The Future of Inclusive Education

Intersectional Perspectives

Valentina Migliarini · Brent C. Elder

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The Future of Inclusive Education

"This volume tackles enduring questions and tensions about the nature and telos of inclusive education. Migliarini and Elder disrupt a benign framing of inclusion and examine its conceptualization and implementation through an interdisciplinary and intersectional lens. This nuanced representation inspires alternative futures for inclusive education in a world of differences."

—Alfredo J. Artiles, Lee L. Jacks *Professor of Education, Stanford University, USA*

"Drawing on DisCrit and decolonial insights, this important, well researched, and timely text convincingly argues for the need for inclusive education to more fully account for the ways that multiple forms of oppression create even more 'insidious' forms of exclusion. The result is a call for dismantling all forms of marginalization in schools and society and supporting more expansive notions of equity and justice."

—Beth Ferri, *Professor of Inclusive Education & Disability Studies, Syracuse University, USA*

"A very important text that critically questions and dislocates multiple fixities and assumptions about inclusive education, especially those fabricated in and exported from hegemonic centers in the Global North, while offering solid, nuanced, contextualized and human options for what a sensitive and responsive inclusion might look like on the ground. Highly recommended reading for readers posing necessary critical questions on inclusive education and beyond."

—Shaun Grech, *The Critical Institute, Malta*

"*The Future of Inclusive Education* is meant to become a milestone in the integration of insights from Disability Studies with Critical Race Theory. With its focus on three quite different socio-historical contexts, namely the US, Italy and Kenya, the book challenges canonical representations of disability, while appreciating impact and needs of students at the crossroads of race, gender, class, and disability, successfully contributing to set the path for re-imagining inclusive education."

—Gaia Giuliani, Author of *Race, Nation and Gender: Intersectional Representations in Visual Cultures*

"As teachers we often use the word inclusion, but how many of us implement it in our classrooms? First of all, for this to happen we must do personal work of decolonization and fight against social and racial injustices. The book guides us by placing the students at the center, highlighting their intersectionality and suggesting that we build a community of people who promote an inclusive school through frameworks such as CDS and DisCrit."

—Rahma Nur, *Primary School Teacher and Poet*

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In memory of
Hon. Judith (Judy) Heumann
§
Thomas (Tom) M. Skrtic
Great scholars, teachers, mentors, and friends.
You are greatly missed.

Foreword: The Value of Intersectionality in Inclusive Practices

I must begin by thanking Valentina and Brent for inviting me to write a foreword to *The Future of Inclusive Education: Intersectional Perspectives.* I have been aware of their scholarship in inclusive education for some time now, including research conducted in different countries (Migliarini et al., 2019), the value of intersectional approaches within educational research (Migliarini, 2017), and a commitment to improving teacher education (Elder et al., 2021)—always with an eye to classroom practice (Elder et al., 2016). These areas—and other strands of their interests, experiences, and expertise—come together in this work in a unique way, exemplifying the commitment and vision of scholar practitioners seeking a more socially just world. But before I draw attention to several of the book's distinctive features, I ask the reader to indulge me as I briefly reflect upon some of my own experiences over the past several decades that provide a glimpse into how far we have come in creating inclusive environments, while acknowledging the distance that remains toward improving our practices—the latter point undergirding the work of Valentina and Brent.

What is inclusive education? What are its origins? Who decides how it is defined? How do we do it? For those of us who have been around a while, these questions may sound tired, if not old. Nonetheless, we must remain mindful that for pre-service and many in-service teachers, the history and purpose of inclusive education is not always known or has been misunderstood. Such questions have constantly been on my mind since the late 1980s when, as a special education teacher of students identified as disabled and placed in "self-contained" (read: segregated) classrooms, I was given a schedule change to team-teaching several classes with general

educators as part of a new federal project called the Regular Education Initiative (Will, 1986) that arguably metamorphosed into inclusive education. As time passed, I supported this initiative by continuing to teach in inclusive classrooms before going on to provide professional development on inclusion at the district level. I had also gained a greater awareness of the overrepresentation of racially, ethnically, and linguistically minoritized students in segregated educational environments within the USA. In pursuing a doctoral degree, the initial idea for my dissertation was to study collaborative teaching in inclusive classrooms, particularly with an eye toward creating successful classrooms to support all students. However, when engaging with interdisciplinary scholarship, I came across the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw et al., 1996) and Patricia Hill Collins (1999) who argued for the value of intersectional approaches to better understand people's lived experiences—including how they are subjected to, and resist, powerful forces such as racism and sexism in society. Subsequently, I wanted to portray the lives of students like those I had taught in high school, at the intersection of learning disability, race, and social class because I had barely seen them featured, let alone accurately portrayed, in special education research (Connor, 2008). By then I was convinced that inclusion was about providing access to a quality education for students who had been historically excluded by race or disability or *both*.

Looking back, I am aware of how inclusive education has changed over time due to shifting priorities of various key stakeholders and the push and pull of numerous competing forces. When teaching graduate classes about inclusive education for many years to both general and special educators, I recognized how it remained a highly contested topic. Moreover, and most surprising, was the fact that many leaders within the field of special education mobilized to resist changing their established practices and maintain segregated systems (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995). Thankfully, other scholars within the field were staunch advocates of including students with disabilities (Salend, 2000). An increased general awareness of innovative pedagogical practices such as universal design for learning (Meyer et al., 2013), collaborative education (Stein & Friend, 2023), differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001), social and emotional learning (Frey & Fisher, 2019), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2018), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017) also significantly impacted how educators conceptualized inclusive teaching for a diverse student body. Given these changes, it is safe to say that, broadly speaking,

inclusive education has grown to be an integral part of most teachers' responsibilities. Over time, my interest in inclusive education grew to encompass how other countries were developing practices. I found encouraging examples (e.g., Artiles et al., 2011; Slee, 2010), along with informative analyses of attempts to constantly stifle inclusive practices around the world (e.g., Done & Knowler, 2023; Ware, 2004). I also found consistent, even bitter, resistance to inclusive education from leadership within the field of special education (Kauffman, 2020).

I share these selected personal experiences and aspects of the history of inclusive education to locate Valentina and Brent's text within longstanding ongoing efforts to build, expand, and refine inclusive practices around the world, while countering resistance toward it. Indeed, their book is a welcome addition to a body of work exploring how inclusion is currently manifested across different classrooms, schools, neighborhoods, states, regions, countries, and continents while asking readers to contemplate how we can work toward constantly improving inclusionary practices to ensure educational equity.

One of the many things I appreciate about this book is Valentina and Brent's strong voices. Their histories and personalities are integral to the conceptualization and execution of research on multiply marginalized children, youth, and adults at the intersections of disability, race, and other markers of identity. The authors are open about the politics of their scholarly interests and are honest about their positionalities, explicitly sharing how these personal elements help shape their research agendas. In addition, they share many similarities in their individual work such as including participants in community-based research, valuing cultural responsivity both within research and pedagogy, strategically using creative qualitative research, establishing collaborations within and across countries, and advocating for redistributions of power within formerly colonized countries and those that previously colonized them. Both authors also seek to dismantle deficit-framings of disability and race that exist in dysfunctional educational systems by illustrating institutional mechanisms of schooling that continue to exclude multiply marginalized students. Simply put, their work reflects what they believe; *there are better ways to conceptualize inclusive education around the world than what has been done to date.*

At the heart of their overarching inquiry is the important question, "How can inclusive education be implemented while actively moving away from the pervasive pathological lens that dominates schools as institutions of normalization?" As part of their explorations, the authors take

on several contentious issues, including challenging the acritical exportation of co-opted understandings of inclusion operating within the global North, rejecting pervasively negative conceptualizations of disability, centering the intersectional experiences of students, and focusing on the needs, resources, and expertise of local communities to create more inclusive environments. In doing so, they purposefully leave the zone of neoliberal, market-based preoccupations with the standardization of curriculum (and oftentimes pedagogy), student assessment, academic performance, zero-tolerance policies for behavior, and the overwhelming emphasis on bureaucratic compliance.

As Valentina and Brent note, there has been a historical lack of "disability informed" inclusive education. By this they mean the centering of Disability Studies (DS), Disability Studies in Education (DSE), Critical Disability Studies (CDS), and Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) in all teacher certification programs, along with in-service professional development for all teachers. This phenomenon of non-disability informed education programs and professional development is highly problematic as traditional—and I would argue outdated—special education epistemologies still maintain a strong hold on the field of education in general, stifling multiple perspectives and inhibiting creative ways to develop inclusive practices. Motivated by challenging these limited ways, the authors take on the epistemological and methodological tensions and limitations of how inclusive education is currently conceived of and ways it is enacted from a global perspective.

Within the overlapping fields of special education and inclusive education, Valentina and Brent call attention to the paucity of theories that question longstanding notions of disability, and ways in which race and disability interact. Subsequently, they employ DisCrit and CDS to craft a framework that illustrates structural inequalities within education that are often compounded by other systemic inequities in healthcare, employment, and housing. By using this overarching theoretical framework in their research to engage communities about ways to consider "intersectional, culturally sustaining and contextually grounded conceptualizations of inclusive education" in various countries, the authors invite readers to expand their own thinking about *whys* and *hows* of the very praxis of inclusive education.

Illustrating how the forces of racism and ableism work together in powerful ways, impacting historical, cultural, systemic, interpersonal, and personal realms of experience, they render instances of inscribing "difference/

disability" onto children, youth, and adults, contributing to multiple forms of marginalization. Importantly, based upon their findings, Valentina and Brent articulate many practical ways to engage in inclusive practices that acknowledge, and build upon, intersectional experiences. Together, they cull from professional and personal experiences in the US, UK, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, as well as working with migrants from various African and Asian countries providing contextualized examples of inclusive education from which readers can learn, expanding their own thinking—wherever they may be in the world.

Using DisCrit and CDS also affords discussions about the global legacy of colonialism, and ways in which it continues to shape the politics of cultural and educational landscapes. Additionally, Valentina and Brent acknowledge the power of transnational thinking when considering inclusive education in international contexts, asserting the benefits of having people with disabilities and supporters of inclusive education informing and learning from each other, regardless of their location in the global North or South. By inviting the reader to engage with their work, the authors confront the need for honest conversations about the beliefs of professionals such as teachers, social workers, psychologists, administrators, doctors, and educational researchers, and ways in which the ableism and racism embedded within our history, culture, and social systems, often undergirds their thinking about inclusive education in implicit and explicit ways. As we know, to ignore the forces of ableism and racism contributes to maintaining a race-evasive world view that upholds the status quo.

