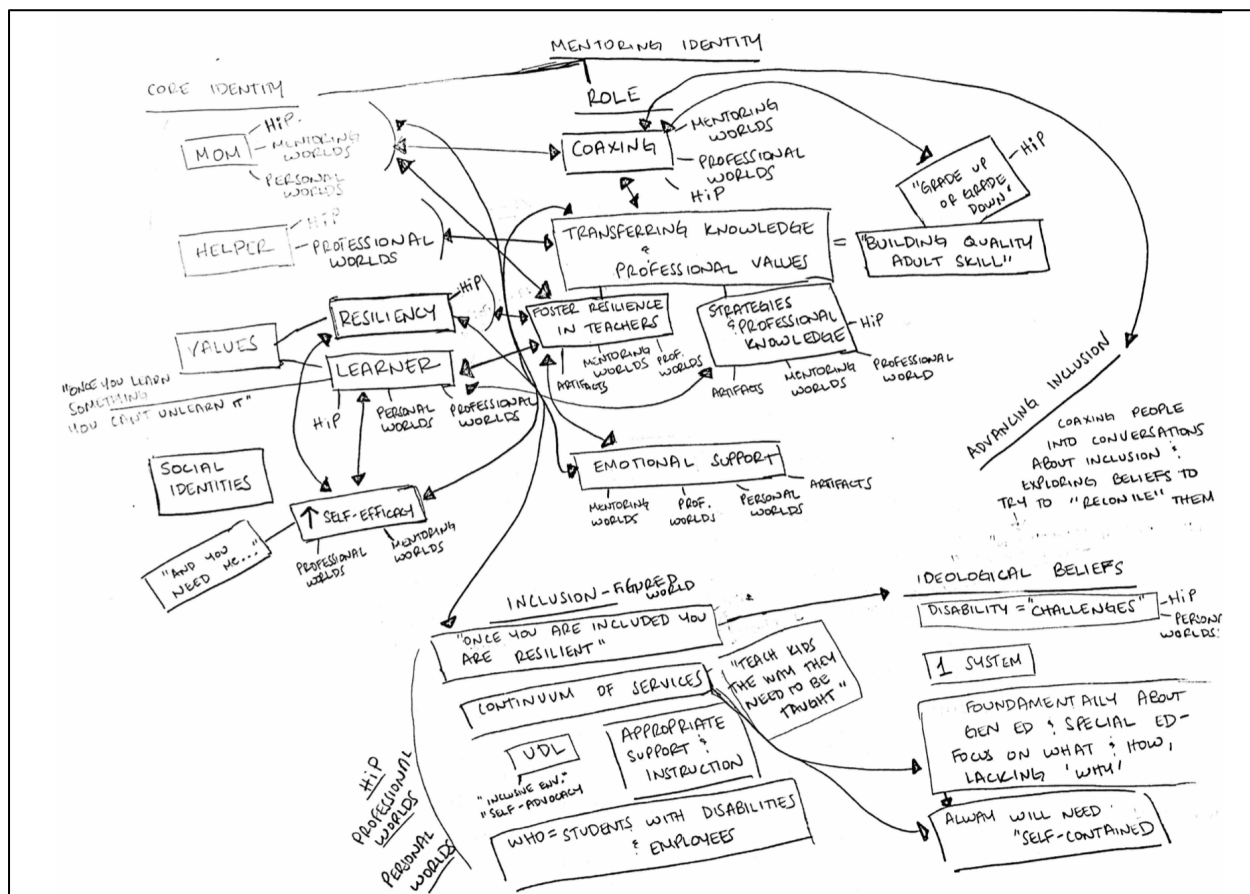
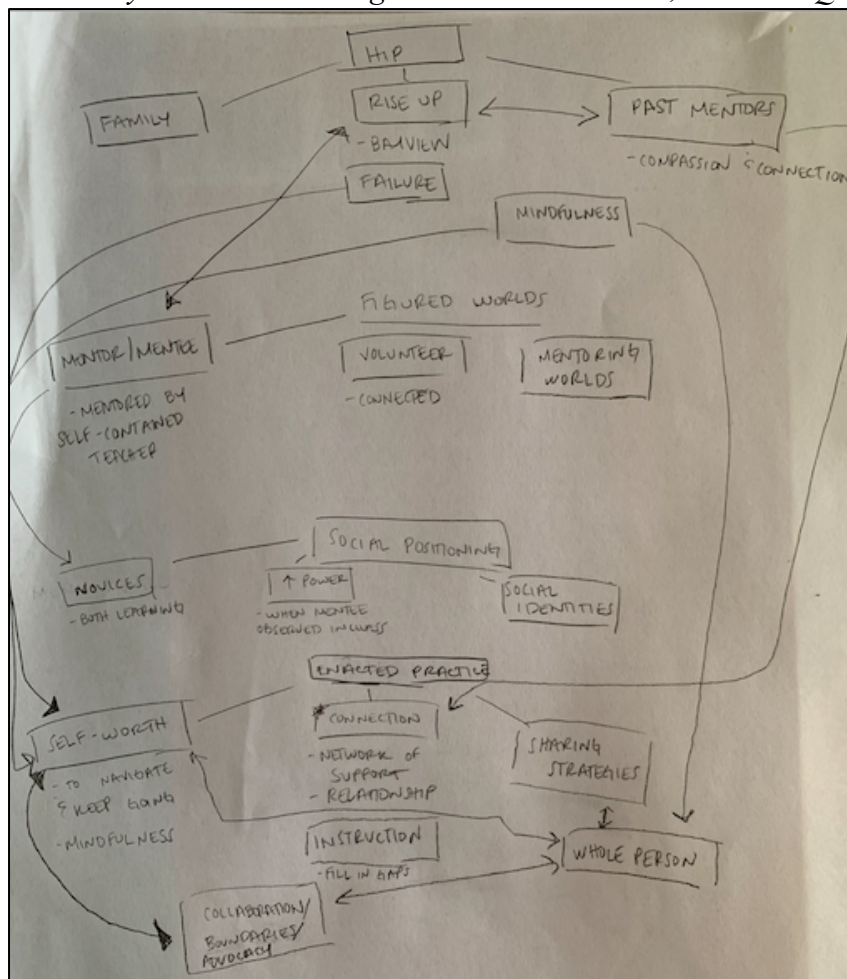


