From the Shadows to the Spotlight: Centering the Experiences of Faculty with (Invisible) Disabilities

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From the Shadows to the Spotlight: Centering the Experiences of Faculty with (Invisible) Disabilities

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the

College of Education and Social Work

West Chester University

West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

By

Tiffany M. Gray

May 2022

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my ancestors. I would not be celebrating this accomplishment if it were not for the people who have come before me. The teachers, storytellers, advocates, and warriors whose memories and legacies will forever have a lasting imprint. I honor you in my words, in my framework, and my commitment to moving the cause for equity and justice forward. I honor you in my investment to self-love, my dedication to sustainable self-care practices, and to my unwavering commitment to prioritizing my happiness and joy.

In addition, I dedicate this dissertation to my mom Tonyia, who has always been my biggest fan and cheerleader. Mom, you are my best friend, and I could not have completed this dissertation without your love and support. Thank you for your encouragement to pursue my goals unapologetically and your encouragement to imagine my dreams into reality. You always believe in me even at times when I do not always believe in myself. There are many lessons and gifts you have given and continue to give me. I am appreciative for your love, care, radiance, resilience, and strength. There are no words to truly express the impact you have had and continue to have on my life. I am incredibly grateful that I get to call you mom and extremely proud of the mother you are and always been. I know that Bryan would be in complete agreement and our love for you is everlasting. Bryan’s beautiful smile, being, memory, and spirit are with us daily. You are both forever in my heart.
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I would like to thank everyone who supported me throughout this dissertation journey. It has been a long road, but I could not have completed this accomplishment without the encouragement of many people. Over the years, I have had many conversations with colleagues, mentors, friends, and family about pursuing a doctoral degree. However, I remained hesitant in pursuing this goal. Through a conversation with my wonderful friend Dr. Diane Wiener, I finally addressed the reasons that held me back and made the bold and brave decision to follow my academic aspirations. Thank you Diane for that critical conversation, all of our conversations over the years, and the depth of your dedication to disability-justice. Your support means the world to me. Also, I am beyond grateful for the incredible poem that you graciously wrote for my dissertation. Thank you and I love you.

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Thank you to my family for constantly believing in me. To my aunt Carol and uncle Carl who are more like siblings. You both have always supported me in pursuit of my dreams and goals. I love you both and hope to always make you proud. To my grandmother, who has consistently been a major presence in my life. Before defending my dissertation, you said to me,
“Just imagine us all in the audience, cheering you on. You are not alone we are just sitting back here waiting on you to applaud”. This sentiment among many others over the years, demonstrate the depth of support from my family. To my broader family, I hope to be a role model to future generations and a reminder that our aspirations are possible.

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Lastly, thank you to all the participants in my study. I could not have completed this project and research without you. Thank you for trusting me with your stories and thank you for sharing your experiences navigating the complexities of disability disclosure. To everyone that this dissertation resonates with, you inspire me. You inspire me to spotlight the complexities of disability identities and experiences so that disability does not remain in the shadows. You inspire me to unapologetically center the beauty, complexity, joy, depth, and fullness of disabled lives and experiences. Through my care, compassion, and advocacy, I remain deeply invested and committed to disability-justice, equity, and access.

Forever in solidarity.
Abstract

The absence of research around the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities is critically needed within the academy. Often (invisible) disabilities remain in the shadows because they are non-apparent until publicly disclosed. Equitable access, sustainable resources, and university communications around (invisible) disabilities can impact disclosure decisions. This social justice mixed methods inquiry used an explanatory sequential design to explore factors that contributed to faculty disclosure and/or non-disclosure of their (invisible) disability(ies). For some faculty, the “choice” around disclosure was non-negotiable as a result of a myriad of reasons, one being their access needs. The overall process, navigation, and decision making around disclosure can be complicated and complex for disabled faculty. Utilizing a qualitative survey, six themes emerged: (a) positive representation, (b) classroom disclosure, (c) necessity for accommodations, (d) negativity around disability disclosure, (e) perceived faculty capabilities, and (f) varying levels of disclosure within the university environment. Three additional themes surfaced from the semi-structured interviews: (a) intersections of faculty identities, (b) understanding and negotiating disability identity, and (c) revelations from the pandemic. Finally, from a document analysis review of 51 college and university websites four themes emerged: (a) complexity of website navigation, (b) absence of (invisible) disability language, (c) resources focused primarily on faculty supporting students with disabilities, and (d) difficulty finding accommodation processes. This study aimed to spotlight disclosure experiences of disabled faculty, explore information communicated through university websites about (invisible) disabilities, and inspire a disability-centered futurity with a call to action positioning disability-justice at the axis within the academy.
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Pre-Introduction: A Note to the Reader

Throughout this dissertation, the primary focus centers the complexity of faculty with (invisible) disabilities experience within higher education. However, prior to the introduction of my research, I wanted to offer an orientation and framework to my work which are meant to help guide the reader and offer an understanding of my positionality as a researcher. Language is critical and throughout the dissertation you will notice that I utilized different language to introduce and discuss disability communities, identities, and experiences. Throughout history and current day there has been an evolution of language when referring to marginalized communities. However, one thing I have noticed and experienced is that ableist language is utilized quite freely within society and symbolically, metaphorically, and linguistically there tends to be a linguistic reinforcement of oppressive language.

To the reader, I want to note that these are my own thoughts and construction of language with the effort to encourage my audience to wrestle with language. I do not assume to have the perfect or universal answers. My intention is not to offend, but to offer a perspective that complicates language and challenge the reader to think within and beyond the binary. For example, (invisible) and (visible) leaves us vulnerable to only thinking in absolutes and extremes, which erases a huge demographic that does not neatly fall into one end of a continuum. As a way to demonstrate my own commitment to continually recognizing and evaluating language and to encourage this for my readers, I have decided to purposefully include language that may linguistically utilize (able-bodied) and/or (able-minded) undertones. Often, these words intentionally and/or unintentionally use disabled communities to communicate a point, feeling, or experience. My intention in using these words is not meant to be ableist, but to demonstrate in writing the perverseness of this linguistic language. Throughout the dissertation,
these words will be bolded and placed within parenthesis. I chose bold and parenthesis because it was as close to accessible that I could utilize, while still offering an intentional and thoughtful disruption to the reader. I thought about other disruptions, but chose not to use them (e.g., italics however it can be difficult for people who are dyslexic or even for screen readers to capture). I will try to minimize the use of italics throughout this document as one demonstration of my commitment to equitable access.

In addition, I want to further explain why I chose the word (invisible) for this study. Language within the disability community can be complicated and complex. There is no universal consensus on the “best” and most appropriate language to use and sometimes it depends on context, culture, identities, and experiences. While there are other terms such as non-apparent, hidden, silent disability, I prefer to use the word (invisible) because I believe that there is more space to think about the intersections more broadly of people’s social identities. For example, a person of color who identifies with having an (invisible) disability may feel at varying times (invisible) to the world not because their racial identity is not “apparent”, because the hues of their skin may very well be “apparent” to the world based on assumed racial identity, but they may experience (invisibility) because of the existence of and sustainability of racial oppression. In this regard, (invisibility) becomes expansive and broadens the scope to apply to disability and the ways in which people with multiple marginalized identities and experiences may be erased, dismissed, and not (seen) in the world.

In addition, the next section will offer terms and definitions that will hopefully guide the reader throughout the dissertation. The terms and definitions provided are not meant to be authoritative, stagnant, or absolute. I recognize that different people will interpret these words similarly and/or differently depending on their own perspectives, identities, experiences, and
cultural communities. As previously mentioned, this pre-introduction is meant to be a guide and orientation that is deeply connected to my framework and positionality. Wong’s (2020) powerful words offer a perspective that captures and embodies the essence of this study:

Disabled people have always existed, whether the word disability is used or not. To me, disability is not a monolith, nor is it a clear-cut binary of disabled and nondisabled. Disability is mutable and ever-evolving. Disability is both apparent and nonapparent. Disability is pain, struggle, brilliance, abundance, and joy. Disability is sociopolitical, cultural, and biological. Being visible and claiming a disabled identity brings risks as much as it brings pride. (p. 19)

I (look) forward to you reading my dissertation and the engagement that you have with it while reading.
Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the term disability includes, but is not limited to: physical, cognitive, intellectual, developmental, and mental health conditions. I recognize that there are words that are left out here such as: crip, mad, and neurodiverse just to name a few. My hope was to include broad categories of identity and within my study participants had the opportunity to elaborate and be more specific to the language that resonates more for them. Below are a list of terms and definitions that will be used throughout this study.

**Able-bodied** is defined as a person who is perceived and/or assumed to be without a physical disability. The default in society is to assume that all bodies are physically and developmentally (normative). Note that some people may object to the use of this term because it inherently supports a binary (able-bodied) or “disabled body” which implies that disabled bodies cannot also be (able) and diminishes the ways in which people with disabilities use their bodies.

**Ableism** is defined as “rendering disability as abject, invisible, disposable, less than human, while able-bodiedness is represented as at once ideal, normal, and the mean or default” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 7). Connected to ableism Dolmage (2017) stated that **disablism** “negatively constructs disability. Disablism negatively constructs both the values and the material circumstances around people with disabilities. Disablism says that there could be nothing worse than being disabled, and treats disabled people unfairly as a result of these values” (p. 6-7).

Dolmage makes distinctions between ableism and disablism, but also offered the reliance and relationship one has to the other.
**Able-minded** is defined as a person who is perceived and/or assumed to be without mental health conditions. The default in society is to assume that all minds are psychologically, intellectually, cognitively, and developmentally (normative). Note that some people may object to the use of this term because it inherently supports a binary “able-minded” or “disabled mind” which implies that people with mental health conditions cannot also be “able” and diminishes the ways in which people with disabilities and various mental health conditions utilize their minds.

**Accessible** is defined as full participation of disabled people with regards to facility access, programs/activities access, and technology access.

**Bodyminds** is defined as the belief that the human body and mind are interconnected. Price (2011) “I use the term bodymind to emphasize that although “body” and “mind” usually occupy separate conceptual and linguistic territories, they are deeply intertwined” (p. 240).

**Disability** while disability is defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990; amended 2008) as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. For the purposes of this study, the term disability includes, but is not limited to: physical, cognitive, intellectual, developmental, and mental health conditions. Disability is a self-identification and as the researcher I believe that people have agency and should have agency to self-define and self-determine. Kafer (2013) offered, “The category of “disabled” can only be understood in relation to “able-bodied” or “able-minded,” a binary in which each term forms the borders of the other (p. 27).

**Disclosure** is defined as a person publicly sharing that they have a disability(ies) usually to receive necessary accommodations and resources. Note: There are a myriad of reasons why people disclose and/or do not disclose their disability(ies).
Identity-first language is defined by the linguistic structure which names a person’s identity first for reasons such as cultural connection or identity pride (i.e., disabled faculty member).

Impairment is defined as physical, psychological, or behavioral functional limitations or conditions that impact daily life activities. Can include terms such as but not limited to: mobility, speech, sensory, and vision impairments. Note: Some people may object to the use of the word impaired or impairment because it implies a deficiency. Similar to vision loss or (hearing) loss, it implies a deficit.

Intersectional/Intersectionality is defined as the social and political systems of power, inequity and inequality that overlap, intersect, and merge to create distinct experiences of marginalization and privilege for people at the intersection of those systems (Crenshaw, 1989).

(Invisible) disability is defined as a disability, impairment and/or condition that is considered (invisible) and is not often known until publicly disclosed. While I am choosing to use (invisible) disability throughout this dissertation there are people who utilize and/or prefer other language such as hidden, non-apparent, non-visible, silent etc.

Person-first language is defined by the linguistic structure which names a person first for reasons such as centering a person without their disability defining them (i.e., faculty member with a disability).

Stigma is defined as negative societal beliefs, perceptions, and stereotypes about people with varying marginalized identities.
Chapter I: Introduction

Addressing the needs and experiences of people with disabilities continues to be an underexplored area within higher education. Within society, the narrative around disabilities is often legal-based, compliance-focused, and accommodation-centric and some scholars continue to advocate for the critical need to move beyond legality (Kerschbaum, et al., 2013; Evan, et al., 2017). While not inherently negative on its own, the lack of nuance within legislature fails to highlight the complexities, experiences, cultures, and beauty within disability communities. However, there is a significance to disability-focused laws, because of the work of disabled activists and allies working tirelessly in solidarity for equity and justice. These laws are directly linked and built upon the labor of people within the disability community. The existence, resistance, and persistence of those committed to and demanding disability rights deserves recognition. Unfortunately, because of structural and systemic barriers, the progress towards equity and liberation within disabled communities continues to face many obstacles. Evans et al. (2017) expressed the imperativeness of moving beyond legal mandates to align with a social justice approach that is invested in equity and justice individually and across social structures which by design disproportionately impact marginalized communities. Abrams (2003) referenced the negative impact of using legal/law or legal precedent as a measure to not go above the limits to protect and advocate for faculty with disabilities because of the complexity of disabled people experiences. In other words, when considering legal approaches, accessibility and access should be a starting place and not the final point (Dolmage, 2015; Hamraie, 2016).

Dolmage (2017) posited, “Disability has been a rhetorically produced stigma that could be applied to other marginalized groups to keep them out of the university and away from access to resources and privileges” (p. 45). One goal of this study is to work from an intersectional and
multiple analysis perspective which strengthens the discourse around the complexity of a disability-justice framework. Charlton (1998) first (heard) the powerful and foundational phrase, “Nothing about US without US”, while in South Africa. The phrase initially (heard) at an international disability rights conference by disability leaders, became central to rallies around the world and the Disability Rights Movement (p. 3). The global origins of the phrase, “Nothing about US without US”, demonstrates the power of language and the significance of disability-justice by centering a community often in the shadows and demanding societal accountability. For me, this expression goes beyond “just a phrase” it communicates the necessity for disabled people’s centrality to civil rights and liberation for all people.

Within the academy, there is a need to center the (voices) and experiences of disabled employees. Rothstein (2004) noted the increase in claims regarding discrimination on the basis of disability being presented by faculty and staff. While it is estimated that one in five Americans have a disability, Rothstein further offered:

There is limited data to indicate whether one in five faculty and staff on college campuses have a disability. Because of historical discrimination and qualification barriers it may be that the number of staff and faculty members with disabilities in higher education is less than the overall presence in American society. (p. 124)

Similarly, according to Fuecker and Harbour (2011), “No exact figures are available because higher education does not systematically collect information about employees’ disabilities and because disability status may change over an employee’s career” (p. 45). Factors related to employment status (i.e., adjunct, tenured) as well as onset of disability could have an impact on the rate of disability among faculty (Rothstein, 2004). The rate of disability disclosure among
faculty could also be impacted. When there are barriers to accessing accurate data, it exacerbates the \textit{ability} to know specific community needs.

From this \textit{standpoint}, Kerschbaum (2012) offered, “To function as a truly inclusive workplace, one that values and welcomes disability, higher education needs to move beyond narrow legalism and adopt a new perspective that conceptualize access as a social issue rather than as set of specific solutions to individual problems” (para. 4). According to Fuecker and Harbour (2011), “Healthy faculty and staff are essential for campuses to be competitive, yet the needs of faculty and staff with disabilities are still secondary for many campuses that have well-established services for students” (p. 45). Perhaps aspirational, it is critical within higher education for administration to be more accountable to the holistic experiences of disabled faculty and move beyond narrow assumptions of \textit{able-bodiedness} and \textit{able-mindedness}.

Price (2011) introduced bodymind to connect the deep relationship between body and mind which emphasizes the inseparability. Erevelles et al. (2019) utilized the term bodyminds to convey the complex ways that disabled people be and become in the world. This language also suggests the interconnectedness of the body and mind even though one may or may not inform the other. Highlighting the interconnectedness of the ways in which people move through the world, forces society to pull apart the binary focus on \textit{ability} being the opposite of disability. Within education, Nusbaum and Steinborn (2019) used the term ontological erasure, which goes beyond simply excluding disability from the curriculum, but the action of creating a hierarchy of whose bodies and minds are not welcome in the educational realm. Nusbaum and Steinborn argued that exclusion and oppression occur within the curriculum and aim to erase disabled people who are unable to attain \textit{normality}, which is fundamentally flawed because it reinforces a binary that excludes communities on the margins of society.
**Purpose of the Study**

This dissertation’s primary focus is to center the experiences of faculty with *(invisible)* disabilities and engage a population that is underrepresented in the literature. Additionally, the complexity of self-disclosure and/or non-disclosure can be a significant ongoing decision facing disabled faculty. This study will add to the literature around the experiences for faculty with *(invisible)* disabilities, contributing to the need to expand mixed methods inquiry, and highlighting critical narratives with the goal of transformation for disabled communities within higher education. A mixed methods approach supports the research purpose, which is to gain more insight into the experiences of faculty with *(invisible)* disabilities focusing in on self-disclosure practices as revealed through survey data, interviews, and a document review.

**Rationale and Significance of the Study**

Given the silence and erasure of the experiences of people with *(invisible)* disabilities within higher education, gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of faculty with *(invisible)* disabilities is central to this study. Specifically, the complexity around self-identification, confidentiality, and self-disclosure for faculty with *(invisible)* disabilities adds an additional layer to the phenomenon of “coming out”. An additional challenge and difficulty for faculty to is determine if/when they are going to “come out” and disclose or choose not to disclose. Also, some faculty may not have the choice of not disclosing depending on their disability access needs. Just because some faculty may have no choice but to disclose it does not fundamentally mean their disability is *(visible)*. In addition, some faculty with *(visible)* disabilities may still need to negotiate the experience of disclosing *(visible)* and/or *(invisible)* disabilities.
Furthermore, despite the underutilization of qualitative mixed methods in disability research, the purpose of my use of qualitative survey data is to establish themes present in the survey, build on survey themes, and expand on themes present in the interview data. Hesse-Biber (2010) offered, “Qualitative approaches offer a range of insights into the ongoing discussion of mixed methods research, especially as it relates to arguments concerning the mixing of research paradigms, issues of power, and authority inside and outside the research process” (p. 456). Similarly, Lal et al. (2012) proposed, “Qualitative researchers are increasingly combining methods, principles and processes from different methodologies in the course of a research study as opposed to operating strictly within a delineated tradition” (p. 1). Advocacy and support for qualitative mixed methods inquiry continues to expand.

**Problem Statement**

There are many scholars committed to focusing and researching faculty with disabilities, however there is still limited data and literature on this population in higher education (Fuecker & Harbour, 2011; Kerschbaum & Price, 2017; Price et al., 2017; Shigaki et al., 2012). There is a need for further exploration around hiring practices, campus accessibility, accommodation policies and other barriers including disability disclosure, funding for disability equity, and overall campus climate for faculty and staff with disabilities. Fuecker and Harbour (2011) shared how the University of Minnesota streamlined disability services for employees, relocating them to where student services were also provided. The shift in disabled employee services led to the development of the UMN UReturn Program. The move was both a physical relocation and an organizational change. Also, the university shifted their focus from defining disability to focusing on reasonable accommodations that can support the employee. Fuecker and Harbour described this as a philosophical shift that was about “the university wanting the employee to
remain productive” (p. 47). While productive could be construed as supporting a perspective that employees and their work are solely “producers and products” my interpretation of Fuecker and Harbour’s perspective is about the employee receiving equitable access for their needs in order to be successful in their role. Specifically, key principles of the UMN UReturn program are to remain impartial, provide privacy, and be proactive in providing early intervention strategies (Fuecker and Harbour, 2011). This modification in the university’s approach aimed to support retention and shift work efficiency.

While Fuecker and Harbour (2011) did not address faculty and staff perceptions of the UReturn program, their article provided a foundational model for developing a disability-centered approach to access on campus. In addition, the UReturn program is meant to retain faculty and staff and as Fuecker and Harbour stated, “Focusing on interpersonal reasons for accommodations, such as the benefits to one’s self-worth or identity, helps retain employees and is in line with DS’s [Disability Services] progressive approaches to serving students” (p. 47).

Lessening and eliminating institutional barriers for faculty to receive accommodations directly connects to Fuecker and Harbour description of the importance of an employee’s “work identity”, which described “what they do, whom they work for, and why they like their job” (p. 47). This perspective supports an approach that extends beyond legality and humanizes faculty and staff as members of the university community. Fuecker and Harbour concluded by offering that there is an increased number of students graduating with disabilities, increased aging in the work world, and economic considerations that highlight future implications and impact on higher education that need attention. To me, Fuecker and Harbour were addressing the futurity of disabled students essentially becoming the disabled professors as time passes, which will require accountability and responsibility within the academy.
Shigaki et al. (2012) were unable to find empirical studies related to disability while conducting an exhaustive search around faculty and staff perceptions in the workplace. Similar to Fuecker and Harbour (2011), the gap in literature focusing on disabled faculty supports the purpose, rationale, and significance of this study and reinforces the idea that the problem needs to be addressed. To better understand faculty and staff perspectives of disability on campus, Shigaki et al. (2012) conducted a study to gather more information on disability perceptions on campus. Some of the findings highlighted that staff and faculty without disabilities reported higher ratings as it relates to general experience and satisfaction on campus and those with disabilities reported greater increased experience of harassment, bias, and lack of knowledgeable supervisors. Shigaki et al.’s study may have broader implications for the discrepancy in campus perceptions of disability and the need to address faculty with disability experiences. In the next section, I will articulate the grounding research question and sub-questions that inform this study.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question that guides this research study is: *How do faculty negotiate and experience disclosure of an (invisible) disability(ies) within a university environment?* The following six sub-questions helped frame this study:

1. What are the modes of self-disclosure for faculty with (invisible) disabilities?
2. What factors contribute to the decision for these faculty to self-disclose their (invisible) disability?
3. What factors contribute to the decision for these faculty to not self-disclose having a (invisible) disability?
4. In what ways do university work environment elements emerge as a factor related to (invisible) disability disclosure?

5. In what ways do social identities emerge as a factor related to (invisible) disability disclosure?

6. In what ways do college or university websites communicate information about (invisible) disabilities?

The next section will describe the rationale and significance of utilizing a qualitative mixed methods approach to addressing the research questions.

**Significance of Methods**

For this study, I utilized a social justice mixed methods approach using an explanatory sequential design. For this inquiry, I developed and used a survey, conducted semi-structured interviews, and conducted a document analysis as the three data sources. The method of data collection and analysis for this study was mixed methods. The approach utilized was an explanatory sequential QUAL→QUAL mixed methods approach. A QUAL-only approach is the mixing of qualitative traditions of research, data collection, and analysis all done qualitatively. Morse (2010) indicated that among methodologists there was no universal consensus on the definition of mixed methods. The traditional (view) of mixed methods is combining quantitative and qualitative designs, however, there are scholars that advocate for qualitative mixed methods (Morse, 2010; Morse & Niehaus, 2009; Hess-Biber, 2010; Lal et al., 2012). Morse and Niehuas (2009) defined mixed methods:

**Mixed Methods design consists of a core component (the main, scientifically rigorous study in which the primary or core method is used) and a supplemental component that is**
not complete in itself within which one or more strategies drawn from another method is used. (p. 9)

Morse and Niehaus expanded by offering that publication of both methods must be done together and the supplemental component relies on the core component to understand its importance. Morse and Niehaus’s (2009) definition aligned closet with the purpose of this study and supports the use of this approach. More specifically, Morse (2010) explained that “the primary characteristic is that both the core component and the supplementary component have an inductive theoretical drive” (p. 484). The significance of utilizing inductive analysis for this study supports a qualitative orientation and exploration of the lived experiences of the participants. Morse further suggested that the aim of qualitative mixed methods is “exploratory descriptive, with a goal that may range from rich description to theory development” (p. 484).

For this study, the use of survey method and a qualitative survey instrument tool have been identified as the core component of the study, which as Morse (2010) stated, “May be classified as a standard qualitative method” (p. 484). The interviews and document analysis are the supplemental components, which “consists of research strategy(ies) that are used within another qualitative method (rather than a complete method such), such as particular style of interviews or an observational technique” (Morse, 2010, p. 484). The use of surveys as a qualitative instrument allows for the descriptive analysis of this data and will assist in identifying participants for the interviews. Also, I used collective case study as the method aimed to explore the phenomenon of the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities. Merriam (2001) indicated that researchers that use a collective case study design are offered multiple data sources to understand and interpret their data. The collective case study method was foundational in examining the phenomenon around disclosure and non-disclosure factors for faculty with
disabilities. Lastly, the document analysis will serve as an overarching (view) of college and university website communication regarding (invisible) disabilities.

Limitations

Hesse-Biber (2010) expanded on the necessity of qualitative methods by offering, “Qualitative methodologies offer multilayered view of the nuances of social reality, one that does not privilege the interests of those who occupy positions of authority and power within society” (p. 456). As the researcher, I must be cognizant and attentive to my own positionality and actively recognize the needs and perspectives of the disabled community narratives. To ensure that this study was ethical, I maintained confidentiality throughout the study. Additionally, I utilized multiple approaches to triangulate the data. First, triangulation occurred through collection of data using multiple methods: (a) survey instrument, (b) semi-structured interviews, and (c) a document analysis. Second, I utilized multiple theoretical frameworks: (a) Transformation and Social Justice, (b) Critical Disability Theory, and (c) Crip Theory throughout this entire research study to help to understand the phenomenon.

Additionally, to establish credibility and trustworthiness, I conducted member checks following interviews, engaged in reflexivity through journaling and memoing, and kept an audit trail of the process. Through memoing and self-reflection, I bracketed my experiences to balance my lived experiences with those of my participants as a way to reduce researcher bias. Marshall and Rossman (2016) noted that the researcher having a description of their own experiences can be a beneficial method to bracket and set apart their own experiences from the participants.

Despite the aforementioned intentional efforts to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, there are still limitations to this study. The identities and experiences for people with disabilities is simultaneously beautiful and complicated. I recognize that my use of the word beautiful could
be misconstrued as problematic. My use of the word beautiful is to acknowledge the beautiful existence of disabled people and a rejection of only discussing disabilities and disabled people in the deficit. I understand there is no universal language used to discuss the complexity of disability identities, but my hope is that the reader will consider imagining and actualizing disability as beautiful. Even within disability communities, consensus on the “best” terminology sparks debate.

This dissertation will not focus on establishing who does or does not have a disability. It is the position of the researcher that this status belongs to the person to define for themselves. As presented in the Pre-Introduction: A Note to the Reader, I used a variety of language throughout this dissertation as a way to acknowledge the complexity of disability experiences and to introduce varying ways that people express their identities to the world. One limitation with this approach is that there is no “perfect” language and my attempt at addressing and highlighting the complexity of language may not be embraced by all readers. Therefore, knowingly I did my best to utilize affirming language and language that raised disability (visibility) and consciousness.

Additionally, I gave great attention to diminish and not use linguistic ableist language throughout this dissertation. However, there were moments that I intentionally used words such as the use of (visibility) above and have chosen to bold and place in parenthesis words that read as (able-bodied) and/or (able-minded). The intent here was not to perpetuate ableist language, but more so to offer a disruption to the reader, to highlight the necessity to notice these terms, and work towards finding alternative language to communicate. For example, Agosto et al. (2019) encouraged an investigation of the ways in which oppressive language is deeply rooted in the curriculum and articulated ways that society has constructed a positive (view) of (normative) language that prioritizes bodyminds that are not impacted by an impairment such as: one taking a
(stand) or stance against their oppression, or utilizing their (voice) to (speak up) or (speak out). These linguistic metaphors prioritize ableist ways to demonstrate activism and express one’s existence and resistance. Not everyone may communicate in this way or can communicate in this way. Deficit laden constructs and terms expose the power that language can have on communities that experience marginalization. Schalk (2013a) explored the use of disability as metaphor, specifically in feminist writing, but I apply their perspective more broadly to my arguments around the complexity of language. Schalk stated:

Disability metaphors promotes and ideology of impairment as a negative form of embodiment. These metaphors typically position disability as invariably bad, undesirable, pitiful, painful, and so on. They are, therefore ableist because they promote discriminatory attitudes toward people with disabilities. (para 6.)

Overall, I recognize the complexity of language, and while I may not have always succeeded in this endeavor, I ultimately decided to wrestle with the complexities of language recognizing its past, present, and future which align with the framework of this research study.

In addition to language, another limitation of this study is the potential critique of collecting survey data and using it qualitatively as a way to understand lived experience. Hesse-Biber (2010) argued, “The practice of mixed methods research has leaned toward a more positivist orientation, one that employs qualitative data as “handmaiden” or “second best” to the quantitative data” (p. 457). The utilization of QUAL → QUAL will hopefully lesson that perception and tension around mixed methods neglecting to acknowledge the potential for qualitatively-driven mixed methodology.

Another limitation could be the use of the word (invisible) in my research study. Self-identification and language within disability communities is significant and its possible that my
word choice in the study could feel alienating or problematic to some people. Rothstein (2004) offered, “Defining who is disabled is a particularly contentious issue (p. 125). While contending with this reality, I provide a broad definition or range of what (invisible) disability means, it is my preference to redirect and place the agency on the person to self-describe what (invisible) disability(ies) means to them and for them. The possible divergence in participant disability(ies) types may be one factor that make it difficult to draw connects across varying disabilities or collective case studies. A final limitation to this study could be the data collection timeframe given the varying conditions, impairments and/or disabilities of the participants. The mode of participation in the study (e.g., survey or video communication) may not be ideal within the timeframe of the study. I have offered participants various options to participate in this study such as video or audio communication, (ability) to have camera on or off during the interview, however the very nature of disability means that I cannot predict how it will manifest for people on any given day and as a researcher I must be attentive, open, and flexible in my research approach.

Summary

Faculty can experience a complicated conundrum in terms of disclosing or not disclosing their (invisible) disability(ies). This study aims to examine the factors that contribute to disclosure. As Sanchez (2017) argued, “Framing disclosure as a singular communicative exchange carries a great deal of problematic ideological baggage that is counterproductive to the very goals of many disclosures” (p. 211). As Sanchez articulated, the singular approach diminishes the fluidity of disability and that it is often not bound or motionless. In this chapter, I introduced the purpose of the research study focus around the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities. I then discussed the significance of this study and the problem around the
erasure of (invisible) disabilities within the academy. Next, I briefly discussed the methods chosen for this study and limitations to the study. While the complexity of language is one limitation to this study, a few major benefits of this study are adding to the literature around the experiences for faculty with disabilities, enhancing the potential for qualitative mixed methods, and highlighting critical narratives of disabled faculty. In the next chapter, I will explore literature that highlights the experiences of faculty with disabilities in higher education.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Centering and elevating the experiences of people with disabilities needs more discussion and research attention. Within higher education, the navigation of campus life for faculty with disabilities needs greater consideration. Some of the major themes, topics and concerns that exist for disabled faculty and staff include access, accommodations, disclosure, policies/laws, and stigma (Kerschbaum et al., 2013). Additionally, Chouinard (2010) highlighted various barriers that faculty with disabilities experience in their academic career such as: productivity and tenure, discrimination because of their disability, inequity in pay, inequitable expectations around instruction, and lack of inclusion in meetings and social engagements.

