

Research Articles and Essays

**A Genealogy of the Council for Exceptional Children Advanced Special Education
Preparation Standards**

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Abstract

A qualitative genealogy of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards seeks to answer the following research questions: *How do the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards negotiate the inclusion of neurodivergent teacher candidates? And what is the role of the student with disabilities in schooling, according to the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards?* by comparing the language of the Standards to three of Foucault's techniques of power.

Keywords: inclusion, neurodiversity, teacher preparation programs

A Genealogy of the Council for Exceptional Children Advanced Special Education

Preparation Standards

Teacher preparation programs must adhere to the standards of a designated and recognized organization to be accredited. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Special Education Preparation Standards are one such example of standards for special education teacher preparation programs at higher education institutions in the United States. These Standards were first developed in 1922 by the founders of CEC to align practitioners and organizations working with individuals with disabilities with current best practices and research (CEC, 2021). Supporting both the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA, 1990) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004), CEC states on their website that ‘Protecting and supporting the core principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004’ is one of the organization’s key policy principles (CEC, 2021). The Preparation Standards, along with Ethical Principles and Professional Practice Guidelines, have been updated multiple times since their inaugural development a century ago. There are Preparation Standards for both Gifted and Special Education, each at both Initial and Advanced Certification levels (for new and progressing or master teachers).

Teacher education programs, also called teacher preparation programs, in higher education employ a variety of curricular approaches to readying teacher candidates for jobs in the PK12 teaching field (Kennedy, 2016). These curricula can range from teaching theoretical perspectives, training teachers about specific strategies, or problem-solving real-world conflicts that come up in the classroom, or any combination of these and other methods. Teacher education programs are usually part of a college or school of education that may also include other programs such as school counseling, mental health, psychology, Applied Behavior Analysis, higher education, human development, educational leadership, or policy.

In the United States, various states have different requirements for teacher candidates to become certified teachers, which has implications in the design of teacher education programs. In each state, teacher preparations programs are accredited, by an organization approved by the United States Department of Education such as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP), to recommend graduates from their programs to teacher certification in that state. While teacher candidates can become certified through a direct application to the state, university-based teacher education programs are the most common path of pre-service teacher preparation (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Teacher education programs are categorized by age group taught and/or subject area, and graduating candidates are recommended for the corresponding certificate(s), for which candidates must also complete workshops and certification exams. Examples of programs within teacher education include Early Childhood Education (ages B-2), Childhood Education (grades 1-6), Teaching Students with Disabilities (all grades), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (all grades), Literacy (all grades), and various secondary subjects such as Mathematics, English Language Arts, Social Studies, Physics, Chemistry, Earth Science, Biology (grades 7-12). Teacher education programs can prepare undergraduate and/or graduate students, as well as have programs for initial, professional, and/or advanced certification through the state in the given grade and content area.

In teacher preparation programs leading to certification in Teaching Students with Disabilities, often known as Special Education Programs, the CEC Standards are an essential part of program development. Student learning outcomes are aligned to CEC standards in course syllabi and program-wide assessments, such as teacher performance assessments. Faculty members use the CEC Standards for curriculum development around teaching

students with disabilities, and programs cite the CEC Standards during the accreditation process. Each set of CEC Standards exists to hold programs accountable for how they are teaching future special educators.

Standards are an important part of the explicit and hidden curriculum (Au, 2012), and must be read with a critical eye. Special education continues to reform (even such as the CEC's revisions of the Preparation Standards) at the PK12 level. In the public community, there is also an increased focus on the inclusion of adults with disabilities in the workforce, including teachers who are disabled and/or neurodivergent. While the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards were created with the intent of supporting teachers to work with students with disabilities, and the CEC even has a positionality statement upholding educators with disabilities (CEC, 2016), we must examine these Standards to see if they meet their intended goal to support both students and teachers. The purpose of this paper is to use Foucault's (1975/1984, 1990/1978) genealogical analysis to explore the following research questions:

