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"Because I'm Regular, Too": Educational-Life Narratives of Metro-Atlanta Students in Special Education, 1975-2005

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“BECAUSE I’M REGULAR, TOO”: EDUCATION-LIFE NARRATIVES OF METRO-ATLANTA STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION, 1975 - 2005.

by

CRISTY SELLERS SMITH

Under the Direction of Deron Boyles, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation uses oral history narratives to explore the educational experiences of students with disabilities that attended school between 1975 when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was first established, and thirty years later in 2005. Because of the lack of archival and published information regarding special education students' perspectives, these narratives are intended to expand the existing historical record to include the voices of these students. This dissertation aims to provide agency to individuals whose history has been recorded without their participation. Educational-life narratives were produced from the conversations between the researcher and narrators, and the themes of social acceptance, academic persistence, and student-teacher relationships that evolved are examined by the researcher. Finally, additional lines of inquiry and recommendations for future research in oral history, teacher education, and Institu-

tional Review Board (IRB) governance are recommended and discussed. This dissertation provides agency to these students, and creates a record of their experiences, giving voice to what we know about the history of special education in metro-Atlanta.

INDEX WORDS: Oral History, Special Education, Educational Narratives, History of Education, Education-Life Narratives, Disability Studies.

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in

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in

The Department of Educational Policy Studies

in the

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Georgia State University

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DEDICATION

For Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly.

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1 STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION: THE HISTORY WE (DON'T) KNOW

The history of special education in Georgia, particularly in the Atlanta area, is reasonably documented in the state archives and other local school system holdings. Volumes of state and local board minutes are available to tell the story of policy writing, special program development, and the efforts by state and local systems to train teachers to address the needs of children who presented a different set of learning challenges from those deemed appropriate for the general public classroom.¹ Many of these efforts, while worthy of acknowledgement as the initial establishment of special education, must also be recognized as a response to the requirement to educate disabled children as established by Public Law 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act).² In addition to school policy records, the early twentieth century meeting minutes of charity and volunteer programs in Atlanta illustrate “social mothering” and women’s voluntarism efforts for children with disabling conditions. The assistance of these organizations, a trend discussed by several scholars including Nancy Cott, Theodora Penny Martin, and Anne Firor Scott, are instrumental to the maternal reform period of early American history that played a large role in the development of the modern welfare state.³ Public education, and education for less fortunate children with disabling conditions in the Atlanta area, were the focus of early work

¹ The terminology used to refer to students with disabilities, like their education, has evolved over time . Words such as retarded, disabled, crippled, and handicapped are used when historically relevant, and to keep with the climate of the period being discussed. When referring to the present, to my narrators, or when analyzing the past, I prefer to use person-first language.

² Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. 20 USC 1401, § 1971.

³ See Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New York: Yale University Press, 1987), 13-50; Theodora Penny Martin, *The Sound of Our Own Voices: Women’s Study Clubs, 1860-1910* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987); and Anne Firor Scott, “On Seeing and Not Seeing: A Case of Historical Invisibility,” *Journal of American History* 71 (June 1984); 7-21; idem, *Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

by historian Barry Franklin who wrote about the Atlanta Junior Women's League and their charitable efforts to create educational opportunities for student with speech needs, and medical conditions such as tuberculosis.⁴

In addition to archival holdings specific to the Atlanta area, several histories of special populations, particularly as they relate to the disability rights movement, are available for study. These histories, such as the edited volume compiled by Paul Longmore and Laura Umansky, showcase the work of individuals that were instrumental in moving the disabled from the margins to the mainstream, providing equal access to public facilities that was promised by the Americans with Disabilities act (ADA).⁵ Covering US history from pre-1942 to the present, Kim Nielsen wrote *A Disability History of the United States*, which pulls primary-source documents and social history together in an effort to place people with disabilities at the center of history and retell American history through their eyes. The premise of her work is to reframe the way we view the concept of disability and the way it has influenced American history. Nielsen argues that in order to understand disability history, you must examine everyday events through the lens of a variety of the everyday experiences of disabled people.⁶ One of the merits of her work, much like Daniel Baynton's chapter in Longmore and Umansky's aforementioned text,⁷ is the focus on the way that the concept of disability has shaped American lives and informed ideas

⁴ Barry M. Franklin, "Women's Voluntarism, Special Education, and the Junior League: 'Social Motherhood' in Atlanta, 1916-1968," *History of Education* 29, no. 5 (2000): 415-28.

⁵ Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

⁶ Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States: Revisioning American History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

⁷ Douglas C. Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, eds. Paul Longmore and Laura Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 33-57.

about slavery, immigration, and the rights that were denied citing disability as justification. While both of these works, along with many others, present the voice of disabled individuals, particularly activists in the disability rights movement, the voice of disabled students sharing their experiences in public school is noticeably absent.

Outside of the Atlanta metropolitan area, one of the most recognizable historians in the field of special education history, Robert Osgood, has written extensively on the topic of special education. In his book *The History of Special Education*, Osgood primarily focuses on the lives of disabled children between 1800 and the turn of 21st century. His work examines the social role and status of children who have previously been viewed as less able than other children and works to understand how these children have been prioritized by schools and other public services.⁸ In 1997, he wrote specifically on intermediate schools and special education classes in Boston where children were thought to be undermining the goals of the common school and subsequently were segregated for the purposes of minimizing impact on “normal” children.⁹ Although he focuses more heavily on the philosophy behind inclusion and how it came to be, his work reveals how special education evolved from a separate place allowing students to receive an education to an ideal in favor of placing students in general education classrooms.¹⁰ These works are relevant to the study of the history of special education because, collectively, they illustrate the way that our current system evolved from one where students with disabilities were not included to one where we continually strive to serve students in classrooms alongside their

⁸ Robert L. Osgood, *The History of Special Education: A Struggle for Equality in American Public Schools*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).

⁹ Robert L. Osgood, “Undermining the Common School Ideal: Intermediate Schools and Ungraded Classes in Boston, 1838-1900,” *History of Education Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 375-98.

¹⁰ Robert L. Osgood, *The History of Inclusion in the United States* (Washington, D.C: Gallaudet University Press, 2005).

peers.¹¹ They show us the ways that programs for handicapped children created by private organizations and public boards of education were operated and regulated and help us understand why special education operated as it did, the prevalent issues faced by schools and families, and the climate of communities and politicians during a time that education was changing shape to support some of its neediest students. Osgood offers that the public and private records in existence offer a “limited glimpse” into the lives of these children as the individuals who created the records were often ill informed regarding the context of what they described.¹² While he relied heavily on existing historical narratives to capture the voice of families, he acknowledges that the voice of students themselves is an area that needs further inquiry.¹³

The fight for voice and inclusion however, is not limited to physically inclusive practices. Perhaps one of the best-documented histories is that of deaf students, oralism, and the use of American Sign Language (ASL). In the early twentieth century, a struggle for control of deaf education was brewing between those who supported communication in sign language and those who advocated teaching the deaf to speak (oralism).¹⁴ Many of the deaf celebrated their culture and method of communication (ASL), but, led by influential Alexander Graham Bell, oralists argued that the method of oralism would “restore” deaf people to American culture by providing speech and lip-reading training.¹⁵ The documented propaganda about the debate between oralism

¹¹ Osgood, *The History of Inclusion in the United States*, 200.

¹² Osgood, *The History of Special Education*, xvi.

¹³ Robert L. Osgood, personal communication with Cristy Sellers Smith, November 2, 2016.

¹⁴ Susan Burch, “Reading between the Signs,” in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, eds. Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 214.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 216.

and ASL makes it appear as though oralism triumphed. This might be because mainstream society gave limited recognition to the deaf community, taking control of their education and method of communication.¹⁶ The belief by non-deaf and non-hearing impaired that “restoration” of the deaf was needed is a clear indication of the social hierarchy and acceptance of hearing citizens over deaf citizens across the country. Those who could hear felt that those who could not were in need of remediation and their opinions prevailed, silencing those who were deaf and attempting to develop their own culture and community. By literally removing their voice from the story, their history was written by educators rather than those who were deaf and learning to communicate.

The histories recorded by Franklin, Osgood, and Winzer,¹⁷ as well as the history of deaf education itself, serve as strong examples of special education history. The inquiries of Osgood and Franklin in particular, demonstrate the importance of regional histories, particularly as it relates to this dissertation. Both scholars contributed to the field of educational history by focusing in a particular region, allowing for greater insight into the social context driving the decisions about disabled children and their schooling. Understanding geographical context is a critical consideration in historical study and regional differences must be examined.¹⁸ While I may endeavor to understand the history of special education on a national scale, the possibility of mastering

¹⁶ Ibid., 214-215.

¹⁷ Margret A. Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, D.C: Gallaudet University Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Jonathan Healy, “Why Local History Matters” *Department for Continuing Education* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 14 November 2012): Dr. Healey is a lecturer in local and social history at Oxford University. http://www.academia.edu/2550380/Why_Local_History_Matters

such scope is unreasonable for a single historian and beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, this dissertation, focuses heavily on the history of special education, as shared by students who attended school in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

In the field of history, the reason for inquiry is to answer questions about the past that haven't been answered or were insufficiently answered, using sources that expand our understanding. As noted by scholars of special education, important parts of special education remain unexplored. Specifically, the voices of students are rarely included in the history we know. For this reason, oral history must be called upon to assist us in learning more about the history of students in the metro-Atlanta area who received special education services. Oral history is an important means to investigate these missing pieces. On its own, oral history is a method of inquiry with a past. Much like students with disabilities have been excluded from the history of education, so has the use of oral history in historical inquiry. Before turning to the questions I address in this dissertation, the next section examines oral history, its own history and definition, and why it is the right method for expanding the history of students that needed special education services.

What is Oral History?

Oral history is a complex method of historical investigation. It is more than fact-finding, like conventional histories. Oral history is an interpretive task where years of information are compressed into an interview between researcher and narrator.¹⁹ The stories that result from this interaction reveal how a narrator feels about the past, allowing its impact on the present to em-

¹⁹ Linda Shopes, "Making Sense of Oral History," *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/> (February 2002), 5-7.

phasized when reconstructing a historical event. Oral historians locate stories that have traditionally fallen between and outside of the previously captured historical events.²⁰ Oral history raises consciousness about social and historical concerns from the view of narrators, and reorients our understanding of what, who, why, where, and when.²¹

The subject matter of oral history has varied widely over time and is collected during the interview process. Initially, in the United States, oral history documented and preserved the verbatim conversations of people who were witnesses to events that may have been of interest to future scholars.²² But thinking of oral history in this hind-sight way reduces it to an event without consideration for the process of conducting an oral history and the analysis that ensues. Lynn Abrams describes oral history as four forms: The interview, the recording, the transcript, and the interpretation of the story collected. When oral history occurs, the historian is engaged in the collection of the past by way of oral interview, she hears the narrative via recording without the constraints of focusing on their craft, transcribes what is heard and uses each version of the narrative to create another – the interpretation – in a chainlike method that results in a primary

²⁰ Barbara, Allen, "Recreating the Past: The Narrator's Perspective in Oral History," *Oral History Review* 12, no. 1 (1984): 7-9.

²¹ You will find many terms used to talk about the person who conducts an oral history interview and the person giving information. Common terms for the person conducting the interview are oral historian, researcher, and interviewer. I use each throughout this dissertation, typically based on the use of the source I'm citing if I'm not referring to my own work. My preference is oral historian although there are times when this term doesn't coincide with the context of my discussion so interviewer or researcher is used. The person providing information is typically referred to as an interviewee or narrator. I prefer the term narrator as I refer to the person telling their past and narratives or stories when referring to the information that they shared. You will also see that I use the terms interview and conversation. Technically, I conducted interviews with the narrators but especially with Jennifer and Kelly, our interaction felt much more like a conversation that truly allowed me to explore their past.

²² William W. Moss, *Oral History Program Manual* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 7.

source of historical information.²³ The role of the interviewer, goes beyond asking questions. It is that of archivist as well as historian.²⁴

An oral history interview requires significant preparation such as determining whether you will ask a specific, predetermined battery of questions or a single, open-ended question. Once questions have been determined but before an interview can begin, the oral historian must identify and locate individuals who want to participate. Narrators are typically identified by a project advisory committee if the project is part of a larger organization such as union or civil rights group, however they can also be identified from professional directories, phone books, pension lists, social media, community contacts or other archival resources available that are related to the event under study. The oral historian must then build a rapport that makes the narrator feel comfortable and willing to share.

Oral historians typically agree that the interview itself should be as comfortable and relaxed as possible, like a conversation between acquaintances. In these situations, few questions are asked and the interviewer will attempt to refrain from interrupting the narrator as they tell their story. However, based on the project timeline, the rapport between the researcher and narrator, and the guidelines set by local IRBs, a more structured style may be required. Because oral history collects information, opinions, and observations that are not already available, research into the topic of study must take place prior to the first interview. There is no set number of interviews that an interviewer must conduct; the research goals will drive who and how many interviews occur. Reasonable goals must be set for the number of individuals that will be interviewed.

²³ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 9.

²⁴ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 16. See, also, Raphael Samuel, "Perils of the Transcript," *Oral History* 1, no. 2 (1972), 22.

During the interview, a recording is made of the conversation between interviewer and narrator and later a transcript is made from the recording.²⁵

Different narrators tell different types of stories that can vary significantly in terms of length and chronology. A typical oral history interview session is limited to an hour and a half to two hours and whether or not the narrator is re-interviewed often depends on the scope of the project. A life history, for example, typically documents the entirety of a narrator's life. Multiple conversations would need to occur to gain enough detail and insight to document a lifespan. An oral history documenting a single event, would likely recall less conversations with a single narrator, and instead a larger number of narrators would be sought. The interviewer often begins with key eyewitnesses and expands to include secondary or younger narrators who may have recollection of the event but were further removed from the topic of investigation.²⁶

The interview, however, is only one component of oral history. Following the interview, transcription occurs. The researcher will create a document that carefully captures the conversation that occurred between the interviewer and the narrator. Some researchers will transcribe their own interviews while others may pay a service or individual to assist with this work. The transcripts are housed securely and typically submitted to an archive as a historical records that others can use.

During and after transcription, analysis and interpretation will occur as the researcher makes sense of the information shared and writes about the experiences shared by the narrator. The historian must recognize that oral history is a performance and the meaning is not simply

²⁵ Ibid., 3.

²⁶ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 48-50.

conveyed by what is said, but also the way in which it is said. All narrators adopt a performance style when interviewed and that performance must be analyzed alongside the words the narrator uses. In the same way that a preacher, a storyteller of children's stories, or a politician performs a speech, a narrator also develops a style of narration deemed appropriate for their audience.²⁷

Grele notes that oral historians must grasp the underlying consciousness that informs oral history interviews and those individuals construct (or perform) their life histories in a way that ensures a usable past.²⁸ Like narrators, researchers also perform an identity within the context of the oral history interview. While historians have rarely tapped into performativity theory, it is applicable to the oral history interview in a variety of ways. According to performativity theory, every speech act is performed using an identity that is composed and produced by the individual. In written narrative, identity performance is practiced just like in oral histories but in the case of oral histories, the audience to which the narrator directs their story is immediately interactive. The story emerges as a result of their interactions.²⁹ To this end, oral historians who engage in multiple interviews may experience variations in the narrator's story. For each performance, narrators assess the situation and decide what they should and should not say given the variables of the social identity of the interviewer, setting, and a variety of other factors.³⁰ Careful pursuit of

²⁷ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 22.

²⁸ Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, "Oral History," in *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 1999): 234.

²⁹ Antoinette Errante, "But Sometimes You're Not Part of the Story: Oral Histories and Ways of Remembering and Telling," *Educational Researcher* 29, no. 2 (March 2000): 17. See, also, Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Constructions of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³⁰ Shopes, "Making Sense of Oral History," 8.

the variations between the interviews may lead to valuable and interesting conclusions by the researcher.³¹ These conclusions come not from a straight reading of a transcript but from analyzing and theorizing the performance of the narrator. The performance is something to be noticed and it provides the researcher with clues on how to understand the story that is told.³²

The History of Oral History

In the United States, the struggle and lives of ordinary citizens, until the present century, were given little attention in the field of history. Those in social and political positions of power retained the documents they deemed important and until public record offices were established and birth, marriage, local newspapers, and other personal records were collected, little was known of individuals without rank, high class, or a position of public importance. Once records of lay individuals began to be collected, the scope of history began to expand and economic, labor, and other personal histories began to unfold.³³ But well before modern times, oral history's roots began as a tradition of handing down information to those who followed, as a way to shape the future based upon the knowledge of the past. Thousands of years ago in the time of the Zhou dynasty (1122 – 256 BCE) in China, scribes reported the sayings of people for court historians. In the sixteenth century, during the European conquest of the Americas, oral sources were used to reconstruct the social, religious, and economic history of indigenous people beginning with the Aztecs through the time of the Incas.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., 136-137.

³² Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 140.

³³ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3-5.

³⁴ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19-20.

Early European history relied heavily on oral history. During the mid-nineteenth century, the leading historian in France and chief historical curator of the National archives wrote *History of the French Revolution (1847-1853)* by using a number of oral sources in addition to written documents. Because he was born in Paris in 1798, not long from the fall of the Bastille, he drew upon his own memory along with a wide range of oral evidence he had collected outside of Paris. He wanted to balance the written documents of officials and politicians with the oral tradition.³⁵ In Latin America, oral history has been an important part of building national identity and history. In early times, recorded interviews with political leaders were used to document their own history and traditions. Later, oral histories of those who were an integral part of the independence movement, the descendants of the original colonizers, were used to break from the colonial past.³⁶ In other less-industrialized parts of the world, the oral tradition, defined as one generation passing orally transmitted stories to another, has been equally significant. In these areas, a long history of oral literature and oral art exist, especially in non-literate and pre-literate societies.

By the late nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, oral history fell out of favor among academic historians as the movement towards scientific research gained momentum; research that could be rigorously tested, verified and counted was considered more objective and preferred in the world of research.³⁷ Leopold Von Ranke, a German historian, began to argue that the role of the historian was to show how things occurred rather than moralize the information. Many other historians enthusiastically followed his lead.³⁸ While they helped turn history from a

³⁵ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 25.

³⁶ Ivan Jaksic, "Oral History in the Americas," *Journal of American History* 79, no. 2 (September 1992): 590–591.

³⁷ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 5; and Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 21–46.

³⁸ Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds., *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 10.

literary form into an academic discipline by training historians to scrutinize documents and dismiss folklore and myth, Oral history was used sparingly over the next quarter of a century, and only then to supplement records of prominent historical figures.³⁹

Not swayed by the scientific approach, Hubert Howe Bancroft hired assistants to interview and create biographies of people living in the western part of the United States. His research resulted in a large number of dictations but also a multi-volume *History of California, 1884-1890*, that recorded the voices of Mexican military and civilian officials, along with early American settlers.⁴⁰ But Bancroft was not the only one who continued oral history despite the growing rhetoric surrounding the lack of objectivity associated with oral history. Myles Horton, co-founder of the Highlander Folk School, began to develop guidelines for working with oral histories. In 1932, he created a school for adult education in the mountains of Tennessee where attendees would have the opportunity to value and analyze their experiences. He went on to the University of Chicago where he studied social change, progressive education, and participatory democracy with Jane Addams. Highlander Folk School played an important role in the industrial union and civil rights movements. Horton, who pulled together grassroots leaders to talk about organizational difficulties and focus on their goal, valued reflection on experiences; the foundation of social transformation rested on narratives of personal experience.⁴¹ During this same period, sociologists at the University of Chicago produced a number of life histories based on fieldwork and interviewing and used these interviews to set forth a rationale for the life history

³⁹ Ellen D. Swain, "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomas (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 34.

⁴⁰ Charlton, Myers, and Sharpless, *History of Oral History*, 10.

⁴¹ Daniel R. Kerr, "Allan Nevins Is Not My Grandfather: The Roots of Radical Oral History Practice in the United States," *The Oral History Review* 43, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2016): 372-373, doi:10.1093.

method and the use of interviews to solve social problems and build history from the ground up.⁴²

Oral history began to see a resurgence in the United States. Following the advent of the tape recorder, verbal recollections became an easier task and resulted in a surge in interest in the field of journalism. Suddenly it was easy to record the voices of others and local historians took advantage of the opportunity to gather more information from individuals that had not previously shared their stories or presented their view of historical events. Allen Nevins of Columbia University called for a fuller history by creating an organization that would obtain “from the lips and papers of living Americans” in 1938. In 1948, he created the first oral history archives at Columbia, followed by Berkeley in 1954, and UCLA in 1958. Nevins and Bancroft are often acknowledged as early academic adopters or forefathers of the oral history movement in the United States, though an official organization of oral history was not formed until 1967 when the Oral History Association was founded. Meanwhile, the Harry S. Truman oral history program was inaugurated in 1960 and the use of oral history became a common practice for expanding the collections among presidential libraries.⁴³ At the same time, the civil rights movement in the United States was gaining ground and academic historians began to explore the voices of those previously marginalized and considered insignificant. Women, gays, lesbians, ethnic and racial minorities, as well as those involved in the disability rights movement were starting to be interviewed. By the 1980s, oral history had become necessary as scholars worked to uncover the histories that

⁴² David King Dunaway et al., eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 2nd ed, (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 1996), 64.

⁴³ Allan Nevins, *The Gateway to History* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company Publisher, 1938), quoted in Rebecca Sharpless, “The History of Oral History” in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, eds. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 11; and Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 22.

had previously been ignored.⁴⁴ The method became a consistent choice among historians working for social change.

Why Use the Oral Histories of Special Education Students?

Paul Thompson states that all history depends on its social purpose and when no purpose is clear or available, a history will be created.⁴⁵ Oral history allows those who lived the experience under investigation to fill in the gaps where a history may be assumed. It can provide information that historians are not otherwise able to acquire.⁴⁶ The purpose of my research is to make the traditionally marginalized special education student part of educational history. Collecting narratives of these students provides untapped information for use in the reconstruction of special education as a historical phenomenon and, particularly when coupled with written artifacts, also provides various vantage points for examining the past. Oral history will be a complement to what we know, and allows us to open new views of the past as we explore the way that experiences vary from the isolated episodes that we find in written accounts.⁴⁷ The history of special education is documented through policy records, advocacy groups, and administrative documentation; adding oral histories of the students who have participated in special education will provide a richer history of special education. To avoid the assumption that students positively or negatively experienced their education, the voice of those excluded from the printed history must be collected, catalogued, and archived, placing the people at the center of their own story. Oral

⁴⁴ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 4.

⁴⁵ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 1.

⁴⁶ William W. Moss, *Oral History Program Manual*, 8.

⁴⁷ Linda Shopes, "Making Sense of Oral History," *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/> (February 2002), 4.

history is tape-recorded historical information obtained in interviews concerning personal experiences and recollections.⁴⁸ It provides historians primary documents by preserving insights not previously gathered using existing printed material. Perhaps more importantly, it gives the non-elite and ordinary citizen the opportunity to no longer be hidden from history and instead voice their experience.⁴⁹ While this history will explore new territory, it is not intended to supplant existing historical evidence. Instead, it will supplement and expand upon what we know about in the metro-Atlanta area.