These barriers expose a limited understanding of the lived experiences of people with disabilities and highlight the disproportionate experiences and lack of access, services, and resources available to faculty with disabilities. These obstacles are not an exhaustive list, but they highlight the level of accountability that is needed in universities to be responsible and attentive to the wholeness of disability identities and experiences to support faculty success in their roles.

In this literature review, I will explore the experiences of faculty with disabilities and more specifically the types of barriers that faculty with (invisible) disabilities experience and navigate. Specifically, I review the literature that supports this study, including: (a) disability-centered language, (b) models of disability, (c) significance of (invisible) disabilities and disclosure, and (d) connections in queer and disability identities. I will conclude this chapter with my conceptual and theoretical framework, which is foundational and at the core of my research.
Significance of Language

The significant phrase, “Nothing about US without US”, first coined at an international disability rights conference, is integral to the demand for justice for disabled people and communities. The international beginnings of this slogan share parallels to multiple civil rights movements (Charlton, 1998, p. 3). For me, this is more than a phrase it is a position and a framework that places the existence and resistance of disabled people at the core. This phrase reinforces that disabled people are not an afterthought, should never be left on the fringes, and are central to disability-justice. The significance of intersectional movements requires equity and justice-centered approaches and are important because the identities and experiences of marginalized communities often overlap and do not exist in silo. Language can be quite powerful because it often provides insight into a person’s individual positionality and perspectives while also highlighting broader cultural identities and understandings.

More importantly, the phrase “Nothing about US without US” communicates more than just language, it is a foundational framework that demands that the (voices), the identities, and experiences of disabled communities are centered. While this dissertation will not explain the long history of disability inequity in this country, I want to acknowledge the historical significance of language and the shifts away from ableist language and continued movements from disability scholars and activist.

I will use varying language to discuss disabilities throughout this dissertation as a way to disrupt (normative) approaches to disability discourse and to acknowledge and validate the myriad of ways that people with disabilities identify themselves. The utilization of identity-first language or person-first language is a tension-filled debate. Person-first language means “person with a disability” to acknowledge and prioritize the person/the self, whereas identity-first
language means “disabled person” or “Deaf person” or “autistic person” to communicate identity, disability significance or cultural connections rather than it being a minor characteristic (Brown, 2011; Dunn & Andrews, 2015). Smith and Andrews (2015) offered the perspective that deafness is interconnected to identity, which is why they preferred disability-first language such as Deaf academic. However, Smith and Andrews also noted that not all people within the deaf and/or hard of (hear)ing community adopt this perspective and may prefer person-first language. The multiple perspectives offered provide evidence to the complexity of language. As Pudans-Smith et al. (2019) stated, “Developing terminology and labels that are positive and affirmative from the onset would begin to change pervasive attitudes in society about deaf people and their abilities” (p. 2108). As previously stated, I will continue to utilize multiple terms throughout this dissertation to continue to validate and affirm the myriad of ways people identify.

Additionally, Erevelles et al. (2019) utilized the language bodyminds to convey the complex ways that disabled people be and become in the world and that while one may or may not inform the other there is still an interconnectedness of the body and mind. Price (2015) offered, “Feminist disability studies tend to make the same mistake I was making when I first picked up the term bodymind: inserting mind in a tokenistic way and failing to consider fully its implications” (p. 4). Price further suggested there is a lack of demonstrating what the use of this language (looks) like actualized. In this dissertation, I aim to not utilize bodyminds in a tokenizing or exploitive way, but to add to the multitude of language that attempts to capture the essence, existence, humanity, and identities of disabled people.

Additionally, the utilization of dis/ability or (dis)ability is meant to communicate a variety of frameworks and positions aimed to disrupt (normativity). Schalk (2018) utilized (dis)ability to indicate the primary social structure of body and mind, which includes disability.
and (ability) and expressed that the use of the parenthetical highlights its reliance and interconnectedness. However, according to Wachsler (n.d.), the use of these alternative spellings still convey a “reliance” on (ability). Similarly, Erevelles et al. (2019) argued from a parenthetical perspective that a person’s identity and disability exist in the world in the confines of the parenthetical. Erevelles et al. added that the placement within the parenthetical provides non-disabled people a level of power to keep the disabled person, their identity, their being, and experiences contained. However, I would posit that the range of beauty and complexity of the parentheses is that it is simultaneously constricting and unable to be ignored. As described by Schalk (2018), the parenthetical curve demonstrates the complicated fluidity, controversial, and contextual boundaries between disability and (ability). With all of the varying linguistic choices, Waschler (n.d) noted the importance of acknowledging within group language or “in-house” language.

Despite the varying linguistic and symbolic use of disability-related language, Wachsler (n.d) offered there are clear distinctions in language usage depending on geographical location, the type of disability, and community affiliation. Additionally, I would add that the intersections of a person’s identities and in community culture also have influences on language, their experiences, and the ways in which they experience the world. Ortiz et al. (2020) provided an example that illustrated the complexity of language:

Speaking a language other than English can be framed as a language deficit or as linguistic capital which, in turn, determines whether schools adopt a subtractive (i.e. eliminate the use to the native language) or additive approach (enhance native language skills while teaching English) in educating emergent bilinguals. (p. 357)
While this example is about student experiences, it (speaks) to the complex ways that intersectionality is interpreted and applied in education can have impact and influence on language. Ortiz et al. offered, “Student identities are influenced by contextual factors such as school climate, educators’ perceptions, racism, power, privilege, and oppressive structures” (p. 357).

By recognizing and acknowledging the layers of language and the ways in which culture is influenced by context and understanding, this provides a perspective into the significance of language. As a researcher, my approach is to attempt to capture the layers and nuances of language with sensitivity, thoughtfulness, and criticalness. Throughout this dissertation, I will intentionally utilize varying language to communicate the complexity of disability, to interrupt norms, and to demonstrate the power of language (Evans et al., 2017). As Brown (2011) noted, “Trends of language have the power to transform ideas and attitudes. To dismiss this as ‘a silly semantics argument’ denies the power of language” (para. 19). In order to understand more deeply my positionality around language, the next section will discuss varying models of disability.

**Varying Models of Disability**

In disability discourse, both current and historically significant tensions exist related to varying models of disability that directly impact disabled people’s lives. The use of certain language is also interconnected to an individual’s position and use of a particular model. Barnes (1991) indicated that impairment is the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental, or sensory impairment. However, Barnes also offered that defining impairments is difficult and often dependent upon temporal, cultural, and situational factors. I would add to Barnes’ argument by offering that geographical factors (e.g., western perspective
versus global perspective) can also be a factor in how disability is defined. In contrast, Barnes defined disability as the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the (normal) life of the community on an equal level with others as a result of physical and social barriers. These definitions are quite significant in terms of distinguishing between impairment and disability.

There are many models of disability such as: medical, functional limitations or rehabilitation model, humanistic, social, social justice to name a few. The distinctions between the varying models are clear and distinguishable. For this dissertation, I will only focus on the medical model and social model of disability. These models impact people individually, societally, and systemically. There is a variation to the scale and range of how the models interconnect’s with a person’s life. For example, the medical model approach tends to have more of an individualistic or cure approach which often places the ownership of disability-related barriers and challenges on the person with the physical, cognitive, intellectual impairment (Miskovic & Gabel, 2012). While the focus in the medical model is often on the individual, there are also systemic implications. In the medical model approach, societal structures and systems are granted disproportionate power and authority over the needs for the disabled person versus disabled people having agency over their own experiences. There is also a strong connection to this model with regards to (looking) at disability through a lens of accommodations, legality, medicalization, and paperwork often (viewed) as necessities to “legitimate” a person’s disability. The critique of the medical model framework is the disproportionate focus on the individual, their disability, and the ways in which systems and structures are built, sustained, and create barriers to access for disabled people.

The social model of disability approach focuses on the structures, barriers, and systems that exist in the world. Oliver (1990) coined the phrase “social model of disability” and proposed
that disability was a social status because of the obstacles that prevent people from full participation in all facets of society. In this model, there is a strong emphasis on societal policies, practices, and structures that create and sustain barriers to access for disabled people. An example that is prevalent on college campuses is the architectural design of buildings and access. Dolmage (2017) described the steep (steps) in the academy by stating, “The university erects steep steps to keep certain bodies and minds out” (p. 42). When utilizing a social model of disability framework, the emphasize would be placed on the lack of access as a result of having (steps), inaccessible door frames, or a ramp with grooves, but the onus of inaccessibility would not be on the person with the disability. Dolmage further suggested, “To retrofit our [university] structures for access, we add ramps at the sides of buildings and accommodations to the standard curriculum-still disability can never come in the front entrance” (p. 42). Dolmage’s examples actualize the tangible ways in which university architectural choices communicate ableism within the academy.

While the steep (steps) metaphor provides a concrete example of the social model of disability, there are scholars that have an alternative perspective. Shakespeare and Watson (2001) offered that disabled people are simultaneously disabled by a social model approach and limited by their bodies. In contrast to the social models over emphasis on society, Shakespeare and Watson cautioned scholars to make a definitive distinction between impairment and societal implications. Similarly, Anastasiou and Kauffman (2013) described the dangers of making sharp distinctions between impairment and disability and suggested:

This neutralization of disability, disconnecting it from body, brain, and mind-related conditions, in turn allows proponents of a social model to give their theoretical constructs complete autonomy, to argue as if people were empty of biological features. Needless to
say, human beings without bodies simply do no exist and brainless humans cannot survive in the real world. (p. 446)

Further, Anatasiou and Kauffman (2013) proposed that disability is a part of human diversity and cannot be equated with social disadvantage. This perspective is quite profound and acknowledges disability as an element of diversity, however, simultaneously sets it apart from social barriers, mere differences, and inequalities. This description exposes the imbalance in disproportionate experiences of people with various social identities, but also highlights the necessity to acknowledge the role that bodyminds play individually and within the world.

However, Anatasiou and Kauffman proposed that disability is not a social construct like other social identity categories such as race. This is quite a bold assertion around the constructions of identity categories. While I have space to engage with and interrogate Anatasiou and Kauffman’s perspective more deeply around disability, their argument failed to address the relationship between race and disability specifically at the intersections for people of color.

However, Anatasiou and Kauffman’s (2013) perspective summarized this tension quite succinctly by arguing:

The understanding of disabilities is too complex and multifarious to be unlocked by single-dimensional cultural or biological explanations. Thus, what is needed is a unified and multidimensional understanding of disabilities, clarifying the relationship among the biological and cultural individual and social, psychological and behavioral, intrinsic, and external factors affecting the lives of people without eliminating one of those levels of analysis. (p. 454)
This viewpoint supports the idea that a singular lens is inadequate to understand the lived experiences of people with disabilities as well as the structural and systemic barriers and consequences of an ableist world.

In my research, I utilize a mixture of positionalities as it relates to various models of disability. I operate from a both/and approach acknowledging that there can be overlap in the experiences of people with disabilities and that perhaps multiple models may need each other to function. For example, I posit that despite changes to social environments to be more accessible to the diversity of disabled people it could be possible that a person’s bodyminds may still have difficulty accessing the space (physically, cognitively, or intellectually). Perhaps a disabled person’s access needs are day-to-day depending on how their condition shows up in relationship to time. For example, pain may not always be constant or at the same level and for people with invisible disabilities their pain may or may not always be apparent. For me, a broader, complex, and comprehensive approach is more effective when discussing and approaching disability research.

Transitioning to the core focus of my research, I will next explore invisible disabilities and disclosure. In the literature, there are multiple terms that scholars use to describe this area such as: (a) invisible disabilities, (b) non-apparent, (c) non-obvious, (d) non-visible, or (e) hidden (Tidwell, 2004; Siebers, 2004; Matthews, 2009; Baker et al., 2012; Miller, 2015; Abrams & Abes, 2021). For the purposes of my research, I will use the term invisible disabilities which is currently widely-utilized language despite inadvertently supporting the binary assumption that disabilities are either visible or invisible. According to Brown (2011), language affects all of us both within community and beyond. My hope is to express, consider, and uncover the complexities of invisible disabilities that create various layered experiences around the
disclosure conundrum specifically for faculty. Frequently, \textit{(invisible)} disabilities require ongoing disclosure, can be episodic, \textit{(visibly)} unknown to society, and its existence is unacknowledged without disclosure. Norstedt (2019) described multiple layers of disclosure for individuals with \textit{(invisible)} disabilities such as negotiating who to disclose to, context of disclosure, or timing of disclosure. I want to note that disclosure is not always the individual choice of the person, unfortunately a person’s disability could be outed with or without their consent and/or their disability needs could exceed being able to keep their disability concealed.

Through this lens, the importance of disclosure for a disabled person requires a level of trust, vulnerability, and privacy concerns to name a few. In a positive way, the intention of disclosure is for people with disability to receive equitable access to accommodations and resources and can provide employers with information about areas to improve in to support current and future employers. Additionally, having a part of a person’s identity be \textit{(viewed)} as \textit{(invisible)} can be demoralizing and, for some, coming out as disabled can be a point of pride.

However, in contrast, disclosure does not always lead to positive, supportive, and beneficial experiences for the disabled person. People with \textit{(invisible)} disabilities experience distrust because their disability is not \textit{(visible)} (Samuels, 2003). Some experiences of people with \textit{(invisible)} disabilities may be a fear of not being believed that their disability exists, over reliance on the ethics of the university to support their needs (financially for example), stigma and backlash occurring, or a person’s competency and \textit{(abilities)} being questioned to successfully do the job. von Schrader et al. (2014) identified barriers that people with \textit{(invisible)} disabilities experience in the workplace such as: risk of losing a job, not being hired, loss of benefits, and being treated differently. The experiences of disabled people with \textit{(invisible)} identities regarding disclosure are multifaceted. While this dissertation will primarily focus on
disclosure and non-disclosure of a disability, disclosure does not exist within a binary. For some people, disclosure exists on a continuum, is ongoing, or not an option depending on their impairment, condition and/or disability. Operating through that (viewpoint), some of the tensions around (invisible) disabilities and disclosure are explored further in the next section.

(Invisible) Disabilities and Disclosure

The negotiation that faculty encounter regarding disclosure of a disability is multilayered. According to Price et al. (2017), the burden of disclosure disproportionately places the onus solely on the person with the impairment to manage meanwhile societal and institutional responsibility is often absent. Price et al.’s online survey posed questions to participants about disclosure and their experiences within the university environment. In the study, participants identified risk as a reason for non-disclosure. Additionally, they also found that disabled faculty were more likely to be unaware of accommodations resources, and that there was a heavier reliance on support systems from outside the university such as family and friends. The study’s findings highlighted the need for the centralization of campus resources, inclusive campus climate, and enhancement of supervisor and administration support for disabled faculty. Hamraie (2016) offered that there can be “hidden costs” to disabled people when their disability presence is not obvious.

Specifically, with regard to (invisible) disabilities, Wright and Kaupins (2018) stated that they failed “to find research on disclosure by faculty of their Asperger’s Syndrome/Autism (or any other silent disability affecting educators) to help navigate the personal and institutional dilemmas” (p. 207). Similarly, Norstedt (2019) noted the scarcity of studies related to (invisible) disabilities in the workplace and aimed to add to the literature by interviewing employees with (invisible) disabilities and employers. Norstedt’s findings unveiled discrepancies which left
employees with (invisible) disabilities vulnerable. Despite a noteworthy gap in research, some of
the literature involving disclosure of an (invisible) disability was often from a personal narrative.
For example, Tidwell (2004), a faculty member, discussed their own experience with self-
described “progressing hearing loss”. Tidwell discussed a range of experiences from placing
their (hear)ing difficulties onto the students’ inabilitys to communicate well and at other times
questioning their own abilities as an instructor, describing this process as “mentally fatigued,
over-stressed and psychologically worn down” (p. 198). Tidwell described in detail the tensions
they experienced in terms of self-reflection of their own experiences and external experiences
related to their (hear)ing condition.

Smith and Andrews (2015) shared the range of needs for deaf [Deaf] and hard of
(hear)ing [DHH] faculty and emphasized, “The person who knows best about the needs of a
DHH faculty member is usually the individual themselves, particularly those who have already
been using accommodations for years (p. 1524). In contrast, Smith and Andrews offered, “Some
DHH faculty may not know what they need. Take for example, the DHH faculty who develop
hearing loss late in their careers” (p. 1525). Smith and Andrews’ perspective provides range and
incorporates a complexity of how time and progression can influence disability needs for faculty
members. These realities can have an impact on faculty not having specific answers to what they
need and, in turn, influence disclosure.

Tidwell’s (2004) personal narrative as a faculty member with, as they described,
“progressing hearing loss” reinforced the tensions that faculty with (invisible) disabilities face
even prior to disclosure (if they choose and/or need to disclose). I would offer that people
without (visible) disabilities and without (visible) mental health conditions are often assumed to
be without disability and assumed (able-bodied) and (able-minded) as the default identity.
These assumptions can have an influence on the ways in which the person with the (invisible) disability navigates campus life. Relatedly, McRuer (2006) and Kafer (2013) addressed the consequences and dangers of compulsory (able-bodiedness) and (able-mindedness) as the (normative) way of being, which can influence disclosure and overall experiences for faculty with (invisible) disabilities.

Adjunct (2008) shared their personal experiences being a disabled adjunct professor and the added challenges around securing accommodations such as accessible parking, accessible classrooms, medical benefits, and the need for a living wage to make ends meet. Further, Adjunct described the loneliness of finding these necessary resources, temporary nature of the adjunct position, and the levels of labor that go into navigating institutional barriers while understanding that most often that knowledge and labor will not be sustained over time. Adjunct highlighted the woes of disabled faculty, which offered a specific lens through which to consider the experiences for adjuncts with (invisible) disabilities in relationship to faculty with other positional ranks.

Shigaki et al. (2012) conducted a study more broadly around disability perspectives on campus as it relates to the experiences of faculty and staff. The findings showed that there were differences as it relates to employment status for employees with and without disabilities, and their overall experiences. Shigaki et al. stated that staff reported having a disability status at higher rates than faculty did. While more staff participated in the survey, this study does still raise questions about the specific factors that contribute to faculty disclosure or non-disclosure of a disability. Adjunct (2008) identified that the research showed there is a pervasive climate of “malignant” disregard toward accommodating faculty with disabilities. Adjunct’s perspective about university campus climate paints a negative landscape for faculty with disabilities.
However, faculty roles are integral to the classroom experiences for students and faculty learning and development. Creating a welcoming environment and presence for disabled faculty is important for the community and mission of the university (Kerschbaum, 2012). As a way to keep institutions accountable and responsible, Adjunct (2008) powerfully stated, “A system that discriminates against teachers with disabilities sends a message to their students with disabilities” (para. 22). Adjunct’s perspective offered an alternative way to think about the collective needs and resources of students and employees, and prompts discussion regarding campus priorities, commitment to disability-justice, and equitable access for disabled people across the campus community.

In the *Accommodating Faculty Members Who Have Disabilities* report, Franke et al. (2012) suggested the imperativeness of faculty members with (invisible) disabilities to disclose and share that information with university administration. While some faculty may not have a choice but to disclose their disability, the report did not account for university or department climate around disclosure, stigma, and safety. Burke (2021) offered, “Faculty members with disabilities say stigma prevents some from being open about their conditions, and the path to the academy still has its barriers” (para 1).

As Price et al. (2017) articulated, intentional and thoughtful practices that support disclosure are not a given or built into the experience for faculty. Franke et al.’s (2012) general statement around disclosure does not account for the ways in which disabilities (invisible, visible and the spectrum of disabilities) are experienced by the person, the cultural ways that some people may or may not connect to a disability label, and how they may be treated in the work environment depending on the disability. According to Clair et al. (2005), “Individuals with stigmatizing (invisible) social identities have different interaction experiences at work than those
with (visible) differences. The focus of information management is shaped not only by the threat of stigmatization but also by concerns of authenticity and legitimacy” (p. 79). This perspective highlights the interlocking relationship between revealing a person’s (invisible) disability, the need to prove and/or trust that one has an “legitimate” disability, and the possibility of stigma.

In a response to the *Accommodating Faculty Members Who Have Disabilities* report, Kerschbaum et al. (2013) discussed the myriad of ways that the report lacked depth and dismissed the complexity of disabled faculty lives and experiences. Kerschbaum et al. offered that more consciousness and education around access, accommodations, knowledge building, and intersectionality of identities was immensely needed in the field. Similarly, Tidwell (2004) echoed this sentiment by offering, “invisible” professors within the academy are in critical need of support. Tidwell expanded their argument by stating, “Almost by definition, university professors’ responsibilities on campus depend upon their intelligence and astuteness. We truly are ‘paid to think’. Such cleverness does not necessarily result in functional solutions for the kinds of problems I have identified” (p. 199). While issues of disclosure are complicated and complex, I would posit that there is a connection between the perceptions of faculty disability disclosure and perceptions of (ability) and knowledge. For me, knowledge is complicated because it is simultaneously about the individual, context, culture, identity, access just to name a few. The disproportionate stigma that can accompany a person’s disability disclosure could be a way to problematically measure their assumed or perceived (ability) and knowledge level. While there is a plethora of opinions around disclosure and/or non-disclosure, Wright and Kaupins (2018) argued that the intention behind disclosure and the context and conditions of the disclosure are important considerations.
**Faculty Classroom Disclosure**

While grappling with the tension around disclosure of an *(invisible)* disability, Wright and Kaupins (2018) posed two thought-provoking considerations: (1) *Is it a reflexive decision for each individual faculty member to make their disability known?* (2) *Should it be a requirement to make an invisible disability known if it could impact student learning?* (p. 207). These are questions and thoughts require deeper reflection because they highlight the negotiation disabled faculty face within the classroom. Wright and Kaupins stated, “It remains an ethical dilemma whether we disclose our differences to students and therefore expect students to accommodate our individual differences, or we retain privacy and learn to manage our own behaviors in the classroom environment” (p. 206). The navigation of this dilemma directly impacts faculty with *(invisible)* disabilities. Kornasky (2009) shared their personal journey around disclosure and non-disclosure in the classroom, but ultimately *(sees)* the overwhelming benefit of disclosure “coming out as professor with a disability is more than worthwhile in so far as it fosters positive identity politics among my students with disabilities” (para. 4). Of course there are negotiations and a myriad of decisions that faculty weigh in considering disclosure. Kornasky shared more about how the engagement levels of students and disabled student disclosure increased after they had chosen to disclose their *(invisible)* disability as a faculty member (para 6).

However, there is a scarcity of literature focused on disabled faculty members’ experiences and disclosure factors. In my literature review, there was a focus towards faculty attitudes and perceptions towards students with disabilities in the classroom which by default assumed the professor to be *(able-bodied)* and/or *(able-minded)*. Faculty perceptions of disabled students research and scholarship is important and there is a need for more added research about the disabled faculty experience in the classroom.
Alternatively, Burke (2021) stated, “In some cases, students may doubt they belong in the academe when there are not many faculty with disclosed or visible disabilities in their lives” (para 17). Wright and Kaupins (2018) offered that a benefit to disclosure provides an opportunity for faculty to make a connection with students with marginalized identities in the classroom and demonstrate disability disclosure for those students. This conundrum highlights the significance and complexity of disability disclosure broadly and within the classroom. The questions around disclosure and/or non-disclosure posed by Wright and Kaupins also underscored Tidwell’s (2004) examination of their own personal experiences and professional experiences in the classroom. Tidwell shared about their experience in the classroom when they attempted to hide their disability and further offered, “Much to my surprise, however, there were occasions when it was evident that I could not hide my hearing loss even when I was making the rules for discourse” (p. 199). To this point, it reinforces the complexity of (invisible) disabilities and the reality that a faculty member may not always have control over concealment of a non-apparent disability.

**Curriculum Erasure and Disclosure**

Specifically, as it relates to within the classroom, some scholars have discussed the ways in which disability has been actively erased from curriculum (Erevelles, 2005; Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019; Erevelles et al., 2019). Nusbaum and Steinborn (2019) used the term “ontological erasure”, which goes beyond simply not including disability into the curriculum, but the action of creating a hierarchy of whose bodies and minds are not welcome in the educational realm. I argue that this erasure is connected to the discourse around assumed (ability) levels and knowledge. Nusbaum and Steinborn indicated that exclusion and oppression occur within the curriculum and aim to erase disabled people who are assumed to fit within (normality). While
erasure of disabilities within the curriculum is not the focus of this study, the act of erasure does more broadly connect to this study. Additionally, I posit that a person’s (invisible) disability is potentially erased by the reality of its (invisibility). The possibility of disability erasure and the disclosure conundrum can be an added layer that faculty with disabilities grapple with negotiating whether or not disclose.

As it relates to erasure, Erevelles et al. (2019) offered an alternative perspective that erasure is imperfect and not absolute. Erevelles et al. suggested that in (normative) education, intersectionality, and the lived experiences of people with disabilities is absent. The reinforcement of norms erases people historically and erases their lived experiences that provide freedom and movement within the world. However, Erevelles et al. proposed that because of the insufficient attempt to erase disability or disability experiences, hope remains to shed light on the stories and experiences of disabled people. Similarly, Erevelles (2005) utilized the imagery of the “shadows” to describe the ways in which disabled people are excluded from the curriculum. While my interpretation of their use of the metaphor “shadows” was (viewed) as a deficit, the fact that “shadows” arguably provide an alternate silhouette, a replica of the original, but slightly different is a compelling way to reconsider that disability is not completely lost in the shadows.

Additionally, the imagery of “shadows” directly connects to the possibilities of the shadows being a palimpsest. Erevelles et al. (2019) described a palimpsest as a rewriting of text where traces of the original text can still be retrieved despite the intention to completely erase it. In my interpretation, palimpsests are particularly significant as it relates to the rewriting of experiences, practices, polices and laws that disproportionately impact marginalized communities. An example of a palimpsest could be what Dolmage (2017) described around university architectural designs and the steep (steps). While the narrative about architectural
design choices can be linked to beauty and aesthetic design choices, I would argue that there is a link to keeping disabled bodies out of the academy. Dolmage stated:

The gates, towers, and steep steps should make us understand how deeply these architectural investments imprint educational attitudes: who gets kept out, who and what gets held carefully within, and what conduct can be excused, which rights can be suspended, on campus? (p. 48)

The palimpsest here is the long history of disabled bodies being denied access to academy, but the meanings, metaphors and traces of architectural ableism provide a (visual) reminder despite an attempt to change the implications. There are many palimpsests that exist as it relates to disability, and important consideration is also (viewing) them through the lens of intersectionality and varying social identities. In the next section, social identities will be discussed further.

**Intersections of Identity**

Another layer that is necessary to explore is understanding disability identities and how those intersect with other social identities such as: race, sexuality, and gender identity. Clair et al. (2005) elaborated about the negotiation people with stigmatized (invisible) social identities experience when balancing how and if they should disclose their disability. Clair et al. further stated:

Traditional perspective of stigma focuses on the social reaction of others to a person with a stigma and on the fact that invisibility helps the stigmatized individual avoid problematic social interactions that may occur because of the stigma. Yet for people with invisible differences, issues arise prior to social interaction. (p. 81)
To this point, there is a private management that people experience as they negotiate disclosure and/or non-disclosure of their stigmatized disability. The added layers of navigating these experiences can be a disproportionate and added burden for disabled faculty. Price et al. (2017) offered that (invisibility) coupled with disclosure places the responsibility on the individual to make themselves (visible). The displacement of responsibility around disclosure can be troublesome because there are also other variables that can influence disclosure such as: (a) employment status or seniority, (b) workplace climate around disclosure, or (c) the impact of other intersectional social identities.

When focusing on intersecting identities, Ferri and Connor (2005) argued against the (view) that race and disability are distinct biological identifiers, but moreso overlapping societal constructs. Ferri and Connor suggested, “Within the U.S., rhetoric of race and disability overlap and are utilized to justify exclusion and marginalization” (p. 455). Mog (2008) further complicated this argument by noting that the hierarchy of legitimatizing an identity is connected to whiteness. The societal structures related to race and disability for example for disabled people of color is significant to acknowledge because the experiences will be different because of the broader ways that racism and ableism operate in society.

In addition to racial identity, another area of attention within the literature is around gender identity. Shigaki et al.’s (2012) disability-focused campus climate study found significant gender differences in their faculty and staff survey where men tended to report higher ratings in regard to campus inclusion, acceptance of disability issues, receiving disability training, and their own perceived knowledge around disability issues. Shigaki et al. did not address gender inequity more deeply or include data for faculty and staff that did not identify within the gender binary. While this study will not focus directly on gender differences within society, it is useful to note
the ways in which sexism for example can impact disabled people experiences. The intersections of other social identities such as race, gender identity, sexuality, age and so on need more investigation through disabled employee’s experiences. As a result, the intersections of these varying social identities may interact and inform a faculty members decision to disclose or not disclose an (invisible) disability. In the next section, I will further discuss the links between queer and disabled communities to connect the coming out and disclosure processes.

