

Chapter 3

Disability Critical Race Theory: Exploring the Intersectional Lineage, Emergence, and Potential Futures of DisCrit in Education

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In this review, we explore how intersectionality has been engaged with through the lens of disability critical race theory (DisCrit) to produce new knowledge. In this chapter, we (1) trace the intellectual lineage for developing DisCrit, (2) review the body of interdisciplinary scholarship incorporating DisCrit to date, and (3) propose the future trajectories of DisCrit, noting challenges and tensions that have arisen. Providing new opportunities to investigate how patterns of oppression uniquely intersect to target students at the margins of Whiteness and ability, DisCrit has been taken up by scholars to expose and dismantle entrenched inequities in education.

In 2016, Bresha Meadows, a 14-year-old Black girl, killed her father following years of abuse inflicted on her family.¹ Reporter Melissa Jeltsen (2017) wrote of Meadows's case:

According to Bresha's family, the young girl had started to fall apart in the months leading up to the shooting. Her grades plummeted. She began cutting herself. And she ran away, telling her aunts in Cleveland that she was afraid her father might kill them all. He beat her mother in front of her, she said, and threatened them with a gun. She said she was scared for their lives. (Para 9)

Although the average pretrial length of detention is 22 days (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program, 2013), by May of 2017, Bresha had been incarcerated for over 250 days and labeled² with posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Bresha's story is not only about racial or gender-related violence but also about

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disability. Instead of compassion for the abuse she experienced, Bresha was treated as a dangerous entity, criminalized and punished for being a multiply marginalized³ disabled Black girl in distress. Her story illustrates how race and disability are not only deeply linked with other social locations but also how racism and ableism, intersecting with additional oppressions, often have serious and sometimes deadly implications.

Intersectionality has opened promising lines of inquiry for dismantling interlocking systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989) in education. In initially framing disability critical race theory (DisCrit) as an intersectional framework, we aimed to more fully account for the ways that racism and ableism are interconnected and collusive normalizing processes (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). Providing new opportunities to investigate how intersecting patterns of oppression target students at the margins of Whiteness and ability, DisCrit has since been taken up by scholars to expose and dismantle entrenched inequities in education. In this chapter, we (a) trace the intellectual lineage of DisCrit; (b) review the body of interdisciplinary scholarship incorporating DisCrit to date, and (c) propose the future trajectories of DisCrit, noting challenges and tensions evidenced in the work thus far.

TRACING A LINEAGE OF ACADEMICS, ACTIVISTS, AND ARTISTS

In tracing the lineage for DisCrit, we believe it is important to acknowledge the rich scholarly work that contributed to its genesis. Indeed, given the complex tangle of race and disability that has reverberated throughout U.S. history, we cannot do justice in this short chapter to all those who should be recognized. What we can do, however, is share from our collective perspective a cross-selection of individuals who have strongly influenced our own thinking about intersectionality—in particular, the interstices of being raced and dis/abled⁴—that ultimately led us to develop DisCrit in the service of producing new knowledge.

We begin by locating the foundations of DisCrit in Black and critical race feminist scholarship and activism. Take, for example, Anna Julia Cooper, author of *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* (1892/1988), and educator, principal, activist, and scholar. Cooper's book and other publications have been recognized as one of first articulations of Black feminism as it substantively explored what it meant to be a Black woman in America. A century later, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) further revealed how the law subjugated Black women as they could neither claim discrimination based on race (because Black men were being promoted) nor gender (because White women were also being promoted). Crenshaw (1991) noted how *interlocking forms of oppressions* created unique barriers for Black women and frustrated their ability to claim legal remedy either as women or as persons of color. In her foundational articulation of Black feminism, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) drew from intellectual ancestors such as Angela Davis, Nikki Giovanni, Lorraine Hansberry, bell hooks, Zora Neale Hurston, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, Sojourner Truth, and Alice Walker to illustrate how knowledge claims emerging from Black women's intersectional positioning provided a unique reading on the workings of power, which she identified as a matrix of domination. Although disability did not figure prominently in much of

this work, because of its intersectional nature, the pioneering work of Black feminists has nonetheless been foundational to the development of DisCrit.

The transdisciplinary field of critical race theory (CRT) in which race, centered in law, is seen as an organizing principle of power that affects all aspects of society was also integral to DisCrit's foundations (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT recognizes racism as central to creating group (dis) advantage, highlights knowledge claims forged in the experiences of communities of color, rejects ahistoric accounts of entrenched inequities, and promotes interdisciplinary research that aims to eliminate racial (and intersecting) forms of oppression (Matsuda, 1993). Applying CRT to education reveals pervasive inequities despite decisions, such as *Brown v. Board of Education*, intended to counter them (D. Bell, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT is also a means of reconceptualizing intractable problems (Tate, 1997). Ladson-Billings's (2006) critique of "the achievement gap," for instance, more accurately conceived the problem as reflective of an educational debt owed to students of color rather than some deficit in the children themselves. By centering race within interlocking and oppressive structures of society, CRT provides a means to understand how racism and White supremacy function in education, while seeking to disrupt them (Leonardo, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2002).

As scholars who began our professional lives working in special education, we recognized how youth of color fared far less well than their White counterparts in schools. We were also aware of the ways that disability functioned to "other" students whose differences were envisaged from a deficit lens. Moreover, we recognized that disability was a political identity, socially constructed in tandem with race and class, rather than an objective medical condition. Struck by how the field of special education ignored or denied racial issues, collectively and individually, we focused much of our academic work on issues such as the overrepresentation of children of color in special education, achievement/opportunity gaps, the school-to-prison pipeline, and discrepancies in outcomes of disabled students of color (e.g., graduation, employment, college). Working in a small community of scholars within special education, we called attention to how dis/ability *and* race merited further attention, noting that labeling and practices associated with special education appeared to be maintaining and expanding racial segregation among students (Artiles, 2013; Artiles, Dorn, & Bal, 2017; Bal & Trainor, 2016; Erevelles, 2002; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Waitoller & Thorius, 2016).⁵ Unfortunately, outside of this small circle of scholars, the field of special education has remained quite resistant to engage in the racialized nature of education and dis/ability in meaningful or sustained ways.⁶