Oral history is not a new method for exploring the past. In fact, it is likely the first kind of historical inquiry, going as far back as history itself.⁵⁰ Oral history can be an instrument for change. It can transform the content and purpose of history by providing new content and context while also opening new areas of inquiry based on the information provided by the narrators. Oral history can give a central place to individuals who made and experienced the history previously recorded through other means.⁵¹ Reality is complex and oral history provides a multitude of standpoints associated with a particular period in history; it ensures that history is no longer confined to existing pages of an old book.⁵² In fact, it is the way that oral history is intrinsically different that makes it useful for historical investigation. For example, oral history provides information about illiterate people or other groups that has been missing or distorted, but does so in

⁴⁸ *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "oral history," accessed on October 29, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/oral%20history>.

⁴⁹ For more on elite/nonelite history, see Mary Lawson, "Research Design and Strategies," in *History of Oral History*, eds. Charlton, Myers, and Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 102-104.

⁵⁰ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 6.

way that goes beyond the written document. An oral source provides tone, rhythm, and social connotation that cannot be conveyed in a transcript or other written source.⁵³

In many situations, the collection of oral histories resulted in an obvious improvement to the field of traditional historical research. Beginning with economic and labor history, where oral history use has been modest in scope, the work of Elizabeth Roberts stands out as contributing to what we know about wage and work hours in two Lancashire towns due to her interview of working-class families. Her work illustrated how various factors may have been omitted from the calculation in statistical indices that informed our understanding of the standard of living in the area. Similarly, interviews conducted by Allen Nevins related to the biography of Henry Ford demonstrates how oral evidence can expand our understanding of written documents.⁵⁴ To provide a more modern example that also demonstrates how oral history can bring a new lens to what we know of a historical event, Penny Summerfield's research has opened new understandings of the Second World War's influence on gender identity while also clarifying the war's effect on women's sense of themselves.⁵⁵

There is also another side of oral history, one that speaks more to the art of oral history rather than the steps and tasks that the researcher takes. It goes beyond the tape recorder and it is the part of oral history that cannot be replicated by other methods of inquiry, making it unique and the necessary choice for this historical investigation. The use of oral history brings an under-

⁵³ Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2006), 34.

⁵⁴ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 83-84.

⁵⁵ Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; St. Martin's Press, 1998).

standing of the experience of an event, rather than just the facts and details that are typically captured in a factual account such as a news article or government document. For example, the emotion, inflection, and non-verbal communication captured during an oral history interview cannot be captured using other historical methods. More central to our practice than the production of recordings is the facilitation of dialogue and interpretative reflections on the past. By talking with the narrators, I am helping them gain historical awareness as they make meaning of their pasts. Oral history lends itself not only to documentation, but to empowerment of those traditionally marginalized such as students with disabilities in need of special education.

While no single historical work can collect the voices of everyone involved in a historical event, each voice increases our understanding of the past. When coupled with written artifacts, oral history provides untapped information for use in the reconstruction of a historical event with the benefit of vantage points that were not previously considered. After collecting the recollections of individuals that experienced special education in metro-Atlanta, I explore the way that lived experience varies from the isolated episodes that are in written documents. This process opens new views of the past.⁵⁶ Antoinette Errante noted that oral history examines history as lived experience; it also allows us to read against the documentation – to see if narrator’s histories align with what has been archived from the past.⁵⁷ Stories that reveal how a narrator perceives the past and its impact on the present are emphasized in oral history and represents an agenda of reconstruction.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁷ Errante, “But Sometimes You’re Not Part of the Story,” 18.

The desire to reconstruct history remains the most frequently cited reason for the use of oral history⁵⁸, although others use oral history for fact checking and confirming traditional sources that may contradict one another. There is recent agreement regarding the essential elements of the method and clearly identified underpinnings that draw heavily from the social history movement. Oral history is a conversation about the recent past where the historian, instead of examining artifacts, engages with those willing to share their experiences and together create a primary source born out of their collaboration.⁵⁹ The collaboration with a narrator is oral history as method, but the collaboration, interpretation, and written account also becomes the product of historical inquiry. Oral history, in short, is one way to humanize history. For the purposes of my research, oral history will be employed to ensure that the history of students in need of special education is part of the history of education in metro-Atlanta.

Margaret Winzer states that individuals with disabilities did not put their thoughts on paper and little is available from the students themselves.⁶⁰ She insists that finding who, when, and what was taught, the common substance of special education history, is related more to the conditions at work in society than it is to the unique needs of those with disabilities. Further, she asserts that the persisting and important questions in the history of special education are central to disabled children and whether they enjoyed and appreciated schooling, their parents, and the teachers who worked in the classroom.⁶¹ To date, few histories have documented the history of special education to which Winzer refers, making the need for additional research vital. In the

⁵⁸ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, xii-xiii.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 10; Ronald Grele, "Oral History as Evidence," in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, eds. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 40-41.

⁶⁰ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, xi-xiii.

⁶¹ Ibid., xi.

same way that Scott argued that a reexamination of history through the lens of women would expand the traditional notion of historical significance, including the voices of special education students in metro-Atlanta will also expand what is significant about public education in that area.⁶² The history of these students is not separate and apart from the history of education and it is important that the voice of individuals with disabilities are recorded to ensure their viewpoints are added to conventional histories.⁶³ Any history that includes special education should be inclusive of the students who received special education services.

For the purposes of my research, I focus on the oral history of special education in metro-Atlanta. The current literature and archives documenting special education's history in Georgia is laden with policy discussion. There is ample archival material documenting structural change that was required to implement special education programs in metro-Atlanta, but narratives documenting the experience itself is in poor supply. The lack of understanding of how special education programs impacted the lives of those students is, in part, due to our failure to engage in oral history research to investigate the topic. Aside from the voices of famous individuals who spoke out about parenting children with disabilities, the voice of those who lived the history of special education in Metro-Atlanta, and other regions, I suspect, is noticeably absent.⁶⁴ Hubert Howe

⁶² Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053–75.

⁶³ Jan Walmsley, "Life History Interviews with People with Learning Disabilities," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomas (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 185. Walmsley writes on the idea that individuals with disabilities are often cared for but rarely seen as caring for others. This chapter discusses why it is important to add their voice, pulling from an oral history research project that challenges the idea of dependence and allowed individuals to show ways in which they reciprocated care.

⁶⁴ During the period of 1940 to 1960, Osgood states that the recognition of the presence of persons with disabilities in society gained significant ground. During this time both Pearl Buck, author of *The Good Earth* and Dale Evans Rogers, wife of Roy Rogers, both published personal testimony about having a child with a disability. Rogers' account was told from the eyes of her deceased child who had Down Syndrome. See Chapter 5 of *The History of Special Education*, 92-95.

Bancroft once insisted that the missing element from his memoirs was the personal experience of those who settled and lived in the western United States.⁶⁵ My research will ensure the personal experience of students with disabilities is no longer a missing element.

Research Questions

One of the struggles for any historian of a particular topic, is the potential breadth and complexity of the topic. Although the history of special education is a more recent history, it is a complex history that crosses the boundaries of politics, social class, race, gender, and people who experience pieces of each or all of those identities. There is an intersection of these social constructs that come into play in this history and these factors will be examined further in future chapters. I recognize that I may aspire to one-day capture hundreds of voices, but the scope of this project was much smaller and took a regional focus. Regional histories, while smaller in scope, are essential in understanding the milieu that informed the experiences of the narrators in this study.

I explore several questions during the course of this research.

- In the metro-Atlanta area, what are students' memories of acceptance or rejection and their social position among other students?
- What do students remember and what was valuable about school? While the narrative among disability advocates has focused on the ways that students were separated or treated differently, do students share similar concerns? Are there other events that stand out, beyond those we look for as policy-makers, administrators, researchers, and teachers?
- What do students with disabilities want to share about the experience of being disabled in a school?

⁶⁵ Rebecca Sharpless, "The History of Oral History," in *The History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, eds. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Meyers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 10.

Study Overview

Following this introduction, I provide a review of literature that outlines the history of special education in the United States. I also include artifacts from the Atlanta and Georgia archives to document significant events in social, political, and educational contexts during the establishment of special education in the metro-Atlanta area. To date, a history of special education in the metro-Atlanta area has not been written; I will attempt to create a reasonable outline of the significant events captured in state policy (and local where applicable).

Chapter three focuses specifically on methods and the way I conducted my research. I also discuss the researcher's role, subjectivities, and limitations of the research. I describe the step-by-step process of conducting the research and articulate key topics of interest in oral history, including memory, objectivity, and the construction of meaning. The sampling technique used to locate and gather the voices of those who were part of the history of special education in the metro-Atlanta area is also discussed. Each step in the process will be described with significant focus on the interviews and how the narrators told their stories. I describe how I included each narrator in the process of transcribing and refining their oral history and the way that the joint process of constructing their history impacted my own interpretation of special education.

In chapter four I share the narrators' stories of their experiences in special education in the metro-Atlanta area. I arrange each narrator's recollections chronologically to show the progression of their educational experience over time. This chapter intentionally stands alone with no footnotes and no commentary. Each narrator's story is indicated by their name and begins with a direct quote that represents a powerful theme that was apparent throughout their narrative. The decision to represent their stories in this way is intentional. It allows their voice to stand alone as evidence of the history of education in metro-Atlanta.

Finally, in chapter five, I summarize the themes that were evident across the narratives, pulling directly from the experiences of each student. I discuss the elements of each narrative that speak to the research questions proposed at the beginning of this introduction. I explore the challenges of the IRB process and its effect on my research, focusing on the failure of the system to support humanistic research. In conclusion, I suggest areas for future research and outline my next steps as I continue to explore oral history and the special education in metro-Atlanta.

It is not surprising that we are missing the voices of the disabled from the history of special education as the history itself has yet to prove a popular subfield in the study of educational history. Disability has consistently been considered one of the most prevalent justifications for inequality and exclusion,⁶⁶ and whether intentional or not, this exclusion has carried over into historical inquiry. The history of women, racial and ethnic minorities, and other marginalized groups reflects the use of disability-charged language to justify opposition to equal opportunity and liberty. For example, disability was commonly implicated when discussing American slavery. African Americans, for example, were often said to lack sufficient intelligence to participate in society in the same manner as white Americans.⁶⁷ Likewise, the participation of women in social and political decision making was often questioned, citing concerns for their ability and resulting in a justification for inequality. Similar trends are evident in the history of undocumented workers who have entered the United States. The Act of 1882, one that many consider to be the foundation of modern federal immigration policy, prohibited entry to anyone deemed “unable” to care for himself or herself without becoming the responsibility of or needing assistance from the

⁶⁶ Douglas C. Baynton, “Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History,” in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, eds. Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 33.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 33-57.

community. Later, the law gave latitude to immigration officials to exclude those deemed to be “mentally or physically defective” to the extent that it “may” impact their ability to earn a living.⁶⁸ The assumptions surrounding the inabilities of students who required special instruction has carried over into the documentation of the past. If for no other reason, an oral history to document the experiences of students requiring special instruction is a necessary course of action. This is a history, not of institutions, regulations, and schools, but of people who are brave and open enough to share their personal experiences.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 45.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF DISABLED PEOPLE AND THE ORIGINS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Disability's history is as old as the human race, while "special education" is a term first used in the United States during the late 19th century by Alexander Graham Bell.⁶⁹ The two topics are far from synonymous yet they are inextricably intertwined by the social, political, and medical climate that evolved from early Roman civilization through modern times. Indicators of disability that first dictated the treatment of the disabled can be found in religious texts and informed science and those who created the first schools for the disabled. While the early literary and religious references provide little more than confirmation that disabilities existed, it is important to recognize the changing climate that has influenced special education. Although there is significant medical and philosophical thinking about people with disabilities, historians have uncovered very little beyond the structural and political histories associated with the people who embody the construct of disability.⁷⁰ That is, the following brief history is a précis for what we don't know: the student's experience.

Early evidence of the disabled, as well as teachings that document the care and concern that should be provided to individuals with disabilities, can be found in religious texts such as the Talmud and Midrash, the Old Testament, and the Qur'an.⁷¹ In fact, Hebrew law may be the first known source to suggest that needy individuals be given special treatment, based upon Hebrew scripture such as *Deuteronomy 27:18* and several passages found in the book of *Leviticus* where

⁶⁹ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 153.

⁷⁰ Leo Kanner, *A History of the Care and Study of the Mentally Retarded* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1967), 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

the deaf and blind are specifically mentioned.⁷² “Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind” (*Lev. 14:14*) and “Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way” (*Deut. 27:18*) suggest that followers refrain from cruelty. In *Mark 7:32-37*, Jesus heals the disabled; Moses proclaims himself to be impaired in an effort to make a point of his inadequacy to complete the tasks assigned by the Lord in *Exodus 4:10*.⁷³

Etymology and literature also suggests the presence of disability in very early times but demonstrates more of an aversion to people with disabling conditions. The English word “idiot” can be traced back to the early 14th century to mean a person so mentally deficient that they are incapable of reason. In Latin (12c) “*idiota*” refers to a person who is uneducated and ignorant and the Greek “*idiotes*” refers to a person lacking of any meaningful skill.⁷⁴ Similarly, the term imbecile has been used since Roman civilization by authors such as Celsus to refer to disability or mental weakness.⁷⁵ It was common for royal courts during the 17th century to keep a “fool” (*fatuus*) for entertainment as depicted in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and many other classical literary texts. “Fools” were allowed to “wander unmolested in Europe,”⁷⁶ but those with mental or physical deficiencies who were not hired by the royal courts were commonly thought of and referred to in early literature as monsters or as hideous to view.⁷⁷ Much later in 1831, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* focuses much of its story on Quasimodo who is physically deformed and

⁷² Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 19.

⁷³ Philip L. Safford and Elizabeth J. Safford, *A History of Childhood & Disability* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1996), 10.

⁷⁴ Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. “Idiot,” Accessed January 2, 2017, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=idiot>.

⁷⁵ Leo Kanner, *A History of the Care and Study of the Mentally Retarded*, 5.

⁷⁶ Martin W. Barr, *Mental Defectives: Their History, Treatment and Training* (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston’s Son & Co, 1904), 25, <http://www.archive.org/details/mentaldefective00barrgoog>.

⁷⁷ Kanner, 5.

rarely leaves the cathedral because of his monster-like appearance and the reaction of others who encounter him. Only during the festival of fools is he able to comfortably spend time outside of the cathedral. In the United States, a positive spirit towards those who were less fortunate and disabled was common in early religious texts; however, those gave way to the more prevalent negative images and attitudes that are now common in American literature. The changing view of the disabled began to shift with the period of “enlightenment and “reform” whereby reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin began to attribute physical and mental disabilities to prevailing concerns regarding demonism.⁷⁸

From the mid-15th century through the early 18th century, philanthropy, philosophy, medicine, and education brought new ideas regarding treatment of the blind, deaf and otherwise disabled to Europe. Kepler, Galileo, and Newton – all scientists turned educators – were paramount in the application of scientific thinking, and encouraged western intellectualism and the quest for knowledge and truth. Philosophers such as Hobbes, Hume, and Locke challenged previous ideas about empiricism, cause-effect relationships, and thinking that would eventually create the foundation for 19th century pedagogy that emphasized the importance of experience in education.⁷⁹ In France, Voltaire, Rollin, Condillac, and later Rousseau explored the implications of rote learning and implored teachers to recognize the individuality of students and the role of motivation in learning. Rousseau, who has been referred to as the chief architect of the French Enlightenment,⁸⁰ in particular, was adamant about the importance of sensory experience and described children as instilled with the desire to learn, yet also emphasized that certain kinds of learning

⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁹ Safford and Safford, *A History of Childhood & Disability*, 26.

⁸⁰ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 45.

were aligned to specific developmental periods.⁸¹ In fact, he published what is subtitled the first treatise on education, *Emile*, which insisted in its opening lines that children are perfect as they are made but are made worse by the hands of man. In justification of formal instruction, he continues:

Yet things would be worse without this education, and mankind cannot be made by halves. Under existing conditions, a man left to himself from birth would be more of a monster than the rest. Prejudice, authority, necessity, example, all the social conditions into which we are plunged, would stifle nature in him and put nothing in her place.⁸²

Rousseau's view, and that of his colleagues, was that individuals with disabilities were capable individuals primarily, who were in need of experiences that were personalized to their development. This belief strongly contributed to the foundation for specialized formal education, now referred to as special education.

Jean Marc Gaspard Itard was credited with investigating the “feeble-minded” and their ability rather than inability, is known for his instructional efforts to teach Victor, “the wild boy of Aveyron” around 1800. He is recognized as the first teacher of mentally disabled students in Europe. The boy “stirred the fantasy of the philosophers and the scientists of those days” and the stories of his past took on different accounts but generally he was thought to be feral; Philippe Pinel examined the boy and determined he was an idiot and likely incurable.⁸³ This conclusion was not an acceptable for Itard who believed the child's absence of language and knowledge was

⁸¹ Philip L. Safford and Elizabeth J. Safford, *A History of Childhood & Disability*, 27.

⁸² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (Lexington, KY: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2012), 1.

⁸³ Kanner, *A History of the Care and Study of the Mentally Retarded*, 12–13.

due to isolation. He worked for several years to provide stimulation and teach the skills necessary for Victor to speak, read, and write. While Victor did not progress to the level that Itard had hoped, he did advance, lending credit to Itard's methods⁸⁴ which were applauded by the French Academy and continue to be used in classrooms today.⁸⁵

In Europe, as schools for special populations were introduced, more focus was given to the deaf and blind than individuals with physical disabilities. Although there was an established history of individual teachers, doctors, and researchers who had reported on their work with special populations, schools that tailored instruction to the needs of the deaf and blind were not formally established until the mid-to-late 18th century. In Paris, Charles-Michel de l'Épée is recognized for founding the first school for the deaf, and later Valentin Haüy, inspired by l'Épée, established the Royal Institution for the Young Blind in 1784.⁸⁶ These schools, and others that followed reportedly found inspiration in the work of an exiled Spanish Jew, Jacob Rodrigues Péreire, whose name was originally Giacomo Rodriguez Pereira. He was the first professional teacher of deaf students in France and owed much of his philosophical underpinnings about alleviating deafness to Rousseau, and Pereire focused heavily on individual instruction and systematic training.⁸⁷ He was credited with being one of the founders of the manual alphabet and for teaching one of the deaf-mutes to speak.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Anthony F. Rotatori, Festus E. Obiakor, and Jeffrey P. Bakken, eds., "The Emergence of Specialized Interventions, Programs, Schools and Institutions," in *History of Special Education*, vol. 21, Advances in Education (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2011), 5.

⁸⁵ Safford and Safford, *A History of Childhood & Disability*, 28.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁷ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 47.

⁸⁸ Leo Kanner, *A History of the Care and Study of the Mentally Retarded*, 9.

Based on the work of his teacher Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, Edward Seguin established a private school in Paris in 1837 to educate the idiot.⁸⁹ He revised and modified the methods he had learned and focused intently on teaching his students, resulting in 1842 in his appointment to the directorship of the school for idiots at Bicêtre, which was presided over by the head of the Lunatic Asylums of France. He was lauded by the French Academy of Sciences but his tenure lasted barely a year and he was let go due to conflicts with administration. From then until his death he carried out work with students independently in preparation for his publication, *Théorie et pratique de l' éducation des idiots*.⁹⁰ His work, and that of Itard represent the medical and rehabilitative models of disability that are prevalent in existing historical volumes on special education. Itard, like his mentor Condillac, believed that input or the provision of sensory experience could awaken intelligence, while Seguin demonstrated an intermediate step between the ideas of Itard and Locke: Individuals are born as a blank slate and sensory input is indeed required, but there is a level of faculty needed in order interpret and internalize the external stimulation provided by sensory education.⁹¹

During the early American national period in the United States, the professionalization and expansion of medicine that was occurring in Europe was also evident in the U.S. as it organized and established roots as an independent nation. Physicians became more prevalent and skilled medical practitioners without a formal education, such as female midwives, were no longer welcome in many aspects of diagnosis and treatment. Increasingly, diagnostic conclusions

⁸⁹ Barr, *Mental Defectives: Their History, Treatment and Training*, 33.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 33–34.

were the justification for inequality; women, for instance, were unable to access higher education, or vote in elections, nor did they have the right to own property due to evolving medical “expertise” regarding women’s biological inferiority.⁹² The normalization of the human body and behavior, and consequently the acknowledgment of abnormalities, led to increasing paternalism and created structural and social classifications heavily informed by medical impairment. Private groups quickly established insane asylums and schools for the deaf, blind, feeble-minded, and idiots and justified the separate facilities through religious reform efforts that emphasized good work and human redemption.⁹³

The nation’s first disability-specific institution in the United States was established in 1817 by Louis Laurent Marie Clerc and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet as the Hartford Asylum for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, and was renamed the American Asylum for the Deaf in 1821.⁹⁴ The two arrived only a year earlier on the *Mary Augusta* in the New York harbor but came specifically with the intent of creating instruction for the deaf in the United States. As Clerc explained, the asylum would single handedly transform those who were destined to be an unfortunate class of people into redeemed men.⁹⁵ He had once been a student at the national school for the deaf in Paris; this new school and many others were guided by the flood of evangelical Protestantism in the United States. Teachers, including Clerc, hoped to use sign language to share Christianity with those who had been excluded from its teachings.⁹⁶ There was

⁹² Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, 66.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Safford and Safford, *A History of Childhood & Disability*, 61; and Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, 67.

⁹⁵ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 82–83; and Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, 67.

⁹⁶ Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, 67.

little in the way of institutions for the disabled when he arrived, however, over the course of the next fifty years, a healthy number of institutions devoted to the treatment and care of the disabled would emerge.⁹⁷

In the early 19th century in the United States, rapid acceleration towards modern special education began to occur. By way of reformers who had traveled the Atlantic to bring Christianity, Americans learned of the success of French instructional methods and the British charity schools. Citizens quickly organized to create plans for an institutional complex to care for orphaned children, indigent children, and those whom medical science had deemed impaired.⁹⁸ At the same time, industrialization had kicked into motion and factories, mines, and mills in need of workers began to flourish. The population of the United States changed drastically between 1800 and 1900 and urbanization expanded at a faster rate than any other time in American history between 1820 and 1860.⁹⁹ By the turn of the twentieth century, nearly 50% of the population had moved to urban areas.¹⁰⁰ Americans moved from an agrarian lifestyle to industrialized areas where jobs were plentiful. Meanwhile a large number of individuals from the British Isles, Ireland, and Europe were relocating to the country. The institutions for orphans and the disabled became increasingly important as many of the immigrants entering the country brought dysentery and typhus, resulting in death or lasting conditions impaired as a result of sickness.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 83.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 87–88.

⁹⁹ David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 30.

¹⁰⁰ Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 186.

¹⁰¹ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 89; and Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education, the Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980*, 1st ed (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 21.