**Connections Between Queer and Disability Identities**

Samuels (2003) drew connections between coming out around one’s sexual identity and disability identity. While Samuels does not conflate the experience of a person coming out with their sexuality identity, they do provide a lens and relationship between the challenges that people with (invisible) disability identities face. Specifically, Samuels proposed that there is an interconnectedness between disability communities and queer communities. One overlapping experience was the difficulty in finding community and not readily coming out. Additional connections that Samuels noted were: (a) the challenge of being believed that they are disabled and/or a member of the trans and queer community, (b) the assumption of being assumed straight, cisgender, (able-bodied) and (able-minded) based on societal norms, (c) the conundrum of not being “enough” in one’s identity and expression, and (d) the overall coming out/disclosure negotiations. These overlaps are significant to note because the intersections of disability identities are not disconnected from other marginalized social identities within society (Goodley et al., 2019). This insight regarding the interrelated relationship of social identities has additional layers for those with identities that are not (visible) (e.g., the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities).
McRuer (2006) introduced Crip Theory to explore the relationship between queer identities and disability identities. McRuer explored the links between compulsory (able-bodiedness) and its links to and reinforcement of compulsory heterosexuality. These (normative) ideologies which are often linked, rely on each other for sustainability, legitimacy, and survival within society. Kimball et al. (2018) offered that critical queer theories and crip theories provide significant validation of “non-dominant identities that allow for transgression: the queer and the crip. Both terms serve as discursive spaces rather than a fixed identity based on a particular sexuality, gender, or disability status (para. 9). Queer and crip represent expansive spaces and terms that are fluid and not stagnant identities. However, there is a need to address and discuss compulsory cisnormativity and transgender studies more in the literature and the direct impact these frameworks have on disability identities and experiences. For example, Mog (2008) drew connections between transgender and disability communities. Mog proposed that there tends to be an overemphasis on bodies and how that translates to who gets to “claim” being transgender or having a disability. This argument links to the strong emphasis within society around compulsory (able-bodiedness) and (visibility). There is no one way to be disabled, or transgender, and preposterousness to have to legitimize disability and/or gender identity. The consequence of this societal barrier leaves (invisible) disabilities vulnerable to minimization and erasure. Mog claimed that there is similarity in societal marginalization between transgender and disabled communities. The medicalizing and pathologizing history within queer, transgender, and disability histories (past and current) have some significant overlap.

However, one area that Mog (2008) failed to offer perspective was the intersectionality of the lived experiences of transgender disabled communities or acknowledging the truths of transgender people of color with disabilities. Mog discussed these identities in insolation and not
as overlapping experiences. Mog’s perspective makes me continue to reflect on Anatasiou and Kauffmann’s (2013) assertion that disability is not a social construct. So as a researcher, I am constantly negotiating my own position around these frameworks of what is and what is not a social construct and where and how intersections of identity enter the dialogue. As my own research progresses, I continue to wrestle with these points of entry and how they will inform my analysis, discussion, and considerations for the future. In addition, Sheldon (2017) offered an interesting perspective:

Coming out as disabled is of course different from coming out as LGBTQ, but there are similar issues with disability; some people with disabilities attempt to hide their disability but there is a lot of discrimination against people with disabilities who attempt to conduct educational research. (p. 986)

There are a myriad of factors related to coming out and “hiding” as Sheldon referenced. Given the overlaps in disability disclosure and sexuality disclosure, it will be interesting to (see) how and if that emerges throughout this study. In the next section, the challenges around disclosure are explored further.

**Significance of Disclosure**

While Sheldon (2017) referred to those conducting educational research when discussing disclosure, the negotiation of “hiding”, or non-disclosure as an ongoing tension for many including faculty with disabilities. Clair et al. (2005) challenged the “traditional” (views) of certain scholars that people with (invisible) disabilities can avoid stigma and conceal in social situations. Further, Clair et al. described the considerations people with (invisible) identities experience before social engagement, “These issues are psychological, occurring within the individual as he or she [they] consider how to manage his or her [their] stigma in public” (p. 81).
For example, while Tidwell’s (2004) experiences as a professor experiencing a progression in their disability may not be the exact same as the coming out process that trans and queer people face there is some overlap in terms of the process before disclosure and the process of validating their own identity.

Clair et al. (2005) indicated that policies within organizations have a strong influence on a person’s decision to disclose their identity or attempt to pass within the organization. While Clair et al. acknowledged that “passing” may occur unintentionally the author’s focus more on intentional passing and described it as the level of ambiguousness in a person’s social identity(ies) that assists a person mask their identity publicly. The use of language such as: (a) passing, (b) revealing, and (c) coming out have significant overlap within trans and queer and disability communities (Samuels, 2003; Clair et al., 2005; Miller, 2015; Kimball et al., 2018).

Alternatively, Siebers (2004) explored the (invisibility) and (visibility) conundrum of disability in what they called disability as masquerade and claimed that “masquerade counteracts passing, claiming disability rather than concealing it” (p. 19). While Siebers perspective does not (speak) directly to trans and queer identities, they distinguished the masquerade by arguing that “masquerade used by people with disabilities, where the mask, once removed reveals the reality and depth of disability existing beneath it” (p. 18). The concept of disability as masquerade highlights the experiences of people with disabilities making what is (invisible) (visible) and prompts the public to grapple with its presence and react to it. This perspective that Siebers (2004) offered is a compelling way to consider (invisible) disability disclosure and prompts further curiosities. The weights of disclosure can be significant for disabled faculty. Dolan (2021) conducted a study with disabled faculty and shared that for their participants “even though disclosure is sometimes impossible to avoid, most [participants] felt it necessary to
maintain non-disclosure, despite the fact that the effort can be extremely stressful” (p. 9).

Dolan’s study exposed the complexity of disability in the higher education, the weights of performativity and unattainable productivity standards, and the pervasiveness of ableism. These realities can create heavy burdens around disclosure and/or non-disclosure disproportionately placed on the faculty member.

In the next section, in order to acknowledge and understand the complexity of the varied experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities, I will describe my conceptual and theoretical framework. My framework consists of three core elements: (a) Transformation & Social Justice, (b) Critical Disability Theory, and (c) Crip Theory. I will further explore the interconnectedness of these concepts and theories, which are critical to understanding disability disclosure and non-disclosure factors.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

The conceptual framework and worldview are foundational to understanding the purpose, direction, and underpinnings of this study. In order to (visually) communicate the significance and grounding of this research, the diagram, which is pictured below offers three elements: (a) Transformation & Social Justice, (b) Critical Disability Theory, and (c) Crip Theory. In the next section, each element will be explained further, and their interconnectedness explored as a way to understand their relationship to each other and how they inform the research study. The figure below is a (visual) illustration of my conceptual and theoretical framework.
Figure 1

*Conceptual and Theoretical Framework*

![Diagram](image)

*Note.* Transformative Paradigm and Theoretical Framework Underpinnings.

The image above illustrates three circles. The smallest circle entitled Crip Theory is inside of and overlapping with a slightly larger circle entitled Critically Disability Theory, and the last largest circle overlapping with all three circles is entitled Transformation and Social Justice. The first element in the next section defines and describes my worldview.

**Core Element One: Transformative Worldview**

The theoretical framework foundational to this study is best understood from the grounding conceptual and research paradigm. Through using a transformative worldview, it will
highlight the necessity for social justice, equity, and human rights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). As Fuecker and Harbour (2011) articulated, hopefully there will be more interest and research around the needs and experiences of disabled faculty and staff. While there are scholars directly addressing the experiences of faculty with disabilities (Kerschbaum et al., 2013; Price et al., 2017) more is needed to ensure this population does not continue to stay on the fringes of research. Through utilizing a transformative lens, the centrality and focus centers the community of study. Mertens (2007) noted that when using the transformative paradigm, “the central tenet is that power is an issue that must be addressed at each stage of the research process” (p. 213).

When operating within a transformative paradigm, there are four basic beliefs of a transformative framework: (a) the social construction of reality, (b) ways of knowing being interconnected with cultures/communities and the researcher, (c) the methodology must meet the complexity of the needs of the community, constant negotiation of power, privilege and oppression and allowing space for the qualitative dialogue, and (d) axiology must center and value respect, beneficence and social justice throughout the process (Mertens, 2007). Directly related to ways of knowing, Johnson and McRuer (2014) discussed cripistemologies as a framework. McRuer offered that cripistemology refused the traditional routes of “academic knowledge” and proposed that cripistemology is about “knowing and unknowing disability, making and unmaking disability epistemologies, and the importance of challenging subjects who confidently ‘know’ about ‘disability,’ as though it could be a thoroughly comprehended object of knowledge” (p. 130). This framework supports my commitment to the complexity of challenging and including different ways of knowing and being. Mertens (2010) argued that:

Axiological belief is of primary importance in the transformative paradigm and drives the formation of the three other belief systems. The fundamental principles of the
transformative axiological assumption are enhancement of social justice, furtherance of human rights, and respect for cultural norms. (p. 470)

Similarly, Mertens (2007) indicated that the role of the researcher working from a transformative paradigm is “reframed as one who recognizes inequalities and injustices in society and strives to challenge the status quo, who is a bit of a provocateur with overtones of humility, and who possess a shared sense of responsibility” (p. 212). Operating from a transformative stance requires continuous self-reflection, a commitment to solidarity building, and a level of humility to constantly negotiate their role and position in the research process.

While Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) suggested that a transformative framework is about “lessening marginalization”, I argue that an optimal reimagining society is fully-accessible and socially-just. Additionally, there is a critical necessity to work in unity to dismantle systemic structures that disproportionately disenfranchise communities. For this reason, transformation and liberation are the lenses through which my positionality and worldview are framed. Embedded in the word transformation is the process of and active action of changing and transforming which is why the language is different than transformative worldview. While transformation and transformative have a mutual relationship, they are distinct on their own. In addition, I utilize Love’s (2000) framework around liberatory consciousness. Love described developing and operating from a liberatory framework as noticing the systems of oppression that marginalize communities while simultaneously working to dismantle those systems. Love described this type of liberation work as operating from a position of hope and possibility rather than hopelessness and holding space and empathy for the roles that people play in an oppressive system. Given the conditioning and socialization that people experience, there is a great deal of unlearning and relearning working within a liberatory consciousness framework. As it relates to
my dissertation, my understandings are attributed to Love’s work where I aim to expand on my own framework of liberation and envision that the process to developing this consciousness is not stagnant, linear, or has a timetable. This process requires ongoing work to wrestle with the tensions of privilege and oppression within society.

Evans et al. (2017) offered that operating from a social justice approach unequivocally acknowledges and disrupts the ableism that exist interpersonally, systemically, and within the world. In addition, Dolmage (2017) wrote unapologetically about academic ableism in higher education and how ableism is structurally fed and embedded within institutions. Dolmage complemented this argument by adding that ableism excludes people with disabilities through sustaining ableist practices and policies. By operating from a transformative worldview, I aim to disrupt ableist practices, narratives, and rhetoric within and outside of my role as a researcher. The transformative paradigm is at the core of my framework, and the utilization of this worldview leads to the next element which is Critical Disability Theory.

Core Element Two: Critical Disability Theory

Critical Disability Theory draws its connections from Critical Theory. Hall (2019) explained that Critical Theory dates back to the Frankfurt School influenced by theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Critical Theory is understood as it “identifies, describes, and analyzes the subsumed or hidden origins of social and political culture, discourses, and institutions” (para. 10). Burghardt (2011) drew a correlation between Critical Theory and Critical Disability Theory as it examine[d] and analy[zed] the social and political impact structures have on people with disabilities. This analysis argued that there is a politicization of the embodiment of disability presumed or actual and a marginalization to bodies and minds that are divergent from the (norm).
Some scholars use the terminology Critical Disability Studies or Critical Disability Theory (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Hall, 2019), but overall, as a framework continues to be an important diverse interdisciplinary, crossdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary field of study within the academy. Taylor (2011) indicated that disability presence is not new to higher education as the extensive history of psychiatry and psychology dates back to the late 1800s and early 1900s. The medicalization and pathologizing of disability are embedded into the fabric of institutions and society more broadly. While my dissertation will not address the evolution of disability discourse, it is significant to acknowledge this long history of disability inequity.

Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) showed how other social identities such as race, gender identity, sexuality are integral to the conversation of disability. Theories such as: (a) Critical Race Theory, (b) DisCrit, (c) Feminist Theory, (d) Black Feminist Theory, (e) Queer Theory, (f) Deaf Theory, and (g) Crip Theory are essential and necessary to highlight because their historical emergence expose the critical necessity to address identity and experience. However, some scholars argue against conflating these theories and identities, but rather offering that the privileging of the “dominant” identities simultaneously creates a binary and devalues those that do not fit that category. A disruption to the binary labeling allows for disability to be centered and challenged (Vahmas & Watson, 2014).

Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) posed the question: What’s so ‘critical’ about Critical Disability Studies? The scope of their inquiry was to explore the evolution of disability studies and to problematize the use of the word critical. There are many opposing (views) to this distinction within disability discourse. Meekosha and Shuttleworth wanted to understand “why Critical Disability Studies (CDS) [was] emerging as the preferred nomenclature and whether this constitutes a radical paradigm shift, or simply signifie[d] a maturing of the discipline” (p. 47).
Meekosha and Shuttleworth described CDS as employing a social, political, intellectual, and economic framework to understand the experiences of people with disabilities. As Goodley et al. (2019) explained, the purpose of Critical Disability Studies is that the theory “start with disability but never end with it: disability is the space from which to think through a host of political, theoretical and practical issues that are relevant to all” (p. 977).

Through this perspective, Critical Disability Studies also strives to work from an intersectional lens that builds on the social model of disability. The social model of disability rejects an approach that focuses on an individual’s impairment as the source that needs to be “fixed” and rather draws its attention to the societal barriers that make it difficult for people to access the world fully. Vehmas and Watson (2014) argued that Critical Disability Studies places a stronger emphasis on politicizing disability and social constructs and failed to address the moral dilemmas and personal day to day realities of impairment. Perhaps there is no “right” or “wrong” and an inseparability of identity and the politics of identity. From the scope of Crip Theory and not dematerializing disability identity (McRuer, 2006). There are different perspectives regarding the approach to understanding the complexities of disability, social constructs, and identity politics. All of these factors have additional layers when factoring in other intersectional social identities.

Critical Disability Theory and Crip Theory force society to grapple with what disability is, the fluidity of disability, and the intersections of multiple marginalized identities. The interconnectedness of identity is necessary to preserve its existence and diminish its erasure. I would be remiss not to acknowledge the influences and significance of intersectionality and how it is situated in this study. Black feminist, activist, and legal scholar Crenshaw (1989) coined the term “intersectionality” to communicate the relationship between gender and race, specifically,
as it manifests for black women and their lived experiences. Influenced by a collective of black feminist scholars, the foundation of intersectionality is multidimensional and exposes the tendency to analyze the experiences of black women through a “singular-axis” position that distorts and diminishes the experiences of black women. Understanding this framework of acknowledging overlapping, and interlocking identities is critical to intersectional disability movements. In the next section, I will address the final element of my theoretical framework, which is Crip Theory. The connects between disability and queerness will be explored further.

**Core Element Three: Crip Theory**

The final theoretical framework element is Crip Theory, which was born out of Queer Theory (Hall, 2019). Crip Theory pushes back on who is considered to be disabled and forces a dismantling of (normalcy) and (normality) (Kafer, 2013). Abrams and Abes (2021) offered, “Crip Theory critiques these discourses and the resulting disabled/nondisabled binary that deems disability abnormal” (p. 262). McRuer (2006) introduced Crip Theory to discuss the relationship between queer identities and disability identities. McRuer explored the links between compulsory (able-bodiedness) and its links to and reinforcement of compulsory heterosexuality. Within society, they rely on each other for survival. McRuer’s aim is to reject a prioritization of (normative) and narrow approaches to sexuality and disability. Price (2015) argued, “Crip Theory is not a simple merging of queer and disability studies. Crip and its precursor cripple developed along a distinct historical path” (p. 3). Acknowledgement of this historical linage is important to its understanding and position in society. Language can be complicated and can offer a disruption to the binary and (normative) narratives associated with (ability) versus disability or queer versus straight. Price noted that the use of crip can be quite controversial and
not embraced by all people with disabilities. Price’s argument parallels with the use of the word queer, which can also be (viewed) as controversial.

Kafer (2013) offered that by utilizing the word crip it disrupts (normalcy) and inserts that there are a myriad of bodies and minds that often have political implication. Simultaneously, Kafer noted that by claiming crip, it supports and reinforces a binary structure that feeds off of distinct non-disabled and disabled categories and hierarchies. Similarly, Schalk (2013b) named that a component of Crip Theory is that it questions disability identity while simultaneously acknowledging that identity politics are necessary to endure and survive. McRuer (2006) claimed that Crip Theory acts in a way to destabilize disability but does not “dematerialize disability identity” (p. 35). These perspectives recognize the importance and fluidity of identity, but ultimately, Crip Theory is complex and complicated. As Abrams and Abes (2021) referenced, “Compulsory able-bodiedness and able-mindedness are at the root of these tensions” (p. 262).

The intersection of queer and disability connects back to the foundation of this study regarding disclosure and (invisible) disabilities. Abrams and Abes offered this perspective “for disabled students with non-apparent disabilities, passing is enacted because of compulsory able-bodied and able-mindedness that perpetuate a false normalcy and reproduce binaries about who is a college student” (p. 263). While this perspective is about students, I posit that there are overlapping experiences related to crip experiences, (invisibility), and disclosure for faculty with (invisible) disabilities. Abes and Wallace (2020) provided an example that the juxtaposition of disclosure of a disability in order to receive access to accommodations is an example of Crip Theory in practice. A person must publicly claim disability in order to prove and meet legalized standards of disability while simultaneously being subjected to the stigma and negativity associated with the label.
The final component of Crip Theory that connects to my theoretical framework is the concept of crip time. Crip time is not just about rejecting (normative) approaches to one’s (ability) and time, but also the futurity of disabled bodies and minds being valued and (seen) as part of a desired future not the elimination of one (Kafer, 2013). The consistent culprit here are the consequences of compulsory able-bodiedness and able-mindedness (Abes & Wallace, 2020). Johnson and McRuer (2014) defined cripistemology as acknowledging and affirming the range of ways disabled people produce and comprehend knowledge. Johnson and McRuer offered, “Cripistemology is everywhere in theory, once you start looking for it” (p. 130). As it relates to decisions around disclosure and/non-disclosure of a disability, Abes and Darkow (2020) offered, “Cripistemology, along with compulsory able-bodiedness/mindedness and disability fluidity, inform issues connected to disability disclosure” (p. 224).

Summary

In this chapter, I have explored critical areas necessary to understand the complexities of disabilities and more specifically (invisible) disabilities. I began by discussing the significance of language, varying models of disability, (invisible) disabilities, disclosure, and lastly the overlap in queer and disability identities. While these areas do not represent the full complexity of people with disabilities, they are integral to this research study. Furthermore, in this chapter, I provided an overview of my conceptual and theoretical framework. I began by offering that the transformative paradigm which grounds my framework and worldview. Incorporating principles and values around equity, justice, and humanity are integral to my worldview. Next, I discussed Critical Disability Theory and the significance of operating with a critical lens to consider the relationship between a person’s disability, social structures, and political implications. Lastly, I concluded with Crip Theory as a way to draw the connections of Queer Theory and Disability
Theory and the overlapping relationship of the two and their similarities as it relates to disclosure. Price and Kerschbaum (2016) discussed more deeply disability as methodology and how disability crip methodology in ethical and just ways. Price and Kerschbaum offered a framework and strategies of how to approach ethical research in solidarity with disabled people through this lens. By utilizing transformation and social justice, Critical Disability Theory, and Crip Theory as a theoretical framework sets the foundation for the methodological approach for my study that applies disability as methodology. In the next chapter, I will explore the methodology chosen for this study that best examines the research focus around the disclosure factors for faculty with disabilities.
Chapter III: Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of faculty with \( \text{(invisible)} \) disabilities and to gain a greater understanding of factors that contribute to disclosure and/or non-disclosure for faculty with \( \text{(invisible)} \) disabilities. The negotiations that disabled faculty experience around self-disclosure are complex. At the core of this study was the intention to gain more insight into the complexity and decisions that faculty grapple with as it relates to their disclosure processes. My hope is that the findings of this study will support faculty with \( \text{(invisible)} \) disabilities as they seek equitable access to resources while navigating university systems. Additionally, this study aimed to provide a broader, overarching narrative about how and what universities communicate through their university websites about disabilities. The knowledge and information received from both the participants and university website reviews brought awareness of experiences of faculty with \( \text{(invisible)} \) disabilities, provided a broader big picture perspective, and increased the limited literature in this area specifically around disclosure.

The gained insight from this study may also help university administration develop a deeper understanding of how disability may encompass, but is not limited, to physical or perceived disabilities and that recognition of \( \text{(invisible)} \) disabilities is critical. Understanding the complexity of disability provides one avenue, a space and opportunity to demonstrate a university’s commitment in action to enhance the campus environment. In addition to the campus-level benefits, an overarching value of this study was the opportunity for societal narratives around disability to broaden the scope of what disability is, who has disabilities, and hopefully \( \text{(normalize)} \) disability identities, conditions, and/or impairments that are not \( \text{(visible)} \) or “apparent”. In society, often the \( \text{(invisibility)} \) of disability reinforces an erasure and lack of
acknowledgement of the existence of (invisible) disability. This study bridges the gap to spotlight the significance of (invisible) disabilities. In addition to this position, my study is not meant to simultaneously diminish or erase (visible) disabilities, but to recognize and validate the complexity of disability and broaden the scope of disability identities and experiences.

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the research process by explaining in depth the specific nature of the qualitative mixed methods design I used in this study. Within this explanation, I embedded a social justice framework and will further describe the research design, methods, and the instruments. Additionally, I will describe the participants, setting of the study, credibility of the study, and a synopsis of the data analysis process.

Qualitative Mixed Methodology Overview

Mason (2006) posited, “Qualitatively driven mixed methods research has potential for generating new ways of understanding the complexities and contexts of social experience” (p. 10). A social justice design using an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design approach QUAL → QUAL was the mode of inquiry for this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Utilizing multiple methods to understand the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities was the stronger approach for this study. Creswell and Guetterman explained, “The rationale for this [an explanatory sequential design] approach is that the quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem; more analysis specifically through qualitative data collection, is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general quantitative picture” (p. 553). While Creswell and Guetterman’s definition is coming from a quantitative and qualitative tradition within mixed methods, there are scholars that advocate for a space within this tradition for qualitative approaches to mixed methods (Johnson et al., 2007; Morse, 2010; Hesse-Biber, 2010). In addition, Hesse-Biber (2010) supported the idea that there were no
conflicts between qualitative and quantitative orientations. However, Hesse-Biber emphasized, “It is the methodology, not the method, which determines which types of research practices will best serve the research questions that emanate from a given methodological perspective” (p. 467).

Morse (2010) offered several examples of design considerations that explored simultaneous and sequential qualitative mixed methods designs. Morse emphasized that all the examples fit the mixed methods criteria and provided a strong argument for qualitative mixed methods. During an online discussion with prominent mixed methods scholars, Johnson et al. (2007) compiled a list of nineteen definitions of mixed methods and summarized them through content analysis and discussion. While most of the scholars (viewed) mixed methods through a quantitative and qualitative orientation, one scholar, Al Hunter, provided a definition that aligned with Morse’s (2010) definition:

Mixed methods is a term that is usually used to designate combining qualitative and quantitative research methods in the same research project. I prefer the term multimethod research to indicate that different styles of research may be combined in the same research project. These need not be restricted to quantitative and qualitative; but may include, for example, qualitative participant observation with qualitative in-depth interviewing. Alternatively it could include quantitative survey research with quantitative experimental research. And of course it would include quantitative with qualitative styles. (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 119)

Hunter proposed an expansive way to consider mixing mixed methods research, offering the mixing of qualitative instruments as well as mixing of different methods from similar or different
traditions. Among the 19 scholars in Johnson et al.’s (2007) work, there was no consensus on the 
stage at which mixing should be implemented (i.e., data collection, data analysis, at all stages).

Similarly, Hesse-Biber (2010) shared several case studies that were qualitatively driven 
and showed a range of qualitative mixed methods approaches in terms of data gathering, data 
analysis, and interpretation of result phase. Hunter and Brewer (2003) argued, “By using a 
multimethod strategy, one tends to decrease the likelihood that certain stages of the research will 
be slighted or merely run through by rote procedures with relatively less conscious deliberation” 
(p. 582). Similarly, the direction of my research is supported by this expanded (view) of mixed 
methodology. As Hesse-Bieber (2010) stated, “Qualitative approaches to mixed methods 
research hold out a great deal of promise for understanding the social world” (p. 467).

Utilizing qualitative social justice explanatory sequential mixed methods as the study 
design was core to understanding the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities. More 
specifically, Creswell and Guetterman (2019) offered that a social justice design uses an equity 
focused framework that encases a design like explanatory sequential, which is what I used for 
my study. The theories and frameworks utilized for my study include a transformative, 
disability-centered, and Crip-focused framework. These frameworks align with a social justice 
study design. A transformative lens is foundational in a social justice design which incorporates 
social justice is in all phases of the research, and an aim from the researcher to advocate for 
change and action that will address social issues facing a marginalized community (Sweetman et 
al., 2010; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). As Mertens (2007) stated, “Transformative mixed 
methodologies provide a mechanism for addressing the complexities of research in culturally 
complex settings that can provide a basis for social change” (p. 212).
Moreover, Creswell and Guetterman (2019) also offered the perspective that “a challenge in using this [social justice] design is that we are still learning about how to best integrate the framework into a mixed methods study” (p. 558). While the field may still be learning about this design, my decision to utilize this design are because of the seamless centering of a disability-justice and transformative worldview perspective that is in direct alignment with my theoretical framework. Creswell and Guetterman highlighted that the framework used in a social justice design “shapes many aspects of the mixed methods design, such as the framing of the theory, the questions, the methods, and the conclusions. The framework basically addresses an issue for an underrepresented group” (p. 558). For this study, that group was disabled faculty with (invisible) disabilities with an aim to offer recommendations that transform and address the futurity of disabled faculty experiences and navigation of the academy. In the next section, I provided further detail and description of the setting and participants in the study.

**Setting and Participants**

The survey was purposefully sent to eight organizations because of their commitment to disability-justice and/or their affiliation with faculty populations with a request that they distribute the survey instrument. In addition to this outreach, I chose 58 additional colleges and universities to send the survey instrument to for distribution based on a set of criteria. First, I searched disability-friendly colleges and universities, universities that have some type of academically-focused disability program, searched the National Center for College Students with Disabilities clearinghouse library of organizations, and lastly utilized the Association of University Centers on Disabilities. Once this list was developed, I went to each college and university website to locate the contact information for administration in disability-related roles to attain their contact information. Once I attained the contact information, I contacted
leadership from these organizations and universities requesting that they outreach and distribute my study’s recruitment email and survey to their social media, contacts, and listserv networks.

For this study, it was an intentional choice to find universities that were in some way (viewed) as disability-friendly, because I hypothesized that may attract disabled faculty to those programs. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) defined purposeful selection as an intentional selection of people or organizations to gain more knowledge and understanding of a “central phenomenon” (p. 206). Given that I did not directly have access to my sample population, the choices around selection of universities, organizations, and administration in disability-focused roles enhanced the robustness of the study.

The outreach aimed to include faculty who identify as having an (invisible) disability and work at 2- or 4-year public or private college or university within the United States. As a part of the survey, participants were asked demographic identifiers such as (e.g., faculty employment status/level, teaching discipline, race, gender identity, age, and sexuality) to gain greater insight into the ways in which social identities and the intersections of social identities factor into disclosure and/or non-disclosure of an (invisible) disability. Additionally, the survey included open- and closed-ended questions about the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities within their university environments. The collection of this data would assist in developing specific themes and patterns that explain the complexity of disclosure for disabled faculty.

While I received 91 attempted responses to the survey, 69 participants successfully completed the survey and met all the inclusion criteria. After survey completion, participants had the option to express interest in a follow-up interview. I utilized stratified sampling to identify post-survey participants for the follow-up semi-structured interviews. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) defined stratified sampling as stratifying or dividing the population by on specific
identifiers then taking a portion of the subgroup (stratum) of the population a process that “guarantees that the sample will include specific characteristics that the researcher wants included in the sample” (p. 141).

Selection criteria for the follow-up semi-structured interviews were based on equitable inclusion of varying: (a) employment level/position (e.g. adjunct, assistant, associate, full professor), (b) area of discipline/college, (c) gender identity, (d) racial identity, (e) age, and (f) sexuality. The criteria aimed to develop a range and purposeful group of diverse participants. I hoped to receive a minimum number of four to eight participants interested in volunteering for a follow-up interview. In the end, I completed interviews with six participants out of the 42 participants that volunteered to continue participation post-survey.

**Survey Method**

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) defined a survey research design as a set of research procedures in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population (p. 385). Despite Creswell and Guetterman’s orientation towards survey research being a form of quantitative inquiry, I utilized and stayed consistent to the overarching (steps) they outlined of designing survey research, even though I am using a qualitative approach. The process of designing survey research according to Creswell and Guetterman included: (a) sampling from a population, (b) collecting data through questionnaires or interviews, (c) designing instruments through data collection, and (d) obtaining a high response rate.

For this study, there was no survey tool already available therefore, I developed my own instrument. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) indicated that creating high-quality surveys is a difficult and complicated process. Creswell and Guetterman suggested that if there is no readily
available survey, then researcher should follow three points in creating their own: (a) develop a variety of questions including open- and closed-ended questions, (b) developing questions that are broad across participants and are clearly articulated, and (c) and sharing the questions with a test audience. In the construction of the survey used for my study, I followed Creswell and Guetterman’s points by utilizing a range of questions, constructed clear and concise questions, and sharing the survey instrument with committee members for their review.

Jansen (2010) noted, “Qualitative survey does not aim at establishing frequencies, means or other parameters but at determining the diversity of some topic of interest within a given population” (para. 6). Jansen further offered that the purpose of qualitative survey is searching for empirical diversity, which can be essential in terms of understanding and classification as it relates to “ethnic cultures” (para. 11). Additionally, in the construction of the survey tool and questions, I utilized a social justice framework in development of the questions. The purpose of my survey was to capture broader themes about disabled faculty experiences around disclosure. Also, operating from an equity perspective, utilizing a qualitative survey provided space for disclosure to happen through a survey, which may help support participants that need and/or want to keep their (invisible) disability hidden.

**Collective Case Study Method**

According to Yazan (2015), case study is highly utilized within qualitative research methodologies. Within case study methodologies, three prominent scholars, Yin, Stake, and Merriam all provide definitions and slightly different approaches to conducting case study research. Specifically, the overarching aim of case study design examines a single case or phenomenon or examining multiple case studies. Stake (1995) proposed a qualitative mode of query when describing case study, which is “the study of the particularity and complexity of a
single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). Stake (1995) described a case as “a specific, complex, functioning thing” and further noted that the case “is an integrated system” (p. 2). For this inquiry, the overarching case for my inquiry is the case of faculty at 2- and 4-year US higher education institutions with (invisible) disabilities.