In closing, Valentina and Brent's collaboration in writing this book is evidence of their ongoing commitment to inclusive education and desire to deepen their engagement with the mutually constitutive forces of ableism and racism. As such, their work serves as a model for cultivating more expansive thinking about improving and refining efforts for inclusive education to grow and develop, guided by ideals for a more socially equitable world. It is my hope that readers will find the book as informative and engaging as I did.

Urban Education, Hunter College, New York David Connor

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I (Brent) acknowledge that some of the content in Chap. 5 (Deaf New Americans) is based on some of my previously published work that I co-authored in 2022 with Professor Michael Schwartz, Monu Chhetri, and Zenna Preli in *Education Sciences* entitled, "Falling through the Cracks: Deaf New Americans and their Unsupported Learning Needs." Chapter 6 is inspired by the DisCrit-informed Person-Centered strategies that we (Brent and Valentina), in synergy with Simona D'Alessio, published in 2022 in *Equity & Education in Education* entitled, "A DisCrit-Informed Person-Centered Approach to Inclusive Education in Italy."

Contents

1 The Future of Inclusive Education 1

2 Inclusive Education, Borderland Regime, and Resistance in Italy 23

3 Learning from the Global South: What Inclusive Education in Kenya Has to Offer the United States 53

4 DisCrit Contribution to Inclusive Policies and Practices in the United States 81

5 The Experiences of Deaf New Americans Accessing Education in the United States 117

6 Moving Forward: DisCrit-Informed Person-Centered Strategies for Inclusive Education 145

7 Conclusion: Toward Intersectional Inclusive Education 169

Appendix A 181

Appendix B 183

Appendix C 185

Index 191

Abbreviations

ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis
ACA	Academic Intervention Services
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ASL	American Sign Language
CBPR	Community-Based Participatory Research
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDS	Critical Disability Studies
Ci3T	Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered
COSP	Conference of States Parties
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DisCrit	Disability Critical Race Studies in Education
DNA	Deaf New Americans
DOJ	Department of Justice
DS	Disability Studies
DSE	Disability Studies in Education
EARC	Education Assessment and Resource Centre
ELL	English Language Learners
ENL	English as a New Language
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
FABI	Functional Assessment-Based Interventions
HEOA	Higher Education Opportunity Act
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IDP	Inclusive Development Partners
IEP	Individualized Education Program

ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISF	Interconnected Systems Framework
LCHCR	Leadership Conference on Human and Civil Rights
MAPs	McGill Action Planning System/Making Action Plans
MIUR	Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Universita' e della Ricerca
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Supports
NCD	National Council on Disability
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NIH	National Institute of Health
NSL	Nepali Sign Language
NYSED	New York State Education Department
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PCP	Person-Centered Planning
PDP	Personalized Teaching Plans (Piano Didattico Personalizzato)
PIR	Professor-in-Residence
PDS	Professional Development School
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
RAP	Refugee Assistance Program
RTI	Response to Intervention
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SIT	Student Intervention Team
SWIFT	Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFD	World Federation of the Deaf
WHO	World Health Organization

List of Tables

Table 6.1	Person-centered planning (PCP)—The MAPs process	156
Table A.1	Chapter 2 Participants' list	181
Table A.2	Chapter 4 Participants' list	181
Table A.3	Chapter 6 Participants' list	182

CHAPTER 1

The Future of Inclusive Education

Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder

The idea of writing a book about the epistemological and methodological tensions and limitations of inclusive education from a global perspective came while working collaboratively on two research projects focused on reframing inclusion through Disability Critical Race Studies in Education (DisCrit) (Elder & Migliarini, 2020; Migliarini et al., 2022). Both projects occurred during an unprecedented time of crisis, characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic, the subsequent economic fallout in which we continue to "survive or succumb" (Walker, 2020, 3rd Paragraph), the global awareness of the impact of anti-Blackness, the overturning of *Roe* versus *Wade*,[1] and the persistence of mass shootings[2] and gun violence in the United States (US). Doing research with educational stakeholders internationally, during such strenuous time, we understood that inclusive

[1] While unknown at the time of writing, it is presumed that the overturning of Roe v. Wade will increase child poverty, teen pregnancies, and subsequently decrease the number of women entering the teaching profession, indeed any profession, as a result of having children. All of these factors (and potentially more) will increase the strain in an already overburdened education system in the United States (Blake, 2022). For more information on Roe versus Wade overturned, see: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/roe-v-wade-overturned-supreme-court-justices-b2116042.html

[2] In addition to all of the things that pre-service teachers need to learn, how do we ethically prepare teachers for the potential reality that they may die alongside their students in a school shooting? This is particularly concerning in the wake of the Uvalde shooting, and the mere existence of Education Week's 2022 School Shooting Tracker (Education Week, 2022)

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education does not completely capture current complexities of inequity in schools. Epistemologies of inclusive education, and their implementation by educational professionals, struggle to keep up with contemporary forms of oppression, which are more insidious when disability intersects with identity markers such as race, language, migratory status, and citizenship. We realized that in the age of "Casino Capitalism" (Giroux, 2014), producing global landscapes of wealth, exclusion, fraud, privatization, surveillance, deregulation, massive unemployment, inflation, debt and repression, the historically loaded notion of inclusive education demands a radical re-analysis and re-conceptualization, more creative methods of inquiry, and multiple and more nuanced languages and discourses to describe it.

When we started working on our second collaborative project, looking at reframing inclusive tools in Italian public schools through DisCrit (Migliarini et al., 2022), we had mapped the tensions of existing models of inclusive education in our home countries, Italy and the US, and Kenya, where Brent conducted his doctoral research. At the start of the second collaborative project, Italy was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cases rose sharply in late February 2020, which led to the country placing its some 60 million residents on lockdown in early March. Italy's numbers peaked in mid-March at roughly 6000 new cases a day, placing significant strain on the medical system, and causing up to 627 deaths in a single day at the peak (Ministero della Salute, 2021). The realities in Italy unfolded in other countries around the world with countries like the United States, Brazil, Russia, and the United Kingdom scrambling to control the outbreak. As the teachers interviewed in our Italian case study affirmed, the pandemic and consequent lockdown amplified pre-existing structural inequalities in education, healthcare, housing, and employment. Clearly, COVID-19 had a significant impact on the learning experiences of students, especially disabled[3] students from migrant backgrounds, as the public support services they needed were significantly eroded.

[3] By "disability," we mean the social and emotional construction of both "disability" and "ability" mediated by political, relational, feelings, affects, cultural, and social factors that both afford and constrain people and students' with impairments agency and their material and psychological well-being (Annamma et al., 2013). Hence, why we use identity-first language (i.e., disabled).

In the height of the first wave of the pandemic in June 2020, on the other side of the Atlantic in the United States, racialized violence against Black Americans led to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others, and sparked anti-racist protests across the United States and around the world. People across the globe took to the streets to resist racialized violence in all of its forms in solidarity with Black Americans. Sadly, statistics confirmed what COVID/anti-racist protesters knew from the start, that Black communities and other communities who have been forced to live on the margins of society have been disproportionately impacted by the intersections of COVID-19, race, ethnicity, nation, gender, class, and disability (Centers for Disease Control, 2020). With the unfolding of these events, renewed public attention was paid to anti-Blackness in education (Dumas, 2016), as well as educational processes of pathologization and criminalization fueled by intersecting oppressions, in the US and internationally (Hernández-Medina & Afaneh, 2022).

Two years after the beginning of the pandemic, we find ourselves living in what seems to be a global society of capitalist monsters, as Giuliani (2020) calls them, with the gloomy background of anthropogenic climate change. Hence, we are morally and ethically compelled to pursue an ambitious project to illuminate how inclusive education should be expanded and transformed to address the impact of contemporary exclusionary forces on historically marginalized citizens. This book is not just a theoretical exercise, it is an attempt to imagine a different *praxical*[4] future for multiply marginalized students and their communities. Because of our personal and professional experiences around the world, and in the United States, and the global awareness raised by the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope this book incorporates global implications of inclusion internationally. Our intention is not to create a false binary between the United States and a monolithic rest of the world. On the contrary. We intend to highlight the strengths and limitations of inclusive policies and practices in the United States and in other countries to showcase the possibilities of, or beyond, inclusive education through a global comparative perspective.

In this introduction, we contextualize the genesis of the inclusive education movement globally and look at international policy documents that

[4] "Praxical" implies the coupling of critical thinking and reflection before all educational agents act within global educational contexts with students at their intersections of power and identities (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Zembylas, 2013).

have solidified this notion. We then present the integrated framework of DisCrit and Critical Disability Studies (CDS), guiding us in exposing potentials, tensions, and limitations of inclusive education, as well as imagining its future development. We emphasize how this integrated framework is indispensable for an intersectional and interdisciplinary refinement of the ideas of inclusion, disability, and diversity in education.

The Origin of Inclusive Education

The concept of inclusive education was brought to the fore in 1994 by the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, in which the authors argued that "inclusive schools are the most effective means of combating discrimination, building inclusive society and achieving Education for All" (UNESCO, 1994, p. iv). Before becoming crystallized in an international policy (i.e., The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD] published in 2006), inclusive education was supported by a movement of people within and outside the United States. People involved with this movement believe that inclusive education can shift schools' cultures and ethos, while promoting students' academic learning, social competencies and skills, and positive peer relations (Artiles, 2013). Initially focusing on students with severe disabilities, inclusive education steadily expanded to include students with high incidence disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994), and students from different cultural backgrounds (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Migliarini et al., 2019; Peters, 2004).

Globally, the inclusive education movement is concerned with the student, the teacher, and the education system. As such, all students can learn, learning is supported by the community, services are not limited by location. Teachers' collaboration, enhanced instructional strategies, curriculum accommodations and additional support in general education settings are also central to the movement (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). Instead of concentrating on the individual deficit of the student, the practitioners in the inclusive education movement focus on, or at least attempt to focus on, the educational system, making sure that local neighborhood schools enroll *all* students, especially those with disabilities (Lipsky & Gartner, 1999).