1. *How do the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards negotiate the inclusion of neurodivergent teacher candidates?*
2. *What is the role of the student with disabilities in schooling, according to the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards?*

Positionality Statement

As with much qualitative research, the identity and positionality of the researcher is deeply connected with the research. Therefore, I would like to give helpful context to the research in this paper. I am a white, heterosexual, cisgendered, English-speaking female. I am autistic, and I insist on the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all parts of society, while acknowledging their unique experiences, challenges, and assets. My experiences as a

special education teacher and an instructor in advanced teacher education programs are lived and practiced through the lens of my autism. I have a unique, detail-oriented perspective and strategic way of thinking about problems. I also face social and sensory challenges every day. I was not diagnosed with autism until after I graduated college, so I did not realize the source of challenges with the social and emotional aspects of school while I was facing them. I am able to share resources with my students, both PK12 and postsecondary or graduate, through first-hand experience. Many hours of self-reflection have propelled me to encourage my students to value their support networks and utilize out-of-the-box resources. I teach my graduate students the benefits of neurodiversity and can share a perspective they may not have encountered before. Even though I am autistic, I only fully know the experience of *one* person on the autism spectrum. My experiences as a neurodivergent and disabled person make me passionate about inclusion and belonging of individuals with disabilities.

Literature Review

This article seeks to continue the work of the existing literature on supporting disabled and neurodivergent teacher candidates (Antilla-Garza, 2015; Brulle, 2006; Macleod & Cebula, 2009; Sokal et al., 2017) and examining ableism in teacher education programs (Keefe, 2022). The existing literature in this area includes both theoretical and empirical papers, which gives a valuable perspective on what ‘could be’ in teacher education programs, as well as exploring the current state of teacher education. For instance, Keefe (2022) explains some of the issues that perpetuate existing ableism in teacher preparation programs, such as curricula steeped in the medical model, reinforcement of ableist language, and gatekeeping of the teaching profession. Keefe suggests that teacher education programs should instead presume competence of their teacher candidates, work to incorporate other models of disability such as the social model in the perspectives, and critically examine the

language used in curricula and course titles. Perouse-Harvey (2022) suggests incorporating critical frameworks, such as DisCrit and Intersectionality, into teacher preparation programs could also help to dismantle ableist practices in teacher education and special education.

Theoretical Framework

This research is situated in a constructivist paradigm, in the lens of critical disability theory (Gillies, 2014), the notion of disability being a social construct (Wendell, 1996), and the social model of disability (Jones, 1996; Oliver, 2013). These ideas emphasize the experiences of individuals with disabilities and recognize that ableism constructs environments that exclude or prevent access for those with disabilities or neurodiversities. Au's (2012) curricular standpoint theory (p. 51) also informs this research because the 'power relation is socially situated' (Au, 2012, p. 53) between what I will refer to as constructed or assumed categories of people (Foucault, 1975/1984, 1990/1978). According to Au, the experience of the oppressed must be counted as truer than the experience of the oppressor, which leads to my epistemological and ontological stance: knowledge is both subjective and objective. Knowledge is constructed through lived experiences, and we must listen to the voices of the oppressed or 'othered' (in this case, individuals with disabilities) to shape the most objective truth and reality.

Humans are adaptable beings (Weinberg et al., 2021). They are able to adapt to the social environment around them (Ramos et al., 2019; Weinberg et al., 2021). Humans also tend to categorize and create hierarchies of groups of human beings. Because I believe knowledge is constructed through lived experiences, humans construct these categories of each other based on their social experiences and their access to experiences. For example, the category of disability is constructed by the environment. This is an outgrowth of the idea that

disability is a difference rather than a deficit needing to be fixed (Naraian & Amrhein, 2020; Scotch & Schriener, 1997).