More specifically, I used a collective case study approach for this study. When introducing collective case study, Stake (1995) offered, “Each case study is instrumental to learning about the effects of the marking regulations but there will be important coordination between the individual cases” (p. 3-4). Collective case studies are used to examine multiple cases while using similar procedures within or across cases to determine convergent and/or divergent findings. A Stakian approach focuses more on individuals and programs within a “bounded system” while focusing less on procedure and events (Yazan, 2015). Stake (1995) presented the most flexibility to the researcher in constructing the case study design and throughout the research providing space to adjust to fit the needs of the study.

I conducted semi-structured interviews of six faculty members who served as the individual cases. After gathering survey data, I then conducted follow-up semi-structured interviews with participants. First, I analyzed the survey data and developed codes that I utilized in my analysis of the interview data. The themes from the survey and additional themes from the faculty cases were all utilized to tell the story of the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities. In the next section, the survey, interviews, and document analysis are introduced to better understand the instruments used in this study.

**Instrumentation**

For this inquiry, I used three different instruments in the study. The qualitative survey instrument utilized Qualtrics, an online data management and collection system. The survey
questions were multiple choice and open- and closed-ended questions. The survey questions had more opportunities for participants to provide open-ended responses given the complexity of the study and for opportunity to conduct inductive analysis. The second instrument utilized was conducting semi-structured interviews. The post-survey interview participants expanded and enhanced on the data collected within the qualitative survey. Finally, a document analysis was conducted to provide insight, review, and analysis of 51 sample university websites. The purpose of the document analysis was to review college and university websites to explore their communication around (invisible) disabilities.

**Survey Instrument (Qualtrics)**

The primary instruments in the study were utilized in two phases. In Phase I, the method I used was survey design utilizing a participant survey instrument as the core component of the study, which aimed to reach a larger sample of participants. Morse (2010) described the core component as the main standard qualitative method. For this study, while the survey provided useful information regarding the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities, an additional follow-up interview was necessary. Hesse-Biber (2010) noted, “Qualitative approach privileges the exploration of the process of human meaning making” (p. 455). The qualitative surveys add value to the complete totality of the research process. Given that (invisible) disabilities can be a sensitive and complex topic for people the survey instrument was a critical part of this study. The survey option provided a space for open- and closed-ended questions in an anonymous way for participants, but also allowed me as a researcher to gather more direct and broader data.

The survey had four different themed sections of questions: (a) inclusion/qualifying criteria, (b) definition of disability, (c) disclosure and non-disclosure decision-making, and (d) demographic information. The first focused on inclusion/qualifying questions to ensure that
participants met the inclusion criteria of the study and to gain some insight into the size and location of their institution, employment status/level, discipline, and years of service as a faculty member. Next, the second section focused on defining disability, which provided faculty an opportunity to define what (invisible) disability meant to them and how they categorize their own disability(ies). The third section was the most robust concentrating on disclosure and/or non-disclosure decisions, campus climate and work-related factors that contribute to disclosure and/or non-disclosure, modes of disclosure, and the impact of classroom disclosure. Finally, the concluding section focused on demographic questions and offered participants an opportunity to volunteer to continue participation in the study post-survey (see Appendix B for the full survey instrument). As Creswell and Guetterman (2019) offered that explanatory sequential design is meant to “explain or elaborate” on the survey results (p. 553).

After survey distribution and completion, I selected participants that expressed interest in follow-up interviews and contacted them via the email provided at the end of the survey and close date. Additionally, email addresses were collected and stored within Qualtrics only for participants that agreed to a follow-up interview. All survey information, content and data produced was collected within Qualtrics and utilized for survey analysis. In Phase II, I conducted semi-structured interviews to expand on the qualitative survey results. The next section provides more detail about the instruments used for the semi-structured interviews.

*Semi-Structured Interviews*

In Phase II of the study, I utilized collective case study methodology then conducted semi-structured interviews as the instrument and qualitative supplementary component of the study. Morse (2010) argued, “The supplementary consists of research strategy from a second qualitative method, usually using separate data, often of a different type. The secondary
component is incomplete as a method” (p. 484). In the context of this study, the collective case study as the supplement component is meant to complement the qualitative survey instrument. Further, while technically each method (survey and collective case study) could have been conducted independently, for this study, the social justice approach necessitated the connection between the two data points and was critical to better understand the case of and experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities.

To better understand the lived experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities more deeply, follow-up, semi-structured follow-up interviews ranged between 60-90 minutes to expand upon the qualitative survey research. Follow-up interviews were conducted via Zoom, however participants did have the option to request a different platform if needed. Also, participants had the option to change their display name on Zoom and have their camera turned on or off if preferred. The interview questions were divided into six topics. The first section was understanding the career path to becoming a faculty member. The second was a description of their campus climate for faculty with disabilities. The third section focused on areas of support and barriers related to disability disclosure. The fourth section focused on how employment status/level, area of discipline, and social identities could impact disclosure and/or non-disclosure of an (invisible) disability(ies).

The last two topics were independent of each other but helped to tell the story of the faculty experience. The first question: Why or how does the campus environmental factors contribute to your decision to continue working at your college or university? The second question was: If you or someone with an (invisible) disability wanted to disclose to the college or university how would they? Given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, and being in the midst of a pandemic, of course conversation emerged around accommodation process and
lessons learned and/or not learned amid a global pandemic. A benefit of the qualitative follow-up interviews was capturing direct experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities, which enhanced and expanded the data collected in the survey.

**Document Analysis**

The final data point was conducting a document review of 51 college and university websites within the United States, reviewing content and language related to (invisible) disabilities. In terms of the university selection process, I chose to explore and review 51 universities, which was one per state and the District of Columbia (DC). I utilized the National Center for Educational Statistics (National Center for Educational Statistics, retrieved 11/1/2021) to generate a list of 2-and 4-year public and private colleges and universities. I then used a random generator to determine which higher education institutions would be included. The universities were diverse in terms of size, public, private, community college, and 4-year institutions. Additionally, there was diversity across type of institutions such as: religious, historically black, women’s, agricultural, tribal, and technical college and universities. For the document analysis, having a range of representation across university demographics was essential to ensure a more complete robust inclusion of diverse colleges and universities. In addition, while a website does not fully translate into what the exact or specific experiences are for disabled people on a particular campus, it does highlight where there may or may not be gaps of information, resources, and overall accessibility.

Despite the document analysis in some ways functioning as a (standalone) instrument, it serves as a mini-pilot or guide for website examination as it relates to reviewing and assessing university websites for (invisible) disabilities information. This type of review is essential because faculty with (invisible) disabilities may peruse a university website prior to applying for
employment and/or need to utilize the website (looking) for information regarding disability policies and practices as well as community and affinity opportunities. The information found or not found during the review could reflect and communicate a narrative about an institution’s climate around disabilities.

There were four (steps) to the document review process. First, on the main university page I (looked) for any information related to disability and accessibility, such as: an accessibility statement, accessible web option on the main page or programs centering disability. Next, I used the website main search function and entered (invisible) disabilities and (invisible) disability to (see) what information surfaced. I then searched four different university pages: (a) Human Resources, (b) Diversity and Equity, (c) Disability Services Office, and (d) American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Office/Coordinator. On each of these department websites, I examined the full webpages (looking) for several elements: (a) mention of (invisible) disability, (b) a definition of disability, (c) any resources intended for faculty with (invisible) disabilities, (d) how to access those services and an accommodation process for faculty to disclose their (invisible) disability, and (e) any other general or unique observations. The fourth (step) was searching for any information or resources for other faculty, staff or students working with faculty with disabilities. Each college and university website had its own distinctive design and navigation. Therefore, the four main (steps) and search criteria for exploring each university website was extremely important to ensure researcher efficacy when searching the websites.

**Procedures and Data Collection**

This research study was approved by the West Chester University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval included the use of conducting a survey, semi-structured follow-up interviews with post-survey participants, and a document analysis. After selecting eight
disability-focused and/or faculty affiliated organizations and 58 disability-friendly universities
the administrators from those organizations and universities sent outreach to their listservs,
contacts, and social media networks to potential participants.

For the survey, disabled faculty that met inclusion criteria were able to complete the
survey after signing the online informed consent. The 30-item survey took participants between
15-20 minutes, however not all questions were required. After survey completion, I conducted
60-90 minute interviews with six post-survey participants. Each participant was provided a
pseudonym. Lastly, a document analysis of 51 colleges or universities websites was reviewed.

The data collection and analysis process described in Figure 2 occurred over a two-and-a-
half-month period completing the distribution of the qualitative survey, conducting semi-
structured interviews, and a document analysis. The schedule and timeline for obtaining and
analyzing data is described below in Figure 2.
Figure 2

Data Collection Study Schedule

Communication to Organizations and Universities and Survey Sent (Oct 2021) → Survey Reminder to Organizations and Universities (Nov 2021) → Randomly Select 51 College/University to Conduct a Document Analysis (Nov/Dec 2021)


→ Compile, Review and Analyze Survey Results (Dec/Jan 2021-2022) → Complete Interview Transcripts (Dec/Jan 2021-2022) → Compile, Review and Analyze Interview Results (Jan/Feb 2022)

Note: The figure reflects the data collection timeline for my study.

The image above reflects nine square boxes that describes the data collection and analysis process. This study data collection began in late October and concluded in mid-January. First, recruitment emails went out to specific university administrators and disability-focused organizations requesting they send out the study survey to their listservs, contacts, and social media networks to reach possible participants. Participants then completed a 15-20 minute qualitative survey that included open- and closed-ended questions. Survey distribution occurred late October and was available for three weeks. At the end of the survey participants could volunteer to participate in a post-survey follow-up interview. If participants were not interested in a post-survey interview, then their participation was complete after the survey. However,
selected participants from the post-survey then participated in a 60-90 minute follow-up semi-structured interview. Interview participants were contacted in November and early December for a follow-up interview. The interviews were conducted early December through mid-January. Lastly, the document analysis and review process occurred simultaneously with the survey and interview process. Data analysis of the survey, interview, and document analysis results occurred in late December, January, and February. The next section describes the coding and data analysis process for the survey, interviews, and document review.

**Coding and Data Analysis**

According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), the first part of data analysis is exploration of the data. More specifically, Creswell and Guetterman described the process of getting a broad sense of the data, developing written ideas, organizing data, and determining if more data is needed. For the survey portion of my study, data was collected via Qualtrics. The qualitative survey had several open-ended questions to generate more opportunities to provide depth to the closed-ended questions. Creswell and Guetterman described the coding process as “mak[ing] sense of the data, divide it into text or image segments, label[ing] the segments with codes, examin[ing] codes for overlap and redundancy, and collaps[ing] these codes into broad themes” (p. 243).

For the coding process of the surveys, I first organized and grouped the survey responses by question. This allowed for the best organization in reviewing the data. I then began with open coding of the data reviewing each line of the survey transcripts. Corbin and Strauss (1990) stated, “Coding is the fundamental analytic process used by the researcher” (p. 12). For this study, I used open coding as an iterative process to analyze the data. Corbin and Strauss described open coding as “the interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically. Its purpose is to give the analyst new insight by breaking through standard ways of thinking
about or interpreting phenomena reflected in the data (p. 12). As an initial way to describe the content of the data, I used color coding during the first cycle to identify significant words and phrases. During this initial phase major codes and minor codes were created, linked together, color coded, and given descriptors. I then repeated this process for a second cycle searching for patterns. During this iterative and inductive coding process, thematic categories and themes began to emerge. According to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), the strength of inductive coding is that it “ensures closeness or “giving voice” to the data, with the possibility of unfolding theory later” (p. 14). Once I established codes from the qualitative survey, I then utilized the survey codes deductively as a starting place before coding and data analysis of the semi-structured interviews. Linneberg and Korsgaard offered that the strength of deductive approach and using pre-determined codes can “ensure structure and theoretical relevance from the start, while still enabling a closer inductive exploration of the deductive codes in later coding cycles” (p. 14).

Utilizing pre-determined codes is called a priori coding, which means that codes are developed before examining the data. Throughout this process, I utilized a mixed approach of inductive and deductive coding. While the a priori codes that emerged from the surveys were used in advance of reviewing interview data, I understood that new codes and themes may emerge from transcribing, coding, and analyzing the interview data.

For the interview coding process, I first (watched) the Zoom recording while reading the audio transcript. I corrected any errors in the transcription to maintain accuracy. After the first round of (viewing) and (listening) to the video, I then utilized the transcript and conducted in vivo coding. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) defined in vivo codes as “stating codes in the participant’s actual words” (p. 244). This approach was most aligned with my transformative framework because it allowed for the fidelity of the participants words and (voice) to remain
intact. I read the transcript again in its entirety then I began to assign color codes to words and phrases in the transcript that (stood) out in terms of significance and importance. After that process, I then returned to the transcript and repeated the process. However, on the second cycle coding process, I utilized a different color code. While engaged in this process, I was (looking) for codes that were present from the survey data and any new pattern codes that emerged that may lead to additional themes from the interview data.

Lastly, for the document analysis coding and analysis process, I examined the data from the 51 colleges and universities. I utilized an excel spreadsheet to organize the data from each university. The first part of the inductive coding process was to review the data for accuracy. Then I read through each university, reviewed each section, and recorded my first round noticings and codes. I then repeated the process searching for patterns among each university that would lead to theme development.

In addition, triangulation was utilized to enhance accuracy throughout the study. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) defined triangulation as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative resources. This process supports credibility of the study as the themes are developed for the study. This study utilized multiple data points (i.e., qualitative survey, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis) to validate the research study and used multiple theoretical frameworks (Transformation and Social Justice, Critical Disability Theory, and Crip Theory). Figure 3 below reflects the design, methods, and instruments utilized in the study.
Figure 3

Study Diagram Overview

Design
- Social Justice Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods

Methods
- Survey Design
- Collective Case Study

Instruments
- Qualitative Survey
- Semi-Structured Interviews
- Document Analysis

Note. The figure above reflects the design, methods, and instruments utilized in the study.

Limitations to Methodology

I used careful consideration during the survey development process given the sensitivity around disclosure of (invisible) disabilities. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) noted, “If questions are not tactually stated, individuals may either over- or underrepresent their views leading to bias in responses” (p. 395). While this could be (viewed) as a limitation, I strived to be thoughtful with the language used to describe and inquire about disabilities. An additional limitation to survey research is the potential for low response rate and additionally response bias. Creswell and Guetterman described response bias as the survey participants responses are disproportionately negative or positive. Given that I did not reach out to participants directly, this may be a concern in responses. In contrast, the anonymity of a survey may be appealing to some so that they have the (ability) to conceal their identity confidentially.
Additionally, another limitation to the document review is that while 51 college and universities for the document review provide a pilot process for future research it is not generalizable data. The use of 51 college universities for the document analysis provided a broad overarching review, but also is not a significant representation of colleges and universities in totality. I (viewed) the range of institution as a benefit to offer a diversity in the range of institutions. However, simultaneously the limitation is the lack of consistency and range of differences across universities.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

For participants that expressed interest in follow-up interviews, the collection of email addresses included options such as: an anonymous, personal, or work, email address. These options were meant to assist with faculty members’ comfort in continuing with the study. The primary procedure for the study was conducting virtual interviews that were audio and video recorded, however participants had the option to choose to call into video conferencing and only have an audio interview. Participants also had the option to have camera on or off, and add/change their display name and pronouns. Participants that were selected and consented to a follow-up interview data were de-identified by having a self-selected or assigned pseudonym. To ensure that the overall data analysis process was ethical in its analysis, I engaged in reflexivity through journaling, memoing, and maintained an audit trail of the process to ensure trustworthiness and credibility in the study. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) described reflexivity as the process of the researcher being reflective and aware of their own biases and assumptions and finding ways to record those throughout the research process. An additional useful process is the researcher taking notes or memos throughout the data analysis and theme development process. Participants had the opportunity to ask any clarifying questions throughout the process and have the right to withdraw or stop participation at any time.
**Researcher Positionality**

As someone who holds multiple societal marginalized identities, my positionality is critical to this inquiry. The use of the words “societal marginalized identities” is intentional and important. For me, it places the onus on societal systems that support and sustain systemic and structural inequalities based on identities versus the onus being placed on me as the individual being subjected to and/or experiencing the marginalization. Simultaneously, that framing leaves room and space for me to not adopt those ideologies as my own identity and truth. For me, there are multiple layers to a person’s identities and experiences that include and extend beyond historical and current structural societal barriers. In alignment with my framework, it is critical to not place minority or deficit ideologies onto a person or community just because of the disproportional current and historical societal realities.

My values as a researcher overlap with my own personal values around transformation, equity, and liberation. I operate from a position of understanding the ways in which power, privilege, and oppression influence and impact lived experiences within society. Specific to this study, while I am not a faculty member with disabilities, I do come from a position of experiencing and understanding marginality and oppression because of my own social identities. Importantly, in no way am I comparing identities, but simply offering the complexity of experiences given the intersections of my own identities.

In my professional work, while I do not work directly with disabled people, I do hold a position working directly with trans and queer people. Over the years doing social justice work, there has been a great deal of overlap in working with people that also hold disability identities, varying racial identities, sexualities, and gender identities. Sheldon (2017) noted:

> Coming out as disabled is of course different from coming out as LGBTQ, but there are similar issues with disability; some people with disabilities attempt to hide their disability
but there is a lot of discrimination against people with disabilities who attempt to conduct educational research. (p. 986)

As a socially-just-centered researcher, I understand the complexity that Sheldon offered. As I progressed through this research process, taking accurate notes and being reflexive was critical to ensure acknowledgement of my own experiences as someone who holds multiple marginalized identities as a way of understanding my participants experiences.

**Informed Consent and Protection of Human Subjects**

While participants who completed the initial participation survey should experience minimal discomfort or risk, questions about one’s disability status/condition could cause stress or anxiety. I assured participants that their participation was voluntary, there was no identifying information, and that they could discontinue participation at any time. Participants that consented to participated in the follow-up interview could have potentially experienced discomfort, stress or anxiety discussing their disability status/condition. However, participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could discontinue participation at any time.

Additionally, I incorporated the framework Price and Kerschbaum (2016) described around centering disabilities throughout the research process. In the informed consent form, I offered varying interview format options to communicate to participants that what best suited their needs was important to the study. As previously stated, I offered the (ability) to have their camera turned on or off, and to add or change their display names or pronouns. Also, I intentionally incorporated into the interview protocol an opportunity for participants to pause or take a break if or when needed. Weaving in flexibility into the research process and being attentive to the needs of the participants and myself as the researcher was a critical part of operating from a socially-just framework. Throughout this process, I developed a deeper
acknowledgment of, understanding for, and appreciation of the mutuality of the researcher and participant experience.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced social justice explanatory sequential mixed methodology design as the approach for this study. Hunter and Brewer (2003) acknowledged the importance of contending methodologies on one another and the society. However, Hunter and Brewer also offered a significant perspective as the field and tradition of mixed methods continues to grow, they stated, “Equally important, however, is the fact that newer emerging methodologies may also offer solutions not yet conceived for existing methodological problems and present surprising opportunities to increase the depth and scope of social inquiry” (p. 593). This statement is promising for current and future researchers to introduce methods that may deviate from the traditional quantitative and qualitative tradition.

Throughout this chapter, I introduced the methods including survey design, collective case study, and document analysis. Additionally, I reviewed the setting and participants, which included faculty that work at 2-year or 4-year college or university in the United States and identify with having an (invisible) disability. Also, I reviewed the procedures and data collection timeline and schedule for this study. I described the coding and data analysis process, limitations to methodology, creditability, and trustworthiness as well the informed consent process in the study. Lastly, my positionality as a researcher is central to this study and is embedded throughout my approach to this inquiry. In the next chapter, I will discuss the results and research findings from this study.
Chapter IV: Results

In this chapter, I summarize the results of my qualitative explanatory sequential mixed methods study that focused on the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities. This inquiry addressed the overarching research question: How do faculty negotiate and experience disclosure of an (invisible) disability(ies) within a university environment? This study utilized survey method as well as case study method to mix methods. Data was collected over a two-and-a-half-month period through administering a qualitative survey, conducting semi-structured interviews, and completing a document analysis.

Throughout this chapter, I will first share the survey results to provide a detailed (view) of the experiences of disabled faculty survey respondents. The interviews will expand on those results sharing the stories of six faculty members with (invisible) disabilities. Lastly, I will introduce the document analysis. The purpose of the document analysis was to provide an overarching review and sample of college and university websites’ communication around (invisible) disabilities. I will review the themes that emerged from this data collection. Additionally, a joint display will be introduced to provide a (visual) matrix of the results from this data collection. In order to gain greater insight into the study, an overview of the survey participants and interview participants are detailed in the next section.

Survey Participants

The target population for this study was faculty that identify as having an (invisible) disability. Given that I did not have direct access to a group of participants, I outreached to disability-focused university administrators and disability-justice and faculty focused organizations whom I predicted were likely to have connections to disabled faculty. In total, I had 91 people attempt to take the survey. Not all 91 people completed the full survey and/or met
the inclusion criteria of identifying as a faculty member with an (invisible) disability within the United States working at a 2-year or 4-year college or university. Of the required inclusion questions in the survey, five people did not identify as a faculty member, one person did not identify as having an (invisible) disability, and seven people did not work at a college or university within the United States. Thus, after accounting for exclusion criteria the final sample ended up with 69 participants that met all the inclusion criteria. Additionally, for this study, I made the intentional decision not to disclose participants disabilities that were disclosed in the survey and/or the interview. My rationale for this decision was that while the disability/condition/impairment was and is significant my focus was more on the experiences that faculty have within the academy. I did not want my readers focused on the specific disability and more so redirecting attention to experiences and navigation of disclosure. However, I simultaneously did not want to inadvertently further (invisibility). Therefore, Table 1 below is a range of how participants identified their disabilities within the study. Also, as a disclaimer, some participants identified more with identity categories and less with naming their identity and/or experience as a disability.
Table 1

Types of Disabilities Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Invisible) Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Condition</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Say</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to Self-Describe*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Table above includes numeric data of survey participants (invisible) disability categories.

*Addiction, Auto-Immune Condition, Asperger’s, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Auditory, Autism, Bipolar, Birth Defect, Chronic Health Condition, Crohn’s, deaf, Deaf, Degenerative Condition, Hard of Hearing, Hearing Loss, Learning Disability, Mad, Neurodiverse, Neurological, Neuroqueer, Mad, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Pain, Sensory, and Sobriety.

Survey Participant Overview

A qualitative survey instrument tool was utilized in this study. There were 30 questions consisting of multiple choice, open-ended and closed-ended questions. The questions were divided into four sections: (a) inclusion/qualifying questions, (b) identifying (invisible) disability definition, (c) disclosure and/or non-disclosure factors, and (d) demographic questions. Some of the highlights from the survey demographics are included below in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The tables below represent information to gain a greater understanding of the survey participants. Following the survey participant demographic information, I will introduce the collective case study semi-structured interview participants.
Table 2

*College and University Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>College/University</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Year Public</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Year Private</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Year Public</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>71.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Year Private</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of Institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001-5,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001-10,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-15,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,001-20,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,001 and larger</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Table above includes numeric data of survey participants (college type, size, and location).

*Any states not listed were not represented in the population.*
### Table 3

*Faculty Profile Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty Status/Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Professor</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Listed *a</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area of Discipline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Computer Science</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Listed *b</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years at Current Institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 Year</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 Years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 Years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 Years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or more Years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Table above includes numeric data of survey participants (faculty status/level, area of discipline, and years at current institution).

---

a: Faculty also listed the following statuses not listed on the survey: Graduate Teaching Assistant/Instructor of Record, Graduate Teaching Associate, Part-time Lecturer, Postdoctoral Scholar, Psychologist/Counselor, Visiting Assistant Professor, Research Faculty, Teaching Faculty, and Nontenured Faculty.

b: Area of discipline not listed on the survey: Counselor Education, Writing Studies/Gender and Women’s Studies, Medical Informatics, and Interdisciplinary.
Table 4

Social Identity Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American or Black</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan/Native/Indigenous</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latina/Latino/Latinx</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>78.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Racial Identity Not Listed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to Self-Describe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender Identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderfluid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Man</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to Self-Describe</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexuality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asexual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demisexual</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluid</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pansexual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight/Heterosexual</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Say</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sexuality Not Listed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to Self-Describe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Table above includes numeric data of survey participants (race, gender, sexuality, and age).
Survey Results

While analyzing the survey data, it was evident that disclosure and/or non-disclosure is a complicated process for faculty. For some faculty, disclosure is not a choice, and the complexity of their disability(ies) necessitates disclosure. As I approached the data analysis process, it was important for me to understand the significance of choice in connection to disclosure. As a result of analyzing the data, there were six themes that emerged from the qualitative survey results: (a) positive representation, (b) classroom disclosure, (c) necessity for accommodations, (d) negativity around disability disclosure, (e) perceived faculty capabilities, and (f) varying levels of disclosure within the university environment. Before introducing the six themes that emerged from the survey data, I will provide an overview of whom some faculty chose to disclose to and university work environment elements/work-factors that supported disclosure. In addition, I will provide an overview of whom some faculty chose not to disclose to and university work environment elements/work-factors that did not support disclosure.

Chosen Disclosure of Disability

For faculty members that chose disclosure there were a myriad of considerations related to whom they chose to disclose to and work-related factors that led to their disclosure decisions. The emphasis on supportive colleagues had a significant role among who faculty disclosed to and work-factors that contributed to their disclosure. One faculty member shared, “I disclosed to my supervisor because she is also a personal friend. With HR/Disability Services, I have only disclosed the hearing impairment, but not mental illness or Crohn’s” (Participant 12, Survey). Another professor offered, “The colleagues/friends I have disclosed to have made me feel comfortable and open to sharing with others. The other factor is I have full professor so I don’t have much to lose” (Participant 65, Survey). For another professor, trust was significant, they
shared, “I’ve told some of my colleagues because I trust them to keep it private and consider them my friends, so I want to share things with them” (Participant 3, Survey). In order to get a broad (view), Table 5 and Table 6 reflect the survey responses regarding disclosure decisions of disabled faculty.

**Table 5**

*Chosen Disclosure of Disability Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whom Faculty Disclosed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Departments</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Title IX, Disability Services Office..)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Have Not Disclosed to</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone My <em>(invisible)</em> Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others Outside of the College or University Environment</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Listed *</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Table above includes numeric data of whom survey participants have chosen to disclose their *(invisible)* disability(ies).

*Equity Office, Grad Student Union, My Department, Ombuds Office, and Some Colleagues.*
Table 6

*Chosen Disclosure of Disability Work-Factors Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work-Factors Related to Disclosure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Accessible Campus                             | 6   | 4.14%
| Congruent or Consistent Practices and Policies| 6   | 4.14%
| Transparent Accommodation Process             | 8   | 5.52%
| Affirming Campus Culture                      | 12  | 8.28%
| Supportive Colleagues                         | 35  | 24.14%
| Supportive College or Department              | 18  | 12.41%
| Supportive Disciplinary Culture               | 11  | 7.59%
| Supportive Supervisor                         | 27  | 18.62%
| Not Listed*                                   | 22  | 15.17%

*Note. Table above includes numeric data of work-factors related to disclosure of (invisible) disability(ies) of survey participants.

*Activism, Comfort, Disability Theoretical Framework, Distrust of University (Wanted to “Tell the Truth”), Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Institution Efforts, Full Professor, My Personality, My Students, Need for Accommodations, Owning Who I Am, Representation, Research Related, Tenure, and Unsupportive Campus Environment.

**Chosen Non-Disclosure of Disability**

For faculty members that chose non-disclosure there were a myriad of considerations related to whom they chose not to disclose to and work-related factors that led to their non-disclosure decisions. The emphasis on Administrative Departments such as (Title IX Office, Disability Services Office) and Human Resources had a significant role among who faculty chose not to disclose to and work-factors that contributed to their non-disclosure. When *(looking)* at work-related factors that have contributed to non-disclosure, lack of transparency regarding accommodation process emerged as the number one factor that contributed to non-disclosure, followed by incongruent or inconsistent practices and polices, and non-affirming campus culture. One professor offered, “These departments [Title IX Office, Disability Services Office, HR] at my university have a history of not supporting disabled students and employees”
Another professor shared, “HR is a mess. I am sure that Disability Services has allowed HR to know, but I did not speak to them directly” (Participant 9, Survey). Another professor offered, “I have not tested whether anyone would be supportive. Too risky to do so” (Participant 19, survey). Overwhelmingly the (view) of Administrative Departments, stigma, and unknown factors if they did disclose were present in the faculty responses.