Figure L2

Second Cycle Pattern Coding Data Network: Sarah, Research Question 1



Appendix M: Reflexivity Journal Protocol

Mentor:

Topic and Date of Interview:

Location and Duration:

Commonalities and differences that surfaced (e.g., professional preparation or experiences, past life experience, individuals in common):

Questions or topics that were difficult to ask or bring up with mentors. Why?

Strong reactions or responses to what mentors shared. Why?

Initial thoughts about what mentors shared?

What personal information or experiences did I disclose or describe to the mentor?

Appendix N: Dimensions of Mentors' Roles

Table N1

Identified Functions of Mentors' Roles

	Angela	Susan	Brooke	Sarah	Holly
Develop PCK	X			X	X
Facilitate Reflective Practice	X				X
Emotional Support	X	X		X	X
Supported Problem-Solving	X	X	X	X	X
Model Instructional Practices				X	X
Collaborate on Content		X		X	X
Special Ed. Compliance Assistance	X	X	X	X	X
Provide Resources	X	X	X	X	X
Connect to Other Colleagues	X	X	X	X	X
Advocate for Teachers	X	X	X	X	X
Support with Annual Evaluation	X	X		X	X

Note. PCK = Pedagogical Content Knowledge. Mentoring activities that focused on developing beginning teachers' subject matter knowledge or knowledge of instructional methods was categorized as pedagogical content knowledge.