Concerned about the persistent problems of deficit-based understandings of difference, overrepresentation in negative outcomes, and the limited range of research methodologies accepted by the field, we aligned our scholarly work with the emerging field of disability studies (DS; Connor, Gabel, Gallagher, & Morton, 2008). In doing so, we perceived DS's focus on ableism as an organizing principle in personal, societal, educational, and historical structures. In addition, we embraced a core value

of DS, which privileges knowledge based on lived experiences of disabled people. Subsequently, we began to see the value of drawing on both CRT and DS (as well as feminist studies) in our research. Ferri and Connor (2005), for example, examined public discourse surrounding debates over the two largest historically excluded groups of students in American public schools—African American and disabled children. Drawing on archival research, their findings illustrated how special education became a tool to maintain racial hierarchies after the *Brown* decision. Driven by the desire to have student's lives and voices represented in professional literature that traditionally portrayed them in unidimensional ways, we also documented experiences in and out of school at the interstices of race, dis/ability, and class (Connor, 2008) and gender (Annamma, 2014; Ferri & Connor, 2010).

Linking CRT and DS to frame and analyze the lives of disabled youth of color provided far more nuance than had we simply attended to one element of identity or form of oppression. At the same time, we realized there was a disjuncture in that each field could be engaging more fully with the other. In his critique of DS, Chris Bell (2006) attributed the paucity of DS scholarship addressing issues of race to its White, middle-class location within the academy. Likewise, issues of dis/ability remain largely underexplored in CRT, which has led to “bifurcated social and legal process[es]” that conflate undesirable identities with deficit, while simultaneously ignoring ableism (Goodwin, 2003, p. 229). In other words, both DS and CRT have failed to adequately address intersectionality, focusing primarily on single-axis explanations of structural inequity.

Although there is room to more fully develop the potential power of explicitly integrating both frameworks, some DS scholars have engaged in work about race and disability. Reid and Knight (2006), for instance, used a DS perspective to look at racial disparities in the increased number of college students with learning disabilities, illustrating how some disability labels leveraged access for wealthy White students, while serving as a barrier for Black students. Erevelles (2002) also revealed how citizenship is a form of struggle in which dis/ability and race are implicated. In addition, Mitchell (2006, 2007) has explored ways in which gender, race, and dis/ability involve a life-long negotiation. Similarly, some race and CRT scholars have sought to demonstrate how ability is conferred or withheld along lines of race, gender, and social class. Vincent, Rollock, Ball, and Gillborn (2012), for instance, explored ways Black middle-class parents were aware of how perceptions of their children's ability were constructed by teachers and what parents tried to do to “to present (their child) as a ‘good’ (i.e. enthusiastic, able, relatively compliant) learner with high aspirations and ambition” (p. 270). Critical race feminist scholar Michele Goodwin (2003) explored ableism in the case of Wanda Jean Allen, illustrating how Allen's multiple social locations of being Black, poor, lesbian, and intellectually disabled worked in tandem to position her as bad, dangerous, and shameful. Audre Lorde (1997) took a personal exploration of her own cancer and how illness affected racialized and gendered experiences. We are heartened, too, by the number of dissertations examining varied topics such as autism and race (Hetherington, 2012), vitiligo as involuntary Whiteness (Sierra-Zarella, 2010), high-stakes testing and ability construction (Tefera, 2011), and the intergenerational social reproduction of disability (Welch, 2002). We

imagine this collective work as evidence of the beginnings of a sustained interest in studying the interworkings of race and dis/ability within CRT.

There have also been scholars who have simultaneously integrated CRT *and* DS in innovative and powerful ways. For example, Asch (2001) urged DS scholars to incorporate both CRT and feminism, and Campbell (2008) culled from CRT and the concept of internalized racism to explore internalized ableism within disabled people. Several highly original and provocative studies have included analyses of race, dis/ability, social class, and gender in terms of school discipline (Watts & Erevelles, 2004), inclusive/exclusive education (Erevelles, Kanga, & Middleton, 2006; Petersen, 2009), and state-sanctioned violence (Erevelles & Minear, 2010), among others. In addition, Smith (2004) incorporated DS and critical Whiteness studies, foreshadowing Leonardo and Broderick's (2011) focus on Whiteness and DS, specifically to explicate how smartness and Whiteness operate in schools. Beratan (2008) called attention to institutional ableism within laws and policies that maintain oppressive educational structures. Liasidou (2008, 2011, 2013, 2014) has incorporated critical discourse analysis in examining the intersections of race, class, and disability in terms of inclusive policy. Finally, Ferri's (2008) analysis of Lynn Manning's autobiographical performance of *Weights* highlights how the play illuminates the interstices of race, disability, gender, and class in provocative ways.

Artists and activists, beyond the ones listed above, were also deeply influential in our shifting commitment to an intersectional framing of race and dis/ability. Patti Berne, Anita Cameron, Mia Mingus, Leroy Moore, and Alice Wong, to name a few, have led the conversation, naming how interlocking systems of oppression have affected the lives of disabled people of color. They have created essential organizations led by disabled people of color, such as Sins Invalid and Krip Hop Nation, and developed significant concepts such as Disability Justice and Access Intimacy. Currently, a new generation has joined the work of these trailblazers and continued the lineage of resistance including Lydia Brown, Dustin Gibson, Mia Ives-Rublee, T. L. Lewis, Vilissa Thompson, among others. These emerging voices have pushed intersectional coalitions to let disabled people of color lead as authors of their own lives and solution producers to the inequities they face. Our aim in naming this varied genealogy is to rupture the distance between artists, activists, and academics by recognizing that we owe our evolution in thinking to the knowledge generated from these multiple communities.

Thus, the lineage of DisCrit is both diffuse and rich, exposing commonalities and tensions garnered from its intersectional foundations. The genesis of intersectionality within Black feminism and its further engagement with CRT and DS illuminates the interstices of dis/ability and race within education. Taken together, this multidimensional work demonstrated the viability of developing a specific framework to facilitate engagement with interlocking systems of oppression, to resist them, and to imagine new ways of thinking and advocating for equity. In what follows, we move from tracing the robust lineage of DisCrit to documenting and analyzing how scholars have taken up DisCrit's intersectional commitments to produce new strands of knowledge.