To further underscore the faculty responses around non-disclosure, a survey participant that identified as a graduate teaching assistant/instructor of record and categorized their disabilities as physical, cognitive, and mental health condition, offered a perspective about their doctoral program. The participant shared that while in their Ph.D. program they experienced more ableism, negativity, and discrimination and while their students were accepting “it is the people with power over me who have been surprisingly intolerant” (Participant 48, Survey). This respondent highlighted the ableism happening prior to their faculty appointment. As a result, the experiences in this faculty members doctoral program may have set the tone for discouraging disclosure later in their career. Specifically, for many of the survey participants the negative perception and reaction to disability disclosure for some with (invisible) disabilities led directly to their decision to not disclose. In addition, the direct perception related to their (abilities) as a knowledgeable professor also had impact on disclosure decisions. In order to get a broad (view), Table 7 and Table 8 reflect the survey responses regarding non-disclosure decisions of disabled faculty.
Table 7

*Chosen Non-Disclosure of Disability Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whom Non-Disclosed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Departments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Title IX, Disability Services Office..)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Have Not Chosen Non-Disclosure</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Listed *</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Table above includes numeric data of whom survey participants have chosen not to disclose their (invisible) disability(ies).*

*Certain supervisors, Dependent upon situational and personal context, and some colleagues case by case.*
Table 8

Chosen Non-Disclosure of Disability Work-Factors Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inaccessible Campus</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruent or Inconsistent Practices and Policies</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Transparency Regarding Accommodation Process</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Affirming Campus Culture</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive Colleagues</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive College or Department</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive Disciplinary Culture</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive Supervisor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Listed*</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Table above includes numeric data of work-factors related to non-disclosure of (invisible) disability(ies) of survey participants.*


Survey Results and Introduction of Themes

The next section will build and expand upon the survey data around faculty that chose disclosure and faculty that chose non-disclosure of their disability and the impact of university work environment elements/work-factors. As a result of analyzing the data, there were six themes that emerged from the qualitative survey results: (a) positive representation, (b) classroom disclosure, (c) necessity for accommodations, (d) negativity around disability disclosure, (e) perceived faculty capabilities, and (f) varying levels of disclosure within the university environment.
Positive Representation

The first theme that emerged from the survey data centered on positive representation of disabled professionals in the academy. For many survey participants, disclosure of their invisible disability provided the opportunity to increase disability awareness for other colleagues and for students in the classroom. For many people with marginalized identities, visibility and representation can play a significant role in their collegiate experiences. One faculty member offered, “I also disclose to illustrate to other disabled students (especially those with mental/psychiatric disabilities) that they are valuable and have great potential, even in an ableist society that constantly degrades and devalues them” (Participant 44, Survey). The positive of representational disclosure is exemplified with one participant stating:

They have told me that [my disclosure] is helpful and meaningful. I have had students write me about how my openness and teaching tendencies made them feel so much more comfortable disclosing to me and asking for help. I emphasize kindness, tolerance, diversity, inclusion, flexibility, etc. in my classroom, and I see that reflected by my students. (Participant 48, Survey)

While many faculty saw their role as an advocate or, as one faculty member described, “A budding disability activist,” (Participant 53, Survey) these decisions around advocacy are complicated. Additionally, published writing and publications were another avenue that faculty centered their disclosure and role in being a positive representation. One survey participant stated, “I write about lived experiences with chronic illness, therefore anyone who reads my work will know” (Participant 1, Survey). Another survey participant shared, “It is central to my research and teaching practice that I disclose this aspect of my identity” (Participant 42, Survey). While the complexity and decision to disclose for many faculty is layered with various factors
such as university environment, supervisors, personal decisions, and need for accommodations, it cannot be underscored the importance of representation. As one faculty member stated, “Representation is worth disclosure, too” (Participant 54, Survey). Disability disclosure can require a great deal of courage from faculty to lean into their advocacy and reveal their disabilities despite the ableism that often happens within the university environment. An assistant professor shared:

Being disabled is an important part of my identity. Disclosure carries great risks, but also rewards. It allows me to live as my authentic self and also permits me to draw from my own personal lived experience when teaching about disability, wellness, or health.

(Participant 44, Survey)

Many faculty balance the risks and rewards of disclosure and also make the decision to disclose due to negative experience and the need for advocacy and representation. One faculty member shared that they chose to disclose because of “unsupportive colleagues, culture, and campus. There is no knowledge about disability on my campus” (Participant, 55, Survey). Another faculty member made the decision to disclose recently and shared, “I have been around for a while and I wanted to “stand in the gap” for other faculty members and for students” (Participant 23, Survey). This faculty member wanted to show more positive disabled representation for students and faculty. The decision to (stand) in the gap due to the lack of disabled faculty directly connects to the need for representation and the negotiation faculty experience around classroom disclosure.

Classroom Disclosure

The second major theme that emerged from the survey was around the decision for faculty to disclose or not disclose their (invisible) disability in the classroom. Among the faculty
participants there were varying (views) on the benefit or risks of this decision, which can be an ongoing decision. For faculty that have chosen classroom disclosure the overwhelming sentiment was how much it benefits the disabled student.

I have had students come to me after class with tears in their eyes, saying it was the first time one of their professors had talked about their own disability in an affirming way. I hope that disclosing makes my students more comfortable talking to me about difficulties they’re having due to documented and undocumented disabilities. (Participant 50, Survey)

There was a pattern that emerged from the faculty survey respondents that they hoped students felt affirmed, comfortable to disclose, and supported, but some faculty did not (view) the classroom as a place for disclosure. One faculty member shared, “My students do not know of my condition, and I choose not to tell them. I teach my students to be advocates for themselves, but I am not the role model for this in this environment” (Participant 17, Survey). Another faculty member had the perspective there was a lack of interest people have around disability:

I think people here sort of eye-roll, a "just another disability moment" vibe I get when talking about my situation. There are places where I feel supported, but these are pockets in a larger system. The system does not really support disability. Even when talking about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion disability is always the factor left out.

( Participant 1, Survey)

This faculty member disclosed that they were uncertain about classroom disclosure, stating:

I’m torn. I think that students with any disability would benefit from having faculty disclose and normalize both disability and disclosure. At the same time, I do not want to
introduce irrelevant issues into my classes and do not want to share too much personal information, unless doing so is fairly immediately helpful. (Participant 33, Survey)

Similarly, a Sociology faculty member over the course of their career renegotiated their position on classroom disclosure:

I have thought about this issue [classroom disclosure] quite a bit. As an activist, advocate, and disability scholar, I have reconsidered my position on not disclosing my invisible disability to my students because I realize I might have missed the opportunity to positively affect some students with invisible disabilities in relation to their self-worth and internalized disability stigma. (Participant 46, Survey)

There are no “easy” answers when negotiating classroom disclosure for faculty. There are benefits for disabled students, all students, and the faculty member while simultaneously there can be consequences and negative experiences. A Sociology faculty member summed up this sentiment and conundrum many faculty experience by stating, “There is no simple or obvious way to do this [disability disclosure], though I will likely have to disclose my hearing disability when I go back to teaching in person with masks” (Participant 59, Survey). Disclosure linked to shifting modality of teaching as just described led directly into the next theme around the need for accommodations.

An associate professor in the Social Sciences shared, “I have had to disclose due to unavoidable situations like physical pain, temporary confusion, or machine alarms in class” (Participant 60, Survey). While that disclosure may not have been a choice for this faculty member, they went on to also share that, “I think it [disability disclosure] helps students feel more comfortable in their own bodies. It builds solidarity around accessibility” (Participant 60, Survey). Another associate professor in the Social Sciences shared, “I think representation
matters. I definitely want my students to see themselves (when possible) in positions of power so they are a part of the decision” (Participant 25, Survey).

Multiple participants shared similar sentiments around classroom disclosure, “I hope it [disability disclosure] makes them [students] more comfortable and provides access to a professional disabled person (Participant 10, Survey). Another professor shared about the impact of their disclosure in the classroom, “They [students] have explicitly told me (those who want to disclose, anyways) that it makes them feel more confident in the classroom (I understand their experience) and increases their own willingness to disclose” (Participant 41, Survey). The importance of being a disabled professor and (visible) to students seemed to be essential. One professor offered, “I believe it [disability disclosure] has been encouraging for them [students] to know they are not alone and can have role models and advocates (Participant 23, Survey). A non-tenured faculty offered that classroom disclosure for students meant “Mentorship, modeling, ‘safer than not,’ truth-telling, advocacy...life-long learning, leading by example, countering ableism, not assuming it's all ok (it's not--it's higher ed)” (Participant 4, Survey). This sentiment supports a social justice perspective and the significance of disability disclosure within the academy.

In addition, as it relates to classroom disclosure, the pandemic had a significant impact for an Arts and Humanities processor, who shared:

In the context of the pandemic, I wanted to let them [students] know that they are not alone in having diminished resources. Disclosing to my students has become a key part of my introduction at the beginning of the term as part of a broader discussion of accessibility and accommodations. (Participant 41, Survey)
In addition to the major impact of faculty disclosure, a postdoctoral scholar described the impact that student disclosure has had on them as a new and emerging faculty member and how their disclosure impacts students in the classroom “If anything, it reaffirms my need to continue disclosing my disability, as coming out is a continual process. Most [students] feel more comfortable coming to talk with me about resources and accommodations afterward (Participant 42, Survey). The next section discussed accommodations further and the necessity to provide equitable access, resources, and accommodations for disabled faculty.

**Necessity for Accommodations**

The third theme that emerged from the survey results was for faculty members’ need for accommodations. For many disabled faculty accommodations are not a choice, but a necessity which required disclosure. An assistant professor within the Social Sciences offered:

I would not describe my disclosures as “chosen” or a choice. In order to be protected legally and to access accommodations such as medical leave, I have been forced to disclose my disabilities/chronic illnesses and private health information to my supervisor and administration. These disclosures were each a “choiceless choice” because the system necessitates them. (Participant 53, Survey)

A critical component of the faculty experience is the acknowledgement that while the faculty survey participants discussed the reasons why they chose to make their (invisible) disability (visible) to the campus community their decision may have felt choiceless. For some faculty, disclosure was about the need for reasonable accommodations and assistive technology needed to perform their faculty roles. For others, it was about equitable access within the university environment. An assistant professor with a physical disability who more specifically identified as Deaf shared, “In order to access the communication used by the dominant spoken language, I
must reveal my disability to request accommodations” (Participant 6, Survey). The need to have equitable access was a commonality for faculty. To emphasize the complexity of access, an associate professor who identified as an autistic person but had caution to labeling their identity as a disability noted, “I experience sensory overload from loud noise in public spaces. Disclosing is the only way I can get people to turn down loud music or speak more softly” (Participant 32, Survey).

A couple of faculty members described the juxtaposition of having (visible) and (invisible) disabilities and their experiences. One faculty member who identified their (invisible) disabilities as cognitive and mental health condition shared, “While my disabilities are non-apparent, I do use a service dog, which renders my disability status visible (somewhat). I needed to get accommodations for my service dog on campus, so I did have to formally disclose” (Participant 24, Survey).

In addition, the impact of the current and ongoing pandemic has also had an impact on (invisible) disabilities becoming (visible) as well as the ongoing need for equitable access, accommodations, and disclosure for disabled faculty. An assistant professor who identified their disability as a mental health condition offered, “I only disclosed to HR because I felt strongly during COVID that I needed to get an accommodation (which was originally denied, then granted)” (Participant 3, Survey). Another assistant professor who categorized their disabilities as physical and mental health condition shared, “More recently, I have had to involve the disability office for help securing accommodations around the pandemic and family caregiving” (Participant 58, Survey). As a result of the pandemic, these faculty disabilities were no longer (invisible) because they needed to disclose to get accommodations and services.
While there was a necessity for many faculty members to disclose their (invisible) disabilities to acquire accommodations, there were two faculty members who discussed the need to not disclose. A lecturer who identified with having a mental health condition offered, “I do not need special accommodations so I do not feel that I need to disclose” (Participant 30, Survey). For this faculty member, disclosure was directly linked to accommodation needs or the lack of need. A full professor who categorized their disabilities as physical and cognitive shared:

My immediate supervisors know, and it’s possible that they are discreetly accommodating me in ways that I don’t know about (favorable class schedules, etc.). Otherwise, my disability is sufficiently invisible that I don’t see a need to officially inform the university. That said, it isn’t a secret, and I routinely both identify as someone with a disability and routinely discuss particulars of my situation, as doing so seems appropriate or helpful. (Participant 33, Survey)

While there are varying reasons around why faculty disclose and who they disclose to disclosure is not a binary decision or process for faculty members. While reasonable accommodations are a legal right for disabled people the process can be complicated, lacking in transparency, and negative for many faculty members. In the next session, I will discuss the negativity that faculty members experienced and negotiated as they worked through disclosure decisions and university processes.

**Negativity around Disability Disclosure**

The fourth theme centered around negative experiences that can happen as a result of disclosure and/or the reason for non-disclosure. This fourth theme was the most significant and had the most robust comments from the survey participants. The overwhelming theme was about stigma, discrimination, risk, unknown risks, and uncertainty around support if a faculty member
disclosed. Multiple faculty members offered that stigma was connected to their disclosure decisions. An assistant professor who classified their disability as a mental health condition shared, “Stigma is too great to ever disclose” (Participant 49, Survey). The faculty responses related to the stigma of disability highlighted and elevated the concerns around disability disclosure within the academy.

Similarly, in response to the survey question about areas within the university they have chosen non-disclosure an associate professor who categorized their disabilities as physical, cognitive, and mental health condition offered, “I do not trust them and although they cannot fire me I do fear stigma and reputational harm” (Participant 27, Survey). The weights and gravity of stigma associated with disclosure was a reality for many of the faculty respondents. A full professor, who found mental health condition offensive and resonated with and identified their disability as Mad stated, “Stigma, fear of job loss, and retaliation are some reasons why I have chosen non-disclosure” (Participant 43, Survey).

For some faculty the decision to not was directly linked to employment status/level. More specifically, some faculty discussed their decision pre-tenure and post-tenure in relationship to disclosure. A full professor who classified their disabilities as both a cognitive and mental health condition stated:

When I was going up for full professor, I requested assistance in the form of a letter verifying my disability. I had a terrible teaching semester due to my bipolar and I was concerned it would stop me from getting full. The HR office told me not to disclose because faculty won’t understand. (Participant 65, Survey)

Similarly, another full professor who identified as having a mental health condition said about disclosure “there is too much stigma attached, when I was a junior faculty member, I didn’t dare
disclose” (Participant 56, Survey). An assistant professor who identified as also having a mental health condition offered, “The amount of ableism is unreal. I wanted to put a face to disability and hopefully stop the ridiculous discrimination and judgment” (Participant 55, Survey). The systemic pervasiveness of ableism had a profound impact on these faculty individually and their overarching (view) of the academia.

An assistant professor with a physical and cognitive disability shared their experience with receiving pushback from their supervisor about disclosing in the classroom and now experiencing a shift in their (invisible) disability becoming increasingly (visible). “Everything about disclosure in academe is fraught and full of horrible stress. And you can think you’re safe with disclosures one minute and find out you aren’t safe the next” (Participant 53, Survey).

An assistant professor who identified with having a mental health condition chose to disclose because they had “unsupportive colleagues, poor culture, bad policies, and inaccessible campus climate” (Participant 15, Survey). The negativity around disabilities in higher education influenced faculty decisions around disclosure and/or non-disclosure. For one faculty member, a full professor with a physical disability, made specific communication decisions around disclosure, this professor stated, “People who don’t have a reason to know don’t need to know. I’ve honestly found that the stereotyping and preconceptions around invisible disabilities are about as impactful as the disability itself” (Participant 11, Survey). An associate professor who categorized their disability as physical and cognitive chose to disclose, but made the decision to utilize different language to discuss their disabilities by stating:

I have disclosed my disability as a “health issues” or “chronic illness” with my supervisor, but chose not to talk about it as a disability, I felt I would be subject to
discrimination if I described my condition as a disability, even though it is disabling.

(Participant 52, Survey)

The heightened stigma around disabilities was a major material reality for these faculty members that impacted their physical environment and their place and existence within with academy. The stigma directly influenced their decisions, navigation, and tensions around disclosure.

**Perceived Faculty Capabilities**

The fifth theme that emerged from the survey results focused on the perceptions of faculty capabilities *(abilities)* as it relates to performing their faculty role. Professor’s positions on campus rely on and are directly linked to their intellect and smartness (Tidwell, 2004). The interconnectedness can be particularly complex for faculty with *(invisible)* disabilities because of their intelligence potentially and disproportionately often questioned, measured, evaluated, and critiqued. Disabled faculty would negotiate the risks of disclosing due to this perception of intellect and/or *(ability)*. Professionalism can also include perceptions of equity and/or inequity across faculty roles. For instance, a faculty member who identified as autistic and resistant to classifying autism as a disability shared worries about being judged by stating, “I wish to be taken professionally for my accomplishments, collegiality, and integrity without being labeled” (Participant 32, Survey). This response was about non-disclosure and overall relationship that some faculty drew about their professionalism potentially being questioned if they disclosed. A full professor with a cognitive and mental health disability shared their reasons why they have chosen non-disclosure, “I don’t want the faculty in my department or across campus to think I am not meeting the same standard they are. I don’t think they would understand” (Participant 65, Survey). The need to dismantle perceptions of disabled faculty capabilities and promote equity
across faculty regardless of disability status was significant and critical to many of the faculty participants.

Similarly, an associate professor in Art and Humanities offered, “Deafness of the sort I have is often misconstrued as addle-mindedness or an inability to comprehend. These are liabilities for someone who is a professional smart person, and so I disclosed basic needs to my department prior to my campus visit” (Participant 10, Survey). For this professor, (hearing) as a default made their Deafness a target for judging their capabilities as a faculty member. Another faculty member highlighted how the Disability Services office is geared towards students and not faculty where they assist with accommodations documents. The faculty member further acknowledged the “identity transition needed going from student with a disability to a faculty member” (Participant 35, Survey). Often the lack of clear disclosure processes, concerns of perceived (abilities), and stigma could have an impact as faculty transition from student to faculty.

Additionally, disclosure and/or non-disclosure of an (invisible) disability for some faculty was directly linked to perceptions of their capabilities to perform the job effectively. A full professor who classified their disability as physical, cognitive, and mental health condition shared:

Academia is a brutal environment in which the smartness and mental acuity of individuals is a competitive battle ground. One’s “professional development”, research, and teaching accomplishments are the measure of your value. If you have chronic fatigue, depression, or other realities that undermine your ability to “keep up” you learn to mask those in a variety of ways, including, unfortunately, working much harder than is physically or mentally safe for you to do so. (Participant 19, Survey)
Further, this faculty member identified as a white woman and elaborated by offering that:

Sexism (and for some, racism) combined with ableism create the “perfect storm”. Having taken on patriarchal power structures of academia in a number of ways over the years, I cannot risk the reality of being dismissed as being “irrational” not only cause [sic] I am visibly a woman [read, coded, and/or assumed to be a woman] but also someone with a number of (well-hidden) disabilities. (Participant 19, Survey)

Compounding other social identities and often marginalized social identities with disability can add to the experiences of disabled faculty. Lastly, while addiction and sobriety did come up minimally in the survey, one faculty member offered, “I would never disclose sobriety on campus. I don’t have many supervisors, but I don’t want to foster perceptions about my capacities or abilities in any domain” (Participant 60, Survey). For this faculty member, there were levels to disclosure, and sobriety was an (invisible) disability that they would never disclose in the academy. This sentiment around varying levels and tiers of disclosure leads into the final theme from the survey results.

Varying Levels of Disclosure within the University Environment

For the final theme, the results revealed the different choices that faculty make in terms of what levels of disclosure they are willing or not willing to divulge at the university. For some of the faculty survey participants, these levels of disclosure were about colleague status and the relationships they had established. Multiple faculty members referenced friendships as a source and link to their disclosure.

Yet for others, different department levels on campus and varying degrees of trust contributed to their disclosure. For multiple faculty, disclosure at the departmental level met their needs. For instance, an adjunct faculty member with a sensory disability noted, “There was no
need to contact [HR/The University] because [their] supervisor was agreeable to [their] request” (Participant 31, Survey). Similarly, a visiting assistant professor with a physical and mental health disability said, “I can get accommodations at the department level; it has not become necessary at this institution to disclose my disabilities to administrative offices or HR” (Participant 37, Survey).

In addition, to the experience at the departmental level, another professor shared in more detail their reasoning to not disclose to their Disability Services office by stating:

I have not disclosed to my disability services office because I have been able to create my own accommodations within my classes and implement universal design (which I discuss in depth with my students). Also, my disability services office does not have a deep understanding of disability and approaches disability from the medical model (in addition to giving almost every disabled student the same three terrible accommodations) so I do not feel it would be valuable for me to disclose -- in fact, it could be harmful. (Participant 44, Survey)

Overall, the varying departmental levels played a major role in meeting the faculty needs and accommodations. The distinction between department and university also (spoke) to perhaps a siloing of disabilities and heightened the importance of trust.

For some disabled faculty, the disability type played a factor with how selective they were with disclosure. A research faculty member who identified their disability as physical and mental health condition shared, “I have disclosed the physical disability for accommodations (ergonomic workstation furniture and equipment). I have not disclosed the mental health conditions to others at the institution” (Participant 26, Survey). Similarly, for a faculty member in the Social Sciences, disclosure had a varying level of degree regarding what may be deemed
most “acceptable”. The faculty member offered, “[Disclosure] depends on which disability. I
openly disclose type 1 diabetes, have been slower to disclose about chronic autoimmune
problems, and very rarely disclose sobriety as a mental health issue” (Participant 60, Survey).
For these professors, they prioritized and compartmentalized their request of the university by
revealing parts of their accessibility needs.

In addition to making decisions about what parts of disability(ies) are disclosed,
considerations about the employment status/level and career advancement was also a significant
factor around disclosure. An associate professor who identified as having a mental health
condition and self-described their disability as a chronic health condition offered, “I do not want
my condition to be known. It’s not anyone’s business. I do not want to be judged or have my
condition impede on my ability to advance in this department or at the university” (Participant
17, Survey).

Lastly, taking into account all of the varying levels of disclosure was also the added layer
of determining modes of disclosure, a Social Sciences professor offered:

I consider the context and reflect on the ways disclosure may support me (or others) or
harm me (or others). I then decide if and how to disclose. I generally disclose verbally in
my teaching (and in faculty meetings at times) but also disclose through my scholarship
and advocacy work. (Participant 44, Survey)

For most faculty, if they disclosed, the survey results showed that the primary mode of self-
disclosure was through one-on-one communication and discussion. Followed by their advocacy
and then through email. An Interdisciplinary non-tenured faculty member modes of disclosure
were determined by, “Context, timing, importance to centering social justice, equity, and access”
(Participant 4, Survey). Overall, there were a wide range and varying levels of disclosure and
non-disclosure for faculty in the survey. The next section will expand and elaborate on the survey results by introducing the faculty members that participated in the semi-structured interviews. In addition to the themes that emerged from the survey results, there were three themes that emerged from the interviews that will be explained further.

**Collective Case Study Participants**

For the semi-structured follow-up interviews, post-survey participants were given an opportunity to volunteer participation. I conducted interviews with six faculty members. In order to build and expand on the survey results, keeping the study participation within the same population was important. In the next section, I shared an overview and description of the interview participants.

**Collective Case Study Participant Overview**

In addition to the survey, I conducted follow-up semi-structured interviews with six faculty members who participated in the initial survey. Their stories were each incredibly distinctive as they described their lived experiences as faculty with *(invisible)* disabilities. The following section will include brief introductions to each faculty member that participated in the study.

**Introduction to Dr. Emery.** Dr. Emery is an associate professor at a large, 4-year, private college or university in the Northeast teaching within Arts and Humanities. Dr. Emery has experience as a faculty member ranging from 8-10 years at their current institution and identities as having an *(invisible)* disability, more specifically cognitive and mental health condition. Dr. Emery shared that their interest in this study was because the decision to disclose or not disclose has been major for them and they perceived there is a lack of conversation about this topic. Dr. Emery disclosed that they have benefited from other people sharing their
experiences around disclosure and this was an opportunity for them to do the same. Dr. Emery described a relatively linear journey to becoming a faculty member. Dr. Emery took a gap year after high school then went straight through undergrad, masters, doctoral, and postdoc before taking on their current faculty role.

When discussing more about their disability experience, Dr. Emery shared about how earlier in their career they had experienced the “two body problem” exploring the complexity of their disability and the nuance of questioning is this a “real disability”. This experience can be quite common for disabled people in terms of questioning being disabled enough. As Dr. Emery explained, they had “an implied sense of proving my value and reliability, to the institution” and measured their disability against other’s disability - not wanting to take away resources from someone else. Specifically, Dr. Emery stated, “There can be a sense of fraud syndrome, that I think is pretty common among academics” (Dr. Emery, Interview). More recently, Dr. Emery has become more involved around disability (visibility), which has evolved over the course of their career.

**Introduction to Dr. Riley.** Dr. Riley is a lecturer at a large, 4-year public college or university in the Midwest working within Arts and Humanities. Dr. Riley has a great deal of experience as a faculty member having been employed at their current institution for more than 10 years. Dr. Riley identifies as having a physical and mental health condition, which they self-described as neurodiverse. Dr. Riley shared about their interest in reading, teaching, and writing and how their passion for intersectionality and African American literature contributed to their desire to become a professor. Dr. Riley was interested in this study because of “the history of their career as a faculty member and being forced to disclose in the past and having terrible experiences and now having general support to open-up” (Dr. Riley, Interview). However, in
terms of disclosure of their (invisible) disability to supervisors, colleagues, and students, Dr. Riley have more recently within the last year made the choice to disclose.

**Introduction to Dr. Quinn.** Dr. Quinn is currently a postdoctoral scholar at a large, 4-year public college and university in the Northeast. Dr. Quinn has 2-4 years of experience in this faculty-adjacent role. I decided to include Dr. Quinn in the study because of the unique position of postdoctoral scholars and the role they play in their respective departments. Throughout the interview process, Dr. Quinn simultaneously described their experiences to be in line with faculty, but also having distinctive experiences in their role. Dr. Quinn described their non-apparent disability as a mental health condition. Dr. Quinn shared that their interest in the study was connected to their research around anti-ableism, accommodations, accessibility, and stigma in higher education. Dr. Quinn’s framework emphasizes the significance of art spaces as a way to incorporate positive disability identity. Additionally, Dr. Quinn has an interest in Disability Studies and Critical Disability Studies being integrated more in the curriculum. Throughout the interview, it was evident that disclosure of Dr. Quinn’s disability identity was connected to their efforts within the Arts and Humanities work.

**Introduction to Dr. Avery.** Dr. Avery is an associate professor at a small, 4-year private college or university working in the Social Sciences in the Northeast. Dr. Avery has 4-7 years of faculty experience at their current institution. Dr. Avery described their (invisible) disabilities as physical and mental health condition. Dr. Avery shared that their interest in the study was that they were interested in “intersectional modes of thinking about how race, gender, class, ability, nationality, and age all conspire to shape people's experiences and in a particular social structure (Dr. Avery, Interview). Dr. Avery also wanted a space and opportunity to reflect and share about their own experiences. Additionally, Dr. Avery shared a complicated and rough journey filled
with family hardships that made the pursuit of graduation from undergrad incredibly difficult. During their academic journey, Dr. Avery had a serendipitous opportunity working with a community-based program that worked with marginalized communities doing research. Dr. Avery had found an untapped passion that they were good at and enjoyed. Through mentorship and varying levels of support systems, Dr. Avery chose to pursue their doctoral degree to fulfill their interest in faculty life.

More specifically, as it relates to disclosure, Dr. Avery discussed the intersections of their social identities and the impact that has had in their career and disclosure. Dr. Avery shared that through their survival they are creating space for others (Dr. Avery, Interview). Additionally, Dr. Avery (talked) more about the various levels of disclosure as it relates to the type of disability they are disclosing.

**Introduction to Dr. Taylor.** Dr. Taylor is an associate professor at a mid-sized, 4-year private college or university working in Arts and Sciences in the Northeast. Dr. Taylor has significant experience as a faculty member and 10 plus years at their current institution. When referring to their educational upbringing and experiences Dr. Taylor shared that despite their love for reading and writing growing up, “There’s nothing in my background that suggest I should be a professor” (Dr. Taylor, Interview). While working full-time, Dr. Taylor decided to go back to school and through that experience realized how much they enjoyed school. After graduating as a first-generation college student, they were on a journey to pursue professorship as their career path moving forward. Dr. Taylor shared that their interest in the study was about supporting doctoral students doing this type of research and how they have enjoyment in contributing to studies on misogyny and studies on ableism in academia. Dr. Taylor categorized their invisible disability as physical. Dr. Taylor shared further that they were raised to “pass” and did not
identify with being disabled until they had issues on the tenure track and had issues with supervisors, the department and HR [Human Resources]. Dr. Taylor’s involvement in the study leaves space for them to anonymously and permanently be a part of the literature so that others can learn and deepen their understanding of faculty with disability experiences in the academy.

**Introduction Dr. Cameron.** Dr. Cameron is an assistant professor at a small, 4-year private college or university working in Social Sciences in the Midwest. Dr. Cameron has 2-4 years faculty experience at their current institution. Dr. Cameron identified their (invisible) disability as cognitive and mental health condition. Dr. Cameron shared that their interest in the study stemmed from wanting to break the stereotype of the hyperintelligent and hypercapable professor and to highlight how disclosure for “women, femmes, people of color, is very different and that we have disabilities and we have certain access needs” (Dr. Cameron, Interview). Dr. Cameron shared that as a first-generation college student with financial hardships they truly enjoyed learning and developing their critical thinking skills. Through having supportive professors and deepening their love for learning they knew that professorship was a career path for them.

Additionally, after graduating college and working full-time, Dr. Cameron quickly realized that the “highly structured world didn’t fit well with their disabilities” (Dr. Cameron, Interview). After working full-time, Dr. Cameron decided to go back to school to pursue their masters and doctoral degree, and it was solidified for them that professorship was the next (step) in their journey because it was a role that allowed for flexibility for their disabilities and they could continue to pursue their passions. Throughout Dr. Cameron’s academic journey, disclosure was not always an option because of internalized ableism, once they pursued their doctoral degree Dr. Cameron realized that “accommodations aren’t a weakness on my part it’s because
education is built for a certain body and mind and I don't fit into that and that's on society and education that's not on me” (Dr. Cameron, Interview). Throughout the interview, it was evident the significance for Dr. Cameron to bring their whole self to the professor role and the importance of how they engaged with their students.

In the next section, the themes that developed during the semi-structured interviews will be woven throughout. Additionally, Table 9 below provided an overview of each faculty member profile and demographics.
**Table 9**

*Overview Demographic Data for Interview Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Faculty Status/Level</th>
<th>*Years</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Racial Identity</th>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th>Sexuality</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Emery</td>
<td>Cognitive, Mental Health Condition</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>31-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Riley</td>
<td>Physical, Mental Health Condition</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Cisgender Woman</td>
<td>Straight, Heterosexual, Demisexual</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Quinn</td>
<td>Mental Health Condition</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Scholar</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>White, Hispanic, Latina/o/x</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Bisexual, Queer</td>
<td>31-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Avery</td>
<td>Physical, Mental Health Condition</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>African American, Black</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Straight, Heterosexual</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Taylor</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
<td>Pansexual</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Cameron</td>
<td>Cognitive, Mental Health Condition</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>White, Asian</td>
<td>Cisgender Woman</td>
<td>Bisexual, Queer</td>
<td>31-40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The table above reflects a matrix to represent data collected for the collective case studies.*

*Years listed reflects the range of time the faculty member has worked at their current institution.*
Collective Case Study Themes

While analyzing the interview data, disclosure and/or non-disclosure was a complicated process for faculty to negotiate. For some faculty, disclosure is not a choice and the complexity of their disability(ies) necessitates disclosure. As I approached the data analysis process, it was important for me to understand the significance of choice in connection to disclosure. As a result of analyzing the data, there were three themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews: (a) intersections of faculty identities, (b) negotiations around disability identity, and (c) revelations of the pandemic.