Despite all these important and common characteristics and beliefs, inclusive education remains a contested concept. Unclear goals and multiple definitions characterize the movement's discourse and research

practices (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). The diversity of definitions and goals create multiple discourses, and often generate confusions in teachers and educationists, as to how to implement inclusive education in practice. Some of these tensions and diverse definitions are explored in this section of the introduction, as we analyze critically the international policies that have introduced the concept of inclusive education, and how they have been implemented nationally and locally in the United States, and in other countries.

The Archeology of the Salamanca Statement

The Salamanca Statement (1994) and its Framework for Action on Special Needs Education paved the way to the education of children identified as having disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs in regular classrooms and settings. It was an inspirational policy that led to the dismantling of segregated education in many countries worldwide (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). It consisted of two main documents: (a) a section on principles, namely the Salamanca Statement, which reaffirmed those identified by the World Declaration of Education for All (UNESCO, 1990), and (b) a section on actions, the Framework for Actions on Special Needs Education, which provided a series of recommendations on how to implement inclusive principles. Nevertheless, both sections were not mandatory legislative measures, and their implementation was mostly left to the commitment and goodwill of policymakers and practitioners who received the Salamanca Statement. Despite its transnational dimension, it was up to each nation to determine the actual endorsement and enactment of the documents (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Hunt, 2011).

Policymakers were left with room for navigating implementation of the Salamanca Statement within their own settings and, using an *archeological*[5] method (Foucault, 1972), it is possible to understand the processes that have led to the existence of diverse and dominating discourses about difference in education and the emergence and possible transformations of current approaches to inclusive education (e.g., the blurring between special and inclusive education). The Salamanca Statement (1994), therefore, provides the historical evidence of why, among all possible discourses, only

[5] An in-depth exploration of the policy document, the socio-cultural and legal conditions that have brought to its framing, and its interpretative evolution in these past 25 years.

some of them became dominant while others were left to the margins (Migliarini et al., 2019).

During the 1990s, two of the most important legacies of the Salamanca Statement were the emphasis on inclusion as an issue of human rights (Rioux & Pinto, 2010) and the shift in the language from integration to inclusion (Vislie, 2003). The new terminology, however, did not correspond to a shift in the paradigm from integration to inclusion.

(D'Alessio et al., 2010; Rioux & Pinto, 2010). The Salamanca Statement was then interpreted as a way of challenging all exclusionary policies and practices in education through ensuring the growth of international consensus of the right of all children to a common education (Vislie, 2003). Despite these aims, the Statement, however, did not articulate any explicit theoretical position supporting the advancement of inclusive education as a systemic change. International statements concerning human rights require that theoretical premises and rationales in which they are embedded are clearly explained, because they are not neutral nor immune from power dynamics within dominant discourses (Medeghini, 2013).

It is undeniable that at the time in which the Salamanca Statement was issued, the focus was to ensure a process of deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities (Migliarini et al., 2019). The task of the Salamanca Statement was to bring together as many supporters as it could to achieve such a goal. This search for supporters regardless of their epistemological positions, distracted the attention from what was required in terms of systemic changes beyond the technicalities of additional provision and equal access to education. Using a human rights framework, instead, required addressing a series of political, economic, social, and environmental barriers (Rioux & Pinto, 2010) that countries would have had to overcome to make inclusive changes. The implications of the Salamanca Statement were problematic. They required a series of fundamental changes at the level of pedagogy, assessment, curriculum, organization, and monitoring measures. In the Framework for Actions, the authors of the Salamanca Statement sought to provide a series of recommendations on how education systems were supposed to change in order to develop inclusion (e.g., flexible curriculum, resources allocation, management), but those fundamental changes were not adequately explained and supported. In this concern, Vlachou (2004) argues that policies are destined to fail when they are not provided with clear indications on how they can

be translated into practice and/or with indications about what sanctions are envisaged in case legislative measures are breached.

When the Salamanca Statement was enacted, some countries were already welcoming disabled students in general classrooms (e.g., Italy and Canada), while other countries were still questioning whether this possibility was a valuable option (e.g., Belgium and Germany). The principle of devolving decision-making on how to implement inclusive education to individual countries, boards, administrators, and schools resulted in the juxtaposition of different meanings and related practices. While the principles of mainstreaming and "integrated education" were clearly widely shared, information about how such principles could be translated into practice remained at the level of possibility of practice (Hunt, 2011).

Although the Salamanca Statement was credited for being the first international policy agreement leading to inclusion, it officially remained a Framework for Actions for Special Needs Education, as the title itself reads. This is evident when the Salamanca Statement indicates that the main focus of the report is children "whose needs arise from learning difficulties or disabilities" (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6). Although inclusive education was meant to cater for all children of a wide range of categories, beyond the category of Special Educational Needs, the Salamanca Statement put the emphasis on one specific category of student difference (i.e., disabled students) while mainstream concerns remained outside the debate. At an embryonic level, Miles and Singal (2010) have begun to question Salamanca Statement's inability to see disability as part of the human condition and to discuss how such a groundbreaking policy failed to take account of intersectionalities and of the multi-dimensionality of discrimination operating with education systems. In contrast, any form of student difference began to be interpreted as a form of pathology (and inferiority) that required to be compensated through the provision of additional resources (Slee, 2007).

Soon after the Salamanca Statement, another important UNESCO document, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) (UNESCO, 1997), sought to clarify the language used in the Statement and officially put an end to the notion of "Special Education" in favor of "Special Needs Education," thus reinforcing the move from segregation to inclusion. It was then that the notion of Special Needs Education began to incorporate other minorities at risk of school failure, beyond "handicapped categories," but still needing additional support (UNESCO, 1997). Extending the target population in need of additional

support in UNESCO documents following Salamanca allowed for the process of mis-identification (Peters, 2004) of students at risk of school failure, such as Roma children and ethnic minorities, to begin. It was then that the seeds of the process of over-representation or SENitization (Artiles, 2013; Migliarini, 2018) of other minorities were planted and are still visible today (Ferri & Connor, 2005). Implementation issues of principles of inclusive education within the boundaries of nation states are also common to the UNCRPD (2006), which we explored in the following section of this chapter.

International Disability Inclusive Education: The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

With the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other large international development organizations like the World Bank and the United Nations pivoting to make all of their projects disability inclusive by 2025 (World Bank, 2018), it is important to understand how we arrived at this point in history. Specifically, we need to look back in time in order to better understand more socially just and ethical ways of moving forward when it comes to disability rights and inclusion. This disability inclusive trend is of particular note to the United States as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990) was the foundation for legally binding international instruments like the CRPD (Heumann, 2020).

The CRPD (2006) was first proposed by Mexico in 2001 by an ad hoc committee to protect the rights of people with disabilities (UNDESA 2022). The Convention was adopted by the General Assembly in December 2006, and not only draws on a human rights framework, but it is also "the first human rights convention of the 21st century and the first legally binding instrument with comprehensive protection of the rights of persons with disabilities" (UNDESA, 2022). Another unique aspect of the CRPD (2006) is that it defines disability through a social model of disability.[6] According to the Preamble of the CRPD, "disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental

[6]The social model of disability located disability within inaccessible social, political, and environmental spaces, rather than within people with disability labels themselves (Marks, 1997; Oliver, 1990).

barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Another defining feature of the CRPD (2006) is the Optional Protocol. Ratifying the Optional Protocol means that, through Article 2 of the Optional Protocol, disabled people or groups from ratifying countries who believe they have had their rights denied can file a complaint with a CRPD Committee after seeking due process in the highest court in their home country. Another benefit of ratifying the Optional Protocol is that there is an inquiry procedure that allows the CRPD Committee with the power to make inquiries into "grave or systematic violations of the Convention" (CRPD, 2006, Article 6, Optional Protocol).

As it relates to disability rights and inclusive education, the CRPD (2006) includes Article 24 (Education), which ensures "States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning" (§ 1). Further, Article 24 states, "Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability" (§ 2a). While of course ratifying countries can interpret and then implement Article 24 in many ways, at a minimum it provides an international and legally binding impetus to justify the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools around the world.

In the United States in 2012, the CRPD was five votes short of getting the two-thirds majority in the Senate. Then, in 2014 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee advanced the treaty but the Senate did not take a vote (The Leadership Conference on Human and Civil Rights [LCHCR], 2020). While the United States has not yet ratified the CRPD, there are critics on both sides of the issue. Supporters of United States ratification claim it would make a global bipartisan statement and align the US to other ratifying counties in advancing the civil and human rights of disabled people around the globe (LCHCR, 2020). Critics against ratification argue that a United States ratification of the CRPD would decrease state sovereignty, weaken the federal government's power to support children with disabilities, and erode parental rights to homeschool their children (National Council on Disability [NCD], 2018). While these critiques are not the case, these perspectives did have an impact on the United States' inability to ratify the treaty (NCD, 2018).

United Nations policies present challenges for their implementation, especially in the global South, because of their often uncritical and dominant language and assumptions (Hodkinson & Devarakonda, 2009; Loprespub, 2020). In this book, we highlight international inclusive education and disability rights projects that have been inspired by the CRPD (2006), and we examine them through the critical lens of CDS and DisCrit, to shed light on the residue of colonialism, and the importance of transnationalism and intersectional identity markers when conceptualizing and implementing inclusion in a specific international context. We believe that inclusive education stakeholders and people with disabilities themselves can benefit from applying similar approaches in the United States.

Theoretical Positioning

Integral to each of these projects that we present in this book has been our framing of them through two theoretical frameworks: (a) DisCrit, and (b) CDS. In this section we briefly introduce each theoretical framework and their implications for inclusive education and disability rights in the United States. Then, in the final section of this chapter, we provide a brief overview of each international project and why we think they are important for United States educators and disability advocates.

Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit)

Integrating insights from Disability Studies (DS) and the social model of disability with Critical Race Theory intersectional power, DisCrit is concerned with addressing the connections between racism and ableism (Annamma et al., 2016). By doing so, it destabilizes canonical representations of disability, mostly informed by medical and psychological lenses, which maintain a deficit perspective on the disabled individual. In the attempt to create a new epistemic authority in the field, DisCrit scholars situate disability in its socio-historical contexts. Thus, biological impairments are analyzed through the "cultural work done in the space between the individual and society" (Artiles, 2022, p. xi). Race and disability are then cultural identities that are produced, and constitute processes of becoming (Erevelles, 2000). A central and defining argument of DisCrit is that deficit thinking about historically marginalized communities, such as Black, Indigenous, and other people of Color is deeply rooted in the mutually constitutive nature of racism and ableism (Annamma et al., 2022).