REVIEW METHOD

To trace the many paths that DisCrit has traveled since its initial publication in 2013, we began by searching more commonly used databases such as JSTOR and ERIC using the term “DisCrit.” However, here were only nine results for DisCrit and associated terms in JSTOR, some dating back to 1943 and only tangentially related, if at all. We then searched for “disability critical race theory,” which resulted in 185,630 hits, as there was no Boolean search option out of “critical race theory.” Searching “disability studies *and* critical race theory” resulted in 10,150 works, but again with limited relevance to DisCrit, although many were part of the intellectual genealogy of DisCrit. Understanding that it takes 2 to 5 years to be included in many databases, we turned to alternatives such as Google Scholar, Academia.edu, and ResearchGate. In Google Scholar, our 2013 paper came up as the first result in a search using “DisCrit.” It was cited 93 times, including 85 unique citations (13 were our own subsequent publications). In addition to our own paper, the search term DisCrit resulted in 721 results. Adding quotations (“DisCrit”) resulting in 423 hits. By excluding work that was unrelated (e.g., related to mining or an algorithm) and eliminating duplicates and non-English-language publications, we were left with an additional 17 results. “Disability critical race theory” with quotations resulted in 32 results, 12 of which were duplicates and 21 that mentioned disability studies and/or critical race theory, but not DisCrit, and therefore were not included in our analysis. Similarly, searching for “disability studies” AND “critical race theory” landed 1,800 hits with both (DS and CRT) and single (DS *or* CRT), but no additional results after 2013. The same searches were done both in Academia.edu and ResearchGate resulting in 18 studies in total, and 2 additional results after exclusions for duplicates, dates, and unrelated subjects. To ensure we included emerging work from the field, we also searched ProQuest and found 26 recent dissertations that referenced DisCrit. We originally included conference papers from Disability Studies in Education Association and Critical Race Studies in Education Association but decided to focus solely on published work. Finally, we culled from our own knowledge of recently published works. In total, we ended up with a total of 122 articles, 12 book chapters (8 of which were from our DisCrit edited volume), and 26 dissertations that fit our selection criteria. We then reviewed each paper (each author read a third of the total) and found that 31 of the total number of papers we identified substantively engaged with DisCrit. We defined substantively engagement as (a) *theoretical pieces* that critiqued, disrupted, and/or extended DisCrit and (b) *empirical papers* that used DisCrit as part of the conceptual framing or analytical tools or that illustrate the affordances of DisCrit in exploration of data. We then read each of the 31 papers again (each author was given a new third that they did not review in the first round) to examine (a) themes explored; (b) DisCrit tenets engaged either theoretically (extends, disrupts, or critiques of the framework) or empirically (in the conceptual framing or as an analytical tool); (c) unique contributions; and (d) implications. In our review, we found that many of the papers explicitly and implicitly engaged in one or more

specific tenet of DisCrit. We decided, therefore, that it would be instructive to sort the papers according to the tenets that were either explicitly named or most substantively engaged. When it was difficult to pinpoint the tenet(s) that authors were substantively engaging, a second reader was employed to provide help in determining which of the tenets were addressed—in each of these instances, authors were able to reach consensus. Following this process, we then identified exemplars for each tenet. These were selected to highlight contributions that engaged DisCrit in innovative or substantive ways. We also noted those authors that extended DisCrit or brought additional complexity into their analyses. Because we were interested in determining whether authors were broadening the scope of research on race and disability (beyond, e.g., documenting the overrepresentation of students of color in special education), we also created a chart to summarize the range of topics that the authors were addressing. This summary chart was instructive to illustrate the scope of issues that have been analyzed using a DisCrit framework to date. Overall, our multilayered analysis proved to be useful in accounting for the myriad ways that authors representing this growing body of literature are incorporating DisCrit.

STRETCHING THE BOUNDARIES OF DISCRIT

Positioning DisCrit as an exemplary intersectional analysis (Cook & Williams, 2015; Garcia & Scott, 2016; Ulysse, Berry, & Jupp, 2016), scholars have begun to explore racism and ableism as interlocking oppressions (Kohli, 2016; Lalvani, Broderick, Fine, Jacobowitz, & Michelli, 2015) in fields such as counseling (Peters, 2017), higher education (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015), psychology (Wagner, 2016), and education policy (Ard & Knaus, 2013).

Highlighting the need for intersectional approaches to the study of race and disability, DisCrit encouraged scholars to employ a variety of perspectives and theories in theoretical and empirical work. In addition to crossing disciplinary borders, DisCrit has traversed international boundaries. In the United Kingdom, it has been used to explore the ways Black middle-class parents struggle to prevent or access special education for their children (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2014). DisCrit has informed analyses of racism and ableism that are complicated by legacies of colonialism and globalization in the global south (Stienstra & Nyerere, 2016), by poverty in indigenous communities in Guatemala (Grech, 2016), and special education placement in Canada (Adjei, 2016). Finally, DisCrit has helped lay bare some of the contradictions between language and epistemological commitments, such as Leonardo's (2015) reconsideration of discussing Whiteness as racial dyslexia.

Taken together, this diverse set of scholarship points to the need for intersectional analyses of racism and ableism and offers the potential to deconstruct underlying oppressive ideologies. In the remaining sections of this chapter, we explore the body of this intersectional scholarship to date that has substantively engaged with DisCrit, thereby stretching its boundaries in terms of theory, methodology, and empirical

research. We first examine the topics engaged by various authors employing DisCrit. Next, we provide one or more exemplars of scholarly works for each of the seven tenets. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of what we imagine as the future of DisCrit.

Thematic Engagement

Much of the scholarship exploring the intersections of race and dis/ability in education to date has focused on highlighting the persistent problem of students of color being disproportionately placed in special education, particularly in the most subjective categories of learning disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities, and emotional disabilities. Indeed, a concern about the overrepresentation of Black, Latinx, and Native American students receiving special education labels, being placed in the most restrictive and segregated placements, receiving harsh disciplinary sanctions, and being funneled into jails motivated our own scholarly work and provided the impetus to develop DisCrit as an explicitly intersectional theoretical framework to explore the collusive nature of race and disability. This work is absolutely valuable and necessary. Yet, like Crenshaw's (1989) initial articulation of intersectionality, we, too, envisioned that DisCrit could also help frame a wider set of issues.