Intersections of Faculty Identities

The varying social identities of the faculty interview participants had a major impact on their experiences. The interviewees (talked) quite openly about their path to becoming faculty as well as the impact their identities had and continue to have on disclosure. Dr. Emery shared they had a relatively linear path to becoming a faculty member. They recognize their privileges as a white, healthy (able-bodied), straight professor and how they are (able) to (walk) through university life with those identities. Dr. Emery recognized the importance of (speaking up) because of the access to resources that other people do not have (Dr. Emery, Interview).

Dr. Emery (talked) about their white identity and the privileges that they are afforded. Dr. Quinn and Dr. Cameron offered a slightly different experience because of the juxtaposition of being assumed white and holding privileged racial identities, despite how they personally identify. Dr. Quinn and Dr. Cameron both (spoke) about their perceived racial identity privileges. Dr. Quinn shared, “Presenting as white probably helps in the process of disclosure. Most of the things that can be seen and recognized about me afford me enough privilege to be
able to feel comfortable disclosing identity categories that may be perceived as disenfranchised” (Dr. Quinn, Interview).

Similarly, Dr. Cameron offered the complexity of identifying as mixed race white and Asian and being read as white. Dr. Cameron stated:

There's privilege in that right, like, for example being white and Asian but generally being read as white gives me access to a lot of privilege, but it also can be hurtful or harmful when my identity is denied or you know people don't include me as a part of that community, even though that's how I see myself. (Dr. Cameron, Interview)

Dr. Cameron further suggested not knowing if disclosure of certain marginalized social identities such as their race or sexuality made it “easier” to disclose their disability. The conundrum of multiple identity disclosure can be cumbersome for some people to navigate.

Dr. Avery shared that the most salient parts of their identities are the intersections of the race, gender, class, and age. Dr. Avery shared openly being about being a black cisgender man with a Ph.D. and reflecting on ancestors not being welcomed into the very institution that they are a faculty member. Dr. Avery vividly stated, “I come from people from the dirt” (Dr. Avery, Interview). Dr. Avery also discussed how the social structures made them into a racialized subject, which in turn made their body and the identities that they now claim. The awareness and lived experience of how the intersections of Dr. Avery’s identities manifest was threaded throughout their interview.

Dr. Taylor offered similar experiences to Dr. Quinn and Dr. Cameron regarding their passing privilege. However, for Dr. Taylor and Dr. Riley, the intersection of their disability and gender identity was salient for them during the interview process. Dr. Taylor shared:
I was shocked when I got here [their university]. I started teaching graduate students and the really gendered expectations, they had and also, if you have a round face if you have kind of an open face and people expect for you to be their friend. (Dr. Taylor, Interview)

Dr. Taylor further discussed the intersections of perceived gender identity and perceived disability and how there is an expectation of “niceness”. Dr. Taylor offered, “I’ve never sure how to pull disability and gender expectations apart, I think it's just you know my experience” (Dr. Taylor, Interview).

Dr. Riley (talked) about their experiences as a woman around disclosure and based on some of their experiences around disability disclosure they hypothesized if they were not a woman they would not have had to struggle in terms of advocating for themselves and often not being believed in terms of their disability experiences (Dr. Riley, Interview). Dr. Riley also (talked) about the myth of the neutral space within the academy and how that “works against disability.” Dr. Riley went on to (say), “Many academics really do have a sort of old school idea of neutrality, universality, which really is very, very coded as sort of white hetero patriarchal abled” (Dr. Riley, Interview). Dr. Riley expanded that for a “neutral” or unmarked space to exist, it must be free of ableism and centers intersectionality. (Dr. Riley, Interview).

While the experiences varied across identities the common theme was the impact they had on faculty around disclosure. The faculty (talked) quite candidly about their areas of privilege intertwined with areas of marginalization and how that connects to their experiences with living with (invisible) disabilities. In the next section, I will discuss the second theme which covered a wide range of negotiations around faculty with disability identities.
Negotiations around Disability Identity

Throughout the interview process, multiple faculty members identified often being in positions where they had to explain the range of disability. These explanations often came in the form of acknowledging and challenging the disability binary and expanding the (views) of what is considered and can be a disability. Also, the explanations often came in the perception that their disability was invalid while also working through the complexity of understanding disability on their own. These experiences required the faculty to negotiate their own identity and how and where disclosure fit into that process.

The Limitations of the Binary

The binary of (visible) versus (invisible) disability(ies) can be an ongoing reality for disabled faculty to navigate. Too often disability identities are categorized into the binary often connected to representation and what is (visible). The realities of disability (invisibility) for some and the erasure and/or lack of representation of disability can lead to only binary (views) of disability. This statement is not to imply that physical or more apparent disabilities do not experience barriers and oppression. My statement is simply highlighting the limitations of the binary and how there are a range of disabilities that are much more complex and nuanced.

In Dr. Taylor’s interview, they disclosed the incongruency of their institution’s representation of disabled people and positive historical reputation around disability inclusivity in relation to the actual lived experience on campus (Dr. Taylor, Interview). This incongruency can have a major influence on disclosure and/or non-disclosure decisions for faculty. Similarly, Dr. Quinn and Dr. Cameron shared that their campuses lacked (visible) representation of disability. Also, the (invisibility) of disability can also extend to other social identity markers that are assumed or read differently than the persons actual identity. For example, Dr. Cameron
experienced difficulty finding connection and community because their racial identity was read as white even though they identified as mixed race. Dr. Cameron was worried about acceptance as it relates to their racial identity when they started attending Japanese American events. Dr. Cameron shared, “I was very nervous, I was going to get rejected and they really embraced me, and I think that made it easier to disclose in the future, and I think the same is true with disability having a community to fall back on to tell me, you, are enough” (Dr. Cameron, Interview). These experiences underscore the interconnectedness of identities and difficulty in separating an intertwined identity. Additionally, this experience further highlighted the disproportionate and limited societal (view) of (visibility) and the weight of representation, assumptions, being “read” as a member of a particular community, and “passing.” Simultaneously, it emphasizes the significance of finding community connections. Dr. Quinn affirmed this reality by offering that:

One of the barriers to disclosure that I’ve experienced within the disability community is finding validation that mental health is a real disability with real needs. And so, sometimes I imagine, I am a little hesitant to disclose in a space where there's more prevalent disability and visible disability or apparent disabilities, because I don't want to feel as though I am impeding on another space that I don't have a right to be in so that's been a challenge. (Dr. Quinn, Interview)

Dr. Cameron expanded on Dr. Quinn’s point about being “read” a certain way and level of access or lack of access to spaces. Dr. Cameron intentionally utilized the language apparent and non-apparent because of the real possibilities of their disabilities becoming apparent when and if they are around other people. Dr. Cameron (talked) about the ways in which ableism and the assumptions that all people are (able-bodied) and (able-minded) can have direct impact on them when they fail to reach those standards and by default their disability becomes apparent.
Furthermore, Dr. Cameron (talked) about the ways in which people are coded by other’s based on the assumptions about their identities. Dr. Cameron stated, “Even if that's not how I identify, they are coding me often as white when I’m mixed race, they are coding me as non-disabled when I’m disabled, they are coding me as heterosexual since I’m a femme, but I’m bisexual” (Dr. Cameron, Interview). Dr. Cameron was keenly aware of those tensions and as they shared, “Those things could become apparent at any moment whether it's something I say or something I do or the just the way I present myself” (Dr. Cameron, Interview).

Similar to Dr. Cameron’s sentiments around a disability becoming apparent at any moment, Dr. Avery shared about the (invisibility) of their disability and navigating the realization that concealment may not always be possible. Dr. Avery shared, “I feel increasingly disabled, if there was any sense my disabilities were visible or I could keep them under wraps those days I fear are coming to an end” (Dr. Avery, Interview). Dr. Avery was also highlighting the reality of disability progression being out of their control and navigating that reality in connection to their disclosure choices and/or lack of choices. Dr. Avery also shared the significance of all the considerations of job search processes and only considering jobs that will protect their disabilities for the future. The next section explored how faculty navigated the idea of being disabled enough and proving the existence of their (invisible) disabilities.

Am I Disabled Enough?

Dr. Emery shared that their disability can be difficult to diagnose, so they were experiencing the tensions of wondering if they were “faking” while also trying to figure out their disability for themselves (Dr. Emery, Interview). For Dr. Emery, how and what to disclose and offering what they needed was incredibly difficult because they were still figuring it out for themselves. The experience of having to “prove” a disability(ies) is unfortunately a common
theme and experience for many disabled people. Dr. Riley and Dr. Avery shared similar experiences earlier in their career where they had to “prove” their disabilities were justified.

The intersections of Dr. Riley’s racial and gender identity as a white woman were highlighted in their experiences. Dr. Riley shared an experience about not being believed by colleagues and accused of “faking” their disability and need for accommodations. Dr. Riley detailed an experience where they were made to get an accommodations letter to “prove” their accommodations request were “real”. The department chair at the time held a great deal of power over Dr. Riley in terms of how they treated them throughout this process, which Dr. Riley described as a negative experience.

For Dr. Avery, the intersections racial and gender identity as a black man were also highlighted in their experiences. Throughout the interview, Dr. Avery (talked) about how they were among a minority of black men professors on their campus and how they experienced moments of privilege as a professor and moments of marginalization because of their racial identity. Dr. Avery disclosed a challenging experience when they requested to have their tenure clock stopped due to their disability, but experienced extreme difficulty in accommodation support. Dr. Avery reflected on that experience and articulated a necessity for them to be detailed with documenting their medical needs because of the lack of support from medical doctors and leadership. Dr. Avery offered that there was never a moment where people acknowledged how their disability would impact their (ability) to pursue tenure, there was only a focus on production. The expectations from the university to produce were still at the forefront.

Dr. Taylor also shared about the production that is expected of faculty members. Dr. Taylor shared about the idea of the “superhuman” faculty member. Dr. Taylor offered, “No one sees all the rest that is required, no one knows spoon theory, no one sees all the stuff you do
behind the scenes to look really functional” (Dr. Taylor, Interview). The heightened expectations and pressures for disabled faculty to perform at a certain (normalized), (able-bodied), and (able-minded) level can be heavy. The production expectations and power differentials that Dr. Riley, Dr. Avery, and Dr. Taylor experienced played a role in their disclosure and accommodation experiences. The role that power and privilege plays in this process for people can be a factor that hinders and/or supports a faculty’s disclosure experience and access to accommodations.

Dr. Avery discussed further the transition back to in-person learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic:

So coming back to campus this year and teaching more, being more active and our campus has opened up and everything I’m tired as hell all the time can barely move. Like literally, today I’m like, “It's not a good day” so there’s nowhere in the faculty to register my labor of my teaching or my service anywhere to register that extra work my body does. (Dr. Avery, Interview)

Dr. Quinn shared similar sentiments as Dr. Avery:

The beginning of the pandemic was not great, for me, because it was a lot of unknowns and you know because of my disabilities there are days, where it's difficult to be a person and I found that being able to teach class online was easier for me because I had the things that I needed more accessible to me and it afforded me the opportunity to take breaks when I needed and have some of my self-care tools close by, and whatever capacity that I would need them in. (Dr. Quinn, Interview)

Dr. Taylor reflected on the impact the pandemic has had on their disability and thoughts about how that will influence their future career movement. Dr. Taylor offered:
I don't know how long it's going to take to recover or if I'm going to be able to recover. So now I’m like well, maybe I’m not going to have a career in administration and I have a lot of feelings about that, some of which you're like yay no administration for me. Because the more I know about it, the more I’m like that sucks and then the more you know it's also a lot of grief that goes with it, because it was something that I really did intend to do. So I’m wondering, I’ve never seen statistics on disabled administrators. Once in a while you meet one but it's more like you hear about them because they're this rare butterfly that somebody found right or they're running a disability institute. So I wonder, you know about that population and what's out there and how none of us factor them in to this sort of discussion. I do feel like if I went into administration, I would be even more invisible than I am now and it would be even less room for disclosure. (Dr. Taylor, Interview)

Dr. Taylor’s reflection about the (visible) absence of administrators with disabilities is significant because it prompts dialogue about the structures in place that are set up to keep certain bodyminds out. In addition, it further exposes the need for representation and space within administration to discuss (invisible) and (visible) disabilities. Additionally, the grief process is also a significant reality when the unattainability of career advancement is recognized because of institutional and systemic disability erasure. Dr. Taylor further offered:

You know, and part of it also is capitalism again it's you know expectation, we have a really heavy productivity and availability, especially for administrators. I mean that's a 60 to 80 hour a week job-I will never have that many spoons. You know so part of the reason I, you know, worry about doing that work it's cause [sic] I’m pretty sure I’m doomed to do it badly just based on what the job expectations are and I don't like doing
things badly because I’m your typical overachieving academic so yeah I think it's a structural thing there’s a lot there. (Dr. Taylor, Interview)

The evaluation of the disabled administrator experience directly connects to Dr. Taylor’s earlier sentiments about the “superhuman” faculty member. The complexity of the faculty experiences described in the interviews was simultaneously complex and complicated. The pandemic added layers to their experiences as well as the navigation of their roles within the academy. The last theme was the revelations that emerged at their institutions as a result of the pandemic and the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities.

**Revelations of the Pandemic**

For some of the faculty, the pandemic had a significant impact on the experiences of disabled faculty in terms of accommodations and overall navigation of the campus community. Dr. Riley shared, “People don't talk about this [lessons from the pandemic] enough, the pandemic has had a little bit of a silver lining of being good for people with disabilities, but it needs to, we [the university] need to make sure that [lessons] implemented. In the deep structure, not just as a current bandaid I mean the whole deal” (Dr. Riley, Interview). Dr. Riley shared a reflection that before the pandemic they had requested remote work and more accessible alternative options for students, but it was not until the pandemic that the university accommodated these requests.

Dr. Riley offered that when the pandemic surfaced and impacted the university as a whole:

Low and behold, in the pandemic once it came to the pandemic and the university not wanting to lose too much money, and you know having to shutdown classes at all well low and behold suddenly they [the university] were able to roll out this platform, so there's that for sure there's so much that they were able to do technologically and also
teaching us how to use it, how to use these platforms was really quite something, and so that's absolutely something that they [the university] need to take to heart that that we have to be able to do this [shift to accommodating processes] we can't just all the sudden not have these classes anymore not have as much support. (Dr. Riley, Interview)

Dr. Taylor shared that they believed a lesson not learned because of the pandemic was that “capitalism is bad and we [the university] is locked into a model that forces us into certain positions”. (Dr. Taylor, Interview). Dr. Taylor expanded on the ways in which a money-driven approach at their university was disproportionate and inequitable and a “shut down” of their campus would impact that capitalist model (Dr. Taylor, Interview).

Further, Dr. Emery offered that for (invisible) disabilities that were not (viewed) as pandemic related such as chronic non-immune system related conditions and maybe mental health, the process for accommodations were not as clear (Dr. Emery, Interview). When thinking about the impact of the pandemic, Dr. Quinn shared:

I imagine that the pandemic probably brought a lot of things to light in people's lives and made I think in a lot of ways, maybe made things more challenging for many people, and so in that space they may have needed to seek accommodations or resources and in that process disclosed. And so I anticipated the pandemic increased likelihood of disclosure for people with invisible disabilities. (Dr. Quinn, Interview)

Further, Dr. Emery (talked) about their own personal experience reaching out to the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) coordinator towards the beginning of the pandemic and never (hear)ing back from that person. Dr. Emery acknowledged the “increased workload of the people who make these decisions is [was] increased substantially (Dr. Emery, Interview). It appeared the actual and perceived severity of a person’s disability and (visibility) and
(invisibility) of a person’s disability became even more present during the pandemic and potentially redirected where the ADA office focused their work.

Similar to Dr. Emery, Dr. Avery was unsure what the process would be for faculty to disclose their disability. Dr. Avery processed through all the different options of staff or departments to discuss disclosure with and was still unsure. Further, Dr. Avery also thought about the reasons and context behind the disclosure if they needed accommodations or if they were trying to make a political statement. Dr. Avery mentioned their faculty status/level would play a role in determining disclosure and/or if they were trying to make a broader public statement which would determine who they go to for disclosure (Dr. Avery, Interview).

Similarly, Dr. Cameron shared that they did not know the accommodations process for faculty. Dr. Cameron (heard) from many colleagues that “disclosure to HR [Human Resources] was one of the hardest and worse things because of how they responded to the need” (Dr. Cameron, Interview). In Dr. Cameron’s reflection, they did state that they themselves should “probably push for it [accommodation process] be made clear for new faculty” (Dr. Cameron, Interview). Similarly, Dr. Riley did not know the disclosure process for disabled faculty if they were not already connected to disabled spaces. Dr. Riley shared “I’m going to have to rethink this [disclosure process]. I do think it [disclosure] is easier in an online format, but somehow there does have to be a way that lesson comes back over into the physical classroom” (Dr. Riley, Interview). For Dr. Taylor, they shared, “Over the years, the university has tried to centralize the disclosure process where everything goes through the ADA Coordinator. Before it was for you and your chair to figure out”. (Dr. Taylor, Interview). Dr. Taylor elaborated that there has been increased mandatory trainings focused on disability procedure which is an opportunity for people to “pay attention”. Yet, Dr. Taylor expressed they did not know if people knew the procedures
and “if they are reading the guidelines depends on the sphere of what people believe they need to know” (Dr. Taylor, interview). For Dr. Quinn, they (talked) about an opportunity to disclose through HR paperwork at time of hiring. However, after that time, Dr. Quinn shared, “I don’t think there is a straightforward process, I assume the first step would be to go to HR to let them know you want to change your status in the system.” Dr. Quinn further offered, “I think whom you disclose should be up to the person and I should look into that [the disclosure process]” (Dr. Quinn, Interview). Throughout the interviews, the lack of clarity around disclosure procedures and processes became evident among the faculty members.

Additionally, Dr. Cameron recalled an incident during the pandemic where there was a faculty debate about adjusting an administrative process and deadline for students. The reaction of some faculty was focusing on the need for students to be diligent with their schedules and the importance of faculty not “coddling” students. Ultimately there was a need to address the various disabilities that students may have where an extension, especially in the midst of a pandemic, was necessary. Dr. Cameron’s reaction to this incident captured the significance of supporting and advocating for the disabled community(ies):

This [campus] is not a climate supporting disabled people right when we're talking about things like coddling students and talking about how they have to meet deadlines or they're going to have some kind of consequence. So, it just really highlighted, for me, how much work needs to be done on my campus, at least in terms of teaching people how to be flexible and improve accessibility and not even just physical accessibility. (Dr. Cameron, Interview)

While Dr. Cameron’s experience focused on students, an argument can be made that faculty with disabilities often experience similar scenarios where the assumed way of being and belief that
people *(able-bodied)* and *(able-minded)* often prevails. The margin for error is narrow for disabled faculty and Crip time is often negated and not central to considering the lived experience of disabled people. In the next section, faculty shared the lessons they believe their universities learned from the pandemic and some of their hopes for the future.

**Lessons Learned**

While the impacts of the pandemic are current and will be long-lasting there are some immediate lessons that have been learned from universities throughout this experience. Unfortunately, some of those lessons are not positive and the university practices are reverting back to “business as usual”. For example, for Dr. Emery, the university reaction to the pandemic has been “narrowly focused on and kind of like the general vibe is kind of corrective like, how can we get you to a baseline level, not how can we help you excel”. The university response and approach is, “How do we help you do, or how do we enable you to do your job, not necessarily like, how do we enable you to like your job and be better at it right” (Dr. Emery, Interview). Dr. Riley offered:

> I think the lesson that we need to learn from the pandemic is that we can do it. There are ways to have multiple access even when you're strictly online. It needs to be the university's responsibility to our university particular needs to be our responsibility, not just to have that [accessible platforms and options] or to know how to do it, but to really make that much more of a “normal part” of our process. (Dr. Riley, Interview)

Similarly, Dr. Quinn hoped that a lesson learned would be that “online learning is a valuable tool in education, and it offers a lot of accessibility for individuals with disabilities” (Dr. Quinn, Interview). Dr. Quinn also shared that there are options to maintain rigor in the classroom and be flexible with classroom design, instruction, and the needs of students and the faculty member.
(Dr. Quinn, Interview). Dr. Taylor offered, “It is not clear to me what we've learned from this [the pandemic] I think everyone learned that remote work is possible that it can be done. I hope some people learn that online teaching is viable and can be done well, although I’m not sure that people learned that” (Dr. Taylor, Interview). Dr. Taylor shared that some faculty did not learn or distinguish the difference between “triage teaching” versus developing “carefully planned pedagogically solid online teaching” (Dr. Taylor, Interview).

Dr. Avery (talked) further about potential lessons that their university has learned from the pandemic:

In the pandemic illness is pervasive and looming at every turn. I think there is a general more of a sensitivity and an awareness of both the specific viral thread, but also the psychological threat and ongoing kind of turmoil associated with living in an essentially quarantined police state. That, I think, creates an opening actually like you know it seems like you know every way you can imagine how the sentence goes the pandemic has revealed and has exposed. (Dr. Avery, Interview)

Dr. Avery offered that the pandemic has revealed and exposed many facets of disability that there is an opportunity “an opening” to infuse action. Some of the faculty proposed more directly what they hoped would have been learned from the ongoing pandemic.

Dr. Emery shared what they had hoped would have been learned during this pandemic and moving forward:

I wanted concrete help about figuring out about how to juggle the [administrative opportunities and/or responsibilities] where there are times, where I just can't be at work, I can't it's not a question of will it's not a question of strength, I just won't. Especially with tenure, my research expectations are more flexible. If I need to spend a day recalibrating
and retreating I can. But what I want what I really had hoped for was things that would help me kind of expand my presence and expand my contribution to the university. (Dr. Emery, Interview)

Similarly, Dr. Avery (talked) about being able to stay home during the pandemic and not having to go through those motions. Dr. Avery shared, “Actually, my productivity went up I was able to adjust I didn't have to come and go and the exhaustion the fatigue and those cycles weren't as dramatic” (Dr. Avery, Interview). The need for greater understanding and flexibility seemed like an important hope for Dr. Emery and Dr. Avery.

Dr. Quinn reflected on how the pandemic demonstrated an awareness and prevalence of mental health and how there was an opportunity and possibility for disclosure to happen in a way where people did not feel “judged or criticized as harshly” because everyone was experiencing the pandemic. Dr. Quinn went on to share, “Particularly in America, there was a lot of advocacy for self-care and how to maintain mental wellness and workshops on mindfulness and meditation and there was a lot of stopgap stuff put in there at the university” (Dr. Quinn, Interview).

For Dr. Cameron, there was a futurity about what they hoped were lessons learned from the pandemic. Dr. Cameron shared:

I don't know that we're getting there yet, and I do hope, long term more and more faculty can be in university and college cultures where it's okay to disclose, whether that be to your chair or in a faculty meeting or you know, to get accommodations from HR. I do think we're a long way from that and I think about tenure too, universities and colleges, do not want to adjust tenure expectations because you're disabled. And so, and again that is the same rhetoric that is used on students, you have to produce and how we expect you to produce. And there is no flexibility, this is what you should be able to do right if you're
“normal” and “capable” and “smart” and so we're not going to change these requirements we're not going to be flexible, you need to rise to meet us versus us meeting you where you are. (Dr. Cameron, Interview)

Dr. Cameron’s sentiments expressed the work and accountability necessary to begin to shift the landscape of centering disabled futures into the academy. The experiences of disabled faculty existed before the pandemic, were heightened during the pandemic, and will continue to exist beyond it. However, the sentiment from the revelations of the faculty amid the pandemic is investing in and incorporating positive lessons to move universities forward in their disability efforts.

In the next section, the document analysis is discussed further and provides and overarching (view) that interweaves some of the findings learned in the survey results and interviews. The document analysis and review serve as a guide to understanding more about college and university websites communication around (invisible) disabilities. This guide can be (viewed) holistically and/or through the lens of how it impacts disabled faculty directly.

**Document Analysis**

The focus of my study explored the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities. While the survey and interviews provided data about lived experience, the document analysis had a different aim. The purpose of the document analysis was to investigate college and university websites to explore their communication around (invisible) disabilities. For many disabled people, the onus is on the individual to find information, resources, and to navigate accommodations and accessibility/inaccessibility. For this document analysis, I wanted to examine what types of information universities were communicating about their campus community regarding disabilities. Also, throughout this data collection process, I understood that
while a website does not fully translate into what the exact or specific experiences are for disabled people on a particular campus, it does however reveal where there may or may not be gaps of information, resources, and accessibility.

For the document analysis process, I randomly selected 51 colleges and universities within the United States and reviewed their websites. The selection of 51 colleges and universities is not representative of all institutions in the United States; however, this analysis is meant to serve as a mini-pilot or guide for website review as it relates to reviewing and assessing university websites for (invisible) disabilities.

For each college or university website review, there were four main search criteria. The first area was to scan the main university webpage because most often this is the first page that people (view) when they navigate to a university website. I wanted to analyze the main page to (see) if the website had any information about disability and accessibility from a starting place. The second area was using the search function on the website to (see) what surfaced when (invisible) disabilities or (invisible) disability was placed into the search feature. The third area of focus was to explore four different pages on each university’s site: (a) Human Resources, (b) Diversity and Equity Office, (c) Disability Services Office, and (d) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Office/Coordinator. For simplicity, throughout this dissertation, I am utilizing these four general terms, but I recognize that each office may have a more unique name and title depending on the university. On each of those office pages, I searched for any mention of (invisible) disability, definition of disability, a list of resources intended for faculty with (invisible) disabilities, how to access those services, a description of an accommodation process, and any other unique or specific feature to that university. The fourth area of focus was searching for any information or resources for other faculty, staff, or students working with faculty with
disabilities. The entirety of the review process was quite cumbersome and complex. Each college and university website had its own unique design and navigation. Therefore, the four main search criteria were incredibly important to ensure researcher efficacy and consistency when exploring the websites.

**University Main Page**

The first search criteria task was to examine the main university page. While this process did not result in a theme, the significance of visiting the main university webpage was noteworthy. The main page is what most website visitors visit and the significance of that introductory experience can provide a great deal of information or a lack of information. During this process of data collection, some universities appeared to prioritize the overall accessibility of their websites, while others made it incredibly difficult to navigate. On the main university page, 25 of the 51 universities had an accessibility tab, disability resources tab, accessibility statement, policy, or tab to provide feedback or report inaccessibility of the website to the webmaster. While this does not directly communicate the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities on the respective campuses, it does provide information for website visitors around access.

After data collection and coding the data, there were four themes that emerged from the document analysis: (a) complexity of website navigation, (b) absence of (invisible) disability language, (c) resources focused primarily on faculty supporting students with disabilities, and (d) difficulty finding accommodation processes. In the next section, I will discuss the first theme, varying complexity of website navigation. The navigation of each website became a critical part of the process in order to gain a greater understanding of the presence of (invisible) disabilities language and information.
Complexity of Website Navigation

One of the most common themes when navigating the websites was the complexity of finding information. Information was either easily accessible, unclear, or it took several clicks to locate the information. Of the 51 universities, 20 college and university websites were difficult to navigate as evidenced by hard-to-find information, multiple clicks that did not route to the information needed, or completely not finding information. While that is less than half, this theme was significant because of the degree of difficulty to find information. Also, complexity of website navigation was concerning given the messages that can convey to website visitors about what information is considered important and/or unimportant.

During the document analysis data collection, not all websites were equal in terms of design; however, using the search field feature was a useful starting place across the university websites. However, across university websites there were both similarities and vast differences in terms of accessibility and user friendliness. The complexity of website navigation can be quite concerning for disabled faculty that may have a range of needs and conditions. Specific features that include accessibility and technology services for all bodyminds as well as clear descriptions and information about disability policies, processes, and procedures can make it easier for disabled faculty to find the information they need. For instance, when universities have an A-Z list of departments tab, it makes it friendlier for the user to navigate the university website. For example, a university in Alabama did not have an A-Z tab making navigation more difficult to find specific department information. While searching for common terms such as “Human Resources” or “Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator”, many university websites produced no results. At the same university in Alabama, it was difficult to find both the Human Resources and Disability Services Offices pages, there was no Diversity and Equity Office, and
no ADA information. Placing these commons terms into the search feature did not produce immediate results. The difficulty of retrieving this information could leave website visitors confused on where to find accurate and immediate resources and information. The A-Z tab feature would help find and identify departments that have unique names that are specific to their institution.

Another example of navigation difficulties occurred with the review of the website of a small college in Hawaii that was overwhelmingly lacking information. Similar to Alabama, there was no A-Z listing, and I could not find a Diversity and Equity Office or information regarding ADA. Also, it was challenging to find the Human Resources page. After an initial search there were no search results and after several more clicks I eventually found a staff/faculty accommodations page, but after trying to click on this information it redirected to another university. Perhaps this is a part of a larger state system, but it was confusing to discern that information as a researcher and outsider to this university.

While 31 out of 51 university websites were simpler to navigate as a whole, many provided little to no information regarding (invisible) disabilities. For example, typical Human Resources pages on university websites communicate employment information to faculty. A search for Human Resources at universities in New Mexico and Wyoming provided no results. When I searched for Human Resources at universities in Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Wisconsin the only information that I could find was an employment or job opportunities page to search for career opportunities. The lack of information is concerning for both website visitors and potential disabled faculty searching for employment and information about disability resources at the university.
Given that Human Resources serves as the point of entry to employment, it is troubling that the webpage’s for multiple universities lacks information and/or is not easily accessible. For perspective faculty members, the message that this may convey is that the university is not welcoming to disabled faculty. More in-depth information is provided in Appendix F featuring all 51 universities, which offers more detailed information of the results. Table 10 reflects a matrix that represents the data collected for the document analysis. Included in the table is a list of each state, public/private status, and 2-year or 4-year institution designation. Additionally, the table represents the five different areas represented on the matrix, which include the level of simplicity or difficulty of website navigation, (invisible) disability information, resources for working with disabled faculty, accommodation process, and ADA information. A Yes or No is utilized that show if that university did or did not meet the search criteria. Next, I describe the criteria for determining if the university received a Yes or No in each area of the criteria. The development of the criteria and the matrix provided a useful guide to understand different layers of institutional information regarding (invisible) disabilities at each college or university.