This framework is particularly useful in exposing the limits and tensions within global understandings of inclusion, and provides the justification as to why learning supports strategies for all students should operate intersectionally. Thus, by exploring the affordances of DisCrit for inclusive policies and practices in different contexts, we attempt to recognize the humanity of historically marginalized communities in the United States and globally in a more nuanced and accurate sense. We emphasize the various forms of oppression that intersect in the daily lives of these communities of students, and consequently affect their behavior, academic performance, relationships, and how they "navigate educational and social institutions with savvy and ingenuity" (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 22).

There are seven tenets of DisCrit that show the possibilities of reimagining inclusive education. Each tenet highlights why curriculum, pedagogy and relationships are conceptualized in hegemonic ways and how they can be reimagined in generative ways for students and teachers (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). First, DisCrit focuses on how racism and ableism are normative and interdependent (Collins, 2011). These mutually constitutive processes are systemic and interpersonal and are often rendered invisible to restrict notions of normalcy to the desired and to marginalize those perceived as "different" in society and schools (Annamma et al., 2016). Once a child is perceived and labeled as different from the norm (i.e., whiteness), they are then imagined as less capable in academic contexts (Annamma, 2018). Inclusive education practices should tackle forms of racism and ableism together, not attempting to respond to one or the other form of oppression that students experience.

Second, DisCrit scholars and values multidimensional identities and troubles single notions of identities, such as race or disability. It acknowledges how experience with stigma and segregation often vary based on other identity markers intersecting with race and disability (i.e., gender, language, class) and how this negotiation of multiply stigmatized identities adds complexities. Multiply marginalized students have a clearer sense of the mutually constitutive processes of oppression, and how these processes are visible within segregated or dysfunctional inclusive spaces. As such, an approach to inclusive education should consider the voices of multiply marginalized students to design inclusive practices.

Third, DisCrit rejects the understanding of both race and disability as primarily biological facts and recognizes the social construction of both as society's response to "differences" from the norm. Simultaneously, DisCrit scholars acknowledge that these categories hold profound significance in

people's lives, as it is evident in the marginalization of students of color or migrant students with disability labels, who are more likely to be segregated than their white peers with the same label (Fierros & Conroy, 2002).

Fourth, DisCrit privileges voices of multiply marginalized students and communities, traditionally missing in research (Matsuda, 1987). Consequently, DisCrit scholars recognize those who have been pushed outside of the educational endeavor through the discourse and practices of special segregated classrooms. DisCrit scholars position multiply marginalized students as knowledge-generators, capable of recognizing interlocking oppressions and creating solutions to those systemic and interpersonal inequities.

Fifth, DisCrit scholars and practitioners consider how historically and legally whiteness and ability have been used to deny rights to those that have been constructed as raced and disabled (Valencia, 1997). Schools have historically functioned as spaces to sort and fix multiply marginalized children, curing them of their disability or problematic behavior (Margolis, 2004). Through the present day, multiply marginalized students—especially migrant students—often attend under-resourced schools where they have limited access to qualified teachers, engaging curriculum, and critical pedagogy (Fierros & Conroy, 2002). Even when attending resourced schools, students of Color are often kept out of advanced placement/gifted classes, where creative thinking is valued (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Sixth, DisCrit scholars and practitioners recognize whiteness and ability as "property," conferring rights to those that claim those statuses and abolishing those who are unable to access them (Adams & Erevelles, 2016). Thus, when students are positioned as less desirable, they are barred access to engaging and accurate curriculum, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and relationships that are authentic (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Seventh, DisCrit supports activism and promotes diverse forms of resistance. Particularly, DisCrit supports diverse expressions of resistance that are linked to or informed by the community, whether that be academic or theoretical, pedagogical, or activist (Annamma et al., 2013). These tenets highlight the importance of resisting the existing state of education, which centers the ideal citizen and often segregates the unwanted into spaces less public (Erevelles, 2014). They also expose how multiply marginalized communities resist white supremacy in various ways. As such, work rooted in DisCrit commits to recognizing the values and gifts of such communities (Annamma, 2018).

This book is informed by each of the tenets described above, and attempts to highlight how each of these tenets traverse spaces, crossing geographical borders, to create transgressive spaces of inclusion. In fact, we adopt DisCrit to offer a nuanced critique of how inclusive education is diffused, borrowed, and transferred from the global North to the global South. We are clear about how nationally and globally, inclusive education should work to dismantle racism and ableism in education and society, name inequity more precisely, and build resistance individually and collectively for more generative futures (Annamma et al., 2022).

Critical Disability Studies (CDS)

In addition to the tenets of DisCrit informing our thinking as we write this book, CDS offers a useful lens through which we also view this critical work. Over 75% of people around the world have had their lives shaped by colonialism, including Indigenous people in the United States. The remaining 25% of the population are people from colonizing countries (Meekosha, 2011). We find a CDS framework important because (a) most of the world have been colonized (Meekosha, 2011), including those that relocate to the United States, and (b) nondisabled people colonize and control disabled people through ableist practices influenced by capitalism and globalization (Meekosha, 2011). By implementing global disability rights work through a CDS lens we are able to frame such issues as social justice initiatives and encourage teachers and disability rights activists to think about inclusive education and fighting for disability rights as a series of decolonizing actions and as a form of activism (Smith, 1999; Warrior, 1995). Additionally, a major tenet of CDS is framing lived experience with disability as a form of expertise. This approach promotes the participation of people with disabilities from the global South in all aspects of life and emphasizes participatory citizenship, including disabled people from the global South who have relocated to the United States.

We have used CDS as one way to connect segregated education practices to larger systems of oppression like capitalism, globalization, neo/post/colonialism, and neoliberalism (Grech, 2011; Meekosha & Soldatić, 2011). We believe this approach is certainly relevant to the United States inclusive education and disability rights landscape, particularly when you consider the increase in the number of forced migrant students in American society, and around the world, and the prevalence of negative racialized global discourses around migrant communities (Dolmage, 2018).

Organization of the Book

We have organized this book along our research trajectories in Italy, the United States and Kenya, focusing on building more critical understandings of inclusive education with communities of students, teachers, and families. As readers will witness throughout the chapters, the work to build more radical notions of inclusion does not stop at the school's gates. Thus, in the book, we include detailed descriptions of experiences and narratives to capture students', teachers', families', and community members' perspectives on the benefits and struggles to "do" inclusive education. We continually refer to "we" as in "we explore," and "we investigate," to emphasize the co-constructive work done with communities in different countries, to research, and to analyze the limitations and tensions within so-called inclusive environments.

In the subsequent chapters, we continue the conversation by spotlighting our various projects around the world. In Chap. 2, Valentina explores the reverberations of the Italian borderland regime and racialization of citizenship on inclusive education policies and practices for students who live at the intersections of disability, race, citizenship, language, and migratory status. Drawing on DisCrit and the postcolonial critique of racism in Italy (Giuliani, 2015, 2019, 2020), Valentina traces the effects of dysfunctional educational ecologies (Annamma & Morrison, 2018) for Black African migrant youth in Italy, while highlighting similarities and differences with struggles happening in other Global North countries, and globally.

In Chap. 3 Brent uses his on-going work on inclusive education in Kenya to show what the global South has to offer for the United States related to doing more impactful work with fewer resources. Specifically, he describes practical community-based participatory research (CBPR)-, CDS-, and DisCrit-informed strategies he has personally applied in Kenya and in New Jersey to highlight how locations in the global South can inform inclusive practices in the global North and vice versa.

Drawing on a qualitative case study conducted in Kansas and in Upstate New York, in Chap. 4, Valentina explores possibilities and challenges of reframing inclusive education policies and practices for secondary schools through the DisCrit lens. Valentina analyzes how United States-based educational stakeholders formulate discourses around race and disability and diversity, more generally, within inclusive policies. Then, Valentina explores how these discourses are translated within school practices. Lastly,

Valentina sheds light on the benefits of applying DisCrit to reframe race, behavior and diversity policies and practices.

In Chap. 5, Brent centers the stories of Deaf New American (DNA) refugees' experiences accessing United States education systems. Through these personal narratives, Brent highlights the tensions multiply marginalized refugees' experience when they attempt to educate themselves in order to find dignified employment, as well as their efforts to ensure their children receive access to equitable and high-quality education. The stories Brent presents in this chapter spotlights the barriers Deaf refugees encounter when they are mandated to take language courses in order to receive benefits and employment, as well as the struggles they experience when they are not approached as equal partners when supporting their children's education. Through this chapter, Brent attempts to amplify the stories of this historically omitted population of Americans who have compelling potential solutions to the barriers they face when attempting to educate themselves and their families in the United States.

In Chap. 6, we present DisCrit-informed person-centered strategies to reframe inclusive education tools used in Italian public schools. Chapter 6 draws on findings from a qualitative case study in Rome, Italy, and several teacher training sessions, to advance practices that inform the design and implementation of Individualised Education Programs (IEPs) and Personalized Teaching Plans (Piano Didattico Personalizzato [PDP]), through non-deficit, intersectional, and culturally relevant approaches. The chapter highlights the challenges that teachers face in including students at the intersections of race, ability, language, and citizenship, in the context of Italy. We intend to create a dialogue between practitioners and scholars, to advance critical thinking about the use of inclusive tools, and the importance of reframing them through the DisCrit framework, rooted in indigenous theory (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Ultimately, this chapter shows the practical applications of an intersectional understanding of inclusive education, which hopefully will inspire practitioners and educators globally.

Finally, in Chap. 7, we reflect on the general assumptions behind existing epistemologies of inclusive education, and their implementation within international policies and practices. Here, we review the content of the book, and the focus of each chapter. We identify the implications of this work, and the content of the book into the future, and highlight what is beyond the content of the book, in terms of theory, practice, and policies. Through the use of critical, intersectional, interdisciplinary frameworks

such as DisCrit and Critical Disability, applied within international contexts of education, we envision an intersectional approach to inclusive education in the United States and beyond. Our argument for an intersectional transnational approach to inclusive education is substantiated by examples of our empirical international research, and the urge for inclusive educators to respond to contemporary emerging crises, such as forced migration, climate change, anti-Blackness, and racial capitalism.

