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DisCrit solidarity as curriculum studies and transformative praxis

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ABSTRACT

Classroom and behaviour management are often touted as ways to build relationships in the classroom. Yet conceptions of classroom and behaviour management often focus on controlling or eradicating student behaviour; these carceral logics limit the ways educators can build classroom relationships focused on love and respect. Moreover, classroom and behaviour management are often rooted in punitive, top–down approaches wherein practices are dictated to teachers and classroom contexts and the students within are ignored. To disrupt these carceral and technocratic logics imbued within classroom and behaviour management, we argue that integrating disability studies exceeds constraining and quarantining boundaries of curriculum, shifting to meta-curriculum. Using Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit), we explicitly conceptualize relationships built in the classroom as a necessary part of critical curriculum studies. We then apply Disability Justice principles to curriculum studies to produce DisCrit Solidarity. Finally, we explore the four convictions of DisCrit Solidarity which can reorganize pedagogic spaces for liberation. This intersectional approach to relationships in the classroom rejects managing behaviours, requires purposeful articulation and highlights resistance by educators and students, resulting in transformative praxis.

KEYWORDS

Critical theory; curriculum studies; socio-political conditions; disability studies

In an interview with Charles Johnson, the Sociology Department Chair and later the first black president at Fisk University, Mary McLeod Bethune (1940) recounted her memories about her first teacher, a Black woman: "The things that affected me most about Miss Wilson were her patience, and her tenderness and kindly way in which she handled us … We were not afraid of her. We could approach her at any time" (p. 14). Later in the interview, McLeod went on to describe her own relationships in school:

> My word was always accepted for (teacher & student) decisions – I don't know why. I think it was because I loved them all and would always try to conduct myself so they

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> would always love and respect me. I always felt that if we gave out love and respect, we would get it. I feel that today. (p. 15)

As a life-long educator, Bethune reflected what she experienced with her first teacher; classroom relationships with students rooted in love and respect.

Classroom and behaviour management are often touted as ways to build relationships in the classroom (Skiba, Ormiston, Martinez & Cummings, 2016). Yet conceptions of classroom and behaviour management often focus on controlling or eradicating student behaviour; these carceral logics limit the ways educators can build classroom relationships focused on love and respect (Migliarini & Annamma, 2018) that Bethune describes. These carceral logics are integrated with a technocratic view of education management broadly that insists that general principles can be applied to all situations to increase efficiency in the classroom (Mehta, 2013). When brought to a classroom and behaviour management discourse, these carceral and technocratic logics intertwine.

> "Classroom management" implies top down control–an end not a means . . . .It is wrong-headed to see conflicts solely as management issues to be dealt with by increasing school authority or resorting to punitive zero tolerance and draconian measures that alienate students and socialize them into unproductive futures and prison tracks. (Brantlinger & Danforth, 2013, p. 166)

Said differently, classroom and behaviour management are often rooted in punitive, top–down approaches wherein practices are dictated to teachers and classroom contexts and the students within are ignored. In order to disrupt these carceral and technocratic logics imbued within classroom and behaviour management, we argue that integrating disability studies exceeds constraining and quarantining boundaries of curriculum, shifting to meta-curriculum. Consequently, in this article, we theorize what epistemic space is ruptured when critical classroom relationships are centered through Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). Using DisCrit, we conceptualize critical classroom relationships *as the connections made among teachers and students when teachers recognize the disparate positions of power and oppression they occupy and navigate in pedagogic spaces*. These relationships (1) position teachers and students as part of a shared community and (2) situate students in relation to each other (Milner, 2005). We begin by exploring how, historically, carceral and technocratic logics surrounding the centrality of critical classroom relationships in curriculum studies[1] results in serious consequences (hooks, 1994). Using DisCrit, we then expand space for critical relationships to be leveraged in critical curriculum studies. Finally, we infuse principles of Disability Justice to produce DisCrit Solidarity. This transforms the ways the relationships between classroom community members are conceptualized and enacted in the classroom.

Curriculum is related to the politics of power, determining how educators' and students experience classroom relationships. A dearth of explicit acknowledgement of the importance of relationships within education has resulted in consequences for both educators and students. For example, educators report that the lack of authentic relationships with students is deeply connected to educators' emotional exhaustion (Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014). In fact, poor relationships with students are directly linked to

educator burnout, influencing some educators to leave education (Yoon, 2002). Educators consistently report a lack of classroom management skills to effectively build relationships with students (Chang, 2013). They recognize how curricular constraints impede relational approaches known to reduce student misbehaviour (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). In addition to power differentials between students and educators, educators are also targets of oppressive constellations (e.g. prescribed curricular requirements, reductive classroom management strategies, punitive school discipline) and are often penalized when they resist enforcing the oppressive practices of classroom and behaviour management.