Our analysis of DisCrit research has demonstrated that DisCrit is indeed a flexible and nuanced theoretical and methodological tool for exploring the intersections of race and disability, along with other social markers, across a wide range of issues (see Table 1). Scholars have used DisCrit to critically explore a host of issues related to educational equity as well as to demonstrate the need to infuse teacher education with critical theory. Beyond educational contexts, DisCrit has informed research on health care disparities, postschool transition outcomes, as well as implications of DisCrit in the context of policy and law. Methodologically, researchers have employed a plurality of research traditions (from quantitative, to qualitative, to mixed methodologies). They have also pointed to limitations in data sets that frustrate intersectional analyses and have found it necessary to develop alternative (and creative) methods in order to fully attend to some of the most marginalized and voices (e.g., incarcerated girls of color with disabilities and young women with intellectual disabilities). Table 1 highlights some of the diverse topics addressed in the literature that we reviewed.

DisCrit Tenet Exemplars

To highlight how various scholars incorporated DisCrit, we selected exemplars (from the 31 sources analyzed) in which author(s) deeply engaged with a specific tenet of DisCrit. Although many authors that we reviewed explicitly drew on one or more tenet, because of space, we highlight just a brief example for each tenet. In sharing these models, we hope to provide a robust discussion of how particular tenets could inform varied analyses. In providing these exemplars, we illustrate both the diversity and the affordances of DisCrit in advancing knowledge about the

TABLE 1
An Overview of Thematic Engagement With DisCrit

Themes Addressed	Examples
Health care/rehabilitation disparities; Politics of care	Ben-Moshe and Magaña (2014)
School-to-prison pipeline; Incarcerated girls of color with disabilities; Alternative schools	Annamma (2013, 2014, 2015a); Annamma, Morrison, and Jackson (2014); Dávila (2015); Mahon-Reynolds and Parker (2016); Stanard (2016)
Need for critical theory in teacher education to address gender, race, linguistic diversity, class, and disability; Teacher dispositions (beliefs, attitudes)	Banks (2015); Fergus (2016); Mendoza, Paguyo, and Gutiérrez (2016); Gillborn, Rollock, Vincent, and Ball (2016); Whitney (2016); Young (2016)
Whiteness/ability/goodness as property	Adams (2015); Annamma (2015b)
Discourse; Counternarrative; Resistance; Resilience	Annamma (2016); Migliarini (2017); Whitney (2016); Young (2016)
Postschool transition of adolescent girls with intellectual/cognitive disabilities (impact of gender, race, class)	Cowley (2013)
Inclusion 2.0 (broadening the scope of inclusion); Space as variable	Baglieri (2016); Waitoller and Annamma (2017)
Education debt/Opportunity gap	Thorius and Tan (2016)
Overrepresentation/Disproportionality	Fenton (2016); Gillborn et al. (2016); Kozleski (2016); Mahon-Reynolds and Parker (2016)
Law/policy/critical legal studies	Fenton (2016)
Identity	Banks (2017); Hikida (2015); Whitney (2016)
Genetics; Eugenics; Science	Gillborn (2016); Freedman and Ferri (2017)
Microaggressions	Dávila (2015)
Positioning of parents (focus on Black middle class)	Gillborn (2015); Gillborn et al. (2016)
Multiculturalism	Baglieri (2016)
Intersectional research with large data sets	Kozleski (2016)
Policy/reform	Tomlinson (2016); Waitoller & Super (2017)
Intersectional commitments in discourse, laws, and/or policies	Adams and Erelles (2016); Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison (2017); Broderick and Leonardo (2016); K. Collins (2016)
Shifts in pedagogy	Waitoller & Thorius (2016)
Accounting for class/materiality, as well as race and disability	Ben-Moshe and Magaña (2014); Ferri and Connor (2014)

intersections of dis/ability and race. Each exemplar was selected based on the criteria of whether it explicitly and substantially engaged with the tenet in the framing of the study and/or its analysis.

Tenet 1: DisCrit focuses on ways that the forces of racism and ableism circulate interdependently, often in neutralized and invisible ways, to uphold notions of normalcy.

A leading scholar within CRT, Gillborn (2008) has been long troubled by historical hierarchies of racial dis/abilities. Gillborn (2016) expresses concerns about how “crude and dangerous ideas about the genetic heritability of intelligence, and the supposed biological basis for the Black/White achievement gap are alive and well within the education policy process but [are] taking new and more subtle forms” (p. 365). Specifically, Gillborn takes to task major scholars of genetics and education, both fields of study that are historically rooted in racialized ableism. That is, those who have imagined people of color to be less intelligent have relied on the belief that disability and race are deeply connected (Valencia, 1997). As Baynton (2001) states,

(T)he *concept* of disability has been used to justify discrimination against other groups by attributing disability to them. . . . When categories of citizenship were questioned, challenged, and disrupted, disability was called on to clarify and define who deserved, and who was deservedly excluded from, citizenship. (p. 33, italics in original)

Gillborn (2016) illustrates this phenomenon of allocating disability to limit access to the property rights typically attributed to Whiteness in his examination of genetic determinism. The phrase “softly, softly” in the article’s title refers to indirect, and even subliminal invocations of race within genetic discourse. He warns that such “. . . *inexplicitness* should not be mistaken for an absence of racialized thinking . . .” (p. 366), and, in fact, “*racial genism*—the belief that genes shape the nature of ethnic group achievement and inequities—has returned with a vengeance but in a new and more dangerous form” (p. 336).