What This Book Is Not

This book is *not* an attempt to cluster epistemologies and methodologies of inclusive education fabricated in the global North and export them into the global South to fulfill "supremacist ontologies" of inclusion (Padilla, 2022, p. 148). We distance ourselves from corporate, international attempts to diffuse, borrow, and impose theory and practice of inclusive education, and its problems, as Sarkar et al. (2022) correctly put it. We stand by Kalayanpur's (2016) argument that the monopolized notion of inclusive education in the global North can become "distorted versions of the original intention," when applied without adequate consideration of local contexts of disability and education by international agencies (p. 20). This book is also *not* about how issues of equity have been glossed over from the inclusive education movement around the world. Although equity is a central concept guiding our research, there are already foundational books that do this work, including *Inclusive Education: Examining Equity on Five Continents* (Artiles et al., 2011).

What This Book Is About

Through this book we do not claim to have all the answers and solutions for a reimagined and equitable inclusive education system globally. What this book *is about* is ways to adopt a reflexive approach on the intersectional integrated framework of DisCrit and CDS in the United States and globally, to produce more nuanced representations and praxis of inclusive education. This book *is about* engaging communities in understanding this integrated theoretical framework, with the purpose of expanding and appraising efforts toward an intersectional, culturally sustaining, and contextually grounded conceptualization of inclusive education, in the United States, Italy and other countries, including throughout the global South. Such preoccupation with maintaining a critical look at our home

countries, United States and Italy, and other countries derives from the necessity to create transnational solidarities. Global alliances and frameworks can help people who do inclusion work in transforming communities and schools, so that societies can be better prepared to face the intersections of racial capitalism and ableism. Ultimately, this book is about pushing our radical imaginary for a model of inclusive education that sustains transformative and expansive notions of justice.

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CHAPTER 2

Inclusive Education, Borderland Regime, and Resistance in Italy

Valentina Migliarini

I thought that I would find a place to live in Italy, a wave of civilization, a welcome that would allow me to live in peace and to cultivate the dream of a tomorrow without barriers or prejudices. Instead, I am disappointed. Having a Black skin in this country is a limit to civil coexistence. Racism is also here: it is made of arrogance, of abuse, of daily violence to those who ask for nothing but solidarity and respect. We in the third world are contributing to the development of your country, but it does not seem to matter. Sooner or later, some of us will be killed and then we will realize that we exist. ("Villa Literno, il ricordo di Jerry Masslo: Ucciso 30 anni fa per razzismo" [Villa Literno, remembering Jerry Masslo: killed 30 years ago by racism]. La Repubblica *(in Italian). 23 August 2019. Retrieved 11 June 2020.)*
—Jerry Masslo, South African Refugee

On Friday 30 July 2022, Alika Ogorchukwo, a Black disabled man, was suffocated and killed with his own crutch by a white Italian man on a major

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shopping street in Civitanova Marche, a seaside town in the Marche region.[1] The fatal assault lasted less than four minutes, bystanders filmed it without intervening to stop the killer, and subsequently shared it on their social media channels. The spectacle of the killing of a Black disabled body, publicly perceived as disposable and *risky* (Giuliani, 2015), serves as a somber reminder that racial violence is endemic in Italy and in Europe, and it is not a prerogative of the United States, as many believe. What is possibly more concerning in the Italian context is the public reaction to this episode of violence and the denial by the police, judicial institutions, and broader public of racial bias as the factor leading to the homicide, which is intimately connected to ableism and unaddressed institutional racism.

Italians maintain a color-evasive approach to race and racism, that is they refuse to acknowledge race, racism and ableism as normalizing and interdependent processes that maintain and reproduce white supremacy (Migliarini, 2018). However, the number of Black bodies killed by white Italians and the dehumanization of African migrants portray a different and more dreadful picture. Jerry Masslow was a South African refugee, who lived through the many hurdles of the Italian immigration system. He was killed while on his seasonal job picking tomatoes by an Italian racist and criminal mob, associated with the Camorra mafia clan, in 1989 in Villa Literno, in the province of Naples. His case deeply affected public opinion on racism in Italy and led to a reform of Italian legislation regarding the recognition of refugee status, which was later published into the Martelli Law (Hine et al., 2009).

Despite being progressive, this law did not change the deeply ingrained racial bias of Italians and their perceptions of African migrants. In the last two decades, Black African migrants[2] have been killed almost on a yearly

[1] The news quickly circulated in all the major international media outlets, for example see thislink:https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/31/world/europe/italy-immigrant-beating-witnesses.html

[2] In light of the tenets of DisCrit, I am very conscious about the language used to describe the migrant communities that I focus on in this chapter. As Benhabib (2000) and Rumbaut (1991) highlight, the motives for migration determine whether a subject is called a forced migrant, because they are fleeing by fear of persecution (political motives), or migrant because they are traveling motivated by the aspiration of better material opportunities. In this chapter, I explicitly use "migrant" as the general term indicating all different reasons determining migration. I believe that all the different classifications between migrant/immigrant/refugees do not do justice to the history and pathway of a person at their intersections of power and identities. Importantly, I reckon that the state-imposed definitions of refugee or immigrant (and conversely illegal or undocumented im-migrant) have social, political, economic, emotional, and educational impact on the life of people at their intersections of power and identities.

basis. Kwame Antwi Julius Francis, Affun Yeboa Eric, Christopher Adams, El Hadji Ababa, Samuel Kwako, and James Alex were killed in the 2008 massacre of Castel Volturno perpetrated by the Camorra mafia clan. Abdul William Guibre, known as Abba, was beaten to death by a father and his teenage son outside of a bar in Milan in 2011. Samb Modou and Diop Mor were shot in 2011, and Idy Diene was shot in 2018 in Florence. Soumalia Sacko, a farm worker and labor organizer, was shot in Catanzaro in 2018. Willy Monteiro Duarte was beaten to death by two young brothers in Colleferro in 2020.

In the aftermath of George Floyd's death in the United States, many Italians took to the streets to resist racialized violence in all of its forms in solidarity with Black Americans. Ironically, they do not seem to believe that Black (African) and Disabled Lives matter even in Italy. During such global post-pandemic crisis, when Italians voted for a party endorsing a fascist agenda,[3] it is important to ask the following questions:

1. What can educational stakeholders promoting inclusive education in Italy and the United States learn from the killings of Black African migrants from 1989 to the present day?
2. In what ways can an intersectional and interdisciplinary framework, such as DisCrit, provide a critical lens for Italian and American educational stakeholders to interpret racial violence and to conceptualize more radical notions of inclusion in schools and society?

In this chapter, I attempt to answer these questions by critically analyzing the reproduction of racial inequalities in education in Italy. I explore the reverberations of the borderland regime[4] and racialization of citizenship on inclusive education policies and practices for students who live at the intersections of disability, race, citizenship, language, and migratory status. The goal is to trace the effects of dysfunctional educational ecologies (Annamma & Morrison, 2018) for Black African migrant youth in Italy, while highlighting similarities and differences with struggles happening in the United States.

In this chapter, I draw on the postcolonial critique of racism and the DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2013) framework to illuminate the limits of

[3] For an overview of Giorgia Meloni's Party "Brothers of Italy" political agenda see: https://www.ft.com/content/530de94d-6aef-45d7-aa8e-a1211284745c

[4] This term refers to the nationalistic political agenda pursued by the Italian Right, and the Left, in recent decades, contributing to form the imaginary of which bodies belong, and which do not belong (see Giuliani, 2019).

Italy's contemporary models of inclusive education for migrant and forced migrant students, especially those labeled with disabilities. I use the Italian feminist postcolonial critique of racism to provide the historical background for contemporary color-evasive discourses of inclusion (Giuliani, 2019). Additionally, DisCrit contributes to show how education stakeholders, under the pressure of neoliberal reforms and compounding hegemonic political and social forces, often practice forms of inclusion that replicate traditional special education models through racism and ableism. Although I rely on all seven tenets of DisCrit, for the purpose of this chapter, I draw on Tenet One, which focuses on ways that the forces of racism and ableism circulate interdependently; Tenet Three, which offers that the constructs of race and ability are built into the social consciousness and that these productions have material consequences; Tenet Six, which recognizes whiteness and ability as properties.

Positionality

During my two decades of work on migration in Italy and Europe, I have engaged with critical theoretical frameworks, such as DisCrit, which have guided me in exposing the power dynamics and entrenched inequities that are often reproduced by inclusive education. My positionality in relation to my research, resonates with Italian migration activist Erri de Luca's (2014) poem *Sono Uno del Mediterraneo*:

> [I']m one from the Mediterranean, which is not South or North, it is not East nor West. It is the liquid stomach between Asia, Africa and Europe. Those who are born on one of its coasts have in their blood an archipelago of people (translated from Italian to English by Migliarini). (p. 20)

Born and raised in the heart of the Mediterranean, I am an English Language Learner and multilingual in Italian, English, French, and Portuguese. It is important to note that I grew up in a society where the constructions of disability, diversity, and education are tied to Western conceptualizations. As a white, able-bodied, young academic, and cis-woman, I hold more significant privileges than the migrant communities, experiencing the violence of colonization, considered in this book. In my research work with migrant communities, I engage with critical epistemologies and methods. I strive to build trust with migrant and disabled

youth by spending time with them, interviewing them multiple times, adopting transparent research methods, being authentic in sharing findings, and acknowledging my own biases.

Exploring the relationship between the borderland regime, racialization of citizenship, and inclusive education for migrant youth born in Italy offer a beginning point. It seems timely to focus on the myth of inclusive education for this particular group, as the tensions that define their citizenship status are located between lines of internal exclusion,[5] differential inclusion,[6] segregation and eventual promotion within social and racial hierarchies (Giuliani, 2015). In this chapter, I continue with an analysis of the ways in which forced migrant youth are disabled and over-represented in the macro-category of Special Educational Needs (SEN). I devote particular attention to the processes by which white monolingual Italian teachers construct migration, citizenship, lack of documentation, and language learning phenomena as signs of disability for forced migrant students racialized as Black (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021). Finally, I focus on examples of resistance and intersectional inclusion promoted by AfroItalian grassroots organizations.