Groups with power over another ‘category’ of humans define norms by which all humans are measured. Foucault (1975/1984, 1990/1978) would argue that power is not ‘over’ but is everywhere, and power is formed through the knowledge of accepted, hegemonic hierarchies. The groups of an accepted lower hierarchy are forced to adapt to the norm of the group with accepted and expected power, rather than vice versa (Vornholt et al., 2021). This is possible because of the techniques of power utilized in institutions and throughout society (Foucault, as cited in Gore, 2001). Power is based on accepted knowledge of the constructs that are developed by humans (Foucault, 1975/1984, 1990/1978), or ‘socially determined categorical difference’ (Au, 2012, p. 54). In the case of disability, neurodivergent individuals and individuals with disabilities must change the way *they* interact with the environment in order to comply and be deemed successful or productive (Lepofsky, 2020; Naraian & Amrhein, 2020), or they will be excluded (Vazquez et al., 2019; Vornholt et al., 2021). This creates a deficit model in schools, where students who do not fit the defined norms are perceived as ‘less than’ and attempted to be rectified through a variety of interventions, formal and informal (Danforth & Naraian, 2015; Jones, 1996; Naraian & Amrhein, 2020).

Ideally, neurotypical individuals and individuals without disabilities *could* adapt to be inclusive, but more often than not the case is that the neurodivergent one must do the adapting (Vazquez et al., 2019). Rather than individuals without disabilities collaborating with neurodivergent individuals and people with disabilities to create an accessible, just, and liberating environment where these hierarchies of power become more equalized, neurodivergent individuals must rely on their own self-advocacy skills to seek opportunities for adaptations in each environment in which they exist (Iwanaga et al., 2021; Zhu et al.,

2019). The solution lies in listening to people with disabilities and the neurodivergent to construct a more inclusive environment that allows for the success of all (Naraian & Amrhein, 2020; Vazquez et al., 2019). This theory can be applied beyond disability to include listening to people of color, refugees, women, LGBTQ+ communities, and other groups traditionally placed in categories by others exercising power. This aligns with de Alba et al.'s (2000) framework of postmodernism, particularly in the tenets of 'the cultural construction of subjectivity,' 'interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary,' and 'the diagnosis and critique of binarism' (p. 8). Thankfully, some institutions have supported neurodivergent individuals to build self-advocacy skills (Lee et al., 2021), which is a step toward accessibility, but focus should be placed on interdisciplinary construction of new environments, taking the lead from diverse and neurodivergent individuals.

This conceptual framework allows us to analyze the language of the 2015 CEC Advanced Preparation Standards to explore who is responsible for adapting to environments and whose knowledge is responsible for constructing the environments themselves.

Methodology

When conducting a genealogy of a document, the researcher 'is to critique the pursuit of origins by showing they are fabrications...' (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005). Scheurich and McKenzie discuss how Foucault uses genealogy to explain the knowledge/power dialectic in relationships and institutions to show that there is no origin to the history of a text. Rather, knowledge/power throughout the past, present, and future shape a document. Foucault's theory of disciplinary power states that power is constructed and upheld through a variety of means: surveillance, normalization, exclusion, classification, distribution, individualization, totalization, and regulation (Gore, 2001). I analyze the language of the 2015 CEC Advanced Preparation Standards using the disciplinary power techniques of normalization, exclusion,

and classification in order to answer the research questions. Normalization requires a defining of a norm or norms (Gore, 2001) and ‘normalizing judgement’ (Foucault, 1975/1984, p. 193). Exclusion means setting boundaries between the normal and the pathological (Gore, 2001). Classification involves the construction of categories and classifications of knowledge, individuals, and groups, and the ranking of these categories (Gore, 2001). The method of genealogy ‘...could be broadly construed as “qualitative” methods, as Foucault always used texts as his data or, what he sometimes called, the archive’ (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005). I coded the language in the ‘archive’ of the Standards that suggest or represent normalization, exclusion, and classification as techniques of constructing knowledge/power.

Analysis

The research questions addressed in this article are: *How do the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards negotiate the inclusion of neurodivergent teacher candidates?* and *What is the role of the student with disabilities in schooling, according to the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards?* I use the power techniques of normalization, exclusion, and classification in institutional settings (Foucault, 1975/1984; Gore, 2001) to answer these questions. Although normalization, exclusion, and classification are intertwined in knowledge/power relationships, I separate the three techniques into sections for the purposes of clear discourse.