In the first part of his article, Gillborn (2016) details the return of genetic determinism within debates about educational policy in the United Kingdom. Using critical discourse analysis, he makes visible examples of implicit scientific racism and genetic determinism espoused by contemporary researchers and politicians that subsequently become circulated within the media. Analyzing range of books, articles, lectures, and public interviews, Gillborn persuasively illustrates the inexplicitness of race in discussions of fixed intelligence, intellectual aptitude, and academic achievement as reified by test scores. By doing so, he reveals how notions of normalized racial hierarchies are predicated on dis/ability and upheld by a racialized and ableist discourse. In the second part of the article, Gillborn critiques a variety of claims about heredity and intelligence, critiquing the trustworthiness of researchers’ claims, adequacy of research methods and tools, and the deliberate indirectness when engaging race. Gillborn (2016) concludes, “The hereditarians have not changed their mind about race and intelligence—they just don’t broadcast it anymore” (p. 382). With that subtle connection between race and intelligence being ever present yet unnamed, the author uncovers how it is easier for the media and others to take up this discourse

without being labeled racist. In brief, Gillborn illustrates (a) how race and dis/ability are inextricably enmeshed in subtle and indirect ways that seep “softly, softly” into the public imagination and (b) how the virtual invisibility yet centralized existence of race verifies the need for intersectional theoretical frameworks such as DisCrit. Gillborn’s work traces this intellectual history to show how racism and ableism have always been deeply connected. DuBois (1920), too, addressed this same issue:

For a century or more it had been the dream of those who do not believe Negroes are human that their wish should find some scientific basis. For years they depended on the weight of the human brain, trusting that the alleged underweight of less than a thousand Negro brains, measured without reference to age, stature, nutrition or cause of death, would convince the world that black men simply could not be educated. Today scientists acknowledge that there is no warrant for such a conclusion. (p. 326)

Throughout history, attempts to link disability, in the form of lower intelligence, to Black and Brown bodies has resurfaced in countless ways. Most recently, this thinking would have us believe that achievement gaps in test scores signify that intelligence is fixed and intrinsic. Gillborn’s theorizing does the work that White DS often misses; it renounces beliefs that race, genetics, and intelligence are inextricably linked, explicitly naming and rejecting this newest iteration of racialized ableism by linking it to its eugenic legacy.

Tenet 2: DisCrit values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race or dis/ability or class or gender or sexuality, and so on.

Banks’s (2017) explicitly employs DisCrit to “better understand the educational experiences of African American male students labeled with learning disabilities, as described in their own words” (p. 97). Banks does not simply provide a unidimensional analysis but makes visible the ways racism and ableism inform each other, specifically for Black male students with a disability who are attending college. As one participant noted, “These people are never going to stop labeling me” (p. 96), indicating the effects of feeling perpetually marked as deviant within the education system through his race, gender, and disability label. In determining the consequences of being multiply situated in terms of race, disability, and gender, one participant shared,

In my education career [because I was] an African American male and had ADHD, teachers put me in two boxes—disabled and African American. Then with me above six-feet tall, they expected me to be aggressive. [Teachers] have had to check themselves, but after I talk to them about my learning style, they would see me in a whole different light. (Banks, 2017, p. 105)

Working against master narratives that position Black male students as uninterested in education and simultaneously aggressive in their behavior, this student navigated these intersecting oppressions by explicitly discussing his learning needs as a way to ensure success and teacher cooperation. Another participant highlighted the need to counter official discourses, codified in disability-related paperwork, which positioned him in a negative light:

They looked at me and read what was on the paper and then they judged me off that and put me in special education for the first time. So yeah, I think you always have to prove yourself to people. (Banks, 2017, p. 103)

Banks's (2017) work illustrates how Black students with dis/abilities are positioned differently than White students with a disability and Black students without a disability. Yet the author also uses these counternarratives to highlight the ways multiply marginalized disabled Black male students (re)position themselves, engaging in thoughtful resistance to marginalizing systems. In doing so, the author demonstrates the additional labor that falls on disabled Black males so that they have access to resources and opportunities that should be available to all students. Banks invokes DisCrit to discuss the interdependent circulation of racism and ableism that manifests in multiple, complex ways that run deep within state policies, school practices, and professional and personal discourses and beliefs.

Tenet 3: DisCrit emphasizes the social constructions of race and ability and yet recognizes the material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or disabled, which sets one outside of the western cultural norms.

Demonstrating its influence beyond U.S. contexts, Migliarini (2017) employs DisCrit as a theoretical tool (along with Butler's concept of subjectivation) to examine the ways that 10 "dis/abled asylum-seeking and refugee students" in Italy experienced educational and social exclusions and inequities as a result of the "normalizing processes of racism and ableism" (p. 183). To fully consider the interworkings of disability, race, and other forms of oppression, Migliarini (2017) drew on Tenet 3 to account for ways that the students in the study were positioned at the margins. By attending to both macro- and micro-exclusions, she was able to document the various ways that students were positioned as embodying deficit. Importantly, in examining how "migratory status" interacts with race and disability, Migliarini illustrates how predetermined neoliberal notions of social integration that place a value on autonomy over interdependence, as well as a politics of respectability, combine to funnel refugee and asylum-seeking teens into low-paid and low-skilled jobs, despite the teens' own desires to attend college and pursue a broader range of professional careers.

Adding Butler's attention to discourse, Migliarini's (2017) study suggests that in addition to focusing on forms of constraint and marginalization, attending to forms of agency illustrates the myriad ways that marginalized subjects find ways to enact subjectivity and resistance, despite their social positioning. For instance, although professionals pushed the youth in her study to learn Italian language as a way to ensure that they would be able to enter the work force and obtain a job, participants focused on gaining proficiency in Italian in order to make friends or to "pass the exam" so they could access higher education. Thus, language learning took on very different meanings—representing different ends despite similar means. By looking both at constraint and performative politics in "discursive relations of power" (p. 11), Migliarini uses DisCrit to illustrate both the intersecting and "enduring

patterns” of educational inequality and exclusion and the theoretical tools that can help highlight and support the discursive agency necessary to counter diffuse forms of marginalization.

Tenet 4: DisCrit privileges voices of marginalized populations, traditionally not acknowledged within research.