Educators are not the only ones harmed by the lack of meaningful relationships in pedagogic spaces; multiply-marginalized students of colour[2] also experience consequences. When educators neglect or are unable to attend to relationships in classrooms, they are more likely to misread behaviours of multiply-marginalized students (e.g. Black, queer and gender non-conforming, disabled) as problematic and dangerous (Love, 2014). Multiply-marginalized children of colour, who have not been shown to act out more, are consistently disciplined at higher rates (CRDC, 2016). They are also more likely to experience school arrests and incarceration (Losen, Hodson, Ee, & Martinez, 2015). The lack of meaningful relationships in the classroom, which is partially due to a hyper-focus on controlling behaviour in the classroom (Janzen, 2019), is detrimental for both educators and students; it pushes educators out of classrooms and multiply-marginalized students of colour into prisons. We believe the lack of understanding of how racism and ableism are interdependent in curriculum studies (Connor & Gabel, 2013) limits the ways discursive practices of management can be rejected and how critical relationships can be conceptualized and created. To be clear, we are not claiming that the field of curriculum studies does not ever mention critical classroom relationships as important. In much of the curriculum studies literature, the need for quality relationships that mediate power differentials between teachers and students is implied (Apple, 2008; Greene, 2008), and some articles speak directly to the necessity of refusing managerial discourse and engaging critical relationships in the classroom (El-Sherif & Sinke, 2018; Navarro, 2018; Vaandering, 2014; Wang, 2016). What we are arguing is that the field would benefit from a DisCrit conceptualization wherein classroom relationships are rooted in understanding the ways racism and ableism are built into how educators interpret intelligence and behaviour and are central to curricular commitments.

Historically, classroom relationships had to be explored in terms of a *hidden curriculum*, one that is imbued with unstated norms and beliefs transmitted through the structures of schools (Anyon, 1981). Giroux and Penna (1979) noted,

> (I)t follows that equal weight must be given in any analysis of the hidden curriculum to the organizational structures that influence and govern teacher-student interactions within the classroom. For these suggest an ideological character that is no less compelling than curriculum content in the socialization process at work in the classroom encounter … .(p. 30)

Giroux and Penna argued that classroom relationships must be explicitly named and interrogated as a part of curriculum studies. Critical curriculum theorists have responded by finding "it necessary to interrupt the tendency for certain managerial

and custodial concerns" (Nxumalo, Vintimilla & Nelson, 2018, p. 436). We agree that unearthing the hidden curriculum of classroom social organization, interrupting those managerial concerns, and theorizing about those relationships exposes power dynamics. That is, when power dictates classroom relationships through discourse on management, students learn about hierarchies and their place within through the combined silence and action of educators. All children are under surveillance for misbehaviour and thus they are immediately placed in a hierarchy below their teachers (Janzen, 2019). Critical curriculum studies recognized that Black girls (Butler, 2018; Hill, 2018), Indigenous youth (Carroll & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2016), and other youth of colour (Navarro, 2018) were most likely to be impacted by these managerial concerns. Moreover, these and other critical curriculum scholars recognized the need for ontological visibilizing and centring of these youth. Consequently, the hidden curriculum of classroom interactions, which are predicated on relationships, came to be explicitly articulated within critical curriculum studies.

Yet the ways racism and ableism work in tandem to position specific bodies and minds as out of place, and therefore unwelcome in public spaces like classrooms (Collins, 2016), could be further theorized in critical curriculum studies given that multiply marginalized students are most likely to experience exclusionary discipline (CDRC, 2016). Further, managerial concerns of maintaining order are rooted in normative understandings of behaviour that are intrinsically ableist (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). When those evaluative notions of appropriate behaviour are continually applied to youth of colour and they are found lacking, it is clear how racism and ableism are intertwined in classroom and behaviour management. Ultimately, the bodyminds– "the intertwinement of the mental and the physical" (Schalk, 2018)–of those at the intersections of multiple oppressions are most likely to be imagined as needing management and control (Adams & Erevelles, 2017). Conversely, ability in behaviour is most likely to be attributed to those closest to the desired norm (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). As Dirth and Adams (2019) note, "Hegemonic perspectives of psychological science obscure the cultural-historical scaffolding of enablement and instead portray ability as an essential individual property, indicator of merit, and basis for allocation of rewards" (p. 277). Thus, our goal with this article is to resist the ontological erasure, "the active erasing of certain bodyminds from 'being' in the educational landscape" (Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019, p. 24), and to push critical curriculum studies forward to fully attune to racism and ableism.

Hence, we propose a DisCrit Solidarity imbued with Disability Justice principles wherein critical classroom relationships are central to critical curricular commitments. In making this argument, we do not wish to draw arbitrary conceptual lines between normative and critical curriculum studies. Rather we aim to accentuate the discontinuities critical curriculum studies scholars use to set themselves apart from those who promote hegemonic curriculum (Apple, Au & Gandin, 2009; Pinar, 2005). We seek to reveal conceptual fault lines in how we think about what curriculum is, its relationship to behaviour management, and what this means for the types of relationships that are (re)produced in schools.