Normalization

In CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standard 2.3, there is mention of continual curricular development: ‘Special education specialists use understanding of diversity and individual learning differences to inform the selection, development, and implementation of comprehensive curricula for individuals with exceptionalities’ (CEC, 2015, Standard 2.3), which implies teachers can challenge the current curriculum.

Interestingly, this way of norming and holding educators accountable utilizes individual difference to ‘inform...comprehensive curricula’ (CEC 2015, Standard 2.3). The disciplinary normalization of disabled students can be resisted through valuing students difference and diversity, which aligns with the critical disability studies view of difference and disability as gain. However, this is embedded in a standard about professionals expanding their knowledge of current curriculum standards (CEC, 2015, Standards 2.0, 2.1, and 2.2); specifically, ‘Special education specialists use their knowledge of general and specialized curricula to improve programs, supports, and services at classroom, school, community, and system levels’ (CEC, 2015, Standard 2.0). Though the purpose is to improve outcomes for disabled students, the ‘knowledge’ to be leveraged is clearly stated as the educator’s knowledge; utilizing disabled student and family knowledge is absent from this Standard. Opportunities for disruption of this normalizing power/knowledge could be for special educators to draw on their students’ expertise, experiences, and understandings to improve programs from classroom to system.

Normalization often involves standardization (Gore, 2001), and is exercised as power in this case to promote conformity of teachers, students, and programs. For example, Standard 3.3 states, ‘Special education specialists apply knowledge of theories, evidence-based practices, and relevant laws to advocate for programs, supports, and services for individuals with exceptionalities’ (CEC, 2015, Standard 3.3). Evidence-based practices are often based on evidence from a white/eurocentric/ableist perspective of fixing the ‘other’ (Gillies, 2014; Jones, 1996; Oliver, 2013; Wendell, 1996). Evidence-based practices are the ‘norm’ teachers must adhere to, but they are centered not around the student but around the teacher’s ability to uphold the fidelity of the practices. Additionally, theory and law can be used as disciplinary norms, such as we see with disparities in numbers of disabled students of

color in the school disciplinary system (Kervick et al., 2019; Mahan-Reynolds & Parker, 2016). Yet, theories and laws, just like evidence-based practices, could be used to help teachers gain access and support for their disabled students – a potential resistance to this normalization.

Standard 7.0 (CEC, 2015) says, ‘Special education specialists collaborate with stakeholders,’ but does not define who the stakeholders, whom I will refer to as ‘careholders,’ are. While the student should be the main careholder in their own education, we know that funding sources, administrators, unions, government, families, students, and other teachers all weigh in on decision-making, but hegemonically government and funding are recognized as more oppressive powers than students themselves. For example, since many postsecondary institutions that can recommend teacher candidates for certification are accredited by the CEC through the use of the Initial or Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards, the Standards are used as a normalization tool for *programs* as well as for individual teachers. The power of state and federal funding from retaining program accreditation influences the decisions of university leaders to keep using the CEC Preparation Standards. The CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards themselves are merely documenting the produced power from those relationships.

Conversely, the ambiguity of careholders could document an opportunity for the special education specialist to disrupt this norm of power by resisting some careholder groups and favoring others, or even leveraging careholder power to the benefit of both teachers and students. For example, a disabled special education teacher could leverage their teachers’ union to make sure they get the required accommodations through their school’s human resources department. This action would benefit the disabled teacher, and, by way of hopefully decreasing their stress because they have support, also allow for disabled students

to receive better services since the teacher can put more energy into their teaching job. Albeit this is looking at productivity of disabled people through a functional lens, the primary benefit is for the disabled student and the disabled teacher. Perhaps most importantly, the advocacy of the teachers' union on behalf of the teacher is a step towards appropriately upholding ADA to support disabled employees. Substandard 7.3 states that 'Special education specialists collaborate to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and build consensus for improving programs, services, and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities' (CEC, 2015, Standard 7.3). The language of 'understanding,' 'conflicts,' and 'consensus' allows for tension and resistance in the collaborative efforts of special educators. Though consensus should not be a goal to its own end, the Standards clearly state the purpose of such tensions and resolutions are for 'improving programs, services, and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities' (CEC, 2015, Standard 7.3). This shows an advantage of the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards leaving decisions about careholders open to the expertise of teachers to leverage.