Urbanization and industrialization also led to social unrest and a stratification of class. Owners of factories became the wealthy, the working middle class was established through the increase of skilled labor jobs resulting from industrialization, and immigrants made up the poor (but often working) class of people in the United States. The booming economy and need for laborers created an interest in children as workers and factories employed anyone capable of work to ensure economic progress. Owners realized that even children with intellectual retardation were capable of performing work, and it was widely assumed that they were better off as a result – better fed, better clothed, and no longer in the confines of the institution.¹⁰² These labor practices led to significant exploitation of children for the purposes of wealth, and those without families or with impoverished families who were unable to provide a high standard of care, were often worked to the point of crippling illness and sometimes, death. Slums, unemployment, and vagrancy among children were on the rise as were the problems of crime and delinquency.¹⁰³ In response to the unfavorable working conditions and in an attempt to restore social stability, civic, religious, and philanthropic leaders established both public and private institutions to rehabilitate and set an example for charity that should be provided to those less fortunate.¹⁰⁴ The Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb stressed the importance of rescuing the deaf by providing the “truth of Jesus” while the institutions for the blind that were established between 1830 and 1860 frequently cited education as required to ensure that students were rescued from idleness and solitude.¹⁰⁵ Establishments similar to schools for the deaf and

¹⁰² Safford and Safford, *A History of Childhood & Disability*, 59.

¹⁰³ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 89.

¹⁰⁴ Osgood, *The History of Special Education*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

blind surfaced in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Connecticut, and Kentucky to provide treatment and services for “feeble-minded children and adults.”¹⁰⁶ American treatment and education of mental illness mirrored the work of Pinel and other French and European physicians; the establishment of European schools and American institutions had obvious similarities.¹⁰⁷

The Rise of Institutions for the Mentally Retarded

State institutions for the mentally retarded began to arise as modern psychiatry in America made a shift from thinking of mental illness as incurable to highly-curable during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Described by Deutsch as an “over-optimistic notion” accepted by an “uncritical generation,” the “white lie” of curability grew out claims that high percentages of cases admitted to state hospitals had recovered under the care of prominent physicians across the United States.¹⁰⁸ The movement began with the erection of the State Lunatic Hospital in Worcester in 1833 following a committee investigation appointed by the Massachusetts legislature on the heels of comments made by Horace Mann in 1828 that the insane were wards of the state. This committee reported horrible conditions for the mentally ill and insisted that most were confined in jails and workhouses and suffered from extreme neglect.¹⁰⁹ Following a similar investigation, the state of New York heard the pleas of three governors to provide for the insane, each denouncing the state’s tendency to incarcerate the mentally ill or sell the poor at public auction.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 109; and Osgood, *The History of Special Education*, 25.

¹⁰⁸ Albert Deutsch, *The Mentally Ill in America: A History of Their Care and Treatment from Colonial Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937/2014), 132-136.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 137.

While they effectively pointed out the defective nature of the current system, the financial crisis of 1834 and following severe economic depression stalled the opening of a state hospital for the insane until 1843 in Utica, New York.¹¹⁰ Horace Mann's intent when he announced that "the insane are the wards of the state" on the floor of the Massachusetts legislature was that the state had an obligation to see to it that the insane received care in places designated for their care, but the places of care need not be built by or overseen by the state – it was not until later that states began to supervise the care given to the insane.¹¹¹ State hospitals were often privately run but publically funded – the state's obligation was to have a hospital for the insane and the funds to do so were provided. Initially, given the prevailing belief that mental illness was curable, one hospital per state was seen as sufficient to meet the needs of the insane but these hospitals in all but the most rural of areas were soon over-taxed by the infusion of patients that began to arrive. In turn, a practice of admitting only those who were deemed curable became prevalent and all others were sent to jails or other shelters for the poor. There became a significant divide between the number of cases treated and the number turned away as the number of cases of mentally ill patients began to rapidly increase between 1840 and 1890. Whether these cases were the result of better record keeping, better diagnosis and classification, or whether mental illness was truly occurring with a much more alarming frequency remains unknown.¹¹² The result of the population boom in insane citizens was a rapid expansion of asylums from one hospital per state to multiple in the populated of areas to ensure that even those deemed incurable received care; one of the most notable being the Willard Asylum named for Dr. Sylvester D. Willard of the New York

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 139.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 229.

¹¹² Ibid., 231–32.

Medical Society in 1865. In 1866 California followed suit, as did Rhode Island in 1870, and Connecticut and Illinois in 1877.¹¹³

Southern institutions began to surface in tandem with the urbanization and industrialization that was prevalent during first two decades of the twentieth century. The immediate and significant increase in population led to a shift in southern social structures, and public concerns regarding vagrancy, crime, prostitution and immorality were increasing. In the court of public opinion, “mental defectives” were viewed as primary contributors to the rise of immoral behaviors and as an imminent threat to traditional southern values.¹¹⁴ The rapid succession of institutions that followed were largely informed by state surveys conducted by northern philanthropic organizations such as the Russell Sage Foundation and the National Committee on Mental Hygiene for the purpose of identifying the number of mentally deficient citizens and cataloguing the services available by state. Russell Sage, founded for the purpose of improving social living conditions in the United States,¹¹⁵ provided several of the surveys used as a basis for the formation of southern institutions. Between 1917 and 1921, four major surveys were conducted by Hastings Hart, a man who served as director of Russell Sage’s Child Helping Division following his work as an ordained minister, clerk in the Indian Service, and secretary of the Minnesota State Board of Charities. Mr. Hart believed that feeble-minded persons should be restricted from reproducing in an effort to cut off the possibility of birthing additional feeble-minded people.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Ibid., 236–43.

¹¹⁴ Steven Noll, *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst: Institutions for the Mentally Retarded in the South, 1900-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 11–13.

¹¹⁵ <https://www.russellsage.org/about/history>

¹¹⁶ Noll, *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst*, 15–16.

The underpinnings of southern institutions were born out of the surveys conducted by the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH), using money granted from the Rockefeller Foundation to establish a record of the prevalence of feeble-mindedness, particularly in the South where the network of institutions was underdeveloped. By 1920, at the cost of nearly \$100,000, surveys had been conducted in Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee and resulted in seed money for the states of Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee to develop their network of institutions for the feeble-minded.¹¹⁷ The social surveys laid the groundwork in the South for new social policy as they compared the numbers of feeble-minded citizens and their problems to other social problems of concern to southerners. They were simultaneously portrayed as unfortunate but also as catalysts for the problems of poverty, theft, and diminishing social values. The contradiction of the two versions of feeble-minded citizens enabled admission of those deemed defective to institutions for the purpose of protecting the community, but also to protect those who may not be able to take care of themselves; reformers insisted that institutional care was the right move as it addressed the needs of citizens and of the disabled.¹¹⁸

By the 1920s, intelligence testing was widely used for the classification of feeble-minded individuals. The care and treatment of these individuals ranged from institutionalization, incarceration, colony-style living, special education, and sterilization with institutionalization being the most prevalent by mid-century.¹¹⁹ Progress in human genetics during this time led to eugenic sterilization as a method to control feeble-mindedness, particularly in the South where negative opinions remained regarding special populations such as women, blacks, and those with criminal

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 16–17.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 20–25.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 27–28.

records. Harsher treatment was used, particularly sterilization, in the case of women and blacks. In fact, Hastings Hart of the Russell Sage Foundation felt that feeble-minded girls were of great concern and called for their segregation and priority admission to institutions – a practice established by institutions in Virginia and North Carolina.¹²⁰

The Common School Movement

Meanwhile the government, in search of organizational solutions for the large numbers of children in need of a moral and technical education, the national common school movement began in 1837. Many states, particularly in the northeast had already created local systems designed to provide an education for children but the growing desire to eliminate pluralism and establish common social and economic goals inspired a system that would uniformly drive the country towards prosperity. Designed to provide an elementary-level education to all students, the common school movement was embraced most openly in urban areas where industrialization began to require a higher level of education and sentiments that immigrants needed to learn American values were prevalent. Teachers faced large classes of students and were expected to instill moral teachings and guide students in learning to read; reading and rote recitation was also common.¹²¹ Horace Mann, who had already served as an attorney and republican senator in favor of social reforms such as temperance, institutions for the insane, and alternatives to debtors' prison, was named the superintendent of the Massachusetts Board of Education. He worked for twelve years in this role, earning him the title of "father of the common school."¹²² In 1853, Samuel Gridley

¹²⁰ Ibid., 15–16.

¹²¹ Urban and Wagoner, Jr., *American Education*, 113.

¹²² Ibid., 117-118.

Howe, a social reformer and early supporter of special education in America, identified existing institutions for the deaf, dumb, blind, and feeble minded as necessary to ensure that all children across the state were embraced by the common school movement; it was his efforts that convinced the state legislature to address the needs of disabled children.¹²³ While the common school was not employed uniformly across the United States, many of the values carry on in today's public schools, including the idea that education should be free and open to all, and that teachers should be well-suited to caring for children and well prepared for any and all enter their classroom.¹²⁴ As centralized control over schools would grow in the coming years, so would the variety of pupils, their social and socioeconomic status, as well as their level of ability and disability.

The desire for social efficiency began to encroach upon the common school system as progressive school administrators believed that the missing aspect of the system was the lack of training for jobs that required specialized manpower and a high level of academic pursuits that were failing the variety of children who were flooding schools during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹²⁵ The push to modernize the existing system of schools looked towards scientific explanations for the needs of children, namely in the form of IQ testing. The results of these tests channeled pupils into tracks of education that were designed to produce the best citizenry for an industrial and modernizing nation.¹²⁶ Tracking students increased the amount of record keeping required and the cost of education began to increase. In 1910, schools

¹²³ Osgood, *The History of Special Education*, 8.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 135. For more on the lack of interest in the common school movement in the south, see also ch. 5 in Urban and Waggoner, Jr., *American Education*.

¹²⁵ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 180.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 180–181; 188.

cost twice as much as in 1900 and three times as much in 1890. Compulsory attendance laws were not new to the public school system, in fact many date back to times prior to the common schools, however, they became increasingly effective during the early years of the twentieth century as state aid was tied to daily attendance, leading school officials to pursue truant children.¹²⁷ To address the growing need to address difficult students that resulted from increased attendance requirements, special classes, curriculum, and promotion standards were created.¹²⁸ While not all of these special classes and programs were aimed at disabled students, many were, and the establishment of these separate tracks for students began a practice of segregating students that would be especially evident across populations of disabled students well into the twentieth century.

With the influx of so many children, exclusion suddenly became the means to bring about school order. When compulsory attendance laws were established, teachers and administrators were not eager to accept students from working class families that had previously found work alongside their families out of the desire for wealth or out of necessity.¹²⁹ Eventually, teachers began to express frustration over the requirement to teach so many students with such a wide variety of needs. Tropea reports that evidence of exclusionary practices led to threats of funding loss in Philadelphia where it was identified that schools were excluding students that were difficult to teach.¹³⁰ Tyack and Tropea report exclusion and tracking in public schools following the enactment of wide-spread compulsory attendance rules, and in both cases, they refer to students with behavioral challenges or behavior that would otherwise be unacceptable in the classroom.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 183.

¹²⁸ Joseph L. Tropea, "Bureaucratic Order and Special Children: Urban Schools, 1890s-1940s," *History of Education Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 29–30.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 31.

Public Law (P.L. 94-142) – A Movement to Make Education Accessible for the Disabled

Between 1940 and 1960, the increased public presence of people with disabilities had a profound impact on the public's awareness of the skills of people with disabilities. President John F. Kennedy, whose sister Rosemary was born with "mental retardation," supported programs for the disabled. Although he was not president for long, his administration championed several initiatives to enhance the lives of the disabled.¹³¹ As service men left to fight in WWII, disabled people fulfilled vacant domestic jobs with satisfactory performance while veterans who sustained disabilities during their time in combat returned in need of jobs.¹³² Families with children with disabilities felt more empowered to speak out in favor of their children's needs and stories of life with disabled children began to appear in popular magazines. One example, "The Child Who Never Grew," by Pearl Buck was published as a series of articles in *Ladies Home Journal*.¹³³ The civil rights movement began to take shape and parents began to organize and advocate for the needs of their children. In November of 1975, in the wake of the civil rights movement, congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This act required that all states receiving federal funds provide equal access to public education for children with disabilities that was equal to their nondisabled peers, and in the same environment as their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible.¹³⁴ PL94-142 further expanded

¹³¹ Osgood, *The History of Special Education*, 100.

¹³² Ibid., 93.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. 20 USC 1401 § 1971. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act is also known as EHA and Public Law (PL)94-142. I will use these interchangeably throughout the length of this history.

PL93-380 (The Education Amendments of 1974), which established the need for educational programs for the disabled but provided no means for enforcing the mandate.¹³⁵ The legislation came in response to parent organizations across the country that were pushing for educational rights for their disabled children, but also to put forth guidelines in support of local boards. Teachers, many of whom spoke loudly about the lack of instructional support teachers were getting, were upset by the changing landscape of the general classroom and the wide range of student needs they were expected to address. Professional development programs aimed at identification and diagnosis as well as teaching strategies had been established some thirty years prior, however, their availability was limited to those in larger cities with larger universities such as Boston, New York, and Los Angeles.¹³⁶ In more rural areas, local systems developed training programs to educate teachers to deal with children who struggled to adjust their behavior to meet the needs of the general classroom environment. Various cities and states across the country had already created differentiated classes for students with learning differences. However, there was little consistency across states or even within states that had established special programs. In addition to the pressure placed by teachers and parent organizations, courts also played a significant role in the shaping of educational policy. Following the *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* decision in 1954 when disability joined race and gender as categories needing protection under the law, a number of high profile court cases followed that firmly grounded the rights of disabled children. Namely, *PARC v Pennsylvania*, which gave “retarded” children the right to attend school and overturned a prior law prohibiting children from attending school unless they

¹³⁵ The Education Amendments of 1974, 20 USC § 513 of P.L. 93-380.

¹³⁶ Osgood, *The History of Special Education*, 52.

had attained a mental age of 5; *Wyatt v. Stickney*, which found that institutionalized individualized individuals had a constitutional right to treatment that would aid them in returning to society; *Larry P. v. Riles*, which ruled on the cultural bias in IQ testing that led to over-identification of African American students as mentally retarded; and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*, which found that students with disabilities had the right to a free education even if they could not afford the one that was offered.¹³⁷ In the late 1970s - 1980s, professional organizations and advocacy groups that had formed to protect children during the 1960s and 1970s began a movement to ensure that all people with disabilities, not simply children, had equal access to the workplace, public and private facilities. Since that time, PL 94-142 has been reauthorized several times and currently offers a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities, due process rights for parents who disagree with educational decisions, the right for parents to participate in educational decision-making, and transition services to ensure that the disabled are able to move to supported or independent working and living arrangements, or post-secondary educational institutions following public school graduation.

Special Education in Atlanta and Surrounding Areas

Services for mental illness and other disabilities began nearly thirty years prior to the mandate for a comprehensive school system for the state's white children in 1866 with the establishment of Central State Hospital. The same social reform interests that later inspired the implementation of a free system of schools for children inspired greater governmental assistance for those with mental health conditions.¹³⁸ On December 28, 1837, the Georgia legislature passed a

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹³⁸ Denise S. Mewborn, "Public Education (PreK-12)." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. (September 16, 2014). Accessed on October 25, 2014. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/education/public-education-prek-12>

bill introduced by Judge Iverson Harris to create a “State Lunatic, Idiot, and Epileptic Asylum” near the state’s capital. The facility’s construction was completed and the first patient admitted in late 1842.¹³⁹ According to hospital records, the age of the first thirty-three patients ranged from twenty to ninety years of age with most patients falling between the ages of twenty and sixty.¹⁴⁰ The public backed having a separate system of supports for those who needed additional medical and therapeutic attention. Social attitudes and power dynamics played a role in the support for a hospital to help those who were “feeble-minded” or “idiots” as a survey in 1895 of asylums in eight states including Georgia and the District of Columbia accepted patients regardless of race but segregated them within their facilities.¹⁴¹ These attitudes, along with the success of separate facilities for the mentally insane at removing undesired individuals from the population, likely set the tone for the creation of separate schools for those with disabling conditions.

Not long after the creation of the state’s mental hospital, Georgia began to create schools to educate white children with disabling conditions that prevented their attendance in the local schools that were being built in many cities across the state. In 1846, O.P. Fannin established a residential facility in Cave Spring, Georgia to educate students who were unable to hear and required sign language in order to be educated. At the time of the school’s inception, in a log cabin on the campus of Hearn Academy, the school had four students in attendance.¹⁴² In 1851, the

¹³⁹ Peter Cranford, *But for the Grace of God: The Inside Story of the World’s Largest Insane Asylum* (Milledgeville, GA: Old Capital Press, 2008), 11-12; Payne, David H. "Central State Hospital," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, (September 3, 2014.) Accessed on October 25, 2014. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/education/public-education-prek-12>. Milledgeville was the state’s second capital from 1804 to 1868 following Louisville and preceding Atlanta.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-24.

¹⁴¹ Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, 92.

¹⁴² E-Peachy News for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, “Deaf History,” E-Peachy News, <http://www.epeachynews.org/deaf-history/#sthash.mTJDkBNg.dpbs> (accessed October 25, 2014).

Georgia Academy for the Blind was created after a meeting of citizens who reported that between “two hundred twenty and two hundred thirty blind persons, ... the larger part of whom have not even the rudiments of a mental education...” were citizens of Georgia who were “as a class, the most absolute drones in society.” This group of citizens, who also created a committee to oversee the creation of a school for the blind, reported that other states in their efforts to educate the blind has shown that this need not be the case because blind individuals could be “cultivated to the highest degree of refinement” and could enjoy all pleasures with the exception of those requiring sight.¹⁴³ The state school for the visually impaired formally opened its doors with four “unfortunate” students later in the same year.¹⁴⁴ The Atlanta area school for the deaf later opened in Clarkston, Georgia in 1972 as a day program to serve students in the Atlanta area. Today, these three schools remain as Georgia’s only state operated schools for the disabled.

In the years between 1846 when the School for the Deaf opened in Cave Spring and the passage of PL94-142 in 1975, Georgia expanded its public school system. Until 1975, there remained few requirements for states and local communities to educate the handicapped beyond the opinion of local citizens who were connected to the effort out of advocacy for a loved one who was affected by a disabling condition. Local women’s groups often dedicated their time to social welfare efforts of interest; in Atlanta, the Junior Women’s league served as a surrogate for educating disabled children in the absence of a federal or local requirement to do so. In the 1920s the league engaged in “social case work” at the Grant Park School to assist with contacting and supporting families of truant children. Late in 1921 the League raised funds to provide lunch for

¹⁴³ Georgia Academy for the Blind, “Origin and History of the Georgia Academy for the Blind,” with documents from the beginning, 1851 to 1887 (Macon: Burke and Co. Printers and Binders, 1887), 5-8.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

children in “the special class” at the Luckie Street School.¹⁴⁵ Continuing their commitment to needy children, the Atlanta Junior League minutes also reflect a joint effort with the local Rotary Club and Anti-Tuberculosis Association to help the Atlanta Board of Education in establishing an open-air school for children with anemia. Although this project never came to fruition, it continues to support the notion of an interest in assisting those with disabling conditions and it may be the earliest example of their assistance to disabled children in Atlanta.¹⁴⁶ While other examples of the early work of the Atlanta Junior League such as a book distribution program to ensure that these children also received adequate reading materials can be documented throughout the 1920’s, by the 1930s,¹⁴⁷ these programs had dwindled in scope as they turned their attention towards assisting with the various needs of local medical facilities – primarily the Egleston charity ward and a clinic located at Atlanta’s Grady Hospital.¹⁴⁸ As reported by the 1936-1937 annual report of the Junior League, the chapter also began to sponsor a project by the Family Welfare Society aimed at providing guidance to families that needed assistance in managing children with behavioral difficulties.

In 1936, a lady named Katherine Cathcart Hamm arrived in Atlanta and became involved with the Atlanta chapter of the Junior League. Ms. Hamm relocated to Atlanta from St. Louis, via Birmingham, Alabama, after marrying a surgeon by the name of William Hamm. Ms. Hamm

¹⁴⁵ Franklin, “Women’s Voluntarism, Special Education, and the Junior League, 419.

¹⁴⁶ Barry E. Franklin, *From “Backwardness” to “At-Risk”: Childhood Learning Difficulties and the Contradictions of School Reform* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 84.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁴⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, December 14, 1937. See Also Franklin, *From Backwardness to At-Risk*, 85.

had taught at the Central Institute for the Deaf where her son had been enrolled in the oral program.¹⁴⁹ Ms. Hamm became a member of the Atlanta chapter of the Junior League and joined Louise Davison, a speech teacher in the Atlanta area, as a volunteer at the Baby Clinic at Central Presbyterian Church which operated as the only free facility for speech correction. In May of 1937, Catherine Hamm brought four children whom she had been working with to Junior League meeting and urged the group to consider speech correction as a new and innovative project towards which they could focus their efforts. Because Ms. Hamm and Ms. Ms. Davison were the only volunteers, they could not possibly support the number of deaf and speech impaired children in need of assistance.¹⁵⁰ While the Atlanta Public School system had a class for deaf children established prior to the establishment of the Atlanta Junior League, the program did not provide speech correction as confirmed in the 1938 report to the Board of Education given by the city's lip reading teacher, Belle McConnell. In this report, Ms. McConnell reported the need for additional speech training as deaf children with and without speech were placed in one classroom, which led to deterioration of the skills of those who did have speaking ability. In the same report, Ms. McConnell also reported that there were additional children with speech intelligibility issues who were not deaf or placed in her class, and therefore, were not receiving support to remedy their disability.¹⁵¹ The Atlanta Junior League responded by creating a committee to investigate how they could assist the clinic that later recommended a contribution of \$1500 to

¹⁴⁹ "Biographical Note on Catherine Cathcart Hamm," Atlanta Speech School Collection, Box 2, Folder 9; and "Atlanta's First Lady," *Junior League Magazine*, March 1947, Atlanta Speech School Collection, Box 1, Folder 5.

¹⁵⁰ Franklin, *From "Backwardness" to "At-Risk,"* 86-87.

¹⁵¹ Atlanta Board of Education, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1937 – 1938*, Box 111, Atlanta Public Schools Archive, Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library.

pay for the salary of a teacher to work at the facility.¹⁵² Hamm believed that if these children were not offered an opportunity, they would become charity cases for life instead of “wage earners and useful citizens.” The Atlanta Junior League clearly agreed as their contributions grew over time.¹⁵³ Because there was a close association between the Atlanta Speech School and children with other handicapping conditions vis-à-vis the efforts and connections of the Atlanta Speech School, a wide-range of children were historically enrolled to receive service at the school well into the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁵⁴

The Atlanta Junior League began to demonstrate some uneasiness about their connection to a permanent establishment during the 1950s. During a speech to the Junior League of Knoxville, Tennessee, Hamm is reported to say that such efforts as the speech school belonged to the educators who were trained to teach and described the school as a service began by the Atlanta league due to the public school’s unwillingness or inability to address the needs of the children in the area. At this point, she began to see the work of the League as operating the school to develop community support and then encouraging the local public to advocate for this responsibility to move to the educational system.¹⁵⁵

During the mid-1960s, the Atlanta board of education voted to establish a center for students with learning disabilities. The superintendent at that time, John Letson, expressed concern for children who were not really handicapped but struggled to read.¹⁵⁶ Until this time, classes

¹⁵² A Handwritten Report, Atlanta Speech School Collection, and *Minutes of the Junior League of Atlanta*, May 28, 1937; March 1, 1938; March 29, 1938; April 1, 1938, Box 22, Folder 3, Atlanta Junior League Collection.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, Atlanta School of Speech Correction Collection.

¹⁵⁴ Franklin, *From ‘Backwardness’ to ‘At-Risk,’* 91-93.