Conceptualization of Relationships in Curriculum Studies

We begin our historical review of relationships within curriculum studies by returning to our DisCrit informed conceptualization of critical classroom relationships *as the connections made among teachers and students when teachers recognize the disparate positions of power and oppression they occupy and navigate in pedagogic spaces*. This definition matters as we are specifically searching for how teacher–student relationships are understood in critical curriculum studies as either within or against the grain of behaviour management and control. Hence our review of curriculum studies literature does not touch on every conceptualization of relationships, relations, or relationality, but specifically examines what has been presented in classroom relationships with respect to behaviour management. This is because curriculum is intentionally designed to elicit specific ways of interpreting the world and the meta-curriculum of classroom and behaviour management have continually interpreted raced and disabled body-minds as problematic (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

In exploring the curriculum studies literature on classroom and behaviour management, we have found that relationships are dealt with in one of two ways in the bulk of curriculum studies. The first is that there is a silence on relationships resulting in a hidden curriculum of social interactions (Skiba et al., 2016), which is often filled with a managerial discourse–one that highlights fixing individual and classroom behaviours. The other is that relationships are implied, yet not centred. However, it is clear that curricular decisions in classrooms mediate relationships. Consequently, we next explore how both of these trends support ableist conceptions of classroom relationships.

Relationships as Hidden Curriculum

Curriculum is imbued with interlocking systems of oppressions (e.g. white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativism, ableism) (Gilbert, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2003), which harm students' relationships with educators and with one another. In her classic study on how curriculum was actualized in schools, Anyon (1981) noted that for marginalized children, knowledge was imagined as a set of

> (1) fragmented *facts*, isolated from context and connection to each other or to wider bodies of meaning, or to activity or biography of the students; and (2) knowledge of "practical" rule-governed *behaviours*-procedures by which the students carry out tasks … (p. 12)

Anyon revealed how curriculum dictated content disconnected from students' lives and classroom behaviours. Further, Anyon illustrated how classroom interactions are circumscribed by the curriculum, advancing hegemonic ideas about who is represented and valued, and who is erased and dehumanized. Hence, relationships are built – or destroyed – on those curricular boundaries.

These curricular boundaries often left discourses on classroom management and individual behaviours to dominate the nature of relationships. The master narrative is that an educator cannot communicate the curriculum if they do not have control of the classroom (Leinhardt, Weidman, & Hammond, 1987). Classroom management is often part of educator preparation programs; these strategies are often named as

ways to engage students, but rarely named as part of curriculum (Apple, 2008). In these courses, classroom and individual behaviour management strategies dictate both students' and educators' roles and relationships, and how interactions are interpreted. Simultaneously, these classes are often situated in behaviourism that remains silent on issues of power, rooted in ableist frameworks about children who do not align with normative standards (Bornstein, 2015). This focus on management has dire consequences, discursively valorizing student obedience (Raible & Irizarry, 2010), while in reality only acknowledging "good" behaviour in particular bodyminds, and circumscribing teacher interactions that label, surveil, and punish to others (Annamma, 2018). Punishment is dispensed to those who do not conform to behavioural standards just by being different from the desired norm, ones that are situated outside hegemonic ways of knowing and being, hurting educators and students (Adams & Erevelles, 2016).

Relationally, educators are located as controllers of classrooms; regulating student behaviour becomes top priority, sometimes to the detriment of in-depth learning (Hawkey, 2007). This hyper-focus on management defines educator success as an *individual* accomplishment, where educators are successful if their students are obedient, even if students do not agree with the rules (Spivak, 1985). Said differently, educators are considered a separate entity – independent from their students – because educator success depends on the strategies they impose on their students (Apple, 2008; Pinar, 2005). Meanwhile, students' positionings are hierarchically ordered, distributing power in sliding scales among individuals who navigate marginalized social interactions. These constructions interpret multiply-marginalized students of colour, and their behaviours, as problematic (Winn, 2014). This too is a central part of a hidden, and not-so-hidden, curriculum, dictating who is rewarded and punished. This hidden, and ideologically laden, behavioural curriculum is deeply imbricated in all the activities that take place within schools.

At other times, explicit curriculum determines what is considered appropriate behaviour, and dictates consequences for those who fail to adhere to set standards. Consider how the packaged curriculum of Direct Instruction scripted exactly what educators were to say and required children to only speak after they were cued, suppressing authentic engagement. This type of explicit curriculum was often prescribed for children of colour, those with disabilities, and especially those at the intersections (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Lee, 2001; Milner, 2013); this signalled that for multiply-marginalized children, classroom relationships were about obedience to the educator and curriculum (Morris, 2016).

The pedagogical affordances engendered through these complex relational arrangements prescribed by both the hidden and explicit curriculum of classroom and behaviour management differentially locate students and educators within differing axes of power and marginalization, creating spaces for some ways of knowing, being, and doing to be valued while others are systematically punished (Milner, 2005). Said differently, when behaviour and classroom management were taken up in the classroom, as hidden or explicit curriculum, it situated some children as unable to behave and in need of greater amounts of surveillance, labelling and punishment. The school-prison nexus robustly illustrates how institutional structures powerfully construct deviance,

bending the trajectories of multiply-marginalized students of colour towards carceral institutions (Adams & Erevelles, 2016).

Relationships as Implied

Critical curriculum studies repositions curriculum as a political endeavour (Apple, 1978; Anyon, 1981) and much of the critical curriculum studies literature explicitly names the relationship between power and curriculum. For example, Brown and Au (2014) trace the master-narrative of the history of curriculum studies, reveal the ways communities of colour have been engaged in (re)imagining curriculum temporally, and find that the ignoring of this knowledge is rooted in silence and whiteness. Brown and Au (2014) explain,

> Silence in this context is an act of power where a corpus of knowledge is imposed on a historical narrative, thus producing silence… whiteness as both the presence and dominance of white skin privilege and as an overarching social construct that implicitly normalizes numerous social contexts … including the official school curriculum. (p. 373)

Other recent work has pushed critical curriculum studies forward, demanding an intersectional lens (specifically an Indigenous Feminist lens) be used in the (re)formulation of curriculum studies (Sabzalian, 2018). Each of these is a rewriting of critical curriculum studies that push forward the ontological and epistemological groundings.