Exclusion

The discourse in the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards centers around evidence-based practices, with the metanarrative of normalization and exclusion of those with disabilities by equating those with disabilities as pathologically different (Gore, 2001). For example, the language of 'learning differences' (CEC, 2015, Standard 2.3) and 'individuals with exceptionalities' (CEC, 2015) emphasize the pathological difference of neurodivergent individuals and individuals with disabilities. This is both an example of curriculum as normalization (Erevelles, 2005) and subtraction (Valenzuela, 2017 [2005]). The strategy of this exclusion is to mark those with disabilities as different through stigma. Stigma exists in all relations of power around disability in schools, from government leaders

missing opportunities to further policies that support and protect individuals with disabilities, to administrators failing to include the perspectives of students with disabilities in district initiatives, to educators wanting special education teachers to solely carry the responsibility of managing students with disabilities' behaviors and academics, to peers excluding and bullying students with disabilities or those who associate with students with disabilities. These relationships of normalization, subtraction, and exclusion reinforce 'othering' and stigma, as well as the use of inscription, with the underlying idea that a perpetual difference, a 'less than,' will always exist. Inscription on the body of the student, through practices such as evaluation, diagnosis, progress monitoring, assessment, and treatment, means that the student with disabilities holds a stigmatizing and othering 'accumulation of documents' (Foucault, 1975/1984, p. 201), which is interpreted before a teacher even meets a student. 'This turning of real lives into writing' is a disciplinary technique of power (Foucault, 1975/1984, p. 203). Foucault goes on: 'The *examination* as the *fixing*, at once ritual and "scientific," of individual differences... clearly indicates the appearance of a new modality of power in which each individual... is linked by his status to the features, the measurements, the gaps, the "marks" that characterize him and make him a "case"' (p. 203, emphasis added). Examination, fixing, and measurement are evident in the documentation practices condoned in the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards.

The problem here is not the existence of difference – on the contrary, difference such as disability and neurodiversity are an asset to all of us, as explained by the disability gain model (see Garland-Thomson, 2005). The problem is when difference is seen through a deficit model or used for exclusionary power, an example being that Individualized Education Plans must utilize student deficits to qualify disabled students for services. Using language that embraces difference, such as Identity-First Language (AUCD, 2011; Brown,

2011), in the CEC Standards could prompt educators to write more strengths-based IEPs that highlight the supports and successes of their students. A possible resistance to this exclusionary power could be that education practitioners and researchers use lenses such as Critical Disability Studies to center their work. Standard 4.2 states, ‘Special education specialists use their knowledge of the professional literature to improve practices...’ (CEC, 2015, Standard 4.2); this could include literature situated within a CDS framework. Such literature could encourage disabled and neurodivergent educators in the teaching profession, support inclusive strategies for schools and universities to employ disabled special educators, and describe special education practices through a CDS lens.

Another potential problem of exclusionary discipline in the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards is the stigma of assumed dependence. Many of the Standards articulate ‘Special education specialists [do something] *for* individuals with exceptionalities’: such as ‘Special education specialists design and implement evaluation activities to improve programs, supports, and services for individuals with exceptionalities’ (CEC, 2015, Standard 3.1); ‘Special education specialists apply knowledge of theories, evidence-based practices, and relevant laws to advocate for programs, supports, and services for individuals with exceptionalities’ (CEC, 2015, Standard 3.3); ‘Special education specialists evaluate progress toward achieving the vision, mission, and goals of programs, services, and supports for individuals with exceptionalities’ (CEC, 2015, Standard 3.5). Rather than promoting multidirectional interdependence with disabled and nondisabled individuals, these Standards emphasize disabled students as passive recipients of their teachers’ actions. Special educators can and should resist this exclusionary discipline by collaborating with and relying on the expertise of their students, valuing disabled student knowledge as a unique perspective into insightful understandings about special education

practices. Similarly, hiring more disabled teachers and teachers trained in CDS would be acts of resisting this exclusionary discipline. Special education programs can also offer courses in CDS as part of the curricula.