To decide the simplicity or difficulty of website navigation, I determined that if it took more than several clicks to find information and/or if the degree of information lacked clarity, then that university would receive a no on the matrix. For (invisible) disability, when using the search function, I (looked) for what information came up when (invisible) disability(ies) was placed into the search function. In the matrix Table 10, if a university has an * next to it that represents a university that only had one item come up in the search and that item was either quite dated in relevancy and/or the item that came up was not a direct resource or service. For resources for working with disabled faculty, when searching the university pages, I (looked) for any information that offered resources for non-disabled people working with disabled faculty on
campus or information on the university sites that offered generalized resources to support disabled faculty. For accommodation process, I wanted to (see) did Human Resources page mention disabilities on their website and did Human Resources and any other university pages such as: Disability and Equity Office describe an accommodation process for faculty with (invisible) disabilities. Lastly, for ADA information, I searched the university pages (looking) for any information for an ADA Coordinator position/staff member and/or information about the ADA processes, or information about an ADA policy at that university. More information about these areas and findings can be found in Appendix F. The next section discusses the second theme that emerged from the document analysis.

Absence of (Invisible) Disability Language

When navigating the sample of 51 university websites used in this study, I searched for (invisible) disabilities language. The majority of universities had no information in the search results using that language. Even more concerning, when (looking) across the three to four major webpages, Human Resources, Diversity and Equity Office, Disability Services Office, and ADA Coordinator/Office there were major gaps in terms of discussing disabilities in general. When completing these searches, if disability came up the universities’ websites leaned toward discussing disabilities that would be considered more (visible). If there was a definition offered for disabilities, most of the universities utilized the ADA definition of disability. For context, the ADA defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limited one or more major life activities and/or record of an impairment and/or being regarded as having such impairment” (Americans with Disabilities Act, n.d.). This definition of disability is vague and slightly ambiguous, as a substantial limitation for one person could vary significantly for another
person. While people have the agency to describe their own identity, the university equally has the power to determine or suggest what does or does not qualify as a disability under the ADA.

Of the 51 universities, 29 universities did not list a definition of disability and 13 utilize the ADA definition of disability. Additionally, seven universities utilize their own definitions of disability. One university in the District of Columbia (stood) out in terms of offering a disability affinity space for faculty and staff to connect. The group’s socially-just mission included a range of disability identities that were welcome to join the group. Throughout my review, this was the only website that had a clear level of intention, depth, and expansiveness of disability identities. The group description included shared opportunities for community solidarity, education, development, and resources for further learning (mid-sized private university in District of Columbia, retrieved 11/8/2021).

There can often be basic and simple definitions of disability and the university in the District of Columbia offered a more complex and nuanced understanding of disability identity and experiences. Additionally, in the review of university websites, affinity groups dedicated to marginalized populations in general, and specifically for disabled communities, was lacking. The existence and (visibility) of a disability centered affinity group can be significant for the disabled faculty and staff community. The university in the District of Columbia may serve as a guide and practice for the ways in which other universities may implement similar intentional affinity spaces.

While there was a variety of language used to define disabilities, there was an overwhelming lack of description for (invisible) disabilities. To better understand the findings, I will share a sample of definitions from selected universities. At a mid-sized university in Florida, the Disability Services Office page stated that they “provide services and academic
accommodations for students of all backgrounds on campus with documented physical, psychological and learning disabilities” (mid-sized public university in Florida, retrieved 11/8/2021). A large public college in Ohio stated on their Disability Services Office page that they “offer services to students with physical, psychiatric, and educational disabilities” (large public university in Ohio, retrieved 11/21/2021). The language in this mission is focused on students and is unclear if whether people who do not identify with those terms can still access services and/or (see) the Disability Services Office as a resource.

At a private university in New York, interesting they used the word hidden on their Disability Services Office page. Also, this was the first university website I (viewed) that had an accessibility drop-down menu which gave options for larger text, text spacing, dyslexia friendly, contrast, and highlight options (mid-sized private university in New York, retrieved 11/21/2021). This feature (stood) out among the other university websites because it offered an inclusive way for people with a range of needs and entry points to access their website.

Additionally, during the review, several universities appeared to utilize language that was outdated and/or could be considered offensive. A unique attribute was the Disability Services Offices at a university in New Jersey and university in Georgia were both housed with counseling services. More specifically, the Disability Services Office in Georgia used language on their website such as “physical and mental impairment and hearing loss” (small private university in Georgia, retrieved 11/8/21). A small private university in Vermont, mentioned “learning differences and hindrances” in their mission and services introduction on their website (small private university in Vermont, retrieved 11/25/21). A small college in North Dakota used handicap language on their employment opportunities and positions web page. A small college in Oklahoma used the language special accommodations on their ADA webpage and special needs
on their Disability Services Office website. Lastly, a small college in Massachusetts also used the language special needs on their Human Resources website. Some of the language used at various universities was outdated or potentially offensive such as: describing disabilities as hinderances, using the term (hearing) loss, and labeling disability accommodations or identities as special needs. As discussed, and threaded throughout this dissertation, disability related language can be powerful and complex. Language can be affirming, and it can also be marginalizing. While the university websites reviewed are not specific to faculty identities or experiences, the choices in language does however offer a perspective in terms of what is (seen) as a disability. Language choices potentially provide some insight into the office and/or universities framework around disability.

**Resources Focused Primarily on Faculty Supporting Students with Disabilities**

The third theme that emerged from the document analysis highlighted the lack of resources for faculty with disabilities. When searching the Disability Services Office website for example, most universities only had resources intended for students. While some of the resources could be applied broadly to disabled people, the direction was aimed at how faculty could support students with disabilities in the classroom. The majority of Human Resources websites reviewed as part of this limited analysis provided minimal (if any) resources to support disabled faculty. There were two significant topics related to this theme: (1) the lack of resources and (2) information directly addressing disabled faculty. First, the lack of resources for disabled faculty may suggest that faculty members are assumed to not belong to the disability community, only their students. Additionally, on all webpages reviewed for this study, only a few offered direct information, educational opportunities, or resources for students, faculty, and staff members working with disabled faculty. While most universities made no mention of disabled faculty,
universities in Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island provided some degree of resources, accommodation information, and/or development opportunities around disability education. Overall, the lack of resources and information on how and ways to be in allyship with faculty with disabilities was concerning especially when the decision-making power around disability access and accommodations on campuses resides among various administrators.

**Difficulty Finding Accommodation Process**

The last theme uncovered in the analysis of university websites centered on the glaring absence of published information regarding an accommodation process. The majority of the universities did not disclose an accommodation process on their websites. Lacking an accommodation process can be challenging for all faculty with disabilities and more specifically for faculty with (invisible) disabilities. If a faculty member is negotiating the decision around disclosure and/or non-disclosure, not having accommodations information readily available can be challenging. For universities in this study that did have accommodations information, the information was located on either their Human Resources or Diversity and Equity Office websites. In all, there were 29 universities in this study with a Diversity and Equity Office. Another two universities had diversity and equity information on an individual college’s website, but not information targeted to the larger university. The other 31 universities mentioned diversity broadly, but their websites did not include any information about disabilities. A university in Arizona did not mention an accommodation process, it was the only university that included current information about disability-focused workshops that included (invisible) disabilities on their Diversity and Equity Office website. While the inclusion of disability-centered workshops is promising, the absence of accommodation process information could
further support a culture of non-disclosure, which ultimately places the onus of finding information and disclosure on the faculty with the disability.

**Unique Findings or Noticings**

In this final section, I share unique findings that emerged while conducting the document analysis. While these areas did not develop to themes, these unique noticings were noteworthy because of the ways in which they may impact people with *(invisible)* disabilities. One unique finding was at a mid-sized university in the District of Columbia, the main university page *(stood)* out in terms of inaccessibility. The main university page had a marketing video of the campus showing various images of campus and people moving throughout the campus. However, the rapid speed of the video was incredibly fast. While there were other universities that had videos on their main page, the university in the District of Columbia was noteworthy because of the sensory concerns of the pace of the video. I am unsure if the video was intended to be that fast as a marketing strategy, but for anyone who needs time to process information, has an *(invisible)* disability, and/or have any sensory conditions this main website was *(visually)* difficult to navigate.

During the document analysis process, a large university in Ohio was the first to provide a trainings tab to request a disability-centered training, which could be requested on their Disability Services Office webpage. This was a noticeable finding because all of the other universities did not offer this opportunity. The training focus offered an opportunity to educate campus more broadly around a range of disabilities and experiences. Additionally, some of the 51 universities had processes for requesting reasonable accommodations, which included notifying Human Resources or a supervisor, but I did not find universities that provided trainings to administration around accommodation processes and/or how to enhance disability awareness.
and advocacy. The lack of a training option could assume that Human Resources and/or supervisors are prepared to discuss, support, and be an advocate for faculty with disabilities. Another finding was that while reviewing a university website the majority of webpages did not link to other diversity-related offices and often did not share similar content across webpages. The inconsistency could be concerning if and when visitors are trying to find specific information. The websites that were more universal and streamlined in terms of accessible information and navigation were easier to review and find resources.

As I examined the university websites, I also realized the importance of universities offering clarity about how to access disability services particularly in the midst of a pandemic. For disabled people, amid a pandemic their access and accessibility needs may have been/exposed and/or heightened. Of the 51 sample universities, 13 universities described on their websites whether they were providing in person, virtual, or hybrid services. Of the 13 universities, only three universities, Texas, Utah, and the District of Columbia had COVID-19 information, a statement, or other information to acknowledge the pandemic and the need for remote appointments. For the 13 universities that mentioned the mode in which they were providing services, that information was disproportionately found on Disability Services Offices websites, but not throughout other university pages. This finding is important when considering universal practices within university environments to think about the needs and access of all community members and visitors to the campus.

Another unique noticing during the document analysis, was at a mid-sized university in Connecticut, which had information about reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities and breastfeeding mothers. This finding and language was quite unique and only found at this one university. The language offered by this university made me think about the
experiences of transgender and non-binary parents at the university because of the potential overlap in experiences around disability identities and queer identities, disclosure and/or non-disclosure, and coming out. For this unique noticing, the website did not offer more information about how the university defines “mother” and their disclosure processes. Given that often transgender, non-binary, and queer communities can be left out of parenting experiences providing more clarity for this accommodation would be essential in enhancing and communicating equitable access for disabled queer employees.

Another interesting noticing was at a mid-sized college in Idaho, which had information on their Disability Services Office page for faculty, parents, IDEA, Section 504, and the ADA. The website also had alt text (i.e., hover over the image boxes and it provides a description of the text or images) for images on their website. The accessible nature of the website was helpful, however, this added layer of accessibility was only on this page not embedded throughout the university webpages. Similar to the university in Connecticut, the Human Resources webpage had a section for temporary disabilities (e.g., pregnancy, broken bones, etc.). While the Disability Services Office website did not mention breastfeeding mothers like the university in Connecticut it did have a non-discrimination policy regarding pregnancy or childbirth as well as an accessibility statement on their Disability Services Office website (mid-sized public university in Idaho, retrieved 11/8/2021).

For universities that had expansive definitions of disabilities, accommodation resources, and processes for people with a variety of needs and experiences could be (viewed) as beneficial and offer more range in services, resources, and access points for disabled people. While these unique noticings do not have a direct or immediate relationship to my dissertation, they do offer findings that could be explored further to expand upon the research.
Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the findings of the qualitative survey, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The results of the survey had six themes that emerged from the data that explored reasons around the range of faculty disclosure and/or non-disclosure of (invisible) disability decisions. The semi-structured interviews aimed to expand on the survey results, and three additional themes emerged from the data. Finally, with the results of the document analysis, four themes emerged in the review of 51 college and university websites around their information and communication regarding (invisible) disabilities.

The next chapter will offer conclusions and recommendations about the futurity of disability identities. Reflecting on Dr. Cameron’s interview, they offered a catalyst into the next chapter by sharing:

I just think that it [disclosure] depends on so much like the culture of the school, culture of the department, the culture of your individual classrooms then also the broader culture of higher education. I just think navigating disclosure is very personal but it's also very political. And we, as a higher education and even as a society more broadly need to be creating a more flexible and understanding and supportive culture where disabled students, staff, and faculty can be as they are in these [university] spaces and have our differences, actually celebrated and valued rather than disregarded, ignored, belittled, and completely rejected. (Dr. Cameron, Interview)

In the final chapter, an overview of the study will be discussed, summary and discussion of results, the futurity of educational practice and research, and the significance of social justice throughout the study.
Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this social justice explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to explore the experiences of faculty with \textit{(invisible)} disabilities. More specifically, this inquiry aimed to understand the factors that contributed to disclosure and/or non-disclosure of an \textit{(invisible)} disability in the university environment. For some faculty, disclosure was not an option because of the needs they may require in connection to their disability, but for many faculty they were navigating various factors in determining if and when to disclose. In addition, the disclosure process can be ongoing and is rarely “one and done”. The decisions that faculty make around disclosure and/or non-disclosure of an \textit{(invisible)} disability are varied. Simultaneously, the processes and procedures that universities put into place can also have varied impact on the faculty experience around disclosure and/or non-disclosure. In this chapter, I provided an overview of the study, discussed the connection between the theoretical framework and findings, study limitations, implications for future practice, and future research suggestions as a call to action for a disability-centered futurity in the academy.

Summary of Study

This inquiry included faculty members that work at a 2-year or 4-year college or university within the United States and identified with having an \textit{(invisible)} disability(ies). The study aimed to answer the main research question regarding disabled faculty. The overarching question that guided this research study was: \textit{How do faculty negotiate and experience disclosure of an \textit{(invisible)} disability(ies) within a university environment?} In order to address this question, I collected qualitative data in three different phases. The first phase was a wide invitation for faculty with \textit{(invisible)} disability(ies) to participate through survey participation. Administrators at various colleges, universities, and organizations that are connected to faculty/academia and
conducted disability efforts in their work were recruited to outreach and share my study and survey
with potential listervs and social media outlets. There were 91 people that attempted to complete
the survey, however 69 respondents met the inclusion criteria for the study and completed the
qualitative survey in phase one. After data collection, I coded the survey data and used \textit{a priori}
coding and used those codes for phase two. After reviewing the survey data, I utilized stratified
sampling to select six post-survey participants to participate in follow-up semi-structured
interviews. The interviews served as phase two and the second data point of the study. The semi-
structured interview lasted 60-90 minutes, with each participant. Through a collective case study
approach, each of the six faculty members interview data was analyzed first utilizing the \textit{a priori}
codes from the survey data as a starting place while (looking) for any new patterns and themes to
emerge. Lastly, the final phase of the study was completing a document analysis review of 51
college and university websites. The purpose of the document analysis was to examine the
websites and review information or lack of information offered regarding (invisible) disabilities.

There were six themes that emerged from the qualitative survey results: (a) positive
representation, (b) classroom disclosure, (c) necessity for accommodations, (d) negativity around
disability disclosure, (e) perceived faculty capabilities, and (f) varying levels of disclosure within
the university environment. Additionally, there were three themes that emerged from the semi-
structured interviews: (a) intersections of faculty identities, (b) negotiations around disability
identity, and (c) the revelations from the pandemic. Lastly, there were four themes that emerged
from the document analysis: (a) complexity of website navigation, (b) absence of (invisible)
disability language, (c) resources focused primarily on faculty supporting students with
disabilities, and (d) difficulty finding accommodation processes. In the next section, I will
discuss how these findings connected to my theoretical framework.
Application to Theoretical Framework to Findings

The conceptual framework and transformative worldview were foundational to understanding the purpose, direction, and underpinnings of this inquiry. To (visually) communicate the framework of this study the Figure 4 diagram, illustrates three foundational elements: (a) Transformation & Social Justice, (b) Critical Disability Theory, and (c) Crip Theory. In the next section, I will describe further how I utilized my theoretical framework and how I applied it to the findings.
Figure 4

*Conceptual and Theoretical Framework*

Note. Transformative Paradigm and Theoretical Framework Underpinnings.

The image above illustrates three circles. The smallest circle entitled Crip Theory is inside of and overlapping with a slightly larger circle entitled Critical Disability Theory, and the last largest circle overlapping with all three circles is entitled Transformation and Social Justice.

**Crip Theory**

Crip Theory was the smaller circle in the theoretical framework diagram. McRuer (2006) introduced Crip Theory to acknowledge the connection and relationship between queer and disabled identities. McRuer’s aim was to reject a prioritization of *(normative)* and narrow
conceptualizations and realities of sexuality and disability. Operating from an aligned framework, throughout this study I utilized a Crip Theory perspective recognizing and acknowledging the linkages that may exist for trans and queer disabled faculty around negotiating disclosure and/or non-disclosure of an (invisible) disability. By using this theory, I was aware that coming out as disabled may have similarities to coming out as queer. Samuels (2003) work made connections around sexuality and disability and the coming out process, the conundrum of not being “enough” in one’s identity and expression, and overall coming out/disclosure negotiations. In this study, I hypothesized that the conundrums and negotiations of disclosure would show up in the research findings. However, the relationship between sexuality and disability did not come up in my research findings. While Dr. Cameron did discuss being read and/or assumed to not be bisexual because of being femme, that was the only connections even though there was a significant and representative queer population that was a part of the study. Despite the findings not connecting with this theory, as a researcher throughout the inquiry, I operated from a space that acknowledged the complexity and range of gender identity, sexuality, and disability identities and provided space for those identities and experiences to exist freely and fluidly.

**Critical Disability Theory**

Critical Disability Theory was the middle slightly larger circle in the theoretical framework diagram. My use of a Critical Disability Theory (CDT) and Critical Disability Studies (CDS) framework was embedded throughout the study. By utilizing these frameworks, I operated from an understanding that the experiences, identities, and discourse around disabilities is often social and political. Often utilizing a CDS framework also means building on the social model of disability, acknowledging the social structures that create barriers for disabled people,
and rejecting a medical model and/or individualistic approach to disability justice. My application of a CDT framework was to center and prioritize the agency of my participants to describe their own relationship to their (invisible) disability(ies) identity while simultaneously recognizing the systemic and structural social and political factors that impact disabled people. For example, throughout this dissertation, the complexity of language has been explored and has continued to evolve. Some of my participants had varying degrees of relationships and connections to their identities. For example, some referred to conditions as “diseases” while others (talked) about how their disability was integral to their identity personally and their work professionally. My position as the researcher was to (listen) to my participants and acknowledge the complexity of disability, which can be shaped by a myriad of factors such as: culture, experiences, context, time, environment, and disability type. My sentiment was to acknowledge that not everyone will have a monolithic experience and/or relationship to their disability(ies).

**Transformative Worldview**

Lastly, I framed this entire study using a transformative worldview. Mertens (2007) offered, “Important ways of gathering insights under the transformative paradigm include methods of involving community members in the initial discussions of the research focus” (p. 213). Through utilizing and applying this perspective, led to my decisions of developing a qualitatively focused survey and conducting semi-structured interviews. By centering a qualitative approach to this study, there was the opportunity to better understand the experiences of faculty with disabilities, as “in a transformative paradigm, the issues of understanding the culture and building trust are paramount” (Mertens, 2007, p. 218). In addition, social justice, equity, and humanity is core to a transformative worldview, which directly aligns with my framework and I operated from throughout this study.
In the largest circle in my theoretical framework diagram was Transformation and Social Justice. I chose the language transformation because it directly implies action and underscores a call to action and futurity of disability-justice. Throughout this study, faculty with disabilities were at the core and prioritized at each phase of the research process. Centering access, equity, and justice was foundational to this study. Additionally, the intentionality of using a social justice mixed methods approach enhanced the robustness of the study. As a researcher, it was critical for me to establish a positive rapport and connection in the research process with my participants. (Listening) and centering disabled faculty experiences was essential to my transformative and socially-just framework. In order to understand the results and make meaning of the findings that emerged my use of transformative perspective was central to my understanding of the lived experiences of “culturally complex communities” (Mertens, 2007, p. 224). In the next section, the major takeaways from the results of this study are discussed further. These takeaways underscore the complexity and significance of this study and the future of disability-centered research.

Summary and Discussion of Results

The study results were robust and offered a myriad of considerations and takeaways for the future. There were three major takeaways at the conclusion of this study. While these outcomes can be (viewed) as negative they are a reality of the lived experiences of the faculty that participated in this study. Also, the foundation of this study was to spotlight disability identities that are often in the shadows and highlight the is significance to these realities. As Kafer (2013) offered, imagining a disability future is not separate from the realities of marginalization that exist in the present. Kafer’s sentiments are a reminder that the future can
influence how we address the inequities in the present. Perhaps from this framework, liberation becomes more tangible and realized. Schalk (2018) also discussed disability futures by stating:

Black women writers of speculative fiction as well as other writers of color, women writers, and disabled writers often use this genre to explore how the diverse bodies oppressed people value, desire, and inhabit might continue to exist in future worlds, even as hegemonic forces attempt to literally write us out of these futures. (p. 109)

Schalk defined speculative fiction as ignoring the “rules of reality” in creative writing. Schalk explained “rules of reality” further by stating, “I mean culturally and historically specific social narratives of the possibilities and meanings of bodyminds, time, space, and technology, as well as our constructed notions of what constitutes a “real” disability, gender, race and so on” (p. 17).

Through both Kafer (2013) and Schalk’s (2018) perspectives I am afforded the space and freedom to envision a disability future and a call to action where the “rules do not apply”.

Utilizing this framing as a foundation for understanding and reimagining for the future, in the next section I will introduce the first takeaway.

**Prevalence of Stigma within the Academy**

For the survey findings, the major takeaway was the pervasive prevalence of stigma in the academy related to disabilities. In the survey results and interview results, faculty shared a variety of ways in which marginalization, oppression, and barriers exist in higher education for disabled faculty. One of the ways in which that manifested was the juxtaposition and conundrum of being expected to be (able-bodied) and (able-minded) because of the very nature of faculty roles and expectations. Stigma of disability within the academy is significant and often connected to the perceived or assumed (ability) and capability of the faculty member. Burke (2021) acknowledged this reality and noted:
Faculty members with disabilities still say academe can be a difficult and unwelcoming place. For one, there can be a sense of stigma about disability. Professors say regardless of their quality of work, there can be a general perception that candidates with disabilities will produce worse scholarship or be a cost or burden to a department. (para 3-4)

In order to create a university environment where disclosure is encouraged and supported, there is a critical need to develop sustainable strategies that address stigma within the academy. However, this task is no small feat given the historical and systemic ways that disability oppression has been threaded throughout history and society. However, given that many universities mission statements, values, and strategic plans seem to prioritize diversity and inclusion as a priority, then the stigma within the campus climate must be confronted.

An indirect way that stigma showed up was some faculty’s decision to disclose in their classrooms because of the lack of representation and (invisibility) of (invisible) disabilities both physically and theoretically in the academy. Campus environments that are committed to having more (visible) representation of disability not because of exploitation or tokenization, but because of an investment and commitment to the diversity of faculty existence perhaps demonstrate that commitment in hiring, retention, and sustainability of disabled faculty in the academy. As this research inquiry has exposed, faculty are already navigating a variety of barriers as it relates to disabilities in higher education and faculty life in general. I imagine universities dedicated to recruiting disabled faculty and building a campus environment that welcomes all bodyminds, which may cultivate an environment where faculty disclose because of disability pride rather than disclosing because of the lack of representation.

Lastly, the indirect and direct messages that faculty received around non-disclosure until after the tenure process was complete was a major takeaway from this study. For many faculty
who chose non-disclosure a significant consideration was the negative perceptions and/or interactions with administrative offices on campus. The decision of non-disclosure was connected to fear, experiences of stigma, possibility of job loss, lack of training and understanding, and the overwhelming sense of having to “prove” their disability(ies). As a result, faculty employment level/status and attaining tenure made a major difference for faculty in terms of deciding to disclose and feeling a degree of protection in their roles. The overwhelming conclusion from the survey and interview data was that disclosure was too risky prior to attaining tenure. This does not mean that some faculty did not disclose prior to tenure or that their access needs did not necessitate disclosure. The need to address disability stigma in the academy is critical because faculty should not have to rely on, wait, or hope that the fullness of their being and bodyminds will be accepted post-tenure or have positions that are tenure-track.

**Ongoing Complexity of Navigating (Invisible) Disabilities**

For the interview findings, the major takeaway was how complex it is for faculty to navigate their disabilities within the academy. Also, the navigation had varying levels for faculty depending on their identities and experiences. For example, for some faculty it was also navigating their racial identity and the perceptions of not being perceived as a person of color because of being identified/assumed to be white. For another faculty member, it was the added experiences of being a black faculty member and the lack of representation of other colleagues who (look) like them in the academy. For some faculty, the intersections of their gender identity and disability identity complicated the complexity of their faculty experience around disclosure.

Another example that underscored the complexity of disabilities was the (unspoken) practices and institutional barriers and polices that supported an environment where faculty needed to prove that they had a “real” disability and was that were not faking. Stigma can be
very powerful and can impact people in a variety of ways. As it relates to disabilities, there are a multitude of ways that stigma permeates society that can have a direct influence and impact around disclosure. One potential and detrimental ramification of constantly having to prove a disability and the pervasiveness of stigma is it manifesting into internalized oppression and further supporting non-disclosure. The onus, burden, and expectations of proving a disability should not be displaced on to disabled faculty and being believed when and if they disclose their disability(ies) is an important component to decreasing and eliminating stigma.

Lastly, the intellect and knowledge inherently connected to faculty positions further complicated how faculty navigated the “superhuman” expectations of faculty. The expectations to produce, adhere to rigid timelines, and ultimately function as (able-bodied) and/or (able-minded) does not leave space and/or a margin for “error” for faculty to fall outside of those strict binaries. The rigidity and focus on and sustainability of (normativity) does not provide safer spaces for disability disclosure. If the (spoken) and (unspoken) practice is to wait until after tenure to disclose a disability(ies), that can create additional stress and pressure for faculty pre-tenure and during the tenure process as well as added layers and barriers for the non-tenured faculty members.

**Significance of Clear, Transparent, and Accessible Websites**

The takeaway from the document analysis was the importance of having a website that is easy to navigate in terms of user friendliness and movement throughout the website. Also, the (ability) to find information through an A-Z tab and/or departments listing makes navigation clearer and more accessible for disabled faculty or all visitors to find resources, disclosure processes, and accommodation resources.
Another outcome was the importance of sharing more information about disabilities in
general and more specifically (invisible) disabilities on websites. Many of the college and
university websites failed to even mention disabilities on their webpages. The elimination of this
information can be difficult for disabled faculty and all visitors that are searching for information
and resources. The experiences of faculty with varying disabilities can be unique and not
universal which requires flexibility, care, and consideration for each faculty members
experiences and needs. However, in addition to the lack of information on university websites it
was also clear throughout the surveys and interviews that many faculty did not know their
accommodation processes and/or disclosure processes and that the universities approach was
more individually focused. While the individual access needs of faculty and acknowledgment of
the complexity of different bodyminds is significant that does not simultaneously mean that
university administration cannot invest in developing clear and transparent processes that are
published on their websites. This approach can proactively communicate to disabled faculty a
demonstrated commitment to disabilities and equity in access across varying faculty levels.

Limitations of the Study

Despite efforts to account for limitations in this study, there are opportunities to address
those limitations as a way to consider possibilities for future research. In this section, I will
describe the limitations in methodology, analysis, and generalizability. The limitations offered
will provide context for considerations for future educational research.

Limitations in Methodology

While the design of the study was carefully selected there were some limitations to the
methodology. For the outreach and call to participate in the study, I made the intentional decision
to identify colleges, universities, and organizations that were considered disability-friendly
and/or had Disability Studies types of programs. A limitation to that decision may have been if the colleges, universities, and organizations were already identified as disability-friendly, perhaps that may have shifted the experiences of the faculty at those institutions (if they chose to participate in the study). An additional limitation relates to the choice of using a survey for Phase I of my data collection. While the survey was used to reach a wider audience, provide an additional layer of anonymity around disability disclosure, and support the reality that disclosure for many people with (invisible) disabilities can be complicated, the survey did not provide opportunities for engagement. Foundational to social justice, equity, and solidarity work is centering the (voices) of the community. A survey could be (viewed) as limiting because there is no space for follow-up and deeper engagement. Of the 69 participants that completed the survey, 42 participants volunteered for a follow-up interview which (speaks) to the need for further research and opportunity for further discussion on this topic.

For the semi-structured interviews, a limitation was only completing one 60-90 minute interview. Disclosure of a marginalized identity(ies) can be significant for a person and 60-90 minutes does not provide the time to establish deeper rapport and trust. Perhaps a phenomenological study with multiple interviews would have offered more opportunities for connection and flexibility with time to lessen the rigidity of (normative) research practices and allow more freedom for varying bodyminds to participate. The restrictions of only one interview for 60-90 minutes could be constricting for faculty that have varying access needs.

A limitation to the document analysis was the fluidity and possibility for website images, data, and content to change quickly. While the document analysis was meant to serve as a guide and/or mini-pilot, information that I found and reviewed on the websites in November/December may be significantly different at a later time.
Limitations in Analysis

There were intentional choices made in the analysis of the research findings. However, one limitation in the analysis may have been the decision to use *a priori* coding when analyzing the semi-structured interview results. The use of *a priori* coding served to (look) for codes that aligned from the survey and interview and to determine what additional codes emerged. However, if I did not use *a priori* coding potentially I may have generated different themes.

Limitations in Generalization

The experiences and identities of the faculty in the study were overlapping and expansive. An important part of this study was to place the agency on the person to self-determine and self-describe what (invisible) disability meant to them. Given the variation in how people identify with (invisible) disabilities, a limitation was that there was no way to generalize the experiences around disclosure across varying identities.

An additional limitation to this study was the lack of racial diversity of participants. Demographically, the most glaring absence in the study was the participation of people of color with (invisible) disabilities. Unfortunately, the experiences and perspectives of disabled people of color was not represented well in my study. Additionally, another limitation in terms of participation, was the low participation of adjunct faculty. As the study results revealed, disclosure pre-tenure and during the tenure process was not advised, therefore that could be an explanation of why the lower participation of adjunct faculty. Elevating the discussion related to (invisible) disabilities for adjunct and varying faculty levels around disclosure is important for future educational practice and research.