Yet even early curriculum that incorporates critical lenses often take for granted, or do not make explicit, the power dynamics imbued in *classroom* relationships (Toukan & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2017). More recently, critical curricular studies have included classroom relationships specifically (Cammarota & Romero, 2006), in the interest of "decoupling managerial imperatives from the practice of everyday life" (Nxumalo et al., 2018, p. 444). Still, little of critical curriculum studies scholarship conceives of curriculum through an intersectional lens of disability and ableism (Buffington-Adams & Vaughan, 2019) and racism, recognizing how the two are mutually constitutive. This results in missed opportunities to disrupt hegemonic arrangements between students and educators as critical curriculum studies aims to do (Apple, Au & Gandin, 2009). Au (2012) explicitly names relationships as part of critical curricular work,

> First, on most days and in a multiplicity of ways, we clearly demonstrated that we cared for the well-being of our students on emotional, social, physical, and educational levels. Second, my co-teacher and I developed a culture of curricular resistance in our social studies/language arts coordinated studies classes. (p. 2)

The above description of the classroom culture of Au's co-taught classroom, and the commitments of many colleagues who have redesigned curriculum and pedagogy (e.g. ethnic studies, culturally relevant, culturally responsive, culturally sustaining, hip-hop pedagogy), are essential steps in challenging inequities. We are interested in explicitly articulating the ways in which classroom relationships were built and maintained as part of critical curriculum in ways that acknowledge and disrupt how intersectional injustice is distributed through racism and ableism.

Even when relationships are explicitly addressed through the knowledges and traditions of multiply-marginalized people, curriculum studies often seeks to erase these links through a process of replacement (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). For

example, Richardson (2011) notes that "Indigenous narratives provide rich relations to others and the natural world through the interpretive metaphors" (p. 344). Yet Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) find, "non-white, non-settler contributions to curriculum studies, along with the scholars that make those contributions, are frequently replaced, renewing settler interpretations as central to the field and the history of fantasies of replacement in its founding" (p. 79). Hence, the absorption of critical ideas in curriculum studies through the lens of white supremacy and settler colonialism (Gaztambide-Fernández & Murad, 2011) results in classroom relationships that are rooted in carceral and technocratic logics.

We imagine relationships as the central lever in shaping the ways in which critical curriculum studies takes root in pedagogical spaces (Berry & Stovall, 2013). The centrality of curricular relationships prevents assuming that the antithesis of control and management are superficial interactions that valorize being nice or overly permissive. That is, relationships are sometimes imagined as soft, non-pedagogical deliveries of friendliness (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). This is a form of aesthetic caring wherein the educator believes they are caring though students do not perceive educators to be invested in their success (Valenzuela, 1999); this is often accompanied by low expectations of multiply-marginalized students. This type of inauthentic care can be as damaging as one hyper-focused on surveillance and punishment as it reinforces stereotypes about multiply-marginalized students.

Although the exclusion of multiply-marginalized students in schools is well documented, some curriculum studies leave out the essential component of building substantive classroom relationships, assuming curriculum can be "laid upon" students with no commitment to understanding them as people facing multiple oppressions (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Alternatively, sometimes critical curriculum studies equates curriculum to content and methods, assuming that they automatically build strong classroom relationships (Milner, 2013). Thus, we centre relationships – between students and educators – as an essential way of making learning meaningful in spaces where power disparities abound.

Using a DisCrit lens requires us to centre relationships because it requires a change in how educators imagine disabled students of colour in their classrooms. This framing situates disabled students of colour not as burdens, but as powerful contributors with unique gifts (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Our contribution is theorizing the ways in which curricular relationships are engendered, shaped, and maintained in and through critical curriculum when disability and race are recognized as interdependent and centred. We argue that the important work done by critical curriculum studies in addressing sociopolitical power imbalances will benefit from explicitly theorizing how they mediate classroom relationships through a DisCrit lens. This approach requires seriously considering how disability as an identity and ableism as an oppression, in tandem with racism and other oppressions, can expand and strengthen these critical curricular commitments. Specifically, in introducing DisCrit solidarity, we ask: what is the nature of relationships that are built, how do these relationships play out, and how are they relevant to multiply-marginalized students of colour? We use DisCrit as a starting point to break through curriculum's confining boundaries by centring relationships.

Rooting Ourselves in Theories for Justice

We draw from DisCrit (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013), a theory that explicitly interrogates systemic inequities at the macro-sociopolitical and micro-interactional levels, to centre and (re)conceptualize relationships. Culling from both Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1976; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and Disability Studies (Baynton, 2001; Connor & Gabel; 2008; Kudlick, 2003), DisCrit grew out of a need to better articulate the ways racism and ableism were normal and interdependent (Bell, 2006). We believe this intersectional stance ruptures epistemic space that shifts towards justice.