Borderland Regime and the Racialization of Citizenship

Contemporary forms of racial violence, discrimination, and borderland regime in Italy are the product of an historical invisibilization of race. At the end of World War II, when the amendment was made to ban racial laws and concentration camps, processes of "racial evaporation" started (Giuliani & Lombardi-Diop, 2013), and the whiteness of Italians became unquestionably neutral. "Racial evaporation" implies political and social effort to consider race as immaterial, irrelevant, and inexistent, therefore, to be disregarded. Among Italians mentioning race was dissimulated, but race, and its social and political meanings, did not vanish. It remained contained within Italy's figured world: noticed but not voiced (Frisina, 2020). In post-fascist Italy, Western conceptualizations of whiteness and

[5] Referring to the exclusion of mixed-race children in East Africa, born from the abusive relations between Italian soldiers and the local population during the colonial empire, or to the exclusion of the Roma population in the Italian territory.

[6] Referring to migrants (including those born in Italy by migrant parents), asylum seekers and refugees.

heterosexuality as aspirational in terms of beauty, intellectual contributions, music, theater, the arts, as well as architecture, cemented within the idea of the "nation" and "the people" (Arfini et al., 2018). Indeed, they became the foundations of Italian society and State (Mezzadra, 2008).

Neutrality in the construction of whiteness indicates a willingness to render whiteness as an unmentionable description of one's self and others. In doing so, it also heightens the privileges that being White brought and continues to bring in Italy but are not to be explicitly named in public discourse (Giuliani, 2015). While building on historical processes of concealment of race (Giuliani, 2013; Giuliani & Lombardi-Diop, 2013; Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, 2012), I align this chapter with the notion of color-evasiveness (Annamma et al., 2016), and its intersectional endeavor. An expansion of the critique of color-blind racial ideology (Gotanda, 1991) that employs an ableist term to critique normalized notions of disability as a disadvantage, color-evasiveness directly calls into question the presupposed "goodness" of ignoring race (Annamma et al., 2016). Evasion is about avoidance or escape, not about explicitly creating solutions to problems. Color-evasiveness helps us understand how the failure to address systemic violence and material conditions of racism is purposeful. In this chapter I trace how color-evasiveness swept through various Italian institutions, and was taken up heartily in the field of inclusive education (e.g., Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Universita' e della Ricerca [MIUR], 2007, 2014).

The borderland regime in Italy is institutionally operationalized via a line of color that catalogs specific racialized subjects through phenotypic absorbability based on the spectrum of the nation's color boundaries (Cuttitta, 2012). Its roots can be traced in the national unification process at the end of the nineteenth century when the racial character of the emerging Italian nation was contested. The Italian phenotype was carved from the internal North/South divide and its growing overseas empire in Africa (Giuliani, 2015). From 1861 to 1914, Italians' self-identification as white structured the nation's constitution. Whiteness emerged through contrast and relational processes. These processes identified what constituted deviations from the norm to outline implicitly the identity of the self (Nani, 2006; Patriarca, 2010). Through contrast and relational processes, race was modified according to the hegemonic image that served as the general representation of the nation (Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, 2012). Internal and colonial diversity was relegated to racialized otherness, constructed as monstrosity, as absolute deviation from the "norm." Yet, by

occupying the ends of the distribution of the population, diversity became the very element producing "normality" (Giuliani, 2020). Internal and colonial diversity produced the color of the nation, of its sovereign citizens and their racialized privilege (Giuliani, 2015).

Building on historical internal and colonial diversity, the borderland regime in Italy produces not just a single state of exclusion, but an exclusion set that is marked by degrees of proximity to the hegemonic condition. These exclusionary dynamics are rearticulated through migration legislation that governs and policies (forced) migrants' *risky bodies* and *bodies at risk* of "invading" southern shores of Italy (Giuliani, 2020). These dynamics are passed on to their progeny born in Italy, confined in the suburbs of big cities, and dispossessed of their right to Italian citizenship. Exclusions are also reproduced through the lack of decolonization of education and society more generally (Petrovich Njegosh, 2022). This section focuses on the myth of social and educational inclusion for children born in Italy from migrant parents which is directly linked to the current citizenship law. Indeed, contemporary inclusive education policies and practices do not address the educational experiences of (disabled) students born from migrant parents, and regularly residing in Italy.

From Ius Sanguinis to Ius Scholae: Examples of Italian Exclusionary Citizenship Law

"There are no Black Italians," read a sign during a football match in which Mario Ballottelli of Ghananian origins, born in Palermo and adopted by a family from the Lombardy region, was playing. The sign attests to an idea of Italianness and Italian citizenship that draws on hetero-referential and Mediterranean racism[7] (Guillaumin, 1995). Hetero-referential and Mediterranean racism was a discursive practice common in the first years following the Italian unification in 1861, when the newly formed parliament would contrast the idea that Italians were less white than other Europeans, a widespread belief in Northern Europe (Giuliani, 2013). Influenced by ideas of Aryanism adopted during the Fascist era, Italianness

[7] "Intended as a system of racialization that is centered on the Other. A fundamental trait of such a system is the occultation of the Self, of which people have no spontaneous awareness.19 It is the assignment of a specific color (from a darker nuance than white, to black) to the internal/colonial and postcolonial Other that produces—implicitly—the racial identity of the Self" (Giuliani, 2016, p. 5).

was constructed as an "eroticized" Mediterranean-ness, different yet close to Blackness. It was during the Fascist era that new and more powerful racial discourses articulated the difference between the brown Italian body and the Black body of the colonies, relegated the Black subaltern subject to liminal urban spaces, and consequently excluded them from their rights to be citizens of the Italian nation.

Today, this thick line of color has metastasized into a thin and mobile web that contains every aspect of the social and cultural life of the Italian nation. Often, this web gets entangled with the symbolic manifestations of older lines of color, such as the one that separates the North from the South of Italy. Therefore, contemporary notions of citizenship extend juridically only partially to include racialized bodies within the national identity (Giuliani, 2013). Current Italian citizenship law, adopted in 1992 and based on the principle of *Ius Sanguinis*, or citizenship by blood, builds on the racial archive discussed above. Contrary to countries such as the United States of America where citizenship is granted by birth, the *Ius Sanguinis* establishes that Italian citizenship is granted by blood, thus if you have at least one Italian parent (Santagati, 2013). Since its adoption, the law was subject to several political debates due to its exclusionary jurisdiction, especially toward the progeny of migrant families residing in Italy. In fact, children born from migrant parents can acquire Italian citizenship if they were born in Italy, have had uninterrupted residence until when they turn 18 years of age, and have submitted a statement of intent within one year of their 18th birthday. This process however, is complex and difficult to navigate, and claims are often denied the first time around. As a result, some two million people are excluded from the right to citizenship, despite being born and raised in Italy (European Commission, 2022).

Debates over the transformation of this law feels never ending, and the issue resurfaces only periodically in the public debate, and it seems to be always contentious. The proposed reform to adopt variations, such as *Ius Soli* (i.e., birthright citizenship), *Ius Culturae* and its recent variation into *Ius Scholae*[8] (i.e., citizenship rights by school attendance), is not perceived as a political priority and hence it was stopped. *Ius Culturae* and *Ius Scholae* outline a model for granting citizenship to those who have attended compulsory education in Italy. A child born in Italy to migrant parents that have legal residence and has attended school regularly for a minimum of

[8] For an explanation on the Ius Scholae, see https://alleyoop.ilsole24ore.com/2022/06/30/ius-scholae/

five years can acquire Italian citizenship at the request of their parents. This route is also open to children born in Italy if they are aged 12. The persistent political debate coupled with strident resistance to any reform underscores the beliefs that "there are no Black Italians," and that the color of the national identity should be shielded from any "contamination" with Blackness.

The exclusionary nature of the present citizenship law has a significant impact on the life and educational experience of racialized children and students. Despite being born and educated in Italy, racialized students are precluded from voting, becoming teachers, and accessing a variety of jobs and services. Indeed, their freedoms to participate in society are restricted. Even a school trip outside Italy's borders can become an exclusionary experience because of restrictions on visa applications and other bureaucratic issues related to leaving and re-entering Italy. If inclusive education is to be conceptualized intersectionally, then educational stakeholders should campaign vigorously for substantial reforms of the Italian citizenship law. In the next sections of the chapter, I deal with a further manifestation of the Italian borderland regime, through disablement and over-representation of forced migrant youth in the SEN macro-category. It highlights how, like the United States context, Italian inclusive education draws on ideas of normalcy, and "deficit" perspectives of multiply marginalized students.

Including Through "SENitizing": Dysfunctional Education Ecologies for Forced Migrant Youth

Including through SENitizing asylum-seekers and refugee children involves a range of different procedures articulated in the public and school professionals' discourses, which involves positioning subjects as less "able" or different from a predetermined, standardized "norm." SENitizing is a word play involving the use of the initials SEN which in most European countries refers to Special Education Needs. Including through SENitizing describes systems for sorting students into relatively homogenous boxes, while marginalizing those subjects located at the interstices of multiple differences.

In this section, I explore the different kinds of "Including through SENitizing" actions that I have identified from a qualitative study conducted with school and medical professionals, as well as West African

migrant youth, in the city of Rome. I draw on Annamma and Morrison (2018) definition of dysfunctional education ecologies as ones where marginalized students are not positioned as valuable resources and are instead being lost as outflows. In this section, I offer some evidence of how disproportionate outflows occur for forced migrant youth in Italian public schools and society. The analysis of the data presented is influenced by the DisCrit framework (Annamma et al., 2016, 2022), in order to encourage educational stakeholders to take up a more intersectional perspective to inclusive education.

As Harry and Klingner (2014) argue, SEN and inclusion policies and procedures became the ploy to contain subjects whose differences were perceived to be too extreme to serve in the mainstream. The underlying motivation for including through SENitizing is to meet the challenge of an increasingly heterogeneous student and social population by institutionalizing the concept of "individual deficit," and in so doing to reproduce learning as an individual practice, without bringing about educational change in inclusive terms. It is important to be specific about the process of including through SENitizing in the Italian context. This is especially true in relation to the consequences that it can have on the disablement of young asylum-seeking and refugee learners and on the creation of unhealthy relationships between teachers and students in the space of the classroom that is dysfunctional classroom ecology (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

The Research Study

In this section, I draw from a qualitative study I conducted in Rome, in the period between 2014 and 2016, as part of a project funded by the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR). Based on nine refugee services in the city of Rome, in the study, I investigated the intersections of "race," disability and migratory status in relation to the educational and social experiences of forced migrant children. Located within the interpretive paradigm, the methodological approach I adopted was constructivist grounded theory. I collected data through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 27 participants divided in two groups. There were 17 professional participants in the area of education, health care, and social assistance, and 10 asylum-seeking and refugee youth participants, mostly from sub-Saharan West African countries, who were in the process of putting forward, had presented and waiting for the result, or obtained the

result of the asylum application at the territorial commission for asylum.[9] I chose the professionals because of their roles as managers, educators, teachers, social workers, psychologists, neuropsychiatrists and cultural mediators, with a different level of previous work experience in the field of migration. I used pseudonyms for all the participants, as part of my commitment to protecting their confidentiality, and I translated from Italian to English the interview extracts presented in this chapter.