Classification

In power relations, groups or individuals are classified and ranked (Gore, 2001). In the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards, special education specialists are framed as the ‘protector’ and director or decision-maker of individuals with disabilities. The protecting ‘from’ discrimination, normalization, and possibly failure, is akin to being an ‘ally’ instead of a ‘co-conspirator’ (Love, 2019). Allyship assumes classification and can even be patronizing, while co-conspiring assumes equitable (or equally ranked) power. Examples of this framing of the role of the special educator can be found in Standard 3.2, where ‘special education specialists use [their] understanding of cultural, social, and economic diversity and individual learner differences to inform the development and improvement...’ (CEC, 2015, 3.2); Standard 3.3, in which special education specialists are the ones ‘advocat[ing] for... individuals with exceptionalities’ (CEC, 2015, 3.3); and Standard 3.5, with ‘special education specialists evaluat[ing] progress...’ (CEC, 2015, 3.5). Why are special education specialists not evaluating, advocating, and using understanding with student and family input? The classified groups of students and families are ranked as hegemonically less powerful than the group of teachers, emphasized as ‘specialists’ or professionals. The individuals with disabilities (the students) are classified as needing the help of the professional because of this ranking. This classifying knowledge/power relationship between teachers and students also omits the balancing of *advocacy for* with *Dignity of Risk*. Although some of the author’s language is outdated, Perske (1972), who introduced the concept of Dignity of Risk, asserts, ‘...overprotection endangers the [person

with disabilities’] human dignity and tends to keep [them] from experiencing the normal taking of risks in life which is necessary for normal human growth and development’ (p. 24). While the use of the term ‘normal’ in this quote raises questions about the standardization of human development, the argument of Dignity of Risk is powerful because *risk* and *decision-making* are rights automatically given to individuals without disabilities, but often withheld from individuals with disabilities. Ryan and Deci (2000) echo that all individuals naturally engage in self-motivation. Students, including students with disabilities, *do* have the knowledge/power to make choices with self-determination. The overemphasis on overprotection and advocacy *for* students with disabilities, instead of co-conspiracy and Dignity of Risk *with* students with disabilities, depicts schooling where the educator refuses to listen to the agency of the student, moving backward against the agenda of inclusion of people with neurodiversities and disabilities.

Another example of classifying teacher knowledge/power (Foucault, 1975/1984, 1990/1978) as highly ranked is, ‘special education specialists use their knowledge of general and specialized curricula to improve programs, supports, and services at classroom, school, community, and system levels’ (CEC, 2015, 2.0). Again, there is nothing about input from students. It seems as if the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards assume a vacuum where teachers exist but there are no other existing power relations. In reality, teacher preparation programs, administrators, teachers, students, families, government, and even the media all reinforce the power of teachers to exercise ‘their (the teachers’) knowledge.’ Just as educators actively adjust and adapt the curriculum ‘because all activity takes place in a medium, in a situation, and with reference to its conditions’ (Dewey, 1902), we can apply this active adaptation to both the teachers’ knowledge/power being adjusted with the student, or ‘child’ (Dewey, 1902), and the adjustment of Standards as hegemonic

knowledge/power relations shift.