¹⁵⁵ Katherine Hamm, Speech (untitled) to the Junior League of Knoxville, Tennessee, May 1, 1956, 1-2, Atlanta Speech School Collection, Box 1, Folder 8.

¹⁵⁶ Franklin, *From ‘Backwardness’ to ‘At-Risk,’* 79.

were offered for those children with extreme behavioral or mental challenges, but little was offered outside of private philanthropic efforts, such as the School for Speech Correction, to assist those children with learning challenges.¹⁵⁷ The program established would offer programs for children in elementary school who were selected by their teachers due to their struggles to read, communicate, and write, and they would remain there until it was determined they would be successful with their peers in the regular classroom setting.¹⁵⁸ While this classroom, located at the Whittaker Center, enhanced the city's capacity to offer programs to struggling learners, its establishment cannot be attributed to the public school system of Atlanta alone, as we must recall that the plight to educate struggling learners was born out of the efforts of the Atlanta Junior League, beginning with the opening of the School for Speech Correction in 1938. Only after Hamm reportedly struggled to provide a sound admissions process and proper administration of the School for Speech, did Atlanta public schools become involved.¹⁵⁹ This school initially received most of its support from the Atlanta Public School system, but later Superintendent John Letson recommended that running its own speech correction program would create a savings of \$416 per child in need.¹⁶⁰

During the time that services for students with disabilities were beginning to flourish under the surrogacy of the Atlanta Junior Women's league, Georgia was threatening to dismantle its existing public school system out of strong resistance to the federal court's involvement in local education which escalated in 1954. The United States Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs.*

¹⁵⁷ Atlanta Board of Education, *Minutes*, April 8, 1966, 71:3, 40, Atlanta Public School Archive.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

¹⁵⁹ Franklin, *From Backwardness to At-Risk*, 80, 97-98.

¹⁶⁰ Barry Franklin, "Women's Voluntarism, Special Education, and the Junior League: 'social Motherhood' in Atlanta, 1916-1968." *History of Education* 29, no. 5 (2000): 425.

Board of Education that separate but equal must come to an end and all schools must immediately desegregate. The state legislature declared the decision null and state leadership made it clear that Georgia may have public or private schools but it would never agree to desegregated schools.¹⁶¹ In the late 1950s, a resolution was passed to keep schools open and allow local municipalities to make independent decisions about how and when they decided to respond. In the early 1960s schools in Atlanta, Athens, Savannah, and Brunswick began to desegregate and in the 1970s segregated public schools were dismantled, short of local policies created by some areas to have segregated academies.¹⁶²

The growing influence of federal government was in full effect by this time and local boards were beginning to enact policy to ensure equal rights for all. In 1964, the state of Georgia passed a resolution allowing local funds to be used for the establishment of special classes to encourage local systems to set up programs for children who were learning disabled.¹⁶³ Seeing the opportunity to receive additional funding, the Atlanta Public Schools' board voted to create the Wittaker Center for Learning Problems within the recently closed Wittaker Elementary School. The children who would attend this school were not necessarily handicapped but their learning needs distracted the teacher's attention from other children in the classroom.¹⁶⁴ Programs such as

¹⁶¹ Numan V. Bartley, *The Creation of Modern Georgia*, 2nd ed. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), 207.

¹⁶² Mewborn, Denise S. "Public Education (PreK-12)." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. 16 September 2014. Web. 25 October 2014.

¹⁶³ State of Georgia, Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, *Minimum Foundation Program of Education Act* (No. 523), vol. 1, (1964), 19.

¹⁶⁴ Franklin, *Women's Voluntarism*, 425-426.

these were common in the years following compulsory schooling laws when local boards struggled to strike a balance between educating all students and responding to the concerns of teachers who suddenly faced the challenges of struggling learners.¹⁶⁵

During the years directly proceeding PL94-142, Georgia operated programs for special children mostly in the form of separate schools and programs that were located outside of the community public school. As early as the 1920s, there is evidence of special classes in Atlanta Public Schools, although these classes appear to be for children who failed to fit the mold of up-standing middle class children who had traditionally attended school.¹⁶⁶ In 1972, just three years prior to the passing of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act, the Georgia General Assembly finally created a program for children with severe emotional needs called the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Services. The purpose of the program was to serve students with severe emotional disorders who otherwise would be placed in a “higher cost” residential setting.¹⁶⁷ As argued elsewhere, it appears that turn-of-the-century attendance legislation and lack of funds to support special programs created a level of uneasiness for states who were forced to comply with rules that teachers were unwilling or unable to support. These differences were resolved through the creation of special classes and special programs for specific children.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Tropea, “Bureaucratic Order and Special Children: Urban Schools, 1890s to 1940s, 31-32.

¹⁶⁶ Barry Franklin mentions the special class at Luckie Street and reports that the annual report of the Atlanta Women’s League mentioned that poor nutrition was likely the reason for the children who were enrolled in the class as creating a free meal program restored many of the children to a level capable of rejoining their general classroom peers. See Franklin, *Women’s Voluntarism, Special Education, and the Junior League*, 420.

¹⁶⁷ Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts - Performance Audit Operations, “Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Supports (GNETS),” Georgia Association of Homes and Services for Children, <http://www.gahsc.org/nm/2010/educational%20and%20therapeutic%20support%20-%20gnets%5B1%5D.pdf>. Hereafter I will refer to this program by its standard acronym, GNETS.

¹⁶⁸ Tropea, *Bureaucratic Order*, 52-53.

Although the United States Congress had passed PL 94-142 in November of 1975, and many public schools across the country had given attention to the establishment of some sort of education for disabled students,¹⁶⁹ educational change in Georgia was slow to come for students with disabilities that were not severely disabled or exhibiting severe behavioral challenges that were deemed inappropriate for the general classroom setting. While regulatory language was included in January of 1976, state board of education minutes show little discussion of the new mandate until nearly six months following the signing of the All Handicapped Children's Education Act. In the early part of 1976, the Georgia board of education was still touting the benefit of separate schools. On April 8, 1976, Mr. Ernest Whaley, member of the state board, gave an Ad Hoc committee report on the regional meeting of the National Association of State Boards of Education in Washington. In concluding his report, he mentioned that he had also visited the state school for the blind just prior to the meeting and he reported, "it would be good for everybody to visit a school in the state that serves students with special needs".¹⁷⁰ The idea of special education was beginning to take hold, in a sense, but continued to be focused on the most obviously disabled; provisions for students who struggled to learn but were outwardly "normal" were still receiving little instructional or therapeutic attention. In August of 1976, Georgia began to revise state regulatory guidelines, apparently in response to newly gained perspective on the funding ratios tied to the nearly year old legislation. According to board minutes, the move to revise regulations was based upon the need to restructure budgets and local policy in a way that would facilitate the allocation of resources to special programs. None of the changes discussed at the state board level were based on specific concern for the children with disabilities. As recorded in the

¹⁶⁹ Osgood, *The History of Special Education*, 89.

¹⁷⁰ Georgia Board of Education, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – April 8th, 1976*, 1, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028.

minutes, the original regulations for the state's special programs were adopted in January of 1976; however, "in order to continue receiving funds from the Bureau of Education for the handicapped, U.S. Office of Education," the rules required amendment. There was considerable discussion on the topic – nearly two pages of minutes on this item alone. It is recorded that Ms. Carolyn Huseman, state board member, expressed significant concern about the 1:22 ratio being proposed for special classrooms and requested that children with severe emotional handicaps be removed from this requirement. According to the minutes of the board, Dr. H. Titus Singletary, Jr., Associate State Superintendent for Instructional Services clarified, "these numbers do not relate to class size or minimum assignment, but rather the allocation of funds. He stated that this is not, in any way, intended to increase the size of classes or the staff in the psychoeducational centers, but that it is a means by which equitable distribution of funds could be made." Board member Ms. Saralyn Oberdorfer pressed further by requesting that that the caseload for students with "EMR area of disability" be specified as it was specified for other types of classes. In light of the recommended changes, by consensus of the members of the board, it was agreed that final approval would be requested at the September board meeting.¹⁷¹ Records show that in 1978 allocations were still being made at a rate of one teacher per twenty-two students, however the allocation rate for GNETS was a total of 174 teachers, "utilizing a ratio of 1:16."¹⁷² There was no discussion related to students with less severe disabilities or challenges related to anything other than behavior.

¹⁷¹ Georgia Board of Education, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – August 11th, 1976*, 8, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028. For many years "EMR" referred to students who were deemed "Educably Mentally Retarded" in the Georgia Rules and Regulations for Special Education.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – April 14th, 1977*, 1-2, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028.

It is also interesting to note that in the late portion of the minutes from August 1976 there is mention by Superintendent Dr. Jack Nix of morale issues related to early learning disability special education programs and a feeling that special education teachers fail to pull the weight of a general classroom teacher. Nix indicated that he had heard from principals and superintendents of this concern.

...regular classroom teachers are complaining that the special education teachers are not carrying their full share of the load, and that while they are drawing the same salary as the classroom teachers, the special education teachers do not have the same student contact as regular classroom teachers and the regular classroom teachers are having difficulty accepting this. He stated principals and superintendents have indicated there is some feeling between the special education teachers and the regular classroom teachers and this creates morale problems.¹⁷³

Nix went on to request that board members check on these concerns in their districts and Singletary expressed his opinion that this is another reason for letting local officials make decisions about the way in which allocations are to be assigned.¹⁷⁴ Despite the possible moral issues, later that year in November of 1976, Patricia Hammond of Lumpkin County Elementary, who taught students with learning disabilities in grades 1-5, was announced as the teacher of the year. Interestingly, Hammond reported that she had tried “to work as much as possible with the children in the classroom” and that her job had afforded her the unique opportunity to “observe learning” in an attempt to understand “why some children succeed while others fail.”¹⁷⁵ Accordingly, it appears that the early use of special education teachers, due to the lack of information available on

¹⁷³ Georgia Board of Education, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – August 11th, 1976*, 9, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid..

¹⁷⁵ Georgia Board of Education, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – November 10th, 1976*, 2, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028.

teaching children with disabilities, was for the purpose of observing and learning about the children, more so than as a provider of instruction to the children. Changes were being made, but they continued to be focused on mandates rather than helping teachers to help students with disabilities.

Perhaps in response to the morale issues being noted around the state or in response to pressure from local constituents to professionalize the work of special education teachers, the state board of education began to explore and implement strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities. It appears the first effort to provide resources to teachers of students with disabilities was the result of a grant obtained by LaGrange City Board of Education that was shared with the state Board of Education in December of 1976. The LaGrange City Schools Superintendent, J. W. McAllister and trustees of the Fuller E. Callaway Foundation presented a guide that the school system had created “for use in working with children with special needs.” Because of the popularity of the guide, a grant for \$10,000 was written by the LaGrange City School system and approved by the Callaway Foundation to provide the guide, a syllabus, and teacher’s handbook in Language Arts Instruction for the learning disabled child to each school system in Georgia. Tapes had been made with the assistance of the state board so that there was training for teachers who would use the manual. Ms. Betsy Primm of the West Georgia CESA reported that the resource was invaluable to teachers and that she knew of “nothing like it in all of the nation.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Georgia Board of Education, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – December 9th, 1976*, 3-4, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028. “CESA” refers to the Cooperative Educational Service Agency which were later revised to become 16 RESAs or Regional Education Service Agencies charged with providing supplemental services to local districts and ensure the equalization of educational opportunities and contribute to the development of educational change.

The following year, in February 1977, the state board created a State Advisory Panel for Special Education “as a primary committee rather than a subcommittee” and resources for special education programs began to occupy a prominent place in the board minutes as the state prepared FY78 budgets.¹⁷⁷ At the March meeting, the committee reported that they had reviewed federal legislation in an effort to determine what the role of the committee should be. She also added that the federal legislation would “have tremendous impact on states in the next two years” and that “a letter was drafted and sent to members of the General Assembly” to make sure they “know the urgency of the need” for “full implementation by July 1, 1978.”¹⁷⁸ During the same meeting, the board approved the appropriation of \$81 million dollars in new money to support education during FY78. As part of these funds “increased school staffing” to include 300 special education teachers was approved.¹⁷⁹

However, despite the attention given to the need for special education teachers, bureaucratic interests in allocating, saving, and protecting funds continued and programs that segregated students continued to grow. During the April 14, 1977 state board meeting, the issue of allocation of newly acquired resources surfaced again and the board believed that all new units earned should be awarded based on child find reporting. Board member Mr. Vann expressed concern that allocating based on child find would require allocation for some children who “were going to be found” and if these children were to refrain from attending school, funds would be lost. He was also concerned about the board penalizing systems that had no services available to locate such children. Ultimately, the motion passed but allowed systems until September 1 to

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – February 10th, 1977*, 8.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – March 10th, 1977*, 2.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

“find children” in order to benefit from the new earnings that would improve allocation of staff. The board also agreed to study the allocations and approve a formula for distribution of the funds prior to the next budget year. The allocation study would allow local systems to learn how positions were earned and make plans accordingly.¹⁸⁰ At the following meeting on May 12, 1977, the board discussed plans to sell property in Macon where the Georgia Academy for the Blind was located and move multi-handicapped children from the Shurling Campus to the Vineville Avenue Campus. Having all children under one umbrella would be “feasible administratively and cost-wise” and would allow them to sell the 30 acres of property to the City of Macon for use in their recreational program. The board agreed to continue looking into this possibility and others that would bring “all the children together, not for the purpose of mainstreaming, but for the purpose of better administering the educational program for all students at the Academy for the Blind at less cost.”¹⁸¹

The 1980s through the turn of the century brought transformation to the landscape of special education as the federal government passed PL 94-142, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The variety and quality of services for students expanded following the passing of IDEA which guarantees a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and provides due process rights to families who disagree with the educational plans created for students with disabilities. While the law may guarantee an education, the political, financial, and logistical issues of educating students with disabilities remains a point of contention for many school districts. The three narrators who share their stories

¹⁸⁰ Georgia Board of Education, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – April 14th, 1977*, 5, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, *May 12th, 1977*, 2.

in chapter four experience special education during the period of 1975 – 2005. For the purposes of this dissertation, their voices will tell the history of this period.

3 METHODOLOGY

On a warm day in the fall of 2014, I entered the Georgia State Archives in Morrow, Georgia to begin my exploration of the history of special education in Georgia. I was unprepared for the protocol of accessing archival materials and found myself intimidated by the individual monitoring the process who seemed annoyed that I didn't know I'd need to leave my things in a locker and only take my research materials. After securing my coat, laptop bag, and bottled water, I wandered into an area that looked much like a library or school media center and selected a table that had a lamp and was near an outlet where I could charge my computer. I sat for a while, observing others, before getting the courage to approach the long counter that looked like a circulation desk. I had written down the information from the online finding aid I had consulted and explained to the worker what I had come to explore. She was nice enough and told me she would let me know when the boxes were pulled for viewing. I felt accomplished at that moment, however it all dissipated when I was notified that the boxes were ready in the viewing room and that my computer wasn't allowed.¹⁸² I panicked. How would I document what I was seeing? There were so many boxes and I anticipated I was opening the lid to a goldmine of information. If I couldn't photocopy it (and I couldn't), and if I couldn't photograph it (I had no camera or cell phone with me), I had (erroneously) assumed I could quickly type notes or retype the information I reviewed. With so many boxes, how would I ever really capture what I needed for my

¹⁸² In 2018, computers are allowed in the viewing room, and all other research spaces at the Georgia Archives. Being my first experience, I was shocked that my computer wasn't allowed and since I've used it many times since in other libraries and archives, I wonder why it wasn't allowed that day in October.

research? I realized that I would have to make choices about what was relevant and necessary because I certainly couldn't hand-scribe all of the information that was contained within those boxes.

The viewing room attendant offered me purple multi-purpose paper that was lined on one side, and a number 2 pencil to record my thoughts. It had been many years since my hands cramped so badly, but I furiously scribbled notes to document what I read, the box number, the date, and so forth. I examined box after box viewing documents that gave me a nice timeline of the events related to the establishment of special education in Georgia, but little else. It would be an understatement to say that what I found was mostly boring pages of minutes from meetings and correspondence that occurred between some bureaucrat at the state department or school system central office and concerned parents, teachers, and community members. To say that I reviewed endless pages and suffered limitless papercuts would be an oversimplification. Every now and then I would stumble on a gem. I learned that in November of 1976, the state board recognized the teacher of the year, Patricia Hammond, who was from Lumpkin County Elementary. She was a special education teacher for students with learning disabilities in grades 1-5.¹⁸³ There was little information to help me learn about Patricia Hammond, but a recognition during 1976 from a school located in Dahlonega, Georgia was evidence of programming outside of the city of Atlanta which had proved more difficult to find. I was excited when I stumbled across minutes that captured a presentation given by an Atlanta woman named Betsy Primm who I am fortunate to know! Ms. Primm is a former teacher and special education administrator, brilliant, and dedicated, even now in her 70s, to helping children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities learn to read. Betsy found it amusing when I later told her in a Facebook message that I had “found her

¹⁸³ Georgia Board of Education, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – November 10th, 1976*, 1, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028. .

in the archive.” Betsy’s comments to the board on December 9, 1976 were focused on the instructional needs of students with learning disabilities, teachers, and preservice teachers, rather than the operational needs, funding requests, or legislative priorities of the state department of education.¹⁸⁴ I captured everything I could that was humanistic about special education, but the purple pages with this information were significantly less in number. I was appalled at the lack of information that mentioned students or their interests. A school isn’t a school without students. How could education, especially that which was intended to provide something special for a unique population, get so little attention and focus so little on students? How could we have a history of special education without any mention of students who received special education? I packed up to leave the archive feeling an unusual mix of excitement about the research and frustration that so little of what I found was student focused or contained information about the students themselves.

I spent the next several weeks thinking about the material scribbled on my purple papers and upon reflection, realized that what I experienced at the archive must have been something similar to what an archive encounters when accepting documents, scanning material, and boxing gifted records. I can only assume that they cannot keep it all and someone must be responsible for making decisions about what is relevant and necessary. This realization defined my research and I came to recognize that my time in the archive was immensely productive. I had identified what was deemed appropriate by those taking minutes on behalf of school boards and government agencies. What I found was simply a view of special education much different than the one

¹⁸⁴ Georgia Board of Education, *State Board of Education Meeting Minutes – December 9th, 1976*, 1, State Board of Education Collection, Georgia Archives, Box RCB – 14012, Record Group 012-01-028. Betsy Primm’s comments to the board were regarding a grant from the Calloway foundation that would fund the purchase of a book for each school system and colleges in the state of Georgia regarding the learning disabled child and how to teach language arts with their needs in mind.

I had hoped to share. Those documents were my foundation but they are inadequate historical documentation for capturing the experiences of students receiving special education services. Oral history became the obvious vehicle for capturing what was missing.

Some months later, I was attempting to solicit individuals that would be interested in participating in my research by sharing their stories about being a student with a disabilities during their K-12 education. Using social media in hopes of casting a wide net, I decided to tag a number of individuals that had either expressed interest in my work, had identified as having a disability, or that I suspected may know someone interested in what I was hoping to accomplish. One of the individuals I tagged questioned my research and whether institutional review board (IRB) approval had been obtained. Having learned in my graduate history coursework that oral history was exempt from IRB, and being familiar with the guidelines set forth by Donald Ritchie of the Oral Historical Association and Linda Shopes of the American Historical Association,¹⁸⁵ I had not submitted a formal IRB application. An astute methodologist came to my defense regarding IRB and oral history and stifled the interrogation. However after being questioned about my work, we found that at my research institution, local IRB policies required that I obtain an oral history designation for my work through a one-page questionnaire that would officially exempt my requirement to complete an IRB application for approval. The process sounded straightforward and to ensure that my research was well-received and properly designated, I completed the necessary designation paperwork. Within a week I received word that my “subjects” were “vulnerable” and therefore a complete application for IRB approval would be required. For a second time, I was finding that the disability was more the focus than the person or their story.

¹⁸⁵ See the Oral History Association’s guidance on IRB and oral history at <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/oral-history-and-irb-review/> and Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2005), 358-360.

Conceptual Framework

Among American historians, you generally will not hear a lot of discussion or concern with the idea of a conceptual framework in historical research. Simply defined, however, the conceptual framework is the set of ideas and beliefs you hold about a phenomena under study. It is a conceptual idea about what is happening that you intend to study – a tentative theory.¹⁸⁶ In history, we like to insist that historians are objective surveyors and reporters of information that helps us and others to understand how the past is different from the present while becoming sensitive to others and their past.¹⁸⁷ Any analysis, some argue, should occur only after evidence has been collected. Regardless of our research method, as human beings apart from our academic training, we have certain beliefs about phenomena or groups or people that lead us to our work. I did not wake up and pull students with disabilities from a hat for my research, I had prior knowledge of public education and special education, leading me to make observations about the history of education and the noticeable absence of disabled students in the documented history. I am in my 16th year as an educator. I have worked with students that fall into every federally recognized racial and ethnic category, every socioeconomic group, and I have taught, developed programs for, and supervised education for students that occupy every IDEA¹⁸⁸ category of educational eligibility for special education services. I am a researcher and I am a writer. I have studied broadly across the fields that make up the social foundations of education including the disciplines of psychology, sociology, philosophy, and history. I am a historian always striving

¹⁸⁶ Joseph A. Maxwell, “Conceptual Framework: “What do You Think is Going On,” in *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013), 39.

¹⁸⁷ Samuel S. Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. 2001), 5.

¹⁸⁸ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, is federal legislation that, among other things, specifies categories of eligibility that qualify a student to receive public school special education services.

for objectivity, my methodological choices are central to that ideal. Because I bring knowledge and assumptions to my research that have been heavily influenced by all of these experiences, it is my professional and ethical obligation to select a method that would provide for the voices of those who have not told their stories, rather than sharing history from the artifacts that were privileged as worthy of inclusion in the archive. Although I think objectivity is an ideal to which we should aspire, I could not move past the acknowledgement that while I aim to bring student voices to the existing historical record, I am also a non-member of the population claiming disability as an identity and any attempt to tell history from any account other than their first person perspective would likely prove skewed by my own identity.¹⁸⁹ My concerns regarding objectivity are central to my methodological choices.

There is a growing wealth of critical dialogue regarding the medical model of disability that so heavily influences special education and individualizes disability rather than addressing the larger context of disability and applying societal intervention.¹⁹⁰ This body of work, known as disability studies, speaks to my desire to be an equity-focused, social justice educator and researcher. While I was clinically trained in psychology and special education, the practical application of skills taught in those programs, as well as multiple federal policy mandates, have failed

¹⁸⁹ For a comprehensive historiography on the question of objectivity in historical research, Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* is a must read. Novick talks through the impact of the scientific revolution and the swaying perspective of the historical perspective on their objectivity in historical research. In his final pages, Novick concedes that historians have long been shaped by changing social perspective of their time. This aligns closely with the relativity argument made by Columbian historian Charles A. Beard.