The pressure on educators to increase test scores, teach in regimented ways, and present a quiet classroom to demonstrate that learning is occurring can create educator hostility to relationships with students. Additionally, it is important to articulate how relationships are constricted due to the interplay of racism and ableism. Thus, DisCrit provides critical curriculum studies specific affordances: (1) DisCrit recognizes that racism and ableism are mutually constitutive processes. Like critical curriculum studies, DisCrit identifies how classrooms (re)produce and disrupt inequities. Yet it expands critical curriculum studies by examining specifically how racism and ableism, along with other intersecting oppressions, intertwine to determine whose bodies, minds and behaviours have value and who is disposable in our classrooms. (2) DisCrit extends critical curriculum studies by forcing an exploration as to who is actively enabled by our classroom curriculum and who is debilitated, or whose access to education is foreclosed through intersecting oppressions (Puar, 2017). Behavioural standards in schools are set on norms of desired children and those who do not possess those properties are less likely to be rewarded for expected behaviours (Annamma, Handy, Miller, & Jackson, accepted). Those who are dynamically discouraged from accessing the curriculum are those who are further from the desired norm (e.g. white, male, cis-gender) and who are at the intersections of various oppressions–multiply marginalized students of colour. (3) DisCrit names how this social construction of deficit based on distance from the preferred standard also has material realities. While accepted standards of behaviour are often not acknowledged even when multiply-marginalized children of colour engage in them (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015), management discursive practices are employed when these children act differently. These management discursive practices hyper-label, hyper-surveil, and hyper-punish multiply-marginalized children of colour (Annamma, 2018). (4) There are "pedagogies of subjectivities that work to racially configure the citizenry of the nation" (El-Sherif & Sinke, 2018, p. 36). DisCrit acknowledges how these racialized notions of belonging inform perceptions of ability and have historical and ideological roots in the law, education, and all of society. This ideology directly shapes these pedagogies, informing ideas about belonging in classrooms, and linking the historic trends of segregation and exclusion of multiply-marginalized students of colour to current curricular practices. (5) DisCrit argues that those who are imagined as white and able are then given property rights such as access to high-quality curriculum in forms of engaging pedagogy, challenging content and strong relationships. Yet that curriculum (re)inscribes ability by continuing the practices that actively enable specific children. For example, Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) found that Black students with two behavioural

infractions were viewed as troublemakers, whereas white students with the same two behavioural infractions were not; instead, the white students were allowed to start with a clean slate each day. This view that the Black student has a pattern of negative behaviour actively debilitates the Black student while the white student is enabled to continue their own behaviour (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016; Puar, 2017). This is how property rights are distributed along lines of racialized ability, even within classrooms. (6) DisCrit amplifies the voices of the multiply-marginalized. That is, listening to those with multiplicative identities is the way we learn how intersectional processes propel or disrupt inequities (Wing, 1990). Multiply-marginalized students of colour report that the discursive practices of behaviour management single them out for unfair treatment (Winn, 2011). They have reported that positive behaviour supports are often applied unevenly and applied behaviour analysis has serious ethical issues which seek to stamp out difference, coercing disabled people of colour into acting more like enabled white people and punishing disabled people of colour when they do not adhere to these behavioural standards (Asasumasu, 2017, p. 7). Finally, DisCrit highlights the need to welcome resistance. That is, because students face systemic inequities, they develop Strategies of Resistance, wherein they navigate structural and interpersonal violence with savvy and ingenuity (Annamma, 2016). These strategies do not look the same for every child, nor do they all entail acting out in classrooms. Imagining, fighting, fleeing and laughing, among others, are all Strategies of Resistance employed to engage in a world that believes multiply-marginalized students of colour are lesser. If educators entered their classrooms knowing the systemic inequities their students face and the creative resistance students employed, educators would be more likely to create curriculum that is consciously mediated through solidary relationships.

Disability Justice and DisCrit Solidarity

We begin by explaining three principles we drew from Disability Justice in advancing relationships in learning spaces: (1) Recognizing interdependence, (2) Creating meaningful access and (3) Rejecting erasure of difference. We note that Disability Justice is not engaged to replace other notions of justice (e.g. racial justice). Instead Disability Justice seeks to expand notions of justice (Annamma, 2017; Berne, 2015).

Recognizing Interdependence

Sandy Grande (2004) notes that the myth of independence has damaged classroom relationships,

> Children are expected to be self-reliant, to complete school tasks on their own, and accept personal responsibility for one's behavior. The value of independence is so highly regarded that students themselves become suspicious of cooperative efforts as potential impediments to their own academic achievement and personal success. Similarly, relationships in school are largely characterized by formality and impersonality. Teachers retain caring but detached relations with students and actively discourage personal interaction. "Appropriate," on-task behavior is measured by the degree to which students

> behave as if they were in solitude, even though they are not. A good student acts as if he or she is "alone in a crowd". (p. 71)

Consequently, curriculum that highlights independence as a goal ignores that independence is an ableist master-narrative that claims individuals can be entirely self-reliant if we simply work hard enough. None of us, however, are completely independent (Mingus, 2013). Each of us relies on others to survive. The majoritarian story of independence conceals the needs of the powerful, pretending they achieved resources through rugged individualism, while positioning the needs of the oppressed as excessive, a drain on society. Moreover, independence engages the role of "benevolent oppressor" (Mingus, 2013), one in which the student must rely on the educator for access to knowledge in the classroom. In this case, the educator will give the student access only if they behave "right." If the student does not behave according to hegemonic standards, then the student loses access to the content and is often excluded from the classroom. Yang-Copley (2011) notes, "Disability justice … is more relational and transformative-interdependence, in which other people are necessary for physical, emotional and community health and well-being." Thus, in the classroom, educators and students' relationships with each other are necessary to succeed.