Discussion

A key finding of the analysis of the 2015 CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards is the position of the teacher as the model of ableism, idealism, and normativity. The CEC Position Statement on educators with disabilities emphasizes the strengths of teachers with disabilities in building rapport, overcoming challenges, and having first-hand experience. It even encourages educators to disclose their disability to gain more support (CEC, 2016, p. 1). However, the Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards need to be updated to reflect the value of the strength of disability and the ‘power of neurodiversity’ (Armstrong, 2010). The over-emphasis on evidence-based practices can limit teachers from using their own experience with disability or engaging in out-of-the-box practices that may benefit students. Normativity, ableism, and idealism all work together to construct knowledge/power: ‘...new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus’ (Foucault, 1990/1978, p. 89). The normalization of striving toward able-ness creates an ideal that punishes those with disabilities because of the exclusion and classification of this category of people as ‘less’ than those without disabilities. The notion of the teachers conforming to the able norm as the ideal perpetuates the hegemonic power of the neurotypical and able-bodied.

There is explicit language repeated in the Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards that ‘special education specialists will [insert verb] *for* individuals with exceptionalities’ (CEC, 2015, emphasis added). One of the primary tenets of natural supports in disability theory is the idea of ‘with, not for’ in that individuals with disabilities should be

included in a naturally supportive environment (with individuals without disabilities), rather than individuals without disabilities accommodating for or doing things for individuals with disabilities (Perske, 1972; Ryan & Deci, 2000). One silence in the Standards is the voice of students. According to the Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards, special education specialists will decide on and implement assessment, curriculum, strategies, programs, supports, services, technologies, standards, vision, mission, and purpose using their knowledge of diversity, learning, individuals, theories, practices, laws, inquiry, and research, arguably to perpetuate disciplinary power over the student with disabilities. There is no student input on or co-construction of the instructional strategies, curriculum, assessment, purpose, or goals, nor is there student voice represented in the Standards about their own strengths, needs, interests, and preferences. Together, these agencies are also known as *self-advocacy*, which is another significant silence in the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards.

In the 2015 CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards, actual discussion or mention of disability is avoided. This absence of the word ‘disability’ in the Standards reinforces the stigma, invisibility, and othering of disability by circumventing the very idea of disability. If the CEC would move toward discussing disability directly and openly in the Standards, this could raise awareness about disability as an example of human variance (Higgins, 1992; Naraian & Amrhein, 2020; Scotch & Schriener, 1997) rather than a perpetual or ‘pathological’ difference (Foucault, as cited in Gore, 2001) to be shunned. Even more progressive would be the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the decision about language used. In her book, *Disability Visibility*, editor and self-advocate Alice Wong (2020) explains that disability influences all aspects of life, including ‘being, belonging, doing, and

connecting;’ therefore, it is easy to assume that the disability community would have excellent insight and a variety of perspectives to offer on the language used by the CEC.

Instead of using Person-First Language or Identity-First Language, the 2015 CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards use the phrase ‘individuals with exceptionalities.’ The name of the organization reverses that phrase to ‘exceptional children.’ The choice of the word ‘exceptional(ities)’ potentially steers away from deficit language because ‘exceptional’ can describe someone or something positively or negatively... although always differently from a norm. However, the placement of the word ‘exceptional’ before the word ‘children’ could be viewed as a labeling of children and as a nod to Deficit-First Language, or even as disciplinary inscription (Foucault, 1975/1984). According to Keefe (2022), using euphemisms such as ‘exceptional’ and ‘special needs,’ instead of ‘disabilities’ and ‘disabled,’ perpetuates the stigma of difference and is often viewed as offensive or infantilizing by the disability community (p. 124). Again, use of either Person-First or Identity-First Language could reduce the stigma of disability by bringing the difference of disability into a positive light in the conversation of special education by talking about disability directly. Do the CEC Advanced Preparation Standards exist to discipline the bodies of those with disabilities, and, to discipline the bodies of those without disabilities to oppress those with disabilities? It seems that through normalization, exclusion, and classification, these Standards do reinforce hegemonic knowledge/power structures (Foucault, 1975/1984, 1990/1978) of the able body (and mind) over the disabled body and mind, contributing to the deficit model in schools. This genealogical exercise resists and shifts power because my questions generate friction with the teacher-centeredness of the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards.