In addition to traditional forms of qualitative interviewing techniques, many researchers engaging this tenet of DisCrit have found it necessary to devise alternative and innovative strategies to center the “voices” of traditionally marginalized research participants. These have included attending to counternarratives (Banks, 2015), uncovering subtle or unexpected forms of agency (Cowley, 2013), enacting participatory or side-by-side research designs and incorporating mapping or collage as data collection (Annamma, 2016). Enacting Tenet 4, scholars highlight how various mechanisms of surveillance and control often undermine access to participants’ perspectives. Whether it is a parent, a teacher, or other gatekeeper, or even a university institutional review board—which often equate disability with vulnerability—gaining access to marginalized voices takes both persistence and commitment. Moreover, because so many people with disabilities are warehoused in the “institutional archipelago”—the “diverse services and spaces that all trace back to undifferentiated confinement” (Ben-Moshe, Chapman, & Carey, 2014, p. 14)—taking participant voices seriously can require negotiation of multiple forms of gatekeeping. DisCrit scholars have nonetheless gained access to voices that are often suppressed or ignored—positioning their participants as knowledge generators, capable of authoring their own stories and creating solutions to the inequities they face (Annamma, 2014; Connor, 2008; Ferri & Connor, 2010).

Some researchers have incorporated traditional research designs but highlight the material impacts of being multiply marginalized in understudied populations. In her study about how Latinx students experienced special education, for instance, Dávila (2015) explored and extended the concept of micro-aggressions as experienced by students multiply situated in terms of race/ethnicity and disability. Davila’s data included ethnographic classroom observations and interviews with 20 student participants. Using a framework informed by CRT and DisCrit, Dávila (2015) notes, “Disability does not simply replace race in these instances, but represents a complex interplay between race and disability in the lives of Latino/a students in special education” (p. 454). Findings of micro-aggressions included low teacher expectations (often internalized by students), general disregard, and bullying.

In chronicling instances of educators’ micro-aggressions in the form of sarcasm and persistently demeaning remarks toward students, Dávila (2015) highlights their cumulative effects over time. Instances described by students are often shocking. For example, one student recalls a teacher’s aide sitting next to him during an exam, narrating:

She looked at my test and it was blank and she said, “You make me sick.” I laughed at her and was like “what?” I laughed about it. I didn’t get mad . . . she was like, “OK,” she caught herself, like “OK, I made

a mistake in saying that,” so she tried to be friendly and help me out. “No, I don’t need your help,” she tried to grab my test. . . . (Dávila, 2015, p. 456)

In her discussion, Dávila (2015) writes of the “collective impact” (p. 461) of witnessing humiliating micro-aggressions; although targeting one student, it is nonetheless absorbed by all those present. As one girl explains, “Teachers will say, ‘What kind of question is that?’ Are you retarded or something?” (p. 462). By foregrounding students’ voices, Dávila conveys how Latino/as labeled with a disability experience self-contained classes, placing these classrooms in stark contrast to typical depictions of special education within “big glossy” text books frequently used in teacher education (Brantlinger, 2006).

Whether drawing on traditional qualitative traditions or bending these traditions in ways that provide alternative spaces to privilege marginalized voices, DisCrit researchers illustrate the importance of attending to direct testimony of the lived realities of individuals who are multiply oppressed in terms of race and dis/ability, along with other markers. In contrast to research designs that collapse (and therefore dehumanize) lived experience, these studies also position participants of research as co-constructors of knowledge about their lives—honoring their subjectivity and ability to speak back to power through counter narratives and expressions of agency and resistance.

Tenet 5: DisCrit considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens.

Waitoller and Super (2017) use DisCrit as an analytical lens to examine how entrenched inequities have temporal roots and are often perpetuated by the legal system and enacted within public policy. The authors explore how “school choice” is part of a larger neoliberal project of “restructuring urban space . . . grounded in Chicago’s racialized history” (p. 34). Waitoller and Super explore narratives of school selection by Black and Latinx parents of children with disabilities. They found that though their decisions were framed in the language of choice, parents discursively signaled a politics of desperation (Stovall, 2013), wherein they were forced to make school decisions that left their children of color with disabilities unprotected.

Beginning with a discussion of neoliberalism—how it has influenced policy and drastically changed the education landscape in Chicago—the authors then explore how charter schools affect students of color (without disabilities) and those students with disabilities (not disaggregated by race) separately. The authors then use DisCrit to push this unidimensional analysis to understand how students of color with disabilities experience historically and legally compounding forms of exclusion within charter schools. Understanding space as an active ecology that mediates human activity, the authors illustrate the history of uneven spatial development in a racialized city. As public schools closed in Chicago, charter schools appeared on the landscape as an alternative. Neoliberal supporters argued this increase of charters represented an

increase of choice for urban parents. However, Black and Latinx parents on the ground reported fewer options of schools that served disabled children. Waitoller and Super (2017) documented how

closing neighborhood schools and opening charter schools directly decreases school options for Black and Latinx students who require more extensive supports to be included in schools. . . . So, while White students with dis/abilities enjoy the benefits of Whiteness as they lived in areas of the city benefited by the neoliberal restructuring of urban space, and while some Black and Latinx students may enjoy the benefits of claiming smartness and goodness as property (i.e., being considered integrateable to charter schools or selective enrollments), Black and Latinx students with dis/abilities cannot claim neither Whiteness, smartness, nor goodness, and are oppressed by the intersections of these three ideologies. (pp. 10–11)

Ultimately, the authors report that parents of disabled children of color express a politics of desperation that informed the entirety of the educational decision making. Moreover, their children’s educational trajectory was made worse by the destruction and disinvestment of neighborhood public schools. Thus, the creation of seemingly well-resourced charters enacted a source of harm to these families of color and, specifically, their children with disabilities. By engaging a spatial analysis, Waitoller and Super (2017) were able to pinpoint how the politics of desperation was enacted differently based on what area of Chicago parents of students of color with dis/abilities resided. The authors’ work extended the politics of desperation framework to specifically examine education “choices” made by parents of children of color with dis/abilities. Furthermore, drawing on DisCrit, Waitoller and Super uncover how Black and Latinx parents of children with dis/abilities, who could claim neither Whiteness nor ability as property, were deeply affected by neoliberal policies that spatially restructured access to education choices for their children.

Tenet 6: DisCrit recognizes Whiteness and ability as property and that gains for people labeled with dis/abilities have largely been made as the result of interest convergence of White, middle-class citizens.