¹⁹⁰ Simi Linton, "Disability Studies/Not Disability Studies," *Disability & Society* 13, no. 4 (1998): 527.

to resolve the issue of the exclusion of people with disabilities from mainstream society or increase the awareness and acceptance of neurodiversity.¹⁹¹ I believe this demonstrates the inability of the static, law-like nature of policy to provide a solution to the phenomena that is orchestrated by the interaction between society, social constructs, individual identity, and the institutional structures of public education. In my study of history, I brought this belief to the archive and found it to bolster my position that there is an absence of voice in the history of special education. Likely, this is due to the exclusion of people with disabilities from everyday society stemming from our focus on what they are unable to do, rather than what they can. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of Person with Disabilities defines disability as the changing ideas that result from the interaction between people with varying impairments and an environment that promotes inequitable participation in society.¹⁹² It is important to me that the narratives I collect represent the student's experience with schooling and be presented in a manner that would allow each narrator to contribute to a history from which they've been excluded.

Robert Whittemore wrote about the importance of oral history and its role in sharing the history of individuals with intellectual disabilities as a way to expand upon the views and beliefs of those with intellectual disabilities rather than that of parents, caregivers, and professionals.¹⁹³ Although I concur with much of his work and my intent is not to suggest his work is less than sufficient for the purpose he intended, I do use it as a foundation from which I suggest taking a

¹⁹¹ Namely, the Americans with Disabilities Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA in particular has perpetuated the medical-deficit model of addressing differences between students rather than celebrating the diversity in thinking, processing, and cognition (which I refer to as neurodiversity) across students

¹⁹² The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (CRDP): <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/preamble.html>.

¹⁹³ Robert Whittemore, L. L. Langness, and Paul Koegel, "The Life History Approach to Mental Retardation," in *Culture and Retardation: Life Histories of Mildly Mentally Retarded Persons in American Society*, ed. L.L. Langness and Harold Levine (Boston, MA: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1986), 48.

broader approach that includes a wider range of students. Oral history has a role to play in the documentation of history for all forgotten voices, including those of mildly disabled students. Federal legislation and educational programs that established services for student with milder disabilities came much later than medical efforts to assist those with more severe cognitive and sensory disabilities such as deafness and intellectual disabilities. While I would never argue that medical intervention provided more opportunity for their voices to become part of the historical record, I offer the possibility that their presence in society has been more widely recognized than students with milder disabilities that were not visibly evident.¹⁹⁴ With this in mind, I argue that oral history should not limit voices by privileging one story over another based on type of disability, but instead it should provide a platform for all individuals who identify as disabled to tell stories that will ultimately result in a broader understanding of the history of disabled people. Existing stories such as those by Pearl Buck's *The Child Who Never Grew* (1950), Josh Greenfield's *A Child Called Noah: A Family Journey* (1979), and more contemporary titles such as Rachel Adams' *Raising Henry: A Memoir of Motherhood, Disability, and Discovery* (2014), familiarize us with disability and its influence on others, but fails to bring the voice and perspective of the individual experiencing the disability.

These conceptual beliefs - that students should be evident in our historical understanding of a phenomena that doesn't exist without them, that I am a less than objective researcher, and that oral history is instrumental to sharing a history of disability - is the foundation upon which I based my methodological decisions. The following sections of this chapter outline those choices.

¹⁹⁴ Jennifer's story discusses her early struggles with hearing loss and the perceptions of teachers who saw her as capable, despite her unobservable difficulties with hearing, reading, and writing.

Narrators

By way of general introduction, the histories presented in this dissertation are those of three women who range in age from their early-30s to mid-40s that shared little more than the term “disability” and the way it impacted their lives as students and now as adults. Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly attended school across three districts: Fulton County Schools, Gwinnett County Schools, and Clayton County Schools. All three districts are in the metro-Atlanta area: Jennifer, age 46, now resides in the city of Atlanta. Allie, age 31, lives in Forsyth County just north of Fulton County, and Kelly, age 39, remains in Clayton County where she attended school. Jennifer and Allie identify as having learning disabilities and ADHD while Kelly was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy as a child but identifies as having an orthopedic impairment. In chapter four, they will share information about themselves as they tell their educational life narrative. For this reason, I offer no additional introduction and no further commentary on their identity. Throughout the duration of this dissertation, I refer to Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly as narrators instead of participants. This is an intentional choice made in effort to emphasize that the purpose of this dissertation is to bring forward stories of those in need of special support instead of classifying the individuals who elected to participate as parties subject to my research. Additionally I refer to them by their first name instead of first and last name to emphasize their identity as people I have come to know rather than outsiders in need of formal reference. In the same way that I would refer to any other person I know, I refer to my narrators by the way they would introduce themselves: as Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly.

Procedures

To locate and identify narrators to participate in my research, I elected to publicize my research using the social media site, Facebook. Because my personal Facebook account has high security settings that make me invisible to those who have not been verified as friends or friends of friends, and because I currently work as an administrator of special education in a large district that spans urban and suburban areas, I knew that using my social media account alone would not result in a neutral sample of potential narrators. In order to overcome this obstacle, I opted to request that all individuals who saw my research solicitation via Facebook, share the information with their personal and professional networks in order to extend the research opportunity to individuals outside of my sphere of knowledge. My intentions were to create a snowball effect where one would share my research with others who would also share, effectively increasing my bandwidth and the neutrality of my sampling as a researcher. I gave considerable attention to the possibility of power coming into play if my public school teacher and principal colleagues or former students learned of my research. As I prepared materials advertising my research, I meticulously cited my position as a graduate student associated with Georgia State University and intentionally elected not to place information about my research in the schools and offices associated with the school district that serves as my employer. In addition to writing posts to share via social media, I prepared informational flyers for coffee shops and churches in the Atlanta-area, and forwarded information about the research I was planning to conduct to an organization called All About Developmental Disabilities (AADD) in hopes of making the opportunity

to participate inclusive of those that may not use social media or have the ability to decode written text.¹⁹⁵

My second social media post came following IRB approval to begin my research. The first social media post I produced yielded only individuals interested in discussing the ethical boundaries of my research, leading to my IRB application, and no narrators resulted from that initial post. I first solicited for individuals that would be interested in telling me about their experiences as students receiving special education services between 1975 and 2005 in the Atlanta-area during the month of October of 2017. Almost immediately following the first mention of my research on social media, I received a call from someone that had seen my post through a friend of a friend that had shared the information. She ultimately decided not to participate but the interest of an unknown individual outside of my personal and professional life justified my efforts to use multiple means of solicitation for identifying interested narrators.

Within a few days of that social media post, I received a message via Facebook from Allison “Allie” Pridgen who was interested in participating in my research. Allie is an instructional support teacher (IST) for the same school system that employs me to oversee all special education programs. She does not report to me or any of my direct reports and I had never met Allie before or discussed my research with her. She is not one of my connections through social media. Because I wished to further emphasize that my research was not connected to my work, I insisted that we communicate using personal means such as my personal email and cell phone, and scheduled all calls to answer questions after working hours and on the weekends. I proposed to Allie that we meet in a public space such as the local library near her home during the upcoming

¹⁹⁵ AADD is an organization that provides resources and information to the public in an effort to promote meaningful and inclusive living for individuals and families living with or supporting someone with an intellectual or developmental disability. More information about AADD can be found at <http://www.aadd.org>

Thanksgiving holiday break. Allie agreed and scheduled to meet the day before Thanksgiving, 2017.

After hearing from Allie I engaged in another social media push, tagging friends that I thought would share my message or who may know someone interested. I immediately received a response from one individual who inquired but identified herself as not eligible to participate because her services took place outside of Georgia. Another individual reached out to tell me how interesting she thought my research would be. She shared a little about her personal experience as a person with a physical disability but indicated that she had not taken special education classes. Instead she suggested I speak with her spouse who had suffered a head injury during school and would likely be someone with an interesting perspective.¹⁹⁶ I attempted to reach him but never received a follow-up response. A few days later I was contact by another individual who wanted to participate. Jennifer was also an employee of the school district I work for, but another individual that wasn't already part of my social media network. While I did know her, she was not one of my direct reports and contacted me through personal channels. We set up a time to meet in November but later rescheduled for a date in early December. Our interview lasted nearly 2 hours and we later scheduled a short phone interview that took place on New Year's day.

The final narrator to participate in my research, Kelly, attended high school with my husband and I. I didn't know her well, but she was wheelchair bound, making her more memorable than the sea of other students that I saw in the hallway or attended class with. My spouse told me

¹⁹⁶ Interestingly, I later learned that this individual did receive special education support from elementary through high school but never actually participated in separate classes, resulting in her comments about not receiving special education. Her thinking was clearly aligned to the common misconception that special education is a place, rather than understanding that it is designed to be a battery of services that could be delivered in any educational setting.

Kelly was hilarious with a quick wit that stood out.¹⁹⁷ She and I met the first week of 2018 at a local bookstore that she requested. The evening before our interview, it occurred to me that Kelly could require accommodation to complete the informed consent document required of participants so I emailed her directly to ask if I could adapt the form to help her.¹⁹⁸ Kelly thanked me, but assured me that she would be able to sign with a traditional pen. I immediately felt ashamed that I made assumptions about her ability based on the physical appearance of her hands and made a note to discuss this with her during our interview. My background as a teacher, taught to accommodate disability, had come into play as I prepared to engage in my research. The following day, Kelly's mother brought her to the local bookstore and we settled in to conduct our interview. She was able to sign her consent form independently, but the time it took and the obvious struggle to use a pen made her determination to be self-sufficient my immediate observation. Kelly was easy to talk to, I suspect because we shared a bit of history in that we attended the same high school. I felt a similar ease with Jennifer, but my conversation with Kelly lasted longer than those with my previous narrators. As we spoke, I learned that we had more in common than I initially realized. Many of the same friends – her best friend initially went to school with her at a smaller college but later transferred to the small liberal arts college where I obtained my undergraduate degree.¹⁹⁹ By the end of the conversation, I felt I had told her as much about me as she did about herself. Kelly really engaged and wanted to talk about schools. Particularly in the social sciences where ethnography is used to understand populations, building rapport is part of the methodological process. In the field of oral history, rapport is also essential

¹⁹⁷ Clint E. Smith, personal communication with Cristy Sellers Smith, January 2, 2018.

¹⁹⁸ See appendix B for a copy of the informed consent form signed by all three narrators.

¹⁹⁹ Kelly Ashley Clark, interview with Cristy Sellers Smith, January 3, 2018.

to developing the type of comfortable atmosphere and relationship that results in the narrator feeling comfortable enough to share their thoughts. In my case, I had knowledge of all three narrators prior to our conversations, which made me more comfortable and certainly seemed to take some of the discomfort out of the process. In a communication following the interviews, Jennifer shared that she felt comfortable sharing her experiences because she felt I was in a position to use the information in a way that would impact the type of change and support that was needed for kids.²⁰⁰ Yow suggests that every first interview has some uncertainty as the interviewer does not know how the conversation will go while the narrator is often unsure what is expected of them.²⁰¹ Knowing that my time would be limited with each individual, I consciously made an effort to build rapport in other ways. Jennifer and I exchanged messages via Facebook messenger and, eventually, text message, while Allie and Jennifer and I became part of each other's friend network on Facebook after their initial contact regarding my research. It seems odd to talk about Facebook as part of a methodology however it has been a way for us to learn more about each other and even comment on ways that our families and interest are alike. Following the interviews, I found that I think of each of these women as personal friends, not as research subjects. We have continued to correspond and interact following the conversations explicitly set aside for the purposes of my research. If conversation had ceased following our official conversations, I would be concerned that a lack of rapport had been built.

The relationship between interviewer and narrator is a topic that has received considerable attention as there is a shared responsibility and interdependency between the two. I use the

²⁰⁰ Jennifer Lyons-Golden, personal communication with Cristy Sellers Smith, February 15, 2018.

²⁰¹ Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 96.

terms “narrator” and “conversation” intentionally throughout my research because it more accurately conveys the relationship that develops between the oral historian and person whose story is being told when they come together, mutually, to discuss the past. The term narrator gives expression and power to the individual sharing their story, and it serves as a constant reminder of whose story was being told.²⁰² Furthermore, the term narrator necessitates the use of the term conversation to describe the interaction. An interviewer drives the conversation while the interviewee follows their lead. Conversely, a narrator tells the story, leaving an oral historian to listen, ask questions, and engage in the amount of dialogue that is necessary to collect and convey the story that is being shared. My intent in using these words is to convey that the product of my research is a joint endeavor, shaped by the interaction between both individuals.

During the conversation that took place with each narrator, a digital tape recorder outfitted with a small lapel microphone was used. Because each narrator was asked to select a location that was comfortable, I had no way of knowing whether I would be meeting at restaurants, public parks, coffee shops, or in the quiet space of their home. Knowing that the quality of the audio I captured would have considerable impact on the transcription and process of reconstructing the final life narrative, I knew that the lapel microphone would be a necessary accessory to any recording device. To ensure that length of interview was never an issue, I purchased and installed a memory card of considerable size, and always carried multiple packs of back-up batteries in fear of losing the precious memories shared by the narrators. I never encountered this sort of interruption, but I feared the possibility of a technology failure and even considered running multiple tape recorders during each conversation. Each recording was uploaded to my laptop computer as well as a folder on my home server that is protected by a firewall and secure password.

²⁰² Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 30.

In oral history, the question of whether the interviewer should be an objective or neutral observer/interviewer is debated, particularly with regard to how much an interviewer should intervene in the conversation with a narrator. Although some thought that an interviewer was an active member essential to the process, Allan Nevins focused on the neutral collection of other people's memories to the extent that questions were eliminated in the earliest of collections. Studs Terkel similarly has disclosed only a few of the questions that resulted in responses from those he interviewed.²⁰³ Much of this debate centers around whether questions are neutral and the role of analysis in the methodology of oral history. Ritchie suggests that while theorizing that proceeds an interview may be necessary to develop questions, particularly when IRB requires it, an interviewer must always be prepared to abandon those questions and help the narrator by challenging and encouraging as needed.²⁰⁴

During my first interview, I felt like a fish out of water. My application with IRB had resulted in a list of questions that would be asked of each narrator.²⁰⁵ In advance of knowing who I would talk with and anything about their background, gender, or disability, all of the questions I produced seemed either presumptuous and rudimentary. When I began my research proposal, I had envisioned a free-flowing conversation between the narrators and I, where I would listen to stories and interrupt rarely and only when required. Lawrence Goodwyn, once director of the Duke Oral History Program, argued that being a passive observer as part of an interview resulted in the researcher surrendering what they were trained to do.²⁰⁶ I remained more concerned with

²⁰³ Ibid., 28.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 29.

²⁰⁵ See Appendix A

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 28.

the manipulation of their story that could result from questions that directed them away from their memories in an effort to capture specific elements of their past. Still, I asked the questions I had written despite the interview feeling regimented and uncomfortable; as I became more experienced I learned to listen across their stories in a way that eliminated the need to repeat questions that had been previously asked but were now referencing a new timeframe. I recall during my second conversation remembering research by Antoinette Errante. She recalls her interviews with Mozambicans and how she found that they had no problem remembering the past, but instead she had to learn to help them remember the parts of the past that were of interest to her and even convince them that the stories were of value. She eventually found “watershed questions” that unlocked a stream of remembering for her participants, reducing the number of questions she needed to ask.²⁰⁷ I don’t know that I found those “watershed questions,” but I did negotiate a space of comfort with each narrator where they became open and freely shared information without the need for a question as a prompt. I would ask a question, they would answer, but also trail off into a story they remembered that gave me a sense of what was important, without requiring a specific question to elicit the telling of their past. At other times, I would ask questions I hadn’t reported to IRB, but they were appropriate for the context and stories being told by the narrator. I found that my spontaneous questions served to meaningfully respond and show my engagement in the information that was being shared, while also clarifying some of the points that were likely clear in the mind of the narrator of the story, but not to me as a person who wasn’t part of the story. I made sure to adhere to the protocol and questions that were approved by IRB, but there were times that other questions followed naturally from the conversation and I would question the depth of my research had I not used my academic and methodological judgement and infused

²⁰⁷ Errante, *But Sometimes You’re Not Part of the Story*, 19.

questions that really defined my time with each narrator as a conversation. A good example of this was during my final conversation with Jennifer. Across our meetings, she would refer to herself as a bad kid, or one that behaved as she did in an effort to hide her academic struggles. The word “bad” is quite subjective and I was caught off guard by the use of her negative self-representation. Without thought, I probed deeper to understand her insistence that she was a bad kid during her elementary and middle school years. My questions were off script but essential to understanding Jennifer’s identity and the story of her past.²⁰⁸

Following the conversations I was faced with the task of making decisions about transcription. I was initially adamant about transcribing the interviews without professional assistance but after listening to each conversation many times over I didn’t feel that I needed to tap the keys of my computer in order to understand the pauses and word choices of my narrators. I offer this not to diminish the role of transcription but to articulate how deeply familiar I became with the recordings of each conversation. The spoken word has many dimensions that cannot be captured by a transcript but convey feeling about a topic. I deeply studied the arrests, inflection, and tone of each conversation. Someone that transcribes has only punctuation to work with and because stories come in bursts and incomplete phrases, a transcript may be hard to follow.²⁰⁹ I also worried that I might know those rhythms so well that transcribing my own interviews could result in the type of automaticity that occurs when you hand a good reader a poorly written text. Their brain seems to “figure out” more than they actually see – it compensates by filling in what they think they know. I elected to use a transcription service but not before I listened to each conversation many times over, generating a narrative account of their story. Each narrator told

²⁰⁸ Jennifer Lyons-Golden, Oral History Interview, December 3, 2017.

²⁰⁹ Willa K. Baum, *Transcribing and Editing Oral History* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1991), 26.

their story fluidly but not necessarily chronologically. As I listened to their stories, I began to map their history and place it in order by timeframe. This helped me understand the trajectory of their history while allowing me to make meaning of their speech. Had I worked solely from memory of our conversation, or a transcript that attempted to capture feeling, my ability to understand each narrator's connection to the events of the past would have been compromised in the same way that an artifact alone tends to leave you with an account of an occurrence, but little emotional connection to the event. Following substantial time with each recording, I submitted each recording to an online transcription service that created an editable transcript of our conversation. The service took less than 6 days per recording to complete the transcript and because I already knew the arrests and pauses in the recording, I opted not to order a verbatim transcript. While one could argue that the transcript isn't for me but for the archive, I would suggest that the recording itself should serve as the actual primary evidence should a future researcher wish to access the narratives provided by Allie, Jennifer, or Kelly. Further, the use of digital archives are becoming increasingly prevalent making the likelihood of recordings more widely available than when transcripts of recordings were previously archived.²¹⁰ Several days later after they were returned, I read each transcript against my recording and made changes to names that were represented incorrectly or other areas where intelligibility was noted, and substituted initials for individuals that were discussed but had not consented to my research. No other changes were made to the transcript.

I spent considerable time searching for the right way to share the stories that had been shared with me. Simply recording the interview and producing a transcript for the archive seemed insufficient even though it would accomplish the goal of adding student voices to the

²¹⁰ See chapter 5 for further discussion on the use of digital technology and archives for recording and maintaining oral history narratives.

historical archive. When I began my research, I had ideas about juxtaposing a timeline of special education policy with the stories of each narrator. I soon realized that this plan was predicated on the assumption that each narrator's history would follow the trajectory of educational policy. Not to mention a significant number and range of stories would be required in order to have enough voices to even begin the process of mapping the trajectory of change since 1975. Additionally, as you will see in chapter four, the narratives collected contained substance far deeper than the topics touched in special educational policy. They didn't discuss least restrictive environment, procedural safeguards, and labels – at least not in those terms. The narrators discussed experiences, not concepts. The vocabulary I was taught as an educator and educational policy student, rarely entered the conversation.

The memories they shared, however, were episodic - not traditional life histories that would tell an entire story. Instead they shared bursts of memory about events and happenings that stood out as meaningful and informed their identity as a student needing special support. All three narrators talked about elementary, middle, high school and college. While they did not discuss their life history chronologically, they shared details about all levels of their educational history. It was important to me as a researcher to give them a voice without shadowing their stories with my analysis and commentary. Their stories are were similar to traditional life narratives, yet the focused on a segment of their life instead of its entirety – and not in an manner that would read well for those learning about their stories through the publication of my dissertation. My intention is to make their raw recordings publically available, as part of a larger archive of stories. Because the unedited interviews would be available, I decided to edit their stories but only by reordering the information they provide so that it could be read chronologically. This process required that I listen again to their transcripts to create a readable narrative of their experiences

by reordering their statements and comments in a first-person “story” that represents their experience in the chronology it occurred. I coined the product educational-life narratives because they are specific to the narrator’s entire educational experience instead of capturing their entire life story.²¹¹ Using the qualifier “educational-life” helped to specify the segment of each narrator’s entire life that their stories cover.

After completing each narrator’s story, I shared the narrative and transcript with them and requested that they review the story against the transcript as well as their memory and confirm whether they felt the narrative represented their voice and their story. I explained the purpose of the narratives and explained that the work was their story and as such they were welcome to make changes. I offered to sit with each narrator as changes were made, out of consideration for their disabilities and the possibility that they would need assistance. I primarily encouraged feedback, revisions in the form of additional context or vocabulary changes that they felt would be needed to fully share their experience. Each narrator affirmed that they felt that it captured their voice and each expressed that they enjoyed reading their story and collaborating with me on its development. Two of the narrators did not make substantial changes although Jennifer did make some contextual adjustments that she felt would bring greater continuity to the story. She requested to do her revisions independently using her assistive technology.²¹²

A final read of their stories resulted in a few changes that I communicated to each narrator but did not offer as negotiable. One of the beautiful aspects of oral history is that those who tell their story do so willingly and have agency in the process. I was faced with more than one

²¹¹ Ritchie, 40.

²¹² Jennifer regularly uses a browser add-in called “Snap and Read” that uses optical character recognition (OCR) to provide text-to-speech support for readers with dyslexia or other learning disabilities that impact reading written text.

narrator who told stories about others in their lives who had not consented for their stories to be told. In keeping with my philosophical belief that one's story is their own as interpreted through the lens of their identity, I also feel that allowing a narrator to tell the story of someone else without their consent is a gray area. While the actor they are telling about has impacted their story, the facts and perceptions they share may not be representative of the individual who is not present and has not consented to having their story told. For the protection of anyone that did not consent to this research whose story may have been shared, all individuals other than the narrators themselves are named only by their first or first and last initial. The difference in using one initial versus two is based only on the way the names were shared with me during the conversation with each narrator.

The product of our conversations, editing, and narrative constructing makes up the fourth chapter of this research. There is no preface, no introduction, no commentary or footnotes, and no conclusion. The fourth chapter stands alone, providing these individuals the opportunity to tell their educational history as they experienced it.

4 EDUCATIONAL-LIFE NARRATIVES

Allie's Story²¹³

There were about 6 or 7 students in my resource classes and I remember that in math, it seemed like we were doing basic addition and things that were very different or easy when compared to other students. I asked my teacher why and although she didn't say it outright, it was clear that she was teaching what she thought I was capable of learning.

I was born July 7th, 1986 and I currently live in Cumming, Georgia. I grew up in Roswell and attended Barnwell elementary school, Haynes Bridge Middle School, the St. Francis school, and then Centennial High School. Looking back, I didn't really like school and I remember kids making fun of me, saying I was in the stupid class, and teachers that didn't believe in me. There are good things that have come out of my experiences – I am where I am because of it. I want to help other students that struggled like me so I got a bachelor's and master's degree in special education. My teachers helped me learn who I wanted to be when I became a teacher.