Critical curriculum studies can be mistaken for also falsely asserting independence as the key to student success. This unspoken commitment to independence conflicts with critical curriculum studies' political commitment to expose power inequities. In order to disrupt this ideological asymmetry, we follow Nirmala Erevelles' (2014) direction:

> Take any radical theory—radical humanism, marxism, post structuralism, critical race theory, feminist theory, queer theory, etc. Place a disruptive disability studies in its midst. Tentatively pose questions. Trouble their assumptions undergirding their alternative/radical conceptions of the normal.

In advancing Erevelles' observations, we highlight the importance of critical curriculum studies committing to interdependence to disrupt power differentials. Patti Berne (2015), one of the first to coin Disability Justice, wrote,

> A Disability Justice framework understands that all bodies are unique and essential, that all bodies have strengths and needs that must be met. We know that we are powerful not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them. (para 1)

In order to conceptualize relationships within curriculum studies through DisCrit using Disability Justice, it is imperative to understand that all students have strengths and needs in bodyminds and behaviours. It is ideology built on intersectional inequities that claims that some bodyminds and behaviours are too difficult to support in classrooms. Geneva Gay (2010) writes that educators "expect all students to behave according to school's cultural standards of normality. When students of color fail to comply, educators find them unloveable, problematic, and difficult to honor" (p. 49). We agree with Gay and note that this arbitrary line of normalcy is based on ableist and racist notions of what and who is worthy of including (the powerful) and who is deserving of segregation (the multiply-marginalized). Educators must foster relationships through interdependence with and between students (Milner, 2005). This also means that educators must teach white peers about how their futures depend on unlearning their

racism and confronting their power. Multiply-marginalized students of colour must not be burdened with this role; it is the educators' job to employ through interdependence. Thus, educators' goals should be to create access in the classroom and support transformative ways of knowing, being and doing.

Creating Meaningful Access

Creating meaningful access cannot equate diversity with superficial celebrations of difference or inclusion within a specific classroom. Mia Mingus (2011), who conceptualized Disability Justice along with Berne, notes,

> As organizers, we need to think of access with an understanding of disability justice, moving away from an equality-based model of sameness and "we are just like you" to a model of disability that embraces difference, confronts privilege and challenges what is considered "normal" on every front. (para. 5)

This same principal can be applied in classrooms and schools by educators. It is a problem to demand behaviour that meets the same hegemonic standard normed on desired children. Mingus (2017) reminds us that we must resist the societal commitment to "banish bodies and minds that tell the truth." Instead, critical curricular relationships must question why conceptions of normal are based on replicating the behaviours of the most privileged *and* ignoring when their behaviours do not meet those same standards (Slee, 1996). Said differently, why do we continually enable the behaviours of those associated with whiteness and its intersecting powers?

Recognizing student and educator need provides countless opportunities to bring more just discursive practices to critical curriculum studies; this recognition creates access. Yet access, like diversity and inclusion, is not simply about increasing opportunity to share space. Mingus (2013) states, "Access for the sake of access is not necessarily liberatory, but access for the sake of connection, justice, community, love and liberation is." When access to the curriculum happens to and through relationships, all members of the classroom community flourish.

Rejecting Erasure of Difference

Critical curriculum studies can further expand its aim to disrupt power dynamics by adhering to Mingus' warning not to smooth over marginalizations in the name of justice. When we seek to make the most powerful the desired standard, critical curriculum studies may reject this standard in favour of pretending we are all just a little unusual and therefore do not need to worry about our differences. We have even heard people claim, "We are all a little disabled!". Similar to declarations that "I don't see colour," which evade conversations around race and ability and maintain power inequities (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2017); critical educators must repudiate arguments that everyone is different, so we do not need to explicitly discuss ableism, thus rejecting attempts to flatten difference (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013). In rejecting erasure, DisCrit Solidarity encourages critical curriculum studies to consider the ways multiple oppressions intersect in our students' lives. Pretending there are no differences between bodies, minds and behaviours is not the goal of Disability Justice.

Instead, Disability Justice is about listening to the multiply-marginalized describe how intersecting marginalizations impact them.

If independence is a myth created to mask the needs of the powerful while situating the needs of the marginalized as unreasonable (Mingus, 2011), this intersectional movement towards justice is centred around the notion of interdependence. Applying Disability Justice, each classroom member needs the others to succeed–and that includes the educator. By adding DisCrit, need is positioned not as something frustrating to the educator or to other students, it is the thing that gives us hope. Need provides hope as it offers "opportunities to build deeper, more whole (relationships) and practice what our world could look like" (Mingus, 2013, para. 10). This produces DisCrit Solidarity.