Broderick and Leonardo (2016) build on their prior work focusing on smartness as property by exploring how goodness is likewise a form of property conferred on Whiteness. Goodness is thus granted to students who most align with normative identities. That is, goodness is often conferred on a student based on racial positioning—not earned through behavior or disposition—thereby reinforcing White supremacy. Moreover, they show how goodness is also a precondition for smartness,

such that a “smart” kid conceived as bad does not benefit maximally from this construction, whereas a “good” kid who does not perform smartly on assessments may be perceived as “smarter” than his or her academic performance warrants. . . . In other words, the label of smartness is not a taken for granted good-in-itself, but is judged by the contextual regulation of student subjects, such as “too smart for their own good” (that is, precocious) or girls who are too smart (emasculating of boys). (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016, p. 57)

The authors note how without goodness, smartness provides a “wild card,” an uncontrollable force that many fear if it coincides with undesirable characteristics associated with race and gender. Thus, White boys’ misbehavior is met with a “boys will be boys” attitude, while Black boys are seen as menacing. The authors also call attention to ways goodness is withheld as well as distributed as processes of disablement and enablement. Illustrating how Broderick’s White son Nicky, who had been constructed as a “good kid,” and comparing him to his Black friend, Jamal’s, experiences, they state,

Having been constituted as a “good boy,” Nicky reaped the material advantages of race, class, and ableist privilege, manifest in goodness as ideological property, even if he did not understand them as advantages at the time. Through the asymmetric and inequitable distribution of rewards and punishments for behaviors in the classroom both Nicky and Jamal were actively interpolated into racialized identities as “good” and “bad” boys. Nicky was actively groomed to accept his expected role of White complicity with the racist practices of schooling, just as Jamal was materially constituted, over and over, to accept his designated and denigrated subjectivity as a “bad boy.” (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016, p. 60)

Broderick and Leonardo (2016) underscore how DisCrit can help recognize Whiteness and ability as property and help deconstruct labeling and discursive practices that undergird classroom routines.

Tenet 7: DisCrit requires activism and supports all forms of resistance.

Activism is often envisioned as marches and sit-ins and placed in opposition to “ivory tower” research in which academics are far removed from the communities they claim to study and from those whom their ideas will most impact. Yet we believe this dichotomy obscures forms of what we might call intellectual activism. We noted, for instance, several studies that employed DisCrit as forms of intellectual activism. In particular, these scholars (a) situated multiply marginalized students of color, their families, and their communities as knowledge generators, capable of naming the processes that animate statistics centering on disproportionality (Whitney, 2016); (b) reexamined normative discourse, policies, and practices through a multidimensional analysis, making visible the intertwined oppressive forces that multiply marginalized students face (Adams, 2017); and (c) highlighted the ways that disabled students of color (re)position themselves when encountering individuals and systems committed to imagining them as problems (Annamma, 2017).

In a recent article, Mayes (2017) situates a Black male disabled student and his mother as knowledge generators. Previously labeled as gifted, Mayes documents how the student experienced marked shifts in his educational experiences once he sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Though Douglas’s story is unique, it highlighted important discursive moves and pedagogical practices that animate racial disproportionality in special education and discipline statistics. Mayes (2017) shows how once he sustained a TBI, teachers no longer saw Douglas as academically gifted. Stripped of this identity, teachers drew on racist and ableist stereotypes to position him.

Essentially, his giftedness and academic prowess became obsolete once he sustained a TBI as of his teachers focused on his race and dis/ability the same, seeing those are markers of his laziness and inability to do the work. (p. 13)

An important enactment of Tenet 7, Mayes (2017) and many of the authors cited in this chapter situated disabled students of color as experts of their lives (Banks, 2017; Cowley, 2013; Whitney, 2016). We describe this work as a form of intellectual activism as it refuses to imagine disabled people of color, many of whom have been warehoused in spaces less visible, as embodying deficit or as damaged, incapable of authoring their own stories, which is the traditional way that disabled children of color have been positioned in research, if they have been included at all. To ascertain the subjugated voices of disabled people of color, researchers entered into many formal, yet forgotten education spaces,⁷ such as segregated special education classrooms, special schools, alternative school placements, and juvenile jails.

What Adams (2017) and Gillborn (2016) accomplish within their own multidimensional analysis of common discourse and practices is uncover the ways these processes both dis/able and enable specific individuals and groups of people (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Each reexamined specific taken-for-granted discourses, policies, and practices through a multidimensional analysis. In doing so, they discover how typically accepted discourses, policies, and practices enact hidden ideologies about who deserves resources in education. This is intellectual activism because it rejects a singular view of identity and resists commonly accepted deficit views about why multiply marginalized children of color struggle in specific learning environments.

Finally, intellectual activism requires that DisCrit scholars refuse to accept deficit notions about disabled people of color that pathologize their learning and/or behavior. Instead, several authors in this chapter sought to understand the learning and behavior of multiply marginalized disabled people of color within contexts (Banks, 2015; Dávila, 2015; Migliarini, 2017). By making visible systemic oppressions and how those oppressions were enacted, these scholars illustrate how learning ecologies can be filled with violence for some learners. Yet once the context becomes clear, this work also highlights how disabled students of color reposition themselves by employing creative and ingenious strategies (Annamma, 2017). Engaging in intellectual activism, the scholars both refute traditional ways of being in the academy and also document ways students resist the processes and practices that position them as less than.

Ultimately, multidimensional framing and analysis is a challenge, however, because it requires that researchers to look beyond the most privileged within any oppressed groups (Crenshaw, 1989). In other words, this work often seeks out the voices and perspectives of those who are multiply marginalized. Moreover, to resist deficit ways that students of color labeled with dis/abilities are traditionally positioned, researchers must also account for the ways racism and ableism are mutually constitutive. Scholars engaging DisCrit must capture how oppressions intersect to describe how “some human beings are not simply ‘human’ enough”

(Adjei, 2016, p. 2). In each study we reviewed, we were repeatedly struck by the innovative ways researchers sought to understand specific contexts and larger processes that positioned multiply marginalized children of color, their parents, and communities as less than, *and* the ways those multiply marginalized people resisted educational inequities.