The over-representation of young asylum-seeking and refugee children in the category of SEN is a relatively new phenomenon for Italy, which follows the recent introduction of SEN policies by the Italian Ministry of Public Education, 40 years after the passing of the internationally celebrated de-segregation policy of *Integrazione Scolastica* (Migliarini et al., 2019). This policy already envisaged the participation of all pupils, with or without disabilities, in the process of learning. SEN policies were officially introduced in the Italian context to bring justice and equity for all those learners experiencing school failure and who could not be provided with educational support and provision, in the hope of achieving inclusive education. However, notions of inclusion and inclusive education have been absorbed into the lexicon of mainstream/generalist education where these have been incorporated into the language of SEN and used interchangeably with, or in replacement of, the notion of integration (Armstrong, 2003). The extent of this integration-style inclusion of young asylum seekers and refugees is in practice often constrained by the everyday institutional processes of mainstream schools that, in the absence of a transformatory effort, inevitably exclude supposedly included students (Beratan, 2008).

A significant aspect of "including through SENitizing" of asylum-seeking and refugee children in Italy is identified as labeling, through the use of standardized testing material. Here, labeling relates to, and it is a consequence of, the racial archive, which feeds into teachers' biases, and their lack of training on forced migration. Labeling is often perceived by Italian school professionals as a "normalizing" way for forced migrant children to access quality education. Harry and Klingner (2014) affirm that labeling is the result of the "sticking power of the notion of intrinsic

[9] The Territorial Commissions for Asylum, or *Commissioni Territoriali per il Diritto all'Asilo*, which was established regionally by the Italian government with the purpose of hearing the story of each migrant and evaluating the recognition of refugee status, or humanitarian or subsidiary protections.

deficit" (p. 18). Labeling theorists (Becker, 1969; Goffman, 1963) have long pointed out that when an official designation becomes "reified," it is interpreted as a definition of the person, and it overshadows, even excludes, the numerous traits, abilities, and nuances of the individual. Such labels become, as Goffman (1963) said, the "master status" by which the individual is defined, and they can be seen in the construction of various aspects of identity, including "race," gender and disability. Besides the damage done to the individual by internalization of the label, there is also the possibility that the classification system can operate like a straitjacket, limiting the interpretation and insights of professionals (Harry & Klingner, 2014). These negative effects are particularly likely in the practice of the mental health professions, as we will see in this chapter, because of the overwhelming appeal of science as the basis of psychology and psychiatry, both of which have had a powerful influence on the conceptualization of special education.

Dysfunctional Education Ecology and Racial Disproportionate Outflows: The Italian Labeling Culture

The contrapuntal logics of SEN policies in the Italian context, which tend to focus on the individual "deficit" rather than rendering the educational system inclusive, are particularly evident in the discourses of school teachers and professional participants working in refugee services in Rome, and considered in the study presented in this chapter. Firstly, the majority of Italian professional participants show a significant inclination to "the culture of referral" (Harry & Klingner, 2014, p. 103), which can be defined as the attitude toward and beliefs about children who were not doing well in the general education or social programs, as well as beliefs about special education:

> The majority of refugee children and youth that we used to get in the center were those referred to us by different refugee organizations and institutions that manifested explosive signs, that in psychiatry are called positive signs, positive in the sense that they are manifested… (Giuseppe, Medical Doctor)[10]

[10] The table containing all information about the participants interviewed in the research studies presented in this book, can be found in Appendix A.

> I'm thinking of the boy from Cameroon…; he was here with us, he had some psychological issues, I think depression. After he left our organization, he was referred to the ASL[11] then to a psychiatric center, I dunno what was the diagnosis but then they put him in a foster-care specialized for mental diseases. (Francesco, Social Worker)

Through their quotes above, Giuseppe, a medical doctor, and Francesco, a social worker, provide examples of how the behavior of young unaccompanied refugees is quickly medicalized, without any ecological assessment of the causes of their behavior (e.g. how they have reacted to living in foster care homes, what kind of relationship they had with Italian professionals, what kind of relationship they maintain with their relatives back home) (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

In the excerpt below, Nadia, a pediatric neuropsychiatrist working in a hospital specialized for the migrant population in Rome, offers a rich and detailed account on the referral, and how the schoolteachers or the educators are normally initiators of such a process. She also mentions her personal activities in the schools that have referred the children, and her relationship with the family (when present) of the children:

> My work deals with behavioral problems, learning difficulties and development issues, speech problems, psychomotor impairment and so on for children and for teenagers and also for unaccompanied and refugee minors … There was a forced migrant girl in the first year of middle school that had socialization issues and learning difficulties. In the beginning she was sent here by the school because of her learning difficulties … so I met the teachers, the social worker, because her family lives in an occupied building, and after these meetings I met the family with the cultural mediator. … During the first meeting with the family only the dad wanted to be present, but then thanks to the work of the cultural mediator we managed to engage her mom too, and we started working on family roles, and at school we encourage the girl to play with groups of Italian children, and we manage to offer her homework support … We also work to create a better atmosphere in the classroom, distributing the 'Carte del Viandante' with children's drawings related to the migration experience to also understand the girl's expectations from her schooling experience…

[11] The local health service.

Nadia's discourse seems to reinforce the widespread perception of the neuropsychiatric and psychological assessment as the "idealized rock" of special education, the point at which hard science determines whether a disability is present (Harry & Klingner, 2014, p. 111). It also shows how traditional psychology is a "soft" science, in that when a referral actually get considered, as in the case of the forced migrant girl above, there seems to be "soft places" that inform, influence and at times distorted the outcomes of conferences on special education eligibility and placement: school personnel's impressions of the family, a focus on intrinsic deficit rather than classroom ecology, teachers' informal diagnosis, dilemmas of the disability definitions and criteria, and philosophical positions (Harry & Klingner, 2014, p. 111).

Between the lines of Nadia's discourse, it is possible to see the power of school personnel's explicit belief that "dysfunctional" families (e.g., a patriarchal forced migrant Muslim family living in a squat in central Rome) are the direct cause of children's school difficulties. Such power seems to have also affected referral, assessment, and placement outcomes of the forced migrant girl. While Nadia, as the neuropsychiatrist, was accorded the greatest status in placement deliberation, it looks as if teachers' judgment is a significant and influential factor in assessment outcomes. As it is possible to see in Nadia's accounts, the two patterns above seem to converge, in that although the neuropsychiatrist's judgment is almost always definitive, there is a considerable team pressure on psychologists to meet their colleagues' expectations (Annamma et al., 2016). Finally, Nadia's therapeutic philosophy appears to be based on the ecological approach to the girl's learning difficulty, and sustained by a strong motivation to dismantle the "labeling business." However, Nadia confirmed the diagnosis of learning disability, and she seemed to have adopted various strategies, both inside and outside the school context, in the attempt to "protect" the "'vulnerable" girl from falling through the cracks of the educational system.

Importantly, Nadia's ecological view and anti-labeling attitude appears rather different when describing the case of an unaccompanied asylum-seeking boy from Egypt, sent to the hospital unit by the school teachers, who have informally diagnosed him with dyslexia:

> Last Thursday we saw, with a cultural mediator, a boy from Egypt. He is 16 years old and he came here because of a suspected dyslexia but we don't have a specific diagnostic material standardized, so we had to do an

> evaluation with some classic tests, the Cornoldi's tests, with the help of the cultural mediator and with tests in Arabic and more or less we have confirmed the hypothesis of the previous diagnosis of dyslexia within a situation in which the boy never went to school nor his parents, so it is hard to establish if the disorder is caused by environmental or structural factors … This evaluation is anyway useful because it gives the boy, his family and his teachers at school a strategy and an indication to develop an individualized education program, to prepare him for a certain autonomy…

Nadia's discourse in the above passage highlights the interworking of some identity markers (i.e., gender, age, race, disability, migratory status) and their impact on the SEN assessment and placement. It shows the "fine line" between intrinsic and environmentally induced deficits (Artiles, 2013, 2022), reveals the contradictory philosophical orientation of the neuropsychiatrist, and sheds light on the attitude of labeling forced migrant children as a way to guarantee them the same quality education as Italian students (Migliarini et al., 2019). Most importantly it highlights the arbitrariness of the certification process (Collins, 2011; Hart et al., 2010).

The assessment and SEN placement of the Egyptian boy was certainly influenced by the fact that he is a boy, a teen, an Arab, a forced migrant, and from a family history of poor schooling background. All of these elements render him as a potentially difficult subject to "fit" in mainstream educational settings. Alternative forms of educational support and socialization, adopted by Nadia for the previous girl, seem to have been dismissed a priori in the case of the Egyptian boy in virtue of the immediate assignment of a label. The intersectionality of his identity markers has rendered him not only a "bad student," but also an "impossible learner" (see Collins, 2011; Youdell, 2006). Although Nadia was initially uncertain about the intrinsic versus environmentally induced deficit, reflected in her statement that "We try to look at whatever is around the child, and we consider the child is the result of different components, individual, relational, this was revolutionary…."

She eventually contradicts her very own anti-labeling and anti-stigmatizing attitude, when assessing dyslexia with standardized texts in Italian, with a quick and superficial translation of the Arabic cultural mediator. Nadia formally complains about the limitation of standardized Italian tests, as many psychologists do in other socio-cultural contexts (see Harry & Klingner, 2014), but her preference for the Cornoldi's tests seemed,

rather hypocritically I would add, to be intertwined with her views of the relationship between testing contexts and children's cultural and linguistic experiences. Nadia seems to pay merely "lip service" to the "good theoretical models," underpinning the anti-segregation policy of *Integrazione Scolastica*, that she had described in the interview, by confirming the teachers' initial diagnosis of dyslexia. The arbitrariness of assigning to the Egyptian boy a categorical disability was motivated by the pressure of "becoming autonomous" imposed by the current neoliberal model of integration, and by a significant concern for the boy to "fit" the educational homogeneity of the school system.