I remember the earliest years at Barnwell – I was being pulled out for testing and was sent to the office. Between second and third grade, my dad sat me down and shared that I had dyslexia and dysgraphia and I would begin going to a different class to get extra help. From that point on everything changed. I was put in a special class where the students seemed to struggle more than me. I remember a student with Down Syndrome, one with cerebral palsy and a kid that kept hitting his head on the wall. I didn't understand why I was there and knowing what I know now, I think it may have been a class for students with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities. I was so frustrated with school that I would often go to the school clinic just to get away from class. During that time, Northwood was being built and when I got to the 5th grade, I moved

²¹³ Allison Pridgen, *Oral History Interview with Cristy Sellers Smith*, November 22, 2018.

to Northwood Elementary. There, everything changed. It was just a different atmosphere. I used to ride the bus to school but Northwood was in my grandmother's neighborhood and so she would pick me up from school each day. The teachers at Northwood Elementary were kinder and that's when I kind of started to realize that that I was just a slower learner and I needed some extra supports to help me. I was close friends with a girl named B. but then when it was time for middle school, I went to Haynes Bridge Middle School and she went to another school. I don't really remember a best friend at Haynes Bridge. That's where things were the worst. I was made fun of, called slow, and the kids made up horrible songs about me. They said I was in the stupid class. I was pulled out of regular classes for math, reading, and language arts, and a special education teacher would come in to help in my science class. There were about 6 or 7 students in my resource classes and I remember that in math, it seemed like we were doing basic addition and things that were very different or easy when compared to other students. I asked my teacher why and although she didn't say it outright, she insinuated that she was teaching what I was capable of learning. Social studies was the only class where I was included with everyone else.

When I was in the 7th grade, my parents decided to hold me back and I repeated the 7th grade but I moved to St. Francis, a private school in Roswell and stayed there through the 9th grade. This was one of the best times of my life. Everyone was in classes together, it seems like they were teaching me what I needed to learn and I felt capable and smart. Then, after 9th grade my parents made it clear that I could stay at St. Francis or I could move to Centennial High School and I could have a car. Of course, being a teen, I opted for the car! My Sophomore year was horrible. The kids in my classes were a year younger than me so kids knew I was held back and they were making fun of me. Then in my Junior and Senior years, things changed. I felt more included

– I felt that I wasn't so different. Some of it was probably maturity – and meds! I wasn't in a resource setting anymore and instead I was in all general education and co-taught classes. I remember having math, science, language arts, and social studies where two teachers were present – one general education and one special education.

In high school I remember that I loved Biology but I think it was because of my teachers. I had Ms. L. and Ms. S. I had accommodations for testing but they didn't call me out or point me out. They made learning fun and they didn't make me feel different from anyone else. I don't think we really ever sat down and I learned so much about science. I got along really well with Ms. S. who, it turns out, was my case manager. I just knew she would fight for me, stand up for me, and just be that advocate for me when I couldn't be. She was a genuine person and she genuinely cared for me. I remember some of my IEP meetings when everyone would be making recommendations about me without even asking me. She would turn to me and ask what I thought! She would say, "What do you think?" or "what do you think you need?" She made sure I was actively involved when it seemed like to everyone else I was just a name on paper or someone that created extra work. I remember that my Latin teacher was awesome and he always focused on my strengths instead of my weaknesses. He never saw my faults and always had something positive to say. I had a math teacher that never really gave me the help I needed. That teacher made me realize that I was going to go to college to be a special education teacher. It's sad but he taught me what kind of teacher I didn't want to be and made me realize that I wanted to help other students, like me, that needed additional support. I didn't want to be someone that sat in the back of the room and never helped. Fortunately, math turned around and I had a great experience my senior year. We a new teacher that was young and made things fun! She broke it down for me and made me love math. Because of her, I decided to minor in math in college and when I

got my first teaching job at Webb Bridge Middle School in Alpharetta, I was a co-teacher in a math classroom.

I had friends my last few years at Centennial. I met M. and S. – they were probably my best friends. They had other friends too, and we would all hang out as a group. We would hang out in the taco bell parking lot and sneak out of the house. I don't know why that was a big deal because all we would do is walk around the neighborhood or try to meet up with boys, but it was fun. I remember hanging out at the mall but I remember a lot of hanging out in parking lots the most. I also played softball and I was on the varsity team at Centennial. I went on to play in college. Some of my best memories in high school were being part of the team; I really loved softball practice. I also remember being nominated for homecoming court. I got to ride around in one of those corvette convertibles and be introduced on the field at the football game. Everyone was cheering and it was fun.

When I think of the times that weren't fun, I always think about the classroom. You don't forget being made fun of or adults that make you feel inferior. It always makes me wonder why I went to get a degree to teach if I hated it so much. But I wanted to be different for kids that were similar to me. I also wanted to be an actress and took some acting classes, but acting didn't work. Teaching, did.

My dad had a big impact on me and was instrumental during school. He tried to do everything he could to help me, even though he didn't know about all of this special education stuff. Another person that had an impact was my high school principal – his name was Mr. W.. I remember something that happened with softball and it made me want to quit but Mr. W. stood up for me. He made me feel what Ms. S. did – the words he used really built me up.

Jennifer's Story²¹⁴

...she pulled me aside and said, “Jennifer, I’m not going to say this in front of the class but you need to be a teacher. I’ve never seen anyone so gifted with kids. You were born to be a teacher. You don’t need to work in childcare but you’re going to have to take the SAT.” ... I wouldn’t have gone to college if it weren’t for her.

I went to Rockbridge elementary school in Gwinnett County until I was in 2nd grade, before mom pulled me out. I don’t remember preschool but mom says it was horrible. It was called “readiness back then”. When I was ages 2-14, I had repeated ear infections and I wouldn’t know it because I had no fever or no pain. There were whole gaps of time where I wouldn’t hear. I would miss a lot and I would get in trouble a lot because I couldn’t hear so I would miss things. Teachers and adults would say, “She can hear me just fine” – that was something I heard my entire life. Yes, I would turn around b/c I heard something, but I didn’t hear exactly what was said. I would hear parts of something, not all. I might do the opposite of what you said because when I realized I didn’t hear it all, I’d fill in the gaps with what I thought you said and do that. I still do that. Depending on the teacher, I would have a good year or bad year.

1st grade was great. I loved 1st grade. Made straight As. My teacher kept me very active and I was able to move around a lot; I was always with the teacher and was always helping her. She recognized my hearing loss and would redeliver directions. At this point in school, I wasn’t labelled. Then in 2nd grade, I spent part of my year in the hallway and part of my year in the art closet between the classrooms. I stayed in trouble. Evidently, it was written to the teacher that I needed to be near her desk, which she never taught from. She taught from the front of the room and I was at the back of the room. I went home probably once each week – I could literally make

²¹⁴ Jennifer Lyons-Golden, *Oral History Interview with Cristy Sellers Smith*, December 3, 2017 and January 1, 2018.

myself throw up, not even realizing that I was doing it. The teacher stopped my mom in the hallway and said, "You know she's making herself throw up" and my mom said, "Do you blame her?". That was the year that they tested me. I failed the hearing screening. They cleared my ears and retested me and I passed. They diagnosed me as having a learning disability and ADD. I was inattentive ADD. I could look at you and not hear a word you said. If I wasn't actively listening, then I might not have heard anything you said. I'm a verbal processor in order to learn, which is not conducive to how education was at that time. If you tell me something, I need to verbalize it to process it. In college, I could leave class and talk to people about what was said in class that day and never have to study again. I made straight As in my major. The only C that I got, in my last 3 years of college, was in a very statistical, memorization of dates sort of class and I'm bad at memorization with my dyslexia. If you just say it to me, it slips right out of my memory. I need to explain things, which is probably why I'm in the profession I'm in now. I can go in a classroom, watch teachers teach, and explain to them what they did or didn't do. I am processing what I saw and heard and it helps them because it's hard to see what you are doing when you are doing it.

2nd grade was horrible. I liked when I spent my time in the hallways because I could talk to people. I was near the water fountain. That is the positive memory I have from that time. I always tell teachers now that any kid would rather be a badass than a dumbass. When you are put between a rock and a hard place you're going to choose to be cool. So I went with that. That meant being more of a clown, that meant entertaining people. I'm very social. Rather than being made to look stupid, I chose not to do my work, I chose to be cool. I tell teachers now when I do teacher training that – you can make that difference. You can make them the star of the class by pointing out the things they do right or you can point out what they do wrong and they'll show

you! In 1st grade, people pointed out what I did right. I was a very happy child and I made straight As. In 2nd grade I made Ds, Fs, Cs. I don't know that I ever made a B or an A. It was so much about the personality connection between the teacher and I - what she took from me emotionally and academically.

My brother is 10 years older than me. He also has a learning disability and hearing problems due to nerve deafness from high fevers, which I never had. So he had a teacher in 1st grade and she came to my mom and said "don't let them put him in special ed. Because if they do, they will teach him as if he has an intellectual disability, - which is not what they called it then. But because I'm in the profession, that's what I'm calling it. - They will put him in a class and teach to the lowest common denominator. And he is gifted. He is amazing at Science. He can take things apart and put them together. He cannot go into special education." And so when this all came up with me, my brother had already been pulled out. My mom was 17 when she had my brother. She fought Gwinnett County and sat in a room with a bunch of adults who said they couldn't do what she asked, which was keep him in general education classes, so she pulled him out and she got the equivalent of what would have been his bussing paid for so she could drive him to the Howard School in downtown Atlanta. He went there for 3 years, then he came back and she put him in regular education and nothing was ever said about it again. He went on to win some science awards. He didn't go to college, but he did go to some technical schools and took some classes at Georgia Tech. So when I came along, she had already fought this battle. She had me privately tested after the school. She sent me to the Howard School for two years. I was on Ritalin. The Howard School changed my life. They taught me how to compensate and how to advocate for myself. They taught me the questions to ask and the things to say to teachers. I came back and my mom let me choose whether I wanted to go into 4th or 5th grade when I came

back to Rockbridge. I chose 4th grade, probably because my best friend was in 4th grade, and we now know, or I feel pretty confident that holding kids back doesn't do anything – there is research that shows that – I think emotionally for me it was good to start over with a new group. I could be cool. I say it was good but I don't know that, I was kind of a bad kid. But anyway I went from there up until 6th grade. Things started to surface again then. I wasn't in special education. I learned to cheat pretty quickly. They had SRA cards and the answer sheets were in the back near the cards so I would just take the answer sheet and stick it into my SRA card, go sit down, miss a few – because you know, you have to miss a few – and that was my reading. That's really my memory of elementary school and where I went from 1st grade. 1st grade was my best memory and 2nd grade was my worst. I was sick a lot, both from surgeries for having tubes put in, but also emotionally sick. I say I was a bad kid, people may have defined me as a bad kid, but I was a compassionate kid. I was the kind of kid who if someone was being picked on, I would put the kid that was doing the picking in their place. I was the defender. That came from knowing what I went through, I think. I did start smoking in 7th grade. I think I probably drank for the first time in 7th grade. I did all of those fun things that would have qualified me as a bad kid. My mom, dad, and I were very different. I was very compassionate and wanted to save the world. My mom was very matter-of-fact – “we can't take in everyone” – which I understand now as a parent. I still do it, I still help all of the neighborhood kids with their homework and spread myself a little too thin. We went to some counseling when I was 16 and my mom always said that she realized that I wasn't the cheerleader and those things that she had hoped for, when she let go of those things, we really bonded and had a great relationship from there on. I was a challenge. I was not a bad kid in class per se, I didn't act out, I was social, but I wouldn't say I was bad to teachers.

I went to Lilburn Middle School in Norcross. I think with ADD and changing classes, I really probably needed more support. I had two parents that worked full time jobs. I came home and did or didn't do my homework. It was a different world then. My mom and I battled with homework. We later said she probably had the same learning disabilities we had. It was a struggle. And reading in particular, it's still a struggle today. I listen to books on tape and I recently found that colored overlays work for me. It hides the other lines. My eyes jump around a lot on the page when I'm reading. But I didn't have those accommodations when I was a kid. I just struggled and figured out ways to get through. Sometimes that meant cheating and sometimes that meant paying people to type my papers in college. It could have taken me days but someone else could do it in an hour. It wasn't until college that school was easy. I know I jumped way ahead but once I got into my major in college, other people that were the ones that made As in history and everything else were the ones struggling on tests and saying "how did you make an A, you didn't even study!" I just understood it because of my childhood. I understood all of those things that should have been in education, I guess.

It was always the teacher that made school enjoyable or unenjoyable. I remember 3 teachers in my life and that was my 1st grade teacher, and my 8th grade science teacher which is probably a strength of mine a little bit, and my senior year childcare vocational teacher which is funny, because that brings us to a whole other place in the story. I wouldn't have gone to college. My parents moved when I was 16 to North Gwinnett. That was where I went to school after my 1st year. I was at Meadowcreek for ½ a year and then I moved to North Gwinnett for ½ of a year. I was 16 in 9th grade, I could drive. I hated school so much that I decided that I was going to leave school and go to night school back at Meadowcreek. Part of it was culture. I couldn't handle going from this kind of diverse school near the city to being out in the middle of nowhere

with very different minded people than I was. I went to night school and summer school every summer and I worked during the day at Revco Drugstore. My senior year, I graduated in 3 years because I was so ready to get out, and my senior year I was going to night school and then vocational childcare classes during the day and J.B. was my teacher – we are still friends to this day – she pulled me aside and said, “Jennifer, I’m not going to say this in front of the class but you need to be a teacher. I’ve never seen anyone so gifted with kids. You were born to be a teacher. You don’t need to work in childcare but you’re going to have to take the SAT.” So she would give me stuff to study. I’d go out to the car and smoke cigarettes and study for the SAT from these notebooks she would give me, and then I’d go to work, and then I’d go to night school. She took me to a college fair at Meadowcreek High School and I saw this school called Young Harris College. I was a city girl but it just looked so beautiful. I just loved it. I get really car sick and when I went to the Howard School, I would get sick. I’d take Dramamine and Ritalin so by the time I got there, I was a hot mess. I graduated in the cafeteria at Meadowcreek and my whole family was there because no one thought I’d graduate. That same day I found out that my dad had cancer; he died my freshman year of college. My parents were able to take me to Young Harris to see it. I was carsick the whole way there b/c we were driving through the mountains. I was quiet when we were there because I was so sick but when I got home, I told my parents that was where I wanted to go. We didn’t have a lot of money when I was a kid. When I went to the Howard School, my great aunt paid for it. She also paid for my brother to go there, too. Young Harris also wasn’t cheap. It was an amazing college for me. It had small classes and it was like a family. I failed Algebra that 1st year when my dad died. I missed a test and a few things and when you miss things in Algebra, it’s hard to catch back up. The professor failed me. I went to take it in summer school and it was so easy. When I went to UGA, I remember thinking it was

easy. Young Harris was a hard school, but they would help you. I would go to my professor's house and they would help you.

*I think my favorite subject was teacher dependent. I always liked math because it was cut and dry but I also did poorly in math as a young kid in elementary school but now, knowing what I know, it was probably because of my dyslexia. I couldn't memorize my multiplication tables but once I got into Algebra and Geometry, I always made A's. I liked it because it was something I could just do – it was very cut and dry. Reading was always difficult for me and I think if I had the tools that I know of now, when I was younger, it would have been very different for me. My daughter has the same learning disabilities as me but she loves school. She does great in school. But she has great teachers and the tools that she needs. She self-advocates. I didn't have those things. I never liked reading but one of my favorite classes in high school was a night school literature class where we read *The Great Gatsby* and I'll never forget that was the first time I fell in love with reading. And it was all because this night school teacher didn't expect us to do homework because many of us worked and some students were parents. We would read it together in class and I could listen and it made me want to go home and read. I would read ahead. From what I learned from her, it's funny, when I get my daughter a book now, we read it together first. She is much like me in that she would never choose to pick up a book and read. But when she gets into it, she wants to read it.*

I would get up in the morning and go to work at Revco Drugs. I was a cashier and if you've never worked in a drug store, there isn't really anyone there. So I could do my homework there after I straightened a few shelves. I would leave to go to Meadowcreek which was about 30 minutes away from my house and be there from about 3:00 until 9:00 at night. I was there the from the 2nd year the night school opened. It was open to anyone in Gwinnett County. I don't

know that I learned a lot, well obviously I did because I talked about my literature class, but they really weren't gearing you to go to college. It was great for me because it was smaller classes. The teachers differentiated more. I'm not sure what drew them to teach night school but it was definitely a different caliber of teacher. I felt like it was the teachers that were passionate about what they were doing and about kids. And shortly after that, the Phoenix school opened up which was a flexible all-day program but that wasn't in existence then, it was just the night school. I was excited about the Phoenix school and thought it was a good program for kids that didn't fit the regular public-school programming and that wasn't an alternative school for bad kids. I don't believe that there are bad kids, I say that from my teacher perspective, I just don't think we serve them well. Like I said earlier, you can choose to look stupid or you can choose to be cool. I think kids choose to look cool.

Kelly's Story²¹⁵

I was mainstreamed throughout my whole education with able-bodied kids in a regular classroom. I hate that phrase “regular classroom” because I’m regular too, just a little bit different.

I grew up in Jonesboro, Georgia and attended school in Clayton County. My older sisters went different high schools. One went to Riverdale High School while the other went to Lovejoy High. I went to Mt. Zion High. I am the only disabled person in my family. They only went to different schools because of rezoning. It never bothered me that my sisters and I went to different schools. I’m actually glad we didn’t go to the same school – it allowed us to have our own experiences. I’m glad we didn’t go to the same school.

I was mainstreamed throughout my whole education with able-bodied kids in a regular classroom. I hate that phrase “regular classroom” because I’m regular too, just a little bit different. I loved school. I love learning and I loved being around people. I never repeated any years in schools. I began school when I was 3 years old in a special needs PreK program where Ms. C and my mom began to fight for me and my education. Back then, there were several doctors that told my mom that I would be a vegetable. They said there was no point in trying to potty train me. People looked at me and assumed I would never learn to write but my mom and my preschool teacher believed there was nothing wrong with my mind and so they planned for me to be mainstreamed. My mom and Ms. C told people that I would need to know how to sign my name – you have to do that as an adult. I am so thankful that they did that for me. That was the only time I was in a special education class all day. I reconnected with Ms. C when I was in high school because I needed to take an extra physical therapy class and she came to the school to provide that; she remembered me from preschool.

²¹⁵ Kelly Clark, *Oral History Interview with Cristy Sellers Smith*, January 3, 2018.

I attended three different elementary schools – Arnold Elementary, one that I cannot recall the name of, and Kilpatrick Elementary where I spent the majority of my elementary years. I came to Kilpatrick when I was in the first grade. I changed schools because of the program that I needed for special education; some schools provided it and others didn't. I remember so many things about elementary school. When I was in kindergarten, I remember a boy getting his fingers caught in my wheelchair and being afraid that we would have to take him home! I remember playing with my peers outside and my friend was pushing me along the sidewalk. I was yelling for her to "go faster!" and my chair tipped over. I skinned up my face and had a big goose egg on my head. Picture day was the next day and so in my pictures I am smiling but I have a big goose egg on my head. It was a lot of fun, actually, until the very end! Some of the most fun I can recall was in elementary school during recreation. I would play every game that everyone else played but I would do it differently. Someone else would kick the ball for me and another student would run me around the bases. I met my best friend in the second grade and I also began to ride the bus. In the earlier years my mother took me to and from school and when I was little they didn't have school busses for people with wheelchairs so when I was able to ride like my sisters, I thought it was so cool! I rode a lift bus that picked up other children that were not necessarily in my neighborhood. There were other kids in wheelchairs but there were also kids that were hearing impaired and kids that were visually impaired. I remember that in fourth grade I needed to have surgery and had to maneuver around in a wheelchair with both legs in a cast. I will never forget the difficulty of the restroom breaks and transfers when I needed physical therapy. I recall that even though I was at a school that had special programs, it was rare to see several students mainstreamed at the same time. We were in the same grade but we were never in the same class. It always seemed to me that if the teacher could handle having a student in class,

why couldn't they handle more than one. I think maybe they didn't want to overwhelm the teacher. This was the 1980's so special education really was still a newer thing.

I went to sixth through eighth grade at Mundy's Mill Middle School. I hated my special education teacher because she was a mean-spirited, nasty person and she seemed to get meaner as the years went on. She would say things that made me go home crying. When we were planning for high school and we were discussing my courses she told me I would never go to college. I had decided a long time before that that I was going to pursue a college prep track since I knew I had the ability. So when she told me I wouldn't, and I just remember looking at her face and saying, "yes I will. Watch me." The way the other students and I would deal with it was to try to get a laugh in about it. We would sing "Cruella De Vil" as we saw her coming down the hall. She was my orthopedically impaired teacher. I saw her during one period a day that was set aside for me to get started on homework or to finish an assignment I didn't get done in class because of time constraints. Unless it was physical or occupational therapy, that was the only time I had to see her. Years after I graduated college with my associates degree, one of my friend's parents ran into her and told her in a matter of fact way that I had graduated with a 3.9 GPA with a degree in Health and Human Services.

I remember that music education was an elective that everyone had to take. I took the class and we were supposed to play the guitar. If you've seen my fingers, you know that's not possible. My fingers are referred to as "swan neck" because they look like a swan neck. Instead of playing the guitar, I had to learn to play the xylophone. Initially, I didn't feel like I was different than others. I knew I had to make some changes and adapt some things but in my life, challenges are what make life interesting. Learning how to adapt to those challenges are something that I knew from an early age that I would have to do, even as I grew up. I don't think it occurred

to me until I was 12 or 13 that I was really different. I was going through puberty at the time. It was especially hard for me as someone with a physical disability. I could see my peers start to have girlfriends and boyfriends and I would sometimes feel left out. It really hit me that I wasn't like everyone else and I remember wondering why did I have to be different? Why couldn't my body be like everyone else's? Why couldn't I take myself to the bathroom. I call it my self-pity phase. Luckily it didn't last long, mostly because I had an amazing support system at home. My oldest sister Amy is like a second mom for me. She was really there for me and I could talk to her about the changes I was going through and she really helped me get through it. My mom and stepdad too. My stepdad has always been the kind of person that had witticisms and would say that "can't never could without help". I remind myself about that now. "Can't never could without help."

I got my motorized wheelchair in the 8th grade. When I started going through puberty and I was starting to begin growing weaker in my hands. I couldn't push myself in my chair anymore and I didn't have the arm strength to do it anymore. They decided that an electric wheelchair would be best for me. When I was a baby I was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy but I've never really fit the definition. I do have Spasticity or muscle tightness. But I don't have a speech impediment or learning disabilities.

I went to school at Mt. Zion High School because of a special program for students with orthopedic impairments. I didn't need special education for my academics but instead I needed help with using the restroom and I needed physical therapy and occupational therapy services. Physical and occupational therapy were very helpful for me. Physical therapy really helped me

with my balance and being able to sit and know that I could change positions if I needed to. I really feel like if I hadn't had occupational therapy I wouldn't have been able to be mainstream. It helped me with handwriting. I got an extra lesson and it was necessary for me.