DisCrit Solidarity

As Freire, Freire, and De Oliveira (2014) wrote, "Solidarity has to be shaped in our bodies, in our behaviors, in our convictions" (p. 44). Thus, we argue DisCrit Solidarity has four interrelated convictions animated by Disability Justice principles. DisCrit Solidarity must (1) recognize the host of emotions multiply-marginalized students of colour will bring in response to structural and interpersonal violence; (2) provide the classroom as a sanctuary to identify, display and address emotions and behaviours, and concomitantly channel that passion to change the system; (3) understand those emotions and their concurrent behaviours as Strategies of Resistance; and (4) present whole people and histories within their critical curriculum.

Patricia Hill Collins (1989) names an ethic of care that "suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge-validation" (p. 766). An ethic of care recognizes, "the denigration of emotion as problematic, and both suggest that expressiveness should be reclaimed and valued" (Collins, 1989, p. 766). To recognize the host of emotions, multiply-marginalized students of colour will bring in response to structural and interpersonal violence means that DisCrit Solidarity is one in which educators are not bent on managing students. DisCrit Solidarity builds on an ethic of care and means educators are deeply engaged with multiply-marginalized students of colour because they recognize both the individual and systemic oppression those students face. This requires a critical conscious raising on the part of educators, one where they recognize their own and society's commitment to interlocking oppressions and commit to unlearning and disrupting them (King, 2004). Educators must understand not only their students, but themselves. That is, educators must understand the privilege and power they bring to the classroom and acknowledge the ways in which they are inextricably enmeshed in (re)producing oppression (Nxumalo et al., 2018). Only within this stance of politicized caring, one that recognizes "the ways schools reproduce racialized and gendered stereotypes, and seek to cultivate relationships with marginalized students that acknowledges their oppression and their developmental needs as children and learners", can educators move towards liberatory action (De Royston et al., 2017, p. 32).

Hooks (1994) emphasizes, "(T)he pleasure of teaching is an act of resistance" (p. 10). By imagining teaching as an act of resistance, DisCrit solidarity requires teachers to resist

erasure. DisCrit Solidarity, rooted in the refusal of ontological erasure (Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019), forces critical curriculum theorists and educators to ask the following: (1) "Which students am I debilitating and enabling in the classroom from my own pedagogy and content?"; (2) "What struggles and resistance am I highlighting and which ones do I ignore?"; and (3) "How am I contesting or creating interdependence through my assignments, my readings, and my relationships?"

Of course, an educator cannot simply seek to recognize emotions that multiply-marginalized students display. The educator must shift that understanding into action. DisCrit Solidarity requires critical curriculum studies educators to provide the classroom as a sanctuary to display, identify, and address the emotions and behaviours of multiply-marginalized students of colour and concurrently channel that passion to change the system. If educators understand the complex individual and systemic interlocking marginalizations students face, they must also understand that is going to impact students' emotions. How can a student witness the shooting of Tamir Rice or Aiyana Stanley-Jones[3] and not experience a range of emotions? Multiply-marginalized children of colour are often highly public victims of state violence as well as the receivers of multiple daily individual indignities. Thus, educators cannot expect students to enter their classrooms and leave all of their emotions at the door. Instead, educators must invite that emotion into the classroom, allowing students the choice of how their emotions will be displayed and discussed. This may be the hardest part of DisCrit Solidarity because it requires educators to allow students to experience and display a range of emotions in the classroom, interrupting lessons with a variety of behaviours. This is not to say that these emotions and behaviours are not addressed in the classroom. It means that educators must *reframe these emotions and behaviours as welcome and expected*. Interdependence means that when one student is hurting, the community acknowledges and addresses that hurt, from both individuals and systems. Building relationships through solidarity necessitates that the emotions and behaviours of multiply-marginalized students of colour are welcomed. Thus, educator reactions to them can be productive rather than punitive.

Moreover, student emotions and their concurrent behaviours are situated as Strategies of Resistance, where students navigate individual and personal violence with savvy and ingenuity (Annamma, 2015). DisCrit Solidarity recognizes the ways students strategically respond to individual and systemic violence. Too often, students' behaviours are perceived as individual problems without considering how these are actually strategies of resistance to the violence they experience. Multiply-marginalized students of colour often are strategically working to get their needs met in harsh and unwelcoming environments (Wun, 2016). If educators recognize the creative ways multiply-marginalized students of colour resist the violence they face, *they are more likely to position these students as brilliant*. DisCrit Solidarity, then, means that educators ask why emotions and behaviours occurred and connect what students face in terms of systemic and individual oppression with what they feel about that violence. This is how we build interdependent relationships in the classroom.

Finally, DisCrit Solidarity demands that critical curriculum studies present whole people and histories. For example, after the extrajudicial killings of Laquan MacDonald

and Freddie Gray, many critical curriculum studies theorists and educators sought to discuss Black Lives Matter in the classroom. Yet what does it mean that the Black Lives Matter platform completely ignored that both of these Black people, and countless others, were also disabled (Moore, 2015)? What does it mean when critical educators discuss a lineage of resistance from people like Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, Maya Angelou, and Marsha P. Johnson without discussing their disabilities? Often critical educators present people of colour throughout history who have resisted systemic oppression, but their disability is ignored or taught as something they overcame. How does this ableist presentation of those fighting state violence impact both multiply-marginalized students of colour labelled with disabilities and those without? T.L. Lewis (2016), the founder of Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of Deaf (HEARD) and disability justice advocate, writes,

> Simply put, it is impossible to address the crisis of state violence without addressing the systematic failure of the state to provide equal access to education, employment, housing, and resources for people of color *and* people with disabilities — who, for myriad reasons, often are one and the same. These inequalities are inextricably linked.