Conclusion

It is important to note that as an organization, the CEC has made strides in including neurodivergent teachers and educators with disabilities and celebrating their expertise. This genealogy seeks not to analyze the CEC as an organizational whole, but rather to examine the specific document of the 2015 Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards to explore the research questions: *How do the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards negotiate the inclusion of neurodivergent teacher candidates?* and *What is the role of the student with disabilities in schooling, according to the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards?* Interestingly, a question for further research that emerged is the idea of whether and how the 2015 Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards as they are currently written uphold the values of the CEC organization, or if revising would reflect these stated values more accurately. It is my hope that this article will be taken into consideration in the next revisions of the CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards.

An important question raised by the analysis of the 2015 CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards is: While the Standards are and should be written about teachers and teacher programs, why is the student and the experience of the student, or even the impact of the program, mostly absent? Even though the standards are for the audience of teachers and teacher preparation programs, the silence of the student with disabilities in the Standards is presaged by the history of disability in the United States, which is rife with silence, othering, and invisibility. Federal law finally outlawed discrimination based on disability in 1973 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). Individuals with disabilities were often institutionalized, even from a young age. It wasn't until 1975 and the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (IDEA, 2004), later renamed to IDEA, that children with disabilities were allowed to participate in public schools. Still today,

guardianship, while important for many individuals with disabilities, robs some people with disabilities of their rights if family members take advantage of decision-making power (National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making, 2014).

The CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards follow the mainstream able-bodied and neurotypical ideal of teachers, an example of authority with assumed power (Foucault, 1975/1984), ‘fixing’ students with disabilities to fit into an ableist society. There are no mentions of consulting with the students themselves, let alone having students be co-constructors of learning and the learning environment. In response to the research questions, the examination of the Standards reveals that not only do students with disabilities need to adapt to able society, but also that teachers must be models of ableism if they are to contribute to the narrative of special education in schools as a reflection of greater society. This leaves little room for teachers with disabilities, even though neurodivergent teachers and teachers with disabilities might be the best people to facilitate learning for students. The student with disabilities’ role in schooling is that of quiet compliance rather than agency.

As researchers, clinicians, therapists, medical professionals, teachers, teacher educators, and other practitioners, we must make sure we recognize our assumed power, constructed through the knowledge of normalization, exclusion, classification, and ableism. Challenging this hegemonic power/knowledge leads us to include and value the voices, experiences, assets, and choices of individuals with disabilities (both students and adults).

Practices such as Person-Centered Planning (PCP) and Circles of Support (Mazotti et al., 2015; Wistow et al., 2016) focus on individuals with disabilities and disrupt power hierarchies by assuming the knowledge of individuals with disabilities is as important as, if not more important than, the knowledge of other parties. For example, Wells and Sheehey (2012) describe how Making Action Plans (MAPS) is an application of PCP for IEP

development. Using PCP in IEPs and Committee on Special Education meetings would be a welcome addition to draw on strengths of both students with disabilities and their teachers. Special educators could use strategies from Circles of Support to improve outcomes for disabled students by drawing on natural and informal supports in the community (Araten-Bergman & Bigby, 2022). These student-centered models allow disabled individuals more agency and interdependence in academic, employment, and social domains.

PCP and Circles of Support can be used with students *and* with teachers and faculty. Having teacher educators model Circles of Support, having teacher candidates create Circles of Support, or even allowing teacher candidates to have PCP meetings for themselves, can lead to self-reflection, a valuing of diversity amongst faculty and staff, and a step towards inclusion. For instance, faculty and staff within a teacher education program could model their evaluations and department meetings around PCP strategies; allowing teacher educators agency in their practice could encourage these professionals to employ practices with their own students and teacher candidates. Perhaps through challenging the 2015 CEC Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards, teacher preparation programs will seek to hire more faculty with disabilities and neurodiversities, modeling inclusion and encouraging more diverse candidates to enter the teaching field, thus redistributing the knowledge/power of students with disabilities and their teachers.

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