Mathematics was my hardest subject, I like to refer to myself is not just physically challenged but also mathematically challenged. I got through math but with the assistance of my older sister. Thank goodness for her. When my mom or dad would lose patience, she would come in like a superhero and explain it in a way that I could understand. I can honestly say I never enjoyed it. My favorite subject was literature which is funny because I never liked to read when I was younger. But as I got older, it was a way that I could travel to different places and different times. Especially places...because being in a wheelchair makes it hard to travel. It was a way I could escape. I was offered the opportunity to take AP classes but I felt like I would fall behind so I didn't try. As an adult, I kind of wish that I would have tried. It might have helped me in college so I could finish a little quicker.

My favorite teacher was also my literature teacher, Ms. D. I also really loved Ms. E and I also remember Coach M although he was my least favorite of the three. Ms. D wouldn't suggest that I do things a certain way because they were easier for me – she really made sure I tried to do the assignment the way it was meant to be done. But she knew when I got tired and at that time, but not before, she would let me do it differently. My hand would get tired when I would do a lot of writing. But she would never let me make changes before she knew I was tired. That's what I like, I like for people to let me do things in what would be considered the normal way before I make changes. Usually the way it worked in high school, the teacher would make small changes to the assignment on my behalf. For instance in a math class, if she assigned 1-100 on a certain page, she would have me do the odd numbers. Writing wasn't really a problem but my

hand would cramp up after a while because it was hard to hold a pen. There really wasn't any devices although Ms. D let me take an essay test that was timed, since I write slowly, by using a tape recorder. Usually if I saw something that I wanted to do, I figured out a way to do it. I feel like I was really blessed with the teachers that I had. Every one of them would step up and say "here's how we are going to do it" ...they didn't resist, they took it all in stride. I really feel like they were prepared for it.

I was part of my IEP meetings in high school but not in elementary or middle school. I remember that I would have to do certain things in physical therapy so they could measure my range of motion to see if I had improved or if I had decreased in my range of motion. I don't know that I was ever there at the meeting when my mom was in the room, but I remember them giving me tests on shapes and things to assess how I was doing.

As a student I remember wondering why I couldn't do extra-curricular activities like everyone else. I did the best I could. I went to prom although I didn't have a date. I always wanted to be part of the dance club. I love watching people dance and I really wanted to be part of that. It was hard to watch people dance and not be able to do it. But I participated in adapted physical education where we would play flag football and bocce ball. It got aggressive sometimes and I remember someone falling out of their chair while we were playing flag football. His wheelchair tipped over – he wasn't hurt and thought it was funny. I went to a few football games in high school although most of the games I went to were against Lovejoy High School. My sister was a senior when I was a freshman and she was on the flag corps team so I attended a lot of sporting events where our schools were playing against each other. My sisters are my best friends. We may have argued when we were younger but we get along now.

One of the most frustrating things when I was going to school was the bathroom situation. You have several bathrooms throughout the school but you may only have one or two that are really accessible. For instance, for me, I have to take into consideration when I'm out somewhere – even at home now that I'm an adult – that it's a two person operation. You have to have one person to hold me up while one other person deals with my clothing. And also because of the lifting. It was that way in high school too because I was probably as tall as or almost as tall as the paraprofessionals that had to do it. It was frustrating to have to go to the bathroom but you couldn't go to the closest one, you had to go several hallways to get to an accessible restroom. It bothers me to this day to need someone to go to the bathroom. Not necessarily because I have to have someone with me but because I'm concerned for the other person's well-being. I would feel awful if someone hurt themselves. My mother is in her 60's and she is still doing the lifting. First of all because it has to be done and for financial reasons. It's hard to get the lifts in your home. I don't like having to interrupt someone's daily activities because I need help. I've accepted my limitations the best I can because they aren't going to change. I remember Ms. J at Mt. Zion and thinking she didn't like me much. We only had two paraprofessionals to help with bathrooming and so the times we could go to the bathroom were scheduled. My time was just before her class so I would always be 5-10 minutes late for class. I couldn't help it but it bothered her. I remember her making comments – nothing that really bothered me per se because I understood where she was coming from because she was there to do a job and a student was always coming in late – it could throw off the whole lesson so I understood where she was coming from. It bothered me because I wanted people to like me and her attitude around me made me feel like she didn't like me very much. I could see the difference in the way she was with me and the way she was with, G, for example.

I never got to have a usual job when I was in school. It went to a job training center called Worktec that was for people that have disabilities. Typically they worked with students that had mental, physical, and behavioral challenges. I worked there for a summer in the warehouse, packing and folding boxes. I also did some office work. I don't work now and haven't worked since Worktec. Mostly I don't work because of physical issues. I have the mental ability but when you are in school, you have someone to help you to use the restroom but most jobs don't provide that.

Students would ask me about my disability in school and I didn't mind. It bothered me more when I was younger but as I grew up, I realized that the only way you can learn is by asking questions. Instead of making people feel bad, instead of giving a harsh answer, I've used my sense of humor. One time someone asked me if my legs were wooden because they could see where the brace would stick out through my pants. Although I thought, "really?" ...I smiled and said, "well, they used to be, but man the termites were bad in the summer." I feel like my own mental outlook, not the way things were really happening, but the way I would see things in my own mind made me feel like I was different than everyone else. It wasn't the students. I would watch everyone go to parties or get invited out on dates in high school and I never was. I never went to parties or went on a date. And in my own mind, I was thinking that maybe it was because people didn't like me because of my wheelchair. I figured it was why I wasn't invited to parties or why people didn't want to date me or like me in that way. As an adult, I understand that people may have been intimidated, not knowing what needed to be done to get from point A to point B. I looked at myself and thought I wasn't good enough because of my disability.

My best friend in elementary, middle, and high school was G; we met in the second grade. We also went to college together for a short time. We would hang out outside of school –

maybe not as often as other people, but we would go to each other's houses to have play dates and spend the night. We went to a couple of middle school dances. We would meet each other there and hang out – we also went to a few basketball games. She and I would go to the mall to hang out. G. and I were never in the same class until high school. Even then, it was very rare for us to have the same class. If we did they would have to separate us because we'd make jokes. Well, I would make jokes but G would burst out laughing and get in trouble. She was the feisty one as far as driving her wheelchair would go but you know, I was more of the sarcastic, smart ass. G. and I were different because between the two of us, I was the quiet one. I pride myself on being able to read people. I knew which people I'd be comfortable with and which ones I wouldn't. I had my clique. G. could talk to anyone but I wasn't like that. Just give me a few people and I'm happy.

I remember enjoying the people that I was around in high school. Most of my classmates were very understanding about my situation. There was one person who made rude comments about me – he called me “curved claw” because of the way my hands are...and his mother was a special education teacher! I remember having friends that would say, “don't worry about it, he doesn't know anything” – that always made me feel better. I like to say that everyone that I came in contact with had a positive influence on me in one way or another. If they were the ones that made rude comments, those comments made me stronger. They made me realize that not everyone was going to be friendly or understanding. I know now that when people make comments, it's because they aren't educated about or don't understand the situation. I think of myself as someone that uses my sense of humor and my ability to talk to people to teach them that I'm really not so different.

My mom and dad didn't treat me differently than my sisters. If I did something wrong, I got in trouble for it. If I wanted to go somewhere and it wasn't feasible, they would tell me no. They would explain it to me. Sometimes I would get mad or frustrated but they treated me the same as my sisters. I credit them with my outlook on life. I want to be treated like everyone else. In college especially, I was offered the opportunity to use a tape recorder but I never wanted to do it. I wanted to do it like everyone else. I remember one time that I did but that was because the professor talked fast and everyone was using a tape recorder! I never wanted to take the easy way.

I think I was incredibly lucky to have the people around me that really just looked at me like I was in a wheelchair, but thought "so what," you know? I remember that one person that made fun of me throughout school and how hurtful it was, but I remember finding strength inside of me and hoping that he would never have to go through the way people stare at you when you are different. It made me realize that I have a disability but the disability doesn't have me. That's how I live my life every day. There are days where I am frustrated and days when I feel sorry for myself, but I have to remember that I was created the way that I am for a reason. I believe it's because physically I have different abilities, but I'm really not that different. That is what I want people to realize. I think one thing that people don't realize is that a majority of people that are disabled that look at the positive and how life is good. Everyone has ups and downs. I try to keep a positive outlook on life. I know people that have had a worse disability than I have. I knew someone in high school that was able bodied but after something happened, he lost his ability to speak, walk, and even use the restroom. He went from being able-bodied to being an infant again – he needed others for everything. I helped feed him. I remember him and I realize that no matter what I've faced, it could have been worse. I think people need to realize that everyone needs

help. Some people need it differently than others. It's not a bad thing and you shouldn't make assumptions about people because they could surprise you. Don't look down on people and don't underestimate students. Give them the opportunity to try everything. If they can't after you let them try, then make an adaptation.

I remember one time that I was at the mall with G during high school. We were in the food court having lunch and there was a couple sitting at the table beside ours. They just kept staring. I guess they were shocked to see two disabled people sitting there having lunch together. It was driving me crazy. To get them to stop, I started making loud noises and rocking back and forth. They got uncomfortable and finally looked away. G was embarrassed but cracking up. If they wanted a show, I gave them one. Making people laugh or showing people that I can be funny and intelligent is a way of showing people that I'm not much different than anyone else.

I had a lot of friends all the way through school. The funny thing is, even into my college years, I noticed that boys were easier for me to relate to. They didn't judge me based on my abilities. They were the most helpful of all of the students I knew. The girls I knew were helpful, but the boys seemed to go the extra mile to make sure I had everything I needed. The people I became friends with, a lot of them I'm still friends with today. I keep in touch with my friends mostly with Facebook. I even keep in touch with a good friend that I've known since I was three years old. He and I went to the same preschool. He has cerebral palsy.

I studied Psychology and Human Services at Clayton State and at Gordon College from late 1997 until 2003. It took me a little longer and I had to take a lighter schedule until I got to Clayton State because Gordon was further away. I had to think about bathroom breaks and my mom, bless her heart, took me everywhere. For bathroom breaks, it takes two people to help me.

At Gordon College there was a professor I had that was a little harder on me than I was used to. But I loved it – I loved proving that I could do whatever I needed to do. I remember taking notes in class. He would walk around class and he would lean over my shoulder just to make sure I got everything he said. I remember at the end that he came to me and he said, “I didn’t think you could do it. I didn’t think you would be able to pass my class but you proved me wrong. Thank you for proving me wrong.”

A lot of fun happened in college. I remember a friend that got on my lap in college because she wanted a ride on my chair. I drove as fast as I could and she fell into the bushes. I laughed so hard and she laughed so hard that she was crying. I remember another time when a friend of mine and I were walking to class at Clayton College and State University. He took the steps, I always had to go around the building to take the ramp. I said “don’t worry about me” as I drove my wheelchair away and he realized that I couldn’t take the steps. We always joked about that.

As a disabled person I get really irritated when people stare at me. With children, I realize that they may not have been exposed. But when adults stare at me, and 9 times out of 10 it’s an adult, I get irritated. I would rather someone just come ask me why I’m in a wheelchair or why my hands are the way they are. I hate it when people stare at me. It makes me uncomfortable and makes me feel awkward. Kids will ask you if they wonder about something. They will ask me why I’m in a wheelchair and adults try to stop them from asking those questions but it’s okay and I want them to ask. I’ve noticed that kids are more accepting of differences than adults. They will look at you and realize you are different, they will ask you about it, and then they go on their way. I have nieces and nephews that grew up with me and I’m not sure they see the chair. They know I need help but it’s just part of who I am. My sisters tell me that because they have grown

up with me, they are more outgoing towards people with disabilities. They know not to do things for others, because of me they know that you let them try to do it first and then you offer to help. I don't know that they see disabilities but instead they just see people with different abilities. In school I think both adults and students accepted me. I think my fellow students reached a point where they didn't see my disability. I think that's why my friends in college would go down the steps and then realize I wasn't there, come back up the steps, and go down the ramp with me. I had a friend tell me they forgot I was in a wheelchair. That is how I want to live my life. I don't want people to see the wheelchair as the main part of me, as the center. It is part of me but it's not the whole. I started feeling that way in high school and in college especially.

Speaking for my younger sister who is a kindergarten teacher. She has a dual degree but I think because she grew up with me around her, seeing that there are differences, it opened her mind to possibilities. She has always been more compassionate towards other people. I like to think that growing up with me helped her in that aspect. She has always been the first one to jump in and help someone that is elderly or disabled. I got to see it when she was at home so she understands but you don't see disabled people coming into classrooms to talk to teachers to tell them what disabled students need or what to look out for. It would be beneficial for able-bodied people to hear from people with disabilities and give them a way to see that they don't have to behave any differently. They just need a little understanding and a little tolerance.

5 CLOSING THOUGHTS

The purpose and aim of this dissertation is to expand the existing historical record by adding the narratives of students with disabilities. Although we have documented the history of public education between 1975 and 2005, the records in the archive give an incomplete picture of the past that fails to include the voice of students. This oversight may not be an intentional one, but instead, one that is produced via the social stigma and assumption of inability that is reported by individuals living with a disability. Throughout time, as Pelka notes, people with disabilities have been seen as little more than pity cases that need to be managed.²¹⁶ While the archives are full of records to tell the timeline of special education, the first person perspective and experience of students receiving special education is noticeably absent from the history of education. Several scholars have written oral histories of disability rights movement, but few have written about the day-to-day experiences of being a student under the guidelines set forth by IDEA. I maintain that any history that excludes a history of people is incomplete. Oral history research, and the information in this dissertation, is essential to the history of education and special education as it begins the process of capturing the missing voices. By talking with people who were students with disabilities in metro-Atlanta, this research was intended to answer the following questions:

- What are students' memories of acceptance or rejection and their social position among other students?
- What do students remember and what was valuable about school? While the narrative among disability advocates has focused on the ways that students were separated or treated differently, do students share similar concerns? Are there other events that stand out, beyond those we look for as policy-makers, administrators, researchers, and teachers?
- What do students with disabilities want to share about the experience of being disabled in a school?

²¹⁶ Fred Pelka, *What We Have Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), ix.

While only three narratives were generated as part of my research, as previously discussed in chapter 3 their value and content are significant. The stories that Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly shared address the questions set forth before beginning this research, but more importantly, they are now a published part of a larger history that will help us gain a broader understanding of the history of education.

The histories I found in the archives that tell stories of the Atlanta Speech School, The Georgia Department of Education, Atlanta Public Schools, and the Atlanta Junior Women's League, and other programs around the state told stories of special education without including the voices of students who were in special education programs, classes, or received special education services. Atlanta has a rich history of programs for students with varying special needs. Evidence of programs to help students with tuberculous and students with speech impairments is evident in the pages of information maintained about the Atlanta Junior Women's Leagues and their efforts within their community.²¹⁷ Atlanta public schools had early programs for the deaf, and the state of Georgia, while lagging other parts of the country, instituted programs for the deaf and blind long before federal mandates requiring special education programs.²¹⁸ There are stories of programs for students with behavior disorders, and a long history of institutions, including that of Central State Hospital, once the world's largest institution, amidst its 2,000 acre campus in Milledgeville, Georgia.²¹⁹ Yet, outside of the pages of scholarly works in the field of disability studies, the voices of the disabled were absent. The archives contained only stories of teacher of

²¹⁷ Franklin, *From "Backwardness" to "At-Risk,"* 84.

²¹⁸ Atlanta Board of Education, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1937 – 1938*, Box 111, Atlanta Public Schools Archive located at Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library.

²¹⁹ Peter Cranford, *But for the Grace of God.*

the year, curriculum considered by the state, the allocation of funds, and the logistics of opening schools and special programs.

I came to this work with my own assumptions about what people with disabilities might say about their experiences as students. Based upon my time in the archive as a researcher and countless IEP meetings and conferences as a teacher and administrator, I approached my research with the belief that the voices of people with disabilities have been excluded from the body of knowledge known as history, and from the policies that inform special education practice. I came believing that I'd capture voices of a wide range of students with varying abilities but anticipated that I would hear stories of being segregated to special education classrooms, being treated badly or differently, with a smattering of stories about students overcoming the odds.

My suspicions were confirmed early on when educational records rarely mentioned actual students, and then again as I maneuvered through the politics of IRB. Current trends in education were a big factor in my belief. As of 2013, only 61.8% of students with disabilities spend 80% or more of their day in the general education classroom. Only 55.1% and 67.8% of students with orthopedic impairments and learning disabilities, respectively, spend 80% or more of their day in the general education setting.²²⁰ Regulatory guidance provided by the state of Georgia requires that students eligible in these categories must be free from disabilities attributable to an intellectual impairment (in the case of a specific learning disability), or must not show intellectual disability below the mild level (when occurring as a secondary disability in individuals with orthopedic impairments).²²¹ Although these statistics are troubling and illustrate the extent to

²²⁰ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics, 2015, Chapter 2," <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=59>.

²²¹ Georgia Special Education Rules, "160-4-7-.05 Eligibility Determination and Categories of Eligibility," http://archives.doe.k12.ga.us/DMGetDocument.aspx/160-4-7-.05_Eligibility_3-31-10.pdf?p=6CC6799F8C1371F652A505DFC2E6E9873664C9C07475C448B6F4C484C7DA08A6&Type=D.

which students with disabilities are not included in education to the extent of their peers, stories of being excluded were not the focus of the stories narrators shared during our conversations. This may be the result of feeling supported in school or could also be the result of only knowing what they have experienced and feeling as though they have been successful following school. Despite the range of their disabilities, all three narrators went on to attend college and obtain bachelor's degrees – two of them in the field of education and the other in health and human sciences. They did not need special protection predicated on the assumption that they are less able to talk about their past. They were able to tell their history as well as any able-bodied and able-minded person as they were all able-bodied and able-minded. Their abilities are significant, it is our assumption of what they cannot do that has and continues to be the basis for exclusion.

This research brings significance to what we know about special education in metro-Atlanta. The voices of Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly bring a new perspective to the history of education by expanding what we know about the day-to-day experiences of students with special needs. The first-hand experience that their narratives provide, gives us information that existing archival documents have failed to capture. The narratives collected as part of this research brings the voices of only three students to the archive, but each voice expands what we know about what mattered and what made students feel supported, an area where prior historical research has excluded students with disabilities in favor of the perspective of policymakers, administrators, and teachers.

I had hoped to speak to more narrators than I was able to reach. The knowledge that there are a large number of people available to talk with, resulted in an unrealistic expectation regarding the rate of participation that I would see in the timeframe set aside for this research. While I was able to establish rapport with the individuals who expressed interest, each had some personal

familiarity with me, likely increasing their comfort with me as researcher. With more time and more solicitation of potential narrators, the number of voices would likely increase. The accumulation of information must start somewhere and the completion of my dissertation does not signal an end to my commitment to this work, a point discussed later in this chapter. Further, it is important to note that while the number of participants was far less than my initial expectation (but still within the range set forth in the IRB application for research), the limited number in no way reduces the value of the narratives that were collected and published as part of this research.

Individual and Collective Themes

The narratives provided by Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly are not generalizable to a causal finding in the way that one would look for in a scientific study with controlled variables, however there are reoccurring themes that are evident across their stories. Perhaps most relevant to a history of people are the collective themes. While there are other individual themes that surface in Kelly's story, the collective themes across all three stories are related to social acceptance or group membership, academic persistence, and student-teacher relationships. Each of these themes, although informed by the intersection of each narrator's identities, helps us understand the history of being disabled in school and what mattered and prevailed for these students during that time. With persistence and the collection of additional narratives, it is likely that other collective themes, perhaps differentiated by decade, race, class, or gender, would emerge.

Social acceptance and difference emerged thematically throughout Jennifer's educational-life history, in the adolescent and teen years in Kelly's history, and explicitly in the adolescent years of Allie's story but also from a different vantage point in Allie's early years. Jennifer makes mention of her behavior getting attention across all years she attended school, but

also talks about herself as a protector of others who were not accepted among peers. Jennifer's perception of herself as struggling because she didn't have academic support, intertwined with her present opinions on why students misbehave as informed by her professional perspective, leads her to define herself as a bad kid but never as a student that was socially rejected by peers or society. Social acceptance was acknowledged by Jennifer, making it of importance, but there is no indication that being different was a significant struggle that she faced during her years as a student. This is in contrast to Kelly's narrative where she tells explicitly of a boy that made fun of her and called her names during her years at Mt. Zion High. She mentions friends but also recalls her feelings of isolation and social difference when it came to dating and other social events. Kelly's story has strong undercurrents of concern for social acceptance, even in the presentation of academic work. Her own comments regarding herself definition indicate her frustration with social recognition of ability-difference. As quoted at the beginning of her narrative and shared during our conversation, Kelly feels strongly that she is was everyone else, only a little different.²²² It is Allie's story that required further processing when thinking about the social acceptance and social difference theme. Although Allie tells of being made fun of during her time in middle school, she perpetuates social difference from a perspective we typically attribute to a nondisabled person when talking about her early elementary years. Allie describes the other students that she remembers in a special education classroom not by name but by their disability. She expresses frustration when remembering times she was acknowledged as different or disabled but failed to recognize times when she was the individual creating social difference.

²²² Kelly Clark, *Personal Communication*, January 3, 2018.

A second theme that was common across their narratives was that of academic persistence. While all three women struggled in school either physically or academically, they persisted through a university degree. Jennifer and Allie pursued degrees in education, later teaching students with special needs, while Kelly pursued a degree in psychology. For Jennifer, the driving force emerged late in school. Despite being a student that no one thought would graduate, she found a connection to a college and excelled at a degree in teaching. Allie turned her experience as a student with a learning disability into a career helping student who needed special education support in math. Kelly, while she does not work in her field, was determined from adolescence when a teacher insisted she would never be able to go to college as a result of her orthopedic impairment.

The final collective theme, and perhaps the one that was most unexpected, was the student-teacher relationship and its significance to each of the narrators. Despite being an educator and knowing that we all hope to touch the lives of students, I was surprised to hear that each of these women were so heavily impacted by their teachers. All three women had a story to tell about the power of their teacher's words, actions, and support. From Allie's powerful narrative about Ms. S who involved her in the decision-making process at IEP team meetings, and Jennifer's story of the vocational education teacher who pulled her aside and refused to let her work in childcare unless she went on to be a teacher, to Kelly's high praise for Ms. D who never insisted that work be completed differently, despite her obvious struggles with the physical act of writing. Each narrator powerfully recalled and praised their teachers and the impact on their education and future lives.

An additional theme emerged that I find to be narrator-specific but worthy of further attention and that is the theme of self-sufficiency. While all people likely think about the concept

of independence during the course of their life, for Kelly it was and continues to be a daily realization. Aside of the clear impact her physical disability had on her ability to provide her written consent to participate in my research, the discussion of her independence was a prevalent theme. In Kelly's narrative, she recalled an experience in early elementary school where she required a kicker and a runner to allow her to engage in the game of kickball. She also talks about returning to school following surgery and trying to maneuver throughout the school and the difficulty of "transfers" when she needed physical therapy.²²³ In high school, she tells the story of a the impact of scheduled restroom breaks on her relationship with a teacher, and not being able to take the stairs on her college campus. Even today, she shares, she is dependent on another adult – sometimes two – for basic functions that we accomplish without thought. She has never had the opportunity following high school or college to work outside of the home due to the lack of assistance available to lift and support Kelly during transfers to the restroom facilities. Kelly's story provided deep insight into the daily life of a student that needed significant levels of physical assistance, and the ways that the structure of schooling was both a support and a deterrent to meaningful participation in basic daily life.