By engaging in these uni-dimensional presentations of sociopolitical struggle and resistance, critical curriculum studies are often engaged in erasure and shaming regarding disability issues. Yet as Lewis and the rest of the Harriet Tubman Collective (2016), a group of Black disabled activists, remind us, disability is a political identity deeply connected to collective resistance. When disability and ableism were left out of the Platform for Black Lives (2016), the collective refused for their existence and resistance to be eradicated.

> We will not be martyrs for a movement that denies our humanity. We demand that "social justice" coalitions, networks and organizations end the violent erasure of disability from these and all other narrative[s] of the victims of police violence and murder . . . .
>
> We are not an afterthought.
>
> We are here.
>
> We are fighting for all of our lives.
>
> We are Black. We are Disabled. We are Deaf.
>
> We are Black.
>
> Our Black Disabled Lives Matter.
>
> Our Black Deaf Lives Matter.

The Harriet Tubman Collective named disability not as something to be ashamed of, but a part of an intersectional political identity with a lineage of resistance. In critical curriculum studies, if disability were conceptualized as a welcomed political identity, instead of a thing to punish for failing to meet standards or something to ignore because of shame and ableism, the behavioural response would be something much more interdependent, loving and productive. This is what DisCrit Solidarity looks like.

DisCrit Solidarity exposes how relationships are built on resistance by educators and multiply-marginalized students of colour. Educators must resist deficit tropes

about controlling student behaviour, extinguishing emotions in the classroom, and telling incomplete stories within critical curriculum. Students' Strategies of Resistance must be welcomed inside the classroom *and* built upon within critical curriculum studies (Annamma, 2018). DisCrit Solidarity transforms educators, recognizing interdependence with their students. Freire (1970) notes,

> The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor–when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. True solidarity is found only in the plentitude of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis. (p. 50)

Solidarity is the only way that the educator can escape the benevolent oppressor trope Mingus described. Thus, to move critical curriculum studies into the realm of transformative praxis, we call for a DisCrit Solidarity that conceptualizes relationships through Disability Justice.

Conclusion

Mary McLeod Bethune (1940) discussed the ways of her access to education changed her entire community:

> There was nothing for (kids in the community) to aspire to – it was an incentive to me, and of course, many followers after that. Many boys and girls of the community. A new life came into the district. Sunday afternoon I would take the farm children for miles around – I would give them whatever I had learned during the week … Poetry, reading, songs, etc … I would give to them as often as I got. As I got I gave. They gave me a broader capacity for taking in and I feel that up to today, I feel it in all things, and I feel that as I give I get. (p. 11)

Bethune shared the knowledge she got from school, knowing that she was one of the few Black children who could access education. Her experiences with education were rooted in giving back, in the love and respect that transformed her whole community.

That same commitment Bethune spoke of is the same transformative role we hope DisCrit Solidarity mediates, providing a stronger ethos to critical curriculum studies and subverting the danger of critical curriculum studies replicating the same power imbalances it seeks to destroy. Lamm (2015) argues that Disability Justice is rooted in interdependence: "Liberation can't happen alone; we have to reach towards one another" (para. 11). Historically, theorists and educators, some of them critical, have implied that disabled students of colour are too unruly (Erevelles, 2000), too criminal (Annamma, 2018) or too incapable (Adams & Erevelles, 2017) to develop relationships. The epistemic space DisCrit opens in classrooms moves towards liberation when educators refuse this narrative of too much or too little, and reach towards multiply-marginalized students of colour. Hence, inspired by Mia Mingus, we ask of critical curriculum studies: "When our multiply-marginalized students of colour tell the truth with their bodies, minds, and behaviour, what will our reaction be?" What we are asking is for critical curriculum studies theorists and educators to reconsider the limits of their own conceptualizations, engage intersectional work that centres

disability and ableism with race and racism, and expand the ways they engage classroom relationships.

Notes

1. We note that the classroom relationships we are discussing are not the sole responsibility of Curriculum Studies to address. Many education sub-fields (e.g. Educational Leadership, Teacher Education, Special Education) would benefit from a substantive conversation of relationships in the classroom. Instead, we argue that Curriculum Studies has an opportunity to center relationships and therefore theorize in a new epistemic space.
2. We use multiply-marginalized to consistently name the intersecting patterns of oppression (e.g., racism, ableism, sexism). This is not to erase differences, but to give us a way to consistently center the multiple oppressions people of color face. When we use multiply-marginalized students of color, it focuses on race and dis/ability while acknowledging the other marginalized identities students of colour are labelled with and/or claim.
3. Both Aiyana Stanley-Jones (7) and Tamir Rice (12) were Black children shot by police. Both deaths were highly publicized and caused public outrage, yet neither officer was jailed for the murders of these children. For more information, see 21 Times Cops Weren't Held Accountable For The Death Of Black Victims.

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