Finally, a limitation to the document analysis was that while the 51 colleges and universities for the document review provided a pilot process for future research it was not
generalizable data. The document analysis statistically was not a significant representation of colleges and universities within the United States. While the document analysis provided a broad overarching analysis, the intent and purpose of the review was not focused on quantity, however there is no way to generalize the data. Also, while the range and diversity of the colleges and universities reviewed provided benefits to the types of institutions included there was a lack of consistency across the colleges and universities such as: size and locations.

**Implications for Future Educational Practice**

The overwhelming response from disabled faculty and their interest in this study (speaks) to the significance of disclosure and the need to discuss the experiences of faculty with (invisible) disabilities. For the future of educational practice, there is a necessity to enhance and spotlight the identities and experiences of disabled faculty. The reason why I chose a social justice design for this study was because an important component of this design was including a call to action. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) shared, “An added factor of this [Social Justice] design is to bring about change, so the studies often end with specific “calls” for reforming society” (p. 558). As a call to action, I offer implications and recommendations for future educational practice.

After completing the document analysis, it was clear that most universities failed to acknowledge disabilities on their websites, which placed the onus on the employee to disclose in order to figure out accommodation and/or disclosure processes at the university. One recommendation is for universities to provide information on their websites about disabilities as a way to demonstrate their commitment and investment in the experiences with people with disabilities. By the information on university websites remaining updated and accessible can also communicate to faculty and all website visitors that disabilities are not an afterthought. Also,
transparent procedures and resources allows faculty to have clear and transparent information to determine their choices around disability disclosure.

Additionally, while each disabled faculty members needs and experiences are different, investing in a university centralized process, budget, and system could eliminate a siloed approach. This recommendation highlights the need for dedicated funding to support disabled faculty that require a variety of services, technologies, adjustments, and accommodations to be successful in their roles. The potential benefit to a system approach could be to have more transparency and clarity about disclosure, where to seek accommodations, and access needs. Also, streamlining the process may eliminate the concern where perhaps some faculty disabilities and accommodations are being affirmed while other faculty may be facing departmental or supervisor barriers. Building sustainable disability-centered practices may also address the concerns around having to prove a disability identity as well as confront other equities that exist for faculty with multiple marginalized identities.

Another recommendation is that more transparency is needed around accommodation processes and disclosure processes for all disabled faculty. All universities should have designated staff for working with disabled faculty and the creation of a sustainable system that streamlines processes. The role of the staff would be to support faculty with disabilities as well as elevating the campus climate around disabilities. For example, the role of the staff would be available for disabled faculty at various stages such as: recruitment, hiring processes, within colleges/departments, through the ADA office, and maintaining accessibility and accurate information on websites. Also, the designated staff would be responsible for trainings on campus centering disability-justice and university climate. The goal would be to create and sustain a university environment where resources and trainings are for all employees to care about full
access and disability-justice. Perhaps strengthening the culture could diminish and ultimately eliminate the tensions and barriers related to disability disclosure. Also, the trainings would be aimed to reduce and reject stigma in the academy. Additionally, the designated staff would manage centralized funding to support the access needs of disabled faculty (Fuecker & Harbour, 2011; Smith & Andrews, 2015). The establishment of sustainable funding places the onus on the university to support various needs that faculty with disabilities have versus having to prove and plead for resources and services. As I reflect on my own choice in language, perhaps shifting away from “needs” and reestablishing and affirming that access is also about equitable rights. This shift in language, ideology, and framework is perhaps a future educational practice that is necessary within the academy.

An additional recommendation focuses on the need for increased advocacy and efforts in university hiring processes to ensure that disabled faculty are recruited, welcomed, and sustained at the university. In the study, many faculty felt a need to disclose their disability in the classroom because of the lack of representation and wanting to show positive and destigmatized representation of disability. Taking on the role of “role model or mentor” is added work and labor for faculty members with disabilities (Burke, 2021). Perhaps if the hiring of more disabled faculty increased, the rationale of faculty disclosure may be more attributed to identity pride, joy, and social justice rather than an obligation to fill a gap. Also, many faculty chose non-disclosure because of fear and stigma. By increasing hiring efforts and creating a university community where disability is present and affirmed this can impact the burdens that faculty acquire due to ableist barriers in the academy.

Lastly, it is important for the university community and administration to be accountable and have a level of responsibility to ensure the creation of safer spaces for disclosure and
adaptability in shifting policies, practices, and procedures. Burke (2021) offered, “College and universities could also build out accessible infrastructure and acknowledge disability as an axis of diversity. Many people with disabilities see their status as something to be celebrated, not tolerated” (para. 25). Disabled faculty and employees more broadly must be central to and have a role in the creation of university polices, practices, and procedures that impact disabled people’s experiences.

My hope is that proactive shifts in university climate around disabilities have the possibility to impact stigma around disabilities, fears of disclosure, and ensure that disabilities are not forgotten, erased, and left on the margins within and outside of the classroom. von Schrader et al. (2014) highlighted that it is critical and necessary that employers understand the experiences, identities, and perceptions of people with disabilities first as they attempt to create and design strategies that support and encourage self-disclosure in the workplace.

**Implications of Future Educational Research**

For the future of educational research related to (invisible) disabilities, there are many unanswered questions and possibilities. Ferguson and Nusbaum (2012) articulated the significance of disabled people being critical to future research and being central to epistemological disability scholarship. Ferguson and Nusbaum’s position reaffirms and aligns with my framework as a researcher that people with disabilities are a critical and at the core of the future of disability research.

In addition, Mingus (2011) offered an approach that seems necessary in forming disability-centered research queries. Mingus coined “access intimacy” as a way to connect and describe their experiences as a disabled person. Mingus acknowledged that while access can come in many different forms and impact different types of people, for disabled people access is
critical. Mingus further stated that access intimacy was/is quite complicated to explain because it can manifest in many different ways. As Mingus noted, there is no “complete description” of access intimacy, but as a starting place it can be a deepened (ability) to be understood, a linkage and connectivity that centers disabled people, a fusion between people (disabled and/or non-disabled) where a person’s access needs are critical and void of ableism, an ability to freely articulate one’s needs, a validation of one’s disability identity/existence and humanity, which does not have to be explained or proved (Mingus, 2011).

Mingus’s access intimacy goes beyond simply understanding disability language, goes beyond the logistics (i.e. legal, accommodations etc.), it is a shared solidarity that affirms and validates disability experiences and strives to dismantle and reimagine the material realities of living and being a part of a world that is fundamentally inaccessible. While access intimacy may be difficult to describe or possibly imagine, at its core disabled people are (able) to be understood holistically. Access intimacy is deeply connected to collective access, as I understand it. Mingus (2010) offered the possibilities and challenges of disabled people or “crips and comrades” staying and moving together literally and figuratively in a collective way. Mingus contends with the ways in which society makes it difficult for people with varying disabilities to move collectively together. Mingus underscores that the crux of Creating Collective Access (CCA) is a collective understanding and feeling of the weights and burden of inaccessibility to mean for example, ramps, closeness of parking and so on while simultaneously meaning “isolation, shame, exclusion, disappointment, loneliness, anger, privilege, sadness, loss of community and disconnection” (para. 11). My interpretation of Mingus’s work is a mutual connectedness across and within identities that has the (ability) to be revolutionary, transformative, and liberatory for disabled people and non-disabled people.
Through this lens, I strongly encourage the continued need for disabled-centered research and researchers to continue to spotlight the experiences of disabled people. Furthermore, I offer considerations and implications of future educational research and there are four recommendations that I propose moving forward. The first recommendation is for researchers to establish clear practices, protocols, and strategies that incorporate disability-centered practices into the research process. Price and Kerschbaum (2016) discussed the significance of disability as methodology. Often in research, it can be assumed that the researcher is (able-bodied) and/or (able-minded), but the identities of the researcher are not separate from and may show up in the research process. Additionally, there is a necessity for the creation of space in academia for disabled researchers to be present and active.

Mertens (2007) argued:

Transformative mixed methods research does not necessarily serve the needs of those who have traditionally been excluded from positions of power in the research world, and therefore the potential to further human rights through a research agenda has not been fully realized. (p. 212)

The practices and procedures throughout research must have a social justice foundation while understanding the researcher must leave space for the fluidity of disability. The experience and connection of the researcher and participant is a significant part of the research process.

The second recommendation for future research is to focus on the intersection of sexuality, gender identity, race, disability, and disclosure. For my study, the faculty population was well represented with varying sexuality identities, however the overlap in queer and disability experience did not translate to the findings. The literature underscores potential alignment in the coming out process(es) and disclosure around sexuality and disability identities.
However, despite having a significant queer population in the study those experiences around disclosure did not come up in the survey and/or interview findings. Also, there was a low number of people of color, trans and non-binary people, and people that identified outside of the gender binary that participated in the study. In future research, I would suggest exploring race, gender identity, and sexuality further and the ways and which disability intersects to understand faculty with (invisible) disabilities.

The third recommendation is to (look) at the experiences around disability disclosure for specific groups: (a) graduate students, (b) non-tenured faculty, (c) staff, and (d) administrators. Throughout my review of the literature, I found some studies that focused on these populations, but in general there seemed to be a lack of representation as it relates to (invisible) disabilities. For graduate students, Burke (2021) offered the complexity of navigating graduate education for students with disabilities:

The pipeline to professorship can also be complicated when a person has a disability.

Graduate education often requires students to either take on debt or undergo years of low wages and stipends. Some disabilities can require expensive medical care or treatment.

Holding second jobs can take energy that people with disabilities don’t have. (para 11)

This example highlights the significance of understanding disabled graduate student’s experiences and the ways in which the university can understand and address those barriers for all students and more specifically students considering professorship path.

Another example, as previously mentioned, being a tenured faculty member seemed to have a major impact on faculty’s decision to disclose their disability. This raises many questions about the stress, pressure, and climate for faculty during the tenure process, for faculty that are non-tenured and at other employment levels, and for the experiences of faculty post-tenure.
Further research in this area is necessary to better understand the experiences of faculty at varying employment levels/status around disability disclosure and to establish institutional recommendations.

Lastly, the fourth recommendation is to study what impact disability disclosure from a faculty member has on disabled and non-disabled students in the classroom. In this study, faculty that disclosed their disability in the classroom shared their hopes and the possibilities of what their disclosure meant to students, but further research in this area could add to the literature. The opportunity to research disabled faculty classroom disclosure further could (look) at the impact it has on engagement levels of students, academic performance, classroom climate, and disclosure decisions of students with disabilities. Also, exploring the ways in which the pandemic has impacted disability disclosure would be an interesting connection to research the classroom experience further.

As I conclude with my final thoughts, I reflect on Mingus’s (2010) sentiments about the power of Creating Collective Access as a framework. Mingus described collective access as disabled people coming together to co-create movement spaces that are intersectional and leaves no one out. Mingus stated, “Interdependency is not a choice and that creating collective access was about being very clear that we wanted to shift the individualized and independent understanding of access and queer it and color it interdependent. This was about crip solidarity” (para. 2). My reaction to Mingus’s perspective, is a lived reality where collective access, solidarity, and liberation are central and foundational.

**Summary**

By using a transformative, Critical Disability Theory, and Crip Theory framework throughout this inquiry expanded the discussion around the experiences of faculty with
(invisible) disabilities. This was achieved through a robust literature review, developing an intentionally designed social justice mixed methods study, and conducting research that aimed to shine the spotlight on (invisible) disability identities. Also, a theme woven throughout this dissertation, has been the desire to highlight the complexity of language. To close, I revert back to the pre-introduction chapter where I introduced the idea of the parenthesis being used in the dissertation as a disruption to ableist language. Erevelles et al. (2019) argued that one’s identity and disability exist in the world in the confides of the parenthetical. Perhaps placement within the parenthetical provides non-disabled people a level of “power” to keep disabled people, their identity, their being, and experiences (contained). However, for me, the juxtaposition of the parentheses is how it can be both constricting and unable to be ignored. The containment of ableism in the parenthetical does not negate its history in fact it acknowledges the past while simultaneously creating space for the futurity of disability future to bloom outside of its containment. The essence of the poem below envisions a disability future.

Unknown
by Diane R. Wiener

offering traces to
shadow palimpsests
you spotlight Disability futures
where only a few
want the brackets
slashes or capitalization
when ableism
becomes parenthetical
everyone can read italics
emboldened by disruption
as access lifts off pages
in ever-widening circles
Wiener’s (2022) original poem encapsulates the overarching purpose of this inquiry and my choices around language throughout this dissertation. As disability futures are imagined and realized this document will live on etched among the literature and now serves as a palimpsest.

In closing, as I envision and hope for the future, I am reminded of my conversations with the interview participants about lessons learned in the current pandemic and thoughts for the future. After reflection, I will end this dissertation with my response and thoughts for the future. I imagine a disability future that is no longer imagined. A future where the intersectional experiences of disabled people are celebrated, held with care, thoughtfulness, are sustained, and thriving. A future where the range of disability is acknowledged and affirmed and the beauty, pride, and joy of disabled lives is prepositioned at the core. A future where disabled people no longer have to prove their disability(ies) and/or provide evidence of their existence. A future where people can share freely without consequence the ways in which their bodyminds move through the world and are received with kindness and understanding. A future in which collective action and solidarity are central to community building and liberation. A future where access is no longer an afterthought but embedded in the fabric of everything everywhere. A future in which the traces of disability past are never forgotten, lost, or erased and the shadows of disability are a palimpsest that spotlights disability future.
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Aug 13, 2021 8:40:14 AM EDT

To: Tiffany Gray
Trans & Queer Advocacy, Literacy

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - IRB-FY2021-244 Exploring the Experiences around Disclosure for Faculty with Invisible Disabilities

Dear Tiffany Gray:

Thank you for your submitted application to the WCUPA Institutional Review Board. Since it was deemed expedited, it was required that two reviewers evaluated the submission. We have had the opportunity to review your application and have rendered the decision below for Exploring the Experiences around Disclosure for Faculty with Invisible Disabilities.

Decision: Approved

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Sincerely,
WCUPA Institutional Review Board

IORG#: IORG0004242
IRB#: IRB00005030
FWA#: FWA00014155
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form
Project Title: Exploring the Experiences around Disclosure for Faculty with Invisible Disabilities
Investigator(s): Tiffany Gray
Project Overview: The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experiences of faculty with invisible disabilities and factors that contribute to disclosure and/or non-disclosure of a disability/ies. Participation in this research project (both the survey and the follow-up interview) are entirely voluntary and is being done by Tiffany Gray as part of her doctoral dissertation. If you would like to take part, West Chester University requires that you agree and sign this consent form. Your participation will take about 15-20 minutes to take an online survey. After survey completion, participants will have the option to express interest and volunteer to participate in a 60-90 minute follow-up interview. Participants can stop participation and withdraw consent to participate as a research participant. If you withdraw/complete part of the survey and not all of the survey, then your responses will not be viewed or included in the data set. If you are selected to participate in a 60-90 minute follow-up interview, you can stop/withdraw participation at any time. You may contact Tiffany Gray with any questions to help you understand this study further. If you choose to be a part of this study, you have the right to change your mind and stop being a part of the study at any time.

1. What is the purpose of this study?
   - This project aims to learn more about the experiences of faculty with invisible disabilities and understand factors that contribute to disclosure and/or non-disclosure of a disability/ies within a United States college/university environment.

2. If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to do the following:
   - Take a 15-20 minute online survey
   - After survey completion, option to express interest in a 60-90 minute follow-up interview. *If not interested in an interview, participation is complete after the online survey.
   - If interested in being considered for a follow-up interview, you will be asked to share how you would like to be referred to (name, pseudonym, vague descriptor etc.) and to provide any contact email address (anonymous, personal, work, etc.).
   - If selected, participants that volunteered for a follow-up interview will be contacted via the email they provided, and the interview will take about 60-90 minutes. The interview will preferably take place virtually utilizing video communication technology, however a phone interview can also be discussed as a secondary option during the initial email communication to set up the interview.

3. Are there any experimental medical treatments?
   - No

4. Is there any risk to me?
   - Possible risks or sources of discomfort include: There is a minimal risk of discomfort with questions about disability status and/or mental health conditions.
If you become upset and wish to speak with someone, you may speak with Tiffany Gray or Dr. Heather Schugar.

If you experience discomfort, you have the right to withdraw at any time.

5. **Is there any benefit to me?**
   - Benefits to you may include: There are no direct benefits to the participant.
   - Other benefits may include: Offering suggestions and recommendations to raise awareness around the experiences of faculty with invisible disabilities, factors that contribute to disclosure and/or non-disclosure of invisible disability/ies and recommendations to enhance campus climate around faculty with disabilities experiences.

6. **How will you protect my privacy?**
   - Survey responses are collected using an anonymous survey system, Qualtrics. After you submit the survey to the secure server, a message thanking you for taking the survey will be displayed in your browser window.
   - After survey completion, participants will have the option to volunteer for a 60-90 minute follow-up interview.
   - If selected and chosen to continue to the follow-up interview it will be preferably conducted virtually utilizing video communication technology and will be audio and video recorded. If the interview is conducted via phone, it will be audio recorded.
   - Participants can choose to have their camera on or off during the virtual interview and can add/change their display name/pronouns to meet their needs for the interview.
   - How you would like to be referred to in any write up of these findings (name, pseudonym, vague descriptor etc.) will be self-selected or provided to interview participants.
   - All data will be encrypted and stored securely. All your information and interview responses will be kept confidential and the information collected will be used only for this project and will not be used in any reports.
   - Your records will be private. Only Tiffany Gray, Dr. Heather Schugar, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will have access to your responses.
   - Records will be stored:
     - Encrypted File
     - Password Protected File/Computer
   - All responses will also be coded. No identifying information will be associated with any part of the project or used for the dissertation or any corresponding publications/presentations.
   - Records will be destroyed three years after study completion.

7. **Do I get paid to take part in this study?**
   - No

8. **Who do I contact in case of research related injury?**
   - For any questions with this study, contact:
     - **Primary Investigator**: Tiffany Gray at 610-436-2090 or tgray@wcupa.edu
     - **Faculty Sponsor**: Dr. Heather Schugar at 610-738-0507 or hschugar@wcupa.edu

9. **What will you do with my Identifiable Information?**
   - Your information will not be used or distributed for future research studies.
For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) at 610-436-3557.

By clicking the “I consent to participate in this study” button below, you agree that:

- The purpose of the study has been thoroughly explained to you:
- You are at least 18 years of age:
- Understand that you can stop/withdraw participation at any time. If you withdraw/complete part of the survey and not all of the survey, then your responses will not be viewed or included in the data set.
- Understand that if you are selected to participate in a 60-90 minute follow-up interview, you can stop/withdraw participation at any time.
- And you consent to participation in this study
Appendix C: Recruitment Script to University and Organizational Leadership

RECRUITMENT MATERIAL: Draft Survey Invitation Email to Organizations and Colleges/Universities Contact for their Listservs and Social Media Accounts

To: Relevant Organization and College/University Contact
Subject: Study participation requested: Do you identify as a faculty member with an invisible disability?

Hello (Insert Organization or University Contact)

My name is Tiffany Gray and I am a doctoral student at West Chester University. I am seeking your assistance and support in a research study that I am conducting titled: Exploring the Experiences around Disclosure for Faculty with Invisible Disabilities. This project aims to learn more about the experiences of faculty with invisible disabilities and understand factors that contribute to disclosure or non-disclosure of disability/ies. If you are able to distribute to your listservs and social media accounts that would be extremely helpful to this study.

The text below is the study information to easily share across platforms:

Do you identify as a faculty member with an invisible disability? Participants are being sought to participate in a research study aimed to learn more about the experiences of faculty with invisible disabilities and understand factors that contribute to disclosure or non-disclosure of a disability/ies. Participants will have the opportunity to complete an online survey and volunteer for a follow-up interview upon survey completion.

The survey is completed online and participants are encouraged to complete the survey in one sitting. The survey time varies per participant but typically takes about 15-20 minutes to complete.

If selected to participate in a follow-up interview, participants will be contacted separately. ** If not interested in an interview, participation is complete after the online survey.

If interested, please click on the following link to continue to the online survey (INSERT SURVEY LINK). If you know others who may be interested in this study, please feel free to forward and share this message.

Thank you for your time and support. For any questions about this study, contact:

Primary Investigator: Tiffany Gray
Doctoral Student at West Chester University

This study has been approved by the West Chester University Institutional Review Board, Protocol XXXX (will add protocol number upon official approval from the IRB).
Appendix D: Participant Survey Questions

Qualtrics Survey Intro:

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study.

Please note for the purposes of this study the term disability includes, but is not limited to: physical, cognitive, intellectual, developmental, and mental health conditions.

Invisible disability means that without self-disclosure the disability(ies) may not be known to others.

However, the framework of the researcher is to place agency on the participant to self-define and self-determine what disability means to them. Language, identities, and experiences are often multilayered, and it is my hope to offer a range of ways in which people self-identify.

Qualtrics Survey:

Inclusion/Qualifying Questions

1. Do you identify as a faculty member? [y/n]
   a. If YES move to question 2 if NO-Thank you for completing this survey

2. Do you identify as a faculty member with an invisible disability? [y/n]
   a. If YES move to next question if NO-Thank you for completing this survey

3. Do you work at a College/University within the United States?
   a. If YES move to next question if NO-Thank you for completing this survey

4. What college/university type best describes where you work.
   a. 2 Year College or University
   b. 4 Year Public College or University
   c. 4 Year Private College or University
   d. Not Listed (open field)

5. What state/location is your college/university located? Please select from the list below:
   a. Alabama: AL
   b. Alaska: AK
   c. Arizona: AZ
   d. Arkansas: AR
   e. California: CA
   f. Colorado: CO
   g. Connecticut: CT
   h. Delaware: DE
   i. District of Columbia: DC
j. Florida: FL  
k. Georgia: GA  
l. Hawaii: HI  
m. Idaho: ID  
n. Illinois: IL  
o. Indiana: IN  
p. Iowa: IA  
q. Kansas: KS  
r. Kentucky: KY  
s. Louisiana: LA  
t. Maine: ME  
u. Maryland: MD  
v. Massachusetts: MA  
w. Michigan: MI  
x. Minnesota: MN  
y. Mississippi: MS  
z. Missouri: MO  
aa. Montana: MT  
bb. Nebraska: NE  
c. Nevada: NV  
dd. New Hampshire: NH  
ee. New Jersey: NJ  
ff. New Mexico: NM  
gg. New York: NY  
hh. North Carolina: NC  
ii. North Dakota: ND  
jj. Ohio: OH  
kk. Oklahoma: OK  
ll. Oregon: OR  
mm. Pennsylvania: PA  
nn. Rhode Island: RI  
oo. South Carolina: SC  
pp. South Dakota: SD  
qq. Tennessee: TN  
rr. Texas: TX  
ss. Utah: UT  
tt. Vermont: VT  
uu. Virginia: VA  
vv. Washington: WA  
ww. West Virginia: WV  
xx. Wisconsin: WI  
yy. Wyoming: WY  
z. Not Listed (open ended)  

6. What is the Size of your Institution?  
a. 1-500
b. 501-1000
  c. 1001-5000
  d. 5001-10,000
  e. 10,001-15,000
  f. 15,001-20,000
  g. 20,001 and larger

7. How would you identify your Faculty Employment Status/Level? Please select from the list below
   a. Adjunct
   b. Lecturer
   c. Instructor
   d. Assistant Professor
   e. Associate Professor
   f. Full Professor
   g. Not Listed (open field)

8. How would you identify your General Area of Discipline?
   a. Arts and Humanities
   b. Business
   c. Education
   d. Engineering and Computer Science
   e. Health Sciences
   f. Law
   g. Music
   h. Sciences and Mathematics
   i. Not Listed (open field)

9. What is the name of the academic department of your primary appointment? Open Ended and Optional

10. How long have you been a faculty member at your current college or university?
    a. Less than 1 year
    b. 2-4 years
    c. 5-7 years
    d. 8-10 years
    e. 10 years or more

**Defining Disability**

1. How do you define invisible disability? (open-ended)

2. How would you categorize your disability/ies? Please select all that apply:
   a. Physical
   b. Cognitive
   c. Developmental
d. Intellectual
e. Mental Health Condition
f. Prefer not to say
  g. Prefer to self-describe

3. Who have you chosen to disclose to within the College/University environment? Please select all that apply
  a. Supervisor
  b. Colleagues
  c. Students
  d. Administrative Department (Title IX Office, Disability Services Office…)
  e. Human Resources
  f. I have not disclosed to anyone my invisible disability
  g. Others outside of the College or University Environment
  h. Not Listed (open field)

4. Please feel free to elaborate on why you have chosen the above disclosure people/locations (open-ended)

5. Who have you chosen not to disclose to within the University environment? Please select all that apply
  a. Supervisor
  b. Colleagues
  c. Students
  d. Administrative Department (Title IX Office, Disability Services Office…)
  e. Human Resources
  f. I have not chosen non-disclosure
  g. Not Listed (open field)

6. Please feel free to elaborate on why you did not choose the above disclosure people/locations (open ended)

7. What work related factors have contributed to your decision to disclose your invisible disability/disabilities? Please select all that apply:
  a. Supportive Supervisor
  b. Supportive College or Department
  c. Supportive Colleagues
  d. Supportive Disciplinary Culture
  e. Affirming Campus Climate
  f. Transparent accommodations process
  g. Congruent or consistent practices and policies
  h. Accessible Campus
  i. Not Listed (open field)
  j. Not Applicable
8. What work related factors have contributed to your decision to not disclose your invisible disability/disabilities? Please select all that apply:
   a. Unsupportive Supervisor
   b. Unsupportive College or Department
   c. Unsupportive Colleagues
   d. Unsupportive Disciplinary Culture
   e. Non-affirming Campus Climate
   f. Lack of Transparency regarding accommodations process
   g. Incongruent or inconsistent practices and policies
   h. Inaccessible Campus
   i. Not Listed (open field)
   j. Not Applicable

9. Which of the following modes of disclosure have you used at your college or university? Please select all that apply:
   a. Email
   b. One on One
   c. Through expression (types of clothing, artifacts in office etc)
   d. Membership in organizations
   e. Through advocacy
   f. Not Listed (open field)
   g. Not Applicable

10. Which of the following environments or situations have you disclosed your disability at your college or university?
    a. When accommodations related
    b. When serving on committees
    c. Within the classroom
    d. Membership in organizations
    e. Through advocacy
    f. Not Listed (open field)
    g. Not Applicable

11. How do you determine modes and methods of disclosure? (open ended)

12. What effect, if any, do you think your decision to disclose or not disclose your disability may have on your students with disabilities?

13. What effect, if any, did your students have on your decision to disclose or not disclose your disability?

Demographics

14. How would you define your racial identity/ethnicity? Please select all that apply:
   a. African American or Black
   b. American Indian/Alaskan Native/Indigenous
c. Asian

d. Hispanic or Latina/Latino/Latinx

e. Multiracial

f. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

g. White

h. Prefer not to say

i. A racial/ethnic identity not listed

j. Prefer to self-describe (open field)

15. How would you define your gender identity? Please select all that apply:

a. Agender

b. Cisgender

c. Genderfluid

d. Genderqueer

e. Man

f. Non-Binary

g. Transgender

h. Trans Man

i. Trans Woman

j. Two-Spirit

k. Unsure

l. Woman

m. Prefer not to say

n. A gender identity not listed

o. Prefer to self-describe (open field)

16. How would you define your sexuality? Please select all that apply:

a. Asexual

b. Bisexual

c. Demisexual

d. Gay

e. Fluid

f. Lesbian

g. Pansexual

h. Queer

i. Questioning

j. Straight/Heterosexual

k. Prefer not to say

l. A sexuality not listed

m. Prefer to self-describe (open field)

17. Please select your age range below:

a. 21-30

b. 31-40

c. 41-50

d. 51-60
e. 61-70
f. Not Listed (Open field)

18. Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up interview? If selected the interview would take no more than 60-90 minutes. [y/n]
   a. If YES please enter how you would like to be referred to (name, pseudonym, vague descriptor etc.) and any contact email address (anonymous, personal, work, etc.) where participant can be contacted to schedule.
   b. If NO then thank you for participating in this survey
Appendix E: Qualitative Interview Research Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol for Semi-Structured Interview:

1. Introduction of Researcher (name, doctoral student and pronouns)
2. Thank Participant for agreeing to participate in the interview
3. Invite participant to share pronouns if they wish to disclose
4. Review overview of the study. Also, share that throughout the interview language such as faculty with disabilities and/or disabled faculty will be utilized. This is meant to acknowledge and affirm the varying language that people use. Please feel free to communicate with me your preferred language.
5. Share with the participant that they can choose to have their camera on or off, change their display name to meet their needs for the interview.
6. Remind participant that the interview will be recorded and begin recording
7. Share my research environment to assist with comfort of the participant
8. Share that I may be taking observational notes, but that I am still fully engaged and paying attention
9. Share that the participant can ask to take a break or pause if need be.
10. Overview of how long the interview will last.
11. Scope of the interview and number of questions that will be asked
12. Participant has the right to not answer a question, ask for clarification or express at any time if they want to remove themselves from the study
13. Do you have any questions before we begin?
14. Conduct interview
15. Thank participant for participating and share with the participant that a transcription of the interview will be sent to them for member checking (participant accuracy) to assist with trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What made you interested in participating in this interview?
2. Can you share your career path to becoming a faculty member?
3. How would you broadly describe your campus climate for faculty with disabilities?
4. How would you describe the campus climate for your specific disability (ies)?
5. What is the most important factor/s that supports disability disclosure?
6. What is the most important factor/s that is a barrier to disability disclosure?
7. What role does your faculty employment status (adjunct, tenure etc) play in your disclosure decisions?
8. What role does area of discipline/college play in your disclosure decisions?

9. What specific role does social identities (such as racial identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.) have in your decision to self-disclose or not disclose having an invisible disability?

10. Why or how does the campus environmental factors contribute to your decision to continue working at your college or university?

11. If you or someone with an invisible disability wanted to disclose to the college or university how would they?

12. Are there any questions you have or any final information you would like to share?
Appendix F: Document Analysis Results

Table 10

Document Analysis Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>College Type</th>
<th>Website Navigation</th>
<th>(Invisible) Disability</th>
<th>Resources Working with Disabled Faculty</th>
<th>Accommodation Process</th>
<th>ADA Info</th>
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*Note*: Table overview of data collected from 51 universities included in the document analysis.

* Represent only one item emerged in document review (either outdated and/or indirect resource or service).