Echoing Kelly's words which became part of the title of this research, I was reminded during the course of this research that students with special need are "regular" just like their non-disabled peers. I've reflected on whether policy or society is to blame for the belief that neurodiversity and differing physical bodies are valued as less than those of us who escaped labelling or never needed a label to access education or daily life. Perhaps they are so inextricably intertwined that pulling them apart is an effort in futility. Policy is shaped by society and society then

²²³ A transfer is when a student must be moved from one chair to a stander, walker, toilet, or other piece of equipment in order to participate in the next set of activities. Transfers are usually manual, requiring a person that can lift students, or in some less frequent cases, a student may be lifted using a hoist or lift mechanism built into the structure of their classroom or school building.

acts based on policy. The unintended consequences are real. From a schooling perspective, teachers focus on the differences between students to target their instructional needs, rather than operating with an assumption of ability until inability is demonstrated. Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly were all able-bodied and able-minded despite their label of disability. Beyond academics, this way of othering carries over to social and daily life. I was surprised to find that the narrators talked about topics such as sports, social events, their relationships with teachers, and the subjects they loved to study. But why should I be surprised when I, also a white woman of middle-class background, would have talked about my teachers, sports, social events, and my relationships with teachers - the very same topics addressed by these narrators.

Recommended Future Research: Race, Class, and Gender

As previously mentioned, the limited number of narrators qualifies the outcomes of this research. While I maintain that the narratives are no less valid, the range of themes and variability of narratives is widely restricted. Furthermore, the narratives are also defined by the race, class, and gender of each narrator. While questions specific to these areas were not part of the conversation, Allie, Jennifer, and Kelly are all white women. Based on their school attendance in metro-Atlanta, as well as the ability for two of three narrators to attend private school, a reasonable assumption would be that they are from middle class homes. While Kelly mentioned financial constraints, she did so in the context of her current living arrangements rather than as part of the historical context. While Jennifer mentioned the impact of money, she also shared that an aunt had afforded her and her brother the opportunity to attend a private school that would provide for their learning needs.

The issues of race and class in the narrators experiences cannot be overlooked. Scholars who study the disproportionate representation of students in special education by racial and ethnic category cite institutional bias, cultural consonance and dissonance, and the nuances of racism as likely factors.²²⁴ From a surface level, it may seem noteworthy that all three narrators are members of a racial group that is less commonly represented in the historical distribution of students with disabilities, however the early identification of Jennifer and Allie is more likely the result of the educational support available to them. Similar support has not consistently been available to students of color with mild disabilities; more frequently these students are identified as having severe disabilities or their learning challenges go unnoticed until the student's frustration or inability is labelled as a behavioral disorder. Allie and Jennifer were identified early during their school career however this should not be indicative of the severity of their disability. The communities where both women attended school are middle-class areas that are historically populated by settled-living families. On the other hand, Kelly's identification as having a disability is less likely the result of her racial and socioeconomic class membership. Kelly's disability results in apparent physical differences that are likely to draw the attention of others. The fact that she was labelled with a physical and not an intellectual disability however, could have resulted from the privilege of her race and class. The common race of the narrators, then, is likely explained by the race of the researcher. All four are white, middle-class women. Furthermore, two of the three narrators followed a similar professional path as the researcher, while the third attended the same high school as the researcher. The likelihood that these three narrators some-

²²⁴ Beth Harry and Janette Klingner, *Why Are So Many Minority Students in Special Education: Understanding Race & Disability in Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2014), 2-3 and 48-53.

how represents a unique population is negligible and the research acknowledges that their common race, class, and gender further limits the thematic relevance of their stories across the population of students with disabilities.

Deep and thorough analysis of the aforementioned social constructs is warranted and I hope that the information collected will serve as useful data for this purpose. While I recognize the need for other lines of inquiry, I wish to reiterate that analysis of social constructs is not the purpose of this dissertation. Many aspects of identity are difficult to alienate when examining a historical event and some categories, such as race and disability, are not always distinct and the histories are often interlaced. While disability transcends all races and all areas of the country, it was likely thought to be more prevalent in the south as blacks were often considered less intelligent and incapable of being educated. While scholars such as James D. Anderson wrote about education of blacks in the south, effectively adding to the body of literature about public education's history, the impact of disability remains invisible from the discussion in his work and the work of others.²²⁵ The narrators who participated in this history identify as disabled although there are places where racial identity is also apparent. While it is not the focus of this research, the implementation of special education while situating it within the social and political context of a highly racialized south is also an essential understanding in need of further inquiry.

In addition to inquiry regarding the influence of other identities on the experience of students with disabilities, their experiences can also stand alone as a social category worthy of study in the same way as race, class, or gender.²²⁶ Over the course of recent years, more exploration of

²²⁵ See James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South: 1860-1935*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

²²⁶ David Henderson and Christine Bigby, "Whose Life Story Is It? Self-Reflexive Life Story Research with People with Intellectual Disabilities," *The Oral History Review* 44, no. 1 (2017), 41.

the issues, rights, and experiences of people with disability has emerged in both qualitative and historical lines of inquiry. As a result, there is a renewed call for historians and other researchers alike to think of disability as more than simply an isolated pathology but instead as a social category. I concur and hope that we can begin to see disability as more than a barrier, but an identity that has been overlooked and remained out of consideration as we reconstruct the past, and arguably, as we prepare for the future of our schools.

Recommended Future Research: Digital Archiving and the Security of Digital Archives

One of the struggles with collecting oral histories is where to house the audio or video and resulting transcript, if one is derived, from the conversation. American oral historians began to use oral history initially to capture information from powerful and publically important people such as former presidents of our country. Being that these individuals were known, with many having presidential libraries across the country, it's not surprising that people would go in search of these recordings and transcripts. Later, a movement to represent everyday people instead of people in power using oral history developed alongside the social history movement. While I am clearly supportive of this work, I am concerned that the physical archive is not the optimal place for housing transcripts and oral histories. We have moved into an age where digital technology is present in nearly every aspect of our daily lives. I admit that I'm fond of a physical book or periodical however, like in libraries and archives, space is a concern. As our population grows, the need for physical space increases, impacting the available space to house physical documents. Digital archives and digital recording is beginning to revolutionize the way that we maintain information however we should proceed with responsible caution. The Oral History Association,

University of Michigan, and Institute of Library and Museum Sciences are collaboratively exploring the increased accessibility and reduced physical constraints of using digital technology to acquire and maintain oral histories. In addition to further research in the area of increasing accessibility of oral history through digital archives, researchers and oral historians should explore the security and protection of this information, as well as ways to efficiently catalog and represent information once large quantities of oral histories are amassed.

Recommended Future Research: Dispositions in Teacher Education Programs

Finally, although not specific to oral history or the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in historical research, the oral histories I collected point to the importance of student-teacher relationships and the types of teacher dispositions that students with disabilities value most. While it is impossible to determine from these narratives alone whether there is a specific disposition that consistently celebrated, it should be noted that each narrator reported that teachers who treated them first as people deserving of dignity and participation were standouts among those that had learned from across their time as a student. The field of teacher education has long been plagued with selection criteria driven by local and state credentialing systems, rather than focusing on the commitment and behavioral disposition of those applying to practice education. Utilizing the testimony of students to investigate the dispositions that build rapport and learning opportunity could improve upon the selection criteria of candidates receiving admittance to teacher education programs.

Thoughts on IRB, Oral History, and Disability

While the purpose of this research was in no way linked to the activities of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), the IRB served as a physical and intellectual barrier to my research, making it a relevant topic related to this research. There has long been a struggle between oral historians and IRBs, and in a situation where you find yourself a graduate student in need of a degree, policy has a tendency to reign over conviction. In my case, I was caught between policy, bureaucratic oversight, and my desire to give voice to a traditionally marginalized group of people for the sake of giving them voice in their historical narrative. Despite my desire to push against the system, I sacrificed the purpose and quality of my work to address the requirements of the local IRB. Through their policy, my inquiry was minimized to a study, diminishing the value and voice of the people I had aimed to remove from the margins. Because my experience with IRB illustrates the very definition of a structural barrier (a roadblock faced by people with disabilities every day), it is only appropriate that I use the experience to further illustrate the role of policy and bureaucracy in orchestrating disability and serving as little more than a barrier to oral history and other humanistic research.

IRB was established by the federal government to protect the rights and interests of human subjects participating in scientific research, and was authorized by Title II of the National Research Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-348) and codified in Title 45 (Public Welfare), Part 46 (Protection of Human Subjects) of the Code of Federal Regulations, commonly referred to as 45 CFR 46 or

the Common Rule.²²⁷ The National Research Act of 1974 defines research as systematic investigation that includes evaluation and assessment that contributes to generalizable information.²²⁸ However the common rule also exempts oral history from regulatory oversight but allows local IRBs to determine if research is classified as oral history. This has led to a number of contentions interactions, much like my own experience, where the definition of oral history and the extension of IRB to include oral history comes into play. Some have suggested this “mission creep” is the result of recent human-subject violations in biomedical research and the resulting fear of litigation. In light of these concerns, many institutions, including Georgia State University, extended the common rule to all research involving human research.²²⁹ The back-and-forth with IRB, as well as the disorganization of the IRB process at Georgia State, led to more time being focused on their “administrivia” instead of my research. Additionally, having to advertise for “subjects” or “participants,” arguably diminishes rapport with interested individuals who see the opportunity as a study, rather than a meaningful interaction with a historian interested in their independent perspective regarding a phenoma, experience, or period of time.

Other IRB practices that are germane to my critical outlook on the relationship between IRB and oral history include the “expedited process” for approval of oral history research. The insistence by the IRB that people with disabilities are vulnerable populations, and the requirement to use structured and premeditated questions that receive approval prior to knowing anything about the narrators with whom you will be speaking. In 1998 the federal Office of Human

²²⁷ For the full text of 45 CFR 46, see <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy> .

²²⁸ Linda Shopes, “Oral History, Human Subjects, and Institutional Review Boards,” Oral History Association, Accessed on February 20, 2018. <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/oral-history-and-irb-review/#framework>

²²⁹ Ibid..

Research Protections (OHRP) attempted to relieve oral historians of the burden of regulatory oversight. OHRP released a statement that oral history, when required by local IRBs, should benefit from an expedited review.²³⁰ Despite my disappointment upon learning that my university would require an application to IRB for approval of my research as oral history, in order to avoid an application to IRB, I was somewhat relieved to know that the process would go quickly.

While the term expedited is used, the process was far from expeditious. I submitted the requested information, received feedback and “recommended” changes (that I was required to “accept” and implement), and resubmitted. This process occurred multiple times, including several times when my case was assigned to a different reviewer than the ones who previously reviewed the application. While they would approve my changes, an entirely new list would result. I spent time making adjustments, many of which were semantic in nature, and resubmit only to have a new reviewer and a new set of suggestions. On one occasion, I actually received a recommendation to “undo” a recommendation made by a prior reviewer. As one that acknowledges being (and hopefully somewhat remaining) a novice at IRB applications, I cannot be entirely sure that this inefficient and disorganized process is mirrored at other universities. I can attest that the result of OHRP’s recommendations, at least in my case, has resulted in little relief.

Georgia State University’s IRB ultimately deemed my research as requiring review based on the “vulnerable” nature of the population I had proposed to “study.” Yet, other than a mention that I would be talking with individuals that received special education services between 1975 and 2005, there were no “participants” defined. No mention of cognitive or physical ability was included in the application, yet they were defined as vulnerable and assumed to need more assis-

²³⁰ Ibid.

tance and be less able than other citizens. This deficit model of thinking clarifies how the definition of disability as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon, in contrast to the medical model that focuses more on areas of weakness instead of the worth, value, and ability of people. Additionally, the assumption of inability assumed by the Georgia State University IRB is a prevalent one, leading the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to develop a preamble of agreements that defines disability as resulting from “the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others,” and also recognizes that persons with disabilities “should have the opportunity to actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes, including those directly concerning them.”²³¹ Given the incompatibility of the behavior of Georgia State University’s local IRB with the convictions of the U.N.’s committee to focus on the rights of disabled persons, I suggest that Institutional Review Board members at any university be required to demonstrate an understanding of the basic social justice concepts of equity and compassion for people. At no point should the function of IRB come before the basic human rights and interests they were established to protect.

Finally, a valuable insight into the interaction between oral historians and narrators that is discussed by Antionette Errante, is the perception of what an interview should look like and the concern for the meaningfulness of the narrator’s contribution. Narrators, she claims, will point out when you are not performing the interview in accordance with their perception of what it should be.²³² Much like my own preferences, Errante discusses the desire for an open-ended interview that allows the narrator to lead the discussion. The Institutional Review Board also

²³¹ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (CRDP), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/preamble.html>.

²³² Errante, 19-20.

seems to have an image of an interview, albeit different from the one most oral historians describe. IRB requires pre-determined questions for approval and expects that researchers will adhere to only this list. Undoubtedly, given the definition of research in the common rule, the purpose of this is for generalization. However one could argue that the objectivity gained by talking directly with those who have experienced the timeframe or past events you are studying, is lost when questions must be predetermined and created without consideration for the individual people serving as narrators of the past. I felt strongly that the questions I developed for the purposes of the IRB application were watered down, general, and demographic-focused instead of serving as meaningful inquiries into the nature of the narrator's experiences. Rigid and predetermined questions, instead of a free-flowing conversation that allows for storytelling and spontaneous memory-recall, creates a stale (laboratory-like) environment. Rapport must be built between researchers and narrators so that they feel comfortable talking about their experiences. Particularly in my first interview, I followed the script precisely. It was not until I deviated near the end that Allie and I began to have a comfortable dialogue. The questions I asked were often repetitive because I was simply following a script, many of them she had already answered. I don't think it's coincidence that Allie's narrative is the shortest, least specific, and contains the least number of in-depth sporadic memories. The question and answer, interview-like protocol, made it difficult to engage deeply with Allie's memories of her experiences in school.

The use of IRBs to govern oral history research, although heavily researched already, requires additional scrutiny and further commentary and should continue to be a topic of future research. On January 19, 2017, the common rule was updated by the federal government and explicitly states that oral history is no longer subject to IRB approval. This rule was effective in January of 2018. Oral historians are instructed to follow the ethical guidelines of the Oral History

Association and continue to utilize precautionary measures such as informed consent.²³³ While a collective sigh has been heard across the historical profession, I remain skeptical that local institutions will relinquish this control over student and faculty research. Like most federal policy, local states and institutions continue to have the right to interpret the common rule implement local institutional policy. Until the time that oral historians can freely interview individuals to produce invaluable historical records, the attention to this topic should remain steady and focused on the impact of IRB on historical and humanistic research.

The Future of this Research

I distinctly remember the words of my committee upon presentation of my prospectus. While they were supportive of my research, being seasoned and much more familiar than I was with the time it takes to conduct research, they made it clear that I was tackling something huge. Nearly two years later, I have lived their concern, and arguably a few unexpected concerns, but I'm excited about the future of this research. Oral history needs more voices, and people with disabilities are pushing harder than ever to show their current and past contribution to our society. The work must go on, and further lines of inquiry must result, not from the assumptions of what we will hear, but from the words and experiences shared by each narrator. Disability is an element of social relationships, a way of signifying power.²³⁴ In the same way that Joan Scott once redefined gender as an element of historical inquiry, historians and people with disabilities must do the same. For now, disability is a line of distinct inquiry however the proliferation of

²³³ United States Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects. Accessed on February 25, 2018. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/19/2017-01058/federal-policy-for-the-protection-of-human-subjects#p-1354>.

²³⁴ Baynton, *Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History*, 34.

oral histories and the stories they bring will open new lines, and illustrate that the history of education is inadequate without the voices of students. I will continue to identify and locate narrators that will tell their stories. The experiences of students with disabilities must become part of the historical narrative and until that time, the history of education in metro-Atlanta is otherwise incomplete.

Collecting additional narratives will expand the extent of what we know about the history of education in metro-Atlanta but in future research I intend to expand the breadth of oral history interviews to include individuals with cognitive and physical disabilities. The inclusion of those deemed “severely disabled” will further demonstrate the ability of people with varying abilities to participate in activities typically extended only to those who are thought to be of sound body and mind. While there are additional accessibility considerations that may be required when working with people who are impacted by cognitive and physical disabilities, the work is essential to a better understanding of people with disabilities. This may require the use of assistive technology and other modifications to the interview process to allow for equal participation however the information provided would be invaluable. David Henderson and Christine Bigby have recently published on the cautions of engaging in life story research with people with intellectual disabilities. Their research suggests that historians must be careful to address the issues of memory and recall – both topics that are consistently weak for those with intellectual challenges.²³⁵ In my prior research with intellectual disabled individuals, I found that using sources such as school yearbooks and candid photographs were helpful in eliciting memories and family interviews proved helpful verifying the information provided, squashing the critical commentary

²³⁵ Henderson and Bigby, 2017

against the ability of my narrator to produce dependable information.²³⁶ I have a long-standing commitment to individuals with intellectual disabilities and intend to consciously include their narratives as part of my future research. Narratives by these individuals have the power to transform our understanding of history.

Finally, after collecting additional narratives, I would like to arrange them chronologically and publish them alongside of the history of special education policy and court decisions that have driven the practices used in special education. While not concentrated throughout the narratives presented in this research, topics mandated and driven by policy such as the IEP, least restrictive environment (LRE, or the extent to which the student is placed in general education classes), and program elements that constitute a free appropriate public education (FAPE) were evident. Interweaving a timeline of policy with the stories of students would provide an interesting examination of the changes over time that were driven by policy and how it influenced the education of students with special needs. While the voices must become part of what we know, the evidence of policy's presence in education cannot be overlooked.

²³⁶ My journey with oral history began in Spring of 2012 when I started to research the history of special education after conducting an interview with Cile Vardeman, a woman who was 56 at the time and sparked my interest in the experiences of people with disabilities before and after the implementation of the IDEA.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Dissertation Research – Interview Questions:

Demographic Questions:

What is your full name?

How old are you and when is your birthday?

What city and state did you live in when you attended school?

Where do you live now?

Do you have any brothers or sisters and if so, what are their names?

What were your parents' names?

Broad School Questions:

What elementary school did you attend?

Tell me about what you remember most about your elementary school years?

What was the name of your junior high or middle school?

Tell me what you remember most about junior high or middle school?

Where did you go to high school?

Tell me what you remember most about high school?

Did you enjoy school? What were the things that made it enjoyable/unenjoyable?

How did you get to and from school each day?

What classes did you take and what were your classes like?

What was your favorite subject and why did you like it?

What was your hardest subject?

Did you have a lot of friends at school?

Can you tell me about your best friend and the things you liked to do together?

Do you keep in touch with students that you went to school with?

Tell me which teacher was your favorite and tell me why you liked them?

What did you do outside of school or after school? Did you play sports or participate in other extra activities?

Can you tell me a story about the time you had the most fun at school?

Can you tell me the story of a school year that wasn't very fun?

When you were in school, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Did you go to college or technical school when you finished high school? If so, what did you study?

What was your first job?

Was there someone at school that had a positive influence on your life? What did he or she do to influence you?

Special Education Specific Questions:

When did you realize that you were receiving special education help at school and how did you find out? Did it change what you thought of school? Of yourself?

Do you feel like your experiences at school were different than kids who did not need special education? (If yes, probe to tell how)

Were your classes big or small?

Do you recall a time when you only took classes with other special education students?

Did you ever take classes with general education students? (If yes to both prior questions, probe with: Why did your classes change?)

Did you ever attend your own IEP meetings? What were those meetings like?

What kind of relationship did you have with other kids in your school? Do you feel that they treated you different or do you feel like they didn't know that you had a disability?

Do you feel your disability had any impact on your participation in extra activities and why or why not?

Were there other things you wanted to do but didn't feel like you could do because of your disability?

How do you feel special education classes were different from general education classes?

How was participation in special education classes helpful?

Looking back, was your status as a special education student a significant part of your life? Why do you feel this way?

What significant changes to school do you remember taking place when you were in school?

What do you think people should know about what it was like to be a special education student?

How did special education change over the course of your years in school?

Final Thoughts:

Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences at school?

Appendix B

Georgia State University Department of Educational Policy Studies Informed Consent

Title: Voices from the Other Room: Retelling a History of Special Education through Student Narratives

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Deron Boyles

Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI): Dr. Chara Haeussler Bohan

Student Principal Investigator (SI): Cristy Sellers Smith

I. Purpose:

The purpose of the study is to learn more about your experience in special education. Past studies have focused on special education from the view of teachers and other adults. To take part, you must have been in school between 1975 and 2005. You must be 18 years old or older. No less than 5 and no more than 15 people will take part in this study. The interview will last up to 2 hours. No more than three interviews will occur. We will meet at a time and location that is good for you and me.

II. What to Expect:

If you agree to take part, you will meet with the student investigator (SI) to answer questions about being a special education student. The interviews will be recorded.

You will only talk to the SI. You will only meet with the SI. The SI will explain what will happen during the interview.

The interview will last for no longer than 2 hours. After the interview, we may decide to meet again for another interview. The SI estimates that no more than 3 sessions or 6 hours will be needed. Within 3 weeks following the interview, what you told the SI will be typed on paper and given to you to read. It is important that the information represents your experience. You may ask the SI to make changes if you think the information is untrue. You can ask the SI to make changes by sending an email. If you send an email, it could be read by other people. The SI will also meet with you in person to make changes.

III. Risks:

You will not have any more risk than in normal life.

IV . Benefits:

There is no benefit for taking part in this research. The SI hopes to learn about your experiences to better understand what education was like for students with disabilities who were in school between 1975 and 2005. This interview may help with this. The interview with the narrator will help people understand special education from your point of view.

V. You Are a Volunteer:

You are a volunteer. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, we can stop at any time. You may skip questions. There are no consequences if you decide to stop being in this study.

VI. This Information is Not Confidential:

The interviews from this research will not be confidential. Your name will be included when the SI presents the study findings. The SI, PI, and Co-PI will listen to your interview(s). The interview(s) will be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)). The SI will talk and write about you and use your name. The information from the interview will be published. The interviews will be kept on a password and firewall protected computer. Additional hard copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of the PI or Co-PI. These interviews will not be destroyed. They will be provided to the oral history library at Georgia State University (GSU). If GSU does not take them, the SI will keep them. The interview will be written about in the SI's final paper. What you share will be discussed as your personal experience.

VII. Contact Persons:

You can contact Dr. Deron Boyles using his email or phone number. You may call him to talk about the study or if you are concerned about the study. His email address is dboyles@gsu.edu. His phone number is 404-413-8270. You can also call or email Dr. Chara Haeussler Bohan. Her email address is cbohan@gsu.edu. Her phone number is 404-413-8402. You can also call if you think the narrator has been harmed by the study. You can call or email Susan Vogtner in the GSU Office of Research Integrity if you need help. Her number is 404-413-3513. Her email is svogtner1@gsu.edu. She is not part of the research team. You can talk about any questions or concerns. You can give her your opinion. You can get information from her. You can also make suggestions about the study. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about the narrator's rights in this study.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Participant:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded, please sign below.

Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

Version Date: September, 2017