A further example that shows Italian professionals' belief in special education labeling as a way for normalizing the bodies at risk of young asylum-seekers and refugees and for guaranteeing them with access to quality education, but indeed masking a scope for educational homogeneity, is offered by Zara, a teacher and an educator operating a youth recreational service open to all children and young people in central Rome:

> I can tell you my experience in school and here, my experience in the school where I work, a vocational training school that prepares young people to become factory workers, inside my school there are a lot of foreign students, both migrants and asylum seekers … I mean in my school we train factory workers and thanks to the learning disabilities we managed to provide for them appropriate education…

Here Zara shows how the learning disability label offers a green card for Italian teachers to have extra support to teach migrant youth, and for them to have "better" education opportunities. Clearly, such better opportunities are to be found only in vocational institutions, preparing migrant youth to mostly blue collar jobs. Thus, a widespread belief among professional participants in this study seem to be that labeling young asylum-seekers and refugees as having SEN, and the consequent individualization of learning, would improve the child's rate of progress, enable him to access a good quality of education and finally being transformed into a more acceptable learner (Pane et al., 2014).

These quotes from Italian education stakeholders and medical professionals seem to converge into what is stated in DisCrit's Tenet One. The intertwining forces of institutional racism and ableism in place during the process of labeling reinforce the norms of white supremacy and signal those students deemed incapable in body and mind (Annamma et al.,

2013). This predicament indicates DisCrit's Tenet Three, since the social constructions of both race and ability are structuring the lived experiences of these migrant students in both the Italian and the United States contexts. Contrary to what Giuseppe affirmed in relation to the lack of support for disability diagnosis within refugee receptions centers, Francesco shows how for the boy from Cameroon.

"Playing the Disability Card": Rendering Disabled Asylum Seekers Less Authentic

In the context of new and more sophisticated forms of borderland regime, and of an increasingly diffused model of neoliberal inclusion, shaped by racial capitalism, of bodies at risk of migrants, disability is seen by some of the Italian school professionals as a convenient means for obtaining welfare benefits. While most of the professional participants considered "Including through SENitizing" as a procedure to essentially maintain educational homogeneity without transforming the school curriculum in inclusive terms, Alessandro, Francesco, and Giuseppe discredited migrant children's disability. In so doing they rendered disabled young asylum seekers and refugees as "less authentic" than their forced migrant peers. Particularly, Alessandro expresses such a controversial interpretation of young asylum-seekers' disability when referring to a young Black boy and asylum seeker diagnosed with depression, named here Deion. The boy's behavior was seen as "problematic," and according to Alessandro he, as many others do, was "playing the disability card" to obtain a place to sleep and welfare benefits, given the "suspiciously" long course of his depression and the apparent invisibility of the disability:

> I'm thinking of the boy from Cameroon … He was here with us, he had some psychological issues, I think depression. After he left our organization, he went to the ASL[12] then to a psychiatric center. I don't know what the diagnosis was but then they put him in a foster care specialized for mental diseases. He told us that they gave him pharmacological therapy and now he's better. When he left us it was a trauma for him, because of his depression; while he was here he was fine, we had created a welcoming environment, but he couldn't manage to be sent away from here … Now we think he's much better. We normally keep a close relationship with the teenagers that leave our organization, a lot of the time they come to visit us … In that

[12] The local health service.

> case [the case of the boy from Cameroon], the problem was less visible and the symptoms of the depression came out at a later stage. During school he was perceived as distracted and unmotivated, always sitting at the back of the classroom with his hat and headphones, listening to music. This, we think, was caused by the bad reception he had before coming to our organization. When I used to go to talk to the teachers at the school, the depression issue would not come out. Ehm, I have my theory, you know, maybe it's just my paranoia but I think that this boy had a very bad reception in the first place and so he would see leaving the shelter as something very bad that would lead him to psychological problems … And so this [the depression] might have become a way to obtain or negotiate or deal with the social worker a place to sleep. The disability was a card to play to obtain welfare benefits, because neither him or his sister knew where to go to sleep … The disability has become a means to obtain benefits; I mean, I'm sure that there are children that they really need support, but there are others that are, yeah a bit sneaky.

As reported by Alessandro, none of the professionals working in the services where Deion was hosted was able to clearly identify the origin of the depression and to actually create a supportive network to prepare him for the difficult transition into adulthood and into a new reception center. Therefore, the presumably good networking with other local services, promoted by current models of social integration, does not seem to be applied in practice, and especially when there are cases of disability. Alessandro argues that the intervention to deal with Deion's depression was limited to the period in which he was hosted in the semi-autonomous foster care home. Although Alessandro reported that the boy was feeling better during the time in the foster care home, no mention was made about the kind of actions that the team of professionals would implement to handle the depression. Importantly, Deion was attending a local mainstream middle school, but none of the school personnel was raising the problem of the depression or was motivated to further investigate his behavior and find a suitable solution. In Alessandro's account, the teachers reported Deion's behavior as being lazy, distracted and "always sitting at the back of the classroom." Their reaction to the boy's attitude seems to fit within the argument of Gillborn et al. (2012), which highlights the contested nature of disability and racism in education where Black students find themselves denied access to reasonable accommodations for impairments. Thus, in this case it seems that in addition to giving labels, racism can withhold them.

Deion's lack of social, cultural, and economic capitals (see Harry & Klingner, 2014; Gillborn et al., 2012), and the general improvisation-style reception of forced migrants in Italy, has led him into a pharmacological treatment to "normalize" his behavior. While rendering his disability a convenient tool for welfare benefits, the white Italian professionals have displayed their technology of subjection, and consequently subjectified him as a "potential" deviant. In such a schizophrenic neoliberal context, the use of pharmacological therapy remains the only solution to make a depressed asylum-seeking Black boy less "dangerous" for Italian society. Thus, by being perceived as "sneaky," Deion is rendered outside the educational endeavor and the idealistic model of the citizen, ready for the job market competition and for being part of a healthy and strong population (Annamma et al., 2013).

A DisCrit-informed analysis of the quotes above shows how educational stakeholders and medical professionals operate to dehumanize and devalue body minds within the hegemonic order of inclusive education for migrant and forced migrant students. As the quotes show, the dehumanization occurred through personal, interpersonal, structural, and political dimensions of their intersectionality, but also discursively and materially (Migliarini, et al., 2022). Crucially, DisCrit expands the analysis of the data presented in this chapter by showing how oppression is normalized by the policies and practices of whiteness and ableism that are reproduced in inclusive education ideology in Italy.

Exoticizing Refugee Children's Disabilities

At the time when I conducted this study, professionals working in Italian schools and refugee services had a very limited, if not totally absent, understanding of the intersections of disability with race and migratory status. As part of their ultimate objective to include through SENitizing, some of the participants in the study presented here exoticized asylum-seeking and refugee youth's disability. Exoticizing disabilities of *bodies at risk* is a practice applied to facilitate understanding between different cultures in relation to disabilities. Yet it seems to extend the meaning of the difference between the "civilized" medical culture and the "primitive," that is to say, between the "first" and the "third" worlds (Willinsky, 1998). Rooted in Eurocentric cultural and medical perspectives, some of the professionals seem to believe that, due to their illiteracy and disrupted schooling backgrounds, young asylum-seekers and refugees may not understand

the complexities instilled within "typically" Western sciences like psychology or neuropsychiatry. It is common, then, for medical professionals to cooperate with cultural anthropologists and cultural mediators to translate, and transpose, the purpose of the psychological therapy within refugee children's traditional cultures. Nadia's account offers an interesting example of such practices:

> The fact that we have an anthropologist is very important for the service, since a lot of labeling stems from a Western approach to mental health, and I mean this can be useful to coordinate with local services, but not to establish a trust relationship with the families and with the refugee children … Like in the case of the boy from Nigeria with behavioral problems, I mean we have created a positive relationship with the family, and especially with the mother, when we told her that the boy is the reincarnation of his ancestor, and she said it was true, so she trusted us … So you see we try to put the person at the center, we try to recognize the traditions of different cultures as equally important, to create a good relationship and to not pathologize the children…

Throughout the interview, Nadia has demonstrated a contradictory attitude, characterized by the willingness to dismantle the "labeling business" of forced migrant students in Italian schools and the actual attribution of SEN labels to provide children with a strategy for "autonomy" (i.e., as a strategy to fulfill neoliberal pathways of integration). The passage above captures these tensions and shows her attempt to criticize the over-attribution of disability to migrant children, due to a Western medical model, while highlighting the importance of cultural anthropologists to transpose Western disability categories into elements of migrants' traditional culture (Sarkar et al., 2022). However, it is not clear how Nadia reconciles the position of identifying with forced migrants' cultures of origin with the demands, the decisions, and the structures, not only of the social and health services, but also of the Italian society as a whole. Significantly, Nadia does not provide further information on how the Nigerian boy and his family has coped with the above diagnosis, during the time following the therapeutic treatment. Thus, we are left wondering how such transposition of behavioral problems into the traditional aspects of Nigerian culture can actually help the boy and the family navigate the Italian educational, social, and medical system, and whether there could be a more sensible model to understand the origin of the boy's behavior and avoid easy labeling.

Other participants, operating in mental health services, use reference to "magic" practices within refugees' culture of origin in order for the "illiterate" unaccompanied asylum-seeking teens to understand the purpose of psychotherapy:

> We realized that with these illiterate children it is very difficult to carry out the psychological therapy. They just can't do it, so we have to adapt our therapeutic techniques and we have to start from their experiences, from their realities, we have to start from the ground and talk about concepts that they can understand. If you start talking about psychotherapy they won't understand, perhaps you could mention something related to 'magic,' otherwise they'll start asking you why they are here and when they can get papers … Thank God we have the cultural mediator that explains everything to them and that makes them understand that the therapy has nothing to do with their legal papers…

Between the lines of Orazio's discourse, a social worker operating in a youth center in Rome, it is possible to extrapolate what Willinsky (1998) has framed as the educational legacy of European imperialism. Such legacy seems to unconsciously shape professionals' idea of education, science, and psychology, and