CONCLUSION: DISCRIT'S FUTURE

In conducting this review, we are deeply impressed, encouraged, and humbled by the ways in which scholars have taken up DisCrit to uncover how multiply marginalized people experience oppression. As a framework, DisCrit aims to create new knowledge rooted in intersectional commitments, seeks to understand how interlocking oppressions of racism and ableism work in tandem, and pushes the boundaries of intersectionality. It is not and was not meant to be an all-encompassing theory, but one that would thrive by being interwoven with other critical theories and perspectives. Using DisCrit as an intersectional framework, scholars have exposed the social processes that contribute to entrenched inequities and traced how racism and ableism are interdependent in the search for equity. They have introduced new concepts, including the ability line (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016), dis-locating practices (Adams & Erevelles, 2016), and color-evasiveness (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2017), all of which we hope will be further explored, deconstructed, and expanded in the future. Their collective work helps us consider how to stretch the boundaries of DisCrit by pointing to additional theoretical frameworks that resonate or extend DisCrit, such as Migliarini's (2017) use of Butler's subjectification, Young's (2016) use of LatCrit, Waitoller and Super's (2017) spatial analysis, or Fenton's (2016) use of critical legal theory.

In thinking about the future of DisCrit, we remain cautiously optimistic that the framework will continue to expand and deepen with more engagement across disciplines. We hope to see more studies that take up all seven tenets in a sustained way. We would also like to see more engagement with certain tenets—in particular, we have seen fewer studies that *explicitly* consider how to incorporate the call of Tenet 7 for troubling traditional notions of activism. That is, we found several studies that engaged in an expansive notions of activism, but by articulating their purposeful engagement with activism, scholars could more strategically employ Tenet 7. Studies such as Broderick and Leonardo's (2016) that trace both the *affordances of privilege as well as oppression* and scholarship that accounts for within-group privilege and oppression are also an important line of research to extend. Decentering Western and U.S.-centric perspectives point to ways to further develop DisCrit. Finally, we hope to see DisCrit expanded outside of special education issues. We believe that DisCrit is less about disability and race being included in a list of oppressed identities and more about understanding how the interdependence of racism and ableism affect all people.

In closing, we wish to circle back to Bresha Meadows's story. After 10 months of incarceration and a concerted effort by several organizations led by the social media #FreeBresha campaign, Bresha was offered a plea deal. She will spend a year and a day

in prison and another 6 months in a mental health treatment center (or longer if deemed “necessary”). Her case illustrates how racism and ableism actively work together to situate particular children as in need of incarceration. We stand with the Bresha’s family, and the #FreeBresha campaign, which states,

(W)e believe that true care cannot and should not be delivered in the context of punishment. The #FreeBresha campaign is in solidarity with Bresha Meadows and her family who have been forced to make hard choices to try to reduce further harm in a coercive context of violent prosecution and incarceration. . . . It is truly unconscionable that Bresha has been targeted by prosecutors for taking desperate action to survive domestic violence. . . . If a Black girl who is abused in her home does all the things adults tell children to do when faced with violence—tell an adult, report it to the police, trust family services—and, one by one, each system fails her, what exactly do prosecutors imagine she should do next? Bresha tried to run away from the violence, but police forced her to return home. There was nothing else left to do but be beaten and possibly killed or defend her life.

In sum, Bresha Meadows is a disabled Black girl who faced dangers in her life and in the educational system that failed her *at every turn*. This failure positioned Bresha as a dangerous Black girl, erasing her other identities while highlighting her criminality (Annamma, 2018). We believe that DisCrit was created to better understand what disabled girls of color like Bresha, who are multiply marginalized, face. We believe DisCrit can help us #SayHerName as a Black girl who has been #SurvivedandPunished, and recognize ways Bresha’s disability calls for intersectional analysis of #DisabilityJustice. In first envisioning what would eventually become DisCrit, we aimed to expand our own understanding about how entrenched inequities in education are not unidimensional and to uncover the complex social processes that propel them forward. It is clear from this review that DisCrit will continue to develop as it is put in conversation with other theories, methodologies, and framings. We believe it has the potential to be expanded beyond what we originally intended. We also know it must be improved and further developed. Overall, our hopes for DisCrit are that it continues to be critiqued, extended, and disrupted in productive ways as it stretches to dismantle education inequities.

NOTES

¹In a protective order her mother filed against her father, her mother stated, “In the 17 years of our marriage, he has cut me, broke my ribs, fingers, the blood vessels in my hand, my mouth, blackened my eyes. I believe my nose was broken.” She wrote, “If he finds us, I am 100 percent sure he will kill me and the children. . . . My life is like living in a box he created for me, and if I stepped out of that box, he’s there to put me back in that box.”

²We name this act of labeling to highlight ways that race and dis/ability are co-constructed, yet rarely acknowledged as such.

³We use the term *multiply marginalized* to address the way disabled students of color and others at the intersections of multiple oppressions experience the world differently as a result of a complex interaction of social injustices.

⁴We recognize the contestation over other forms of the word *disability*, such as *dis/ability* and *(dis)ability*, which some have critiqued as euphemisms that obscure disability. In this chapter, we attempt to use (a) *ability* when we are talking about a socially constructed and privileged

norm (similar to Whiteness); (b) *disability* when we are talking about either disability-related oppression or disability identity/culture; and (c) *dis/ability* to highlight the constructed and interdependent nature of both ability and disability. These discursive moves are aimed not to circumvent disability but to refute taken for granted deficit meanings of disability, to distinguish the ways society disables (and enables) people, and to recognize dis/ability's contested boundaries.

⁵See also earlier work examining race and disability (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Blanchett, 2006; Dunn, 1968; Erevelles et al., 2006; Ferri & Connor, 2010; Ford, 1998; Kiiewer, Biklen, & Kasa-Hendrickson, 2006; Reid & Valle, 2004; Watts & Erevelles, 2004; and more).

⁶For example, the work of Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, and Maczuga (2012) symbolizes special education's negation or evasion of issues of race and disability.

⁷For the purposes of this review, Annamma defines "formal, yet forgotten, educational spaces" as ones that are traditionally ignored in the education literature due to the binary discourse between formal and informal education spaces. This binary between formal and informal learning ecologies has been useful to contrast the constraints and affordances of these different types of spaces. However, this binary can ignore the variance of formal education spaces, situating them as all similar. By essentially smoothing over the extreme differences in education access and opportunities that occur throughout formal spaces, we are missing possibilities for research, policy, and practices to be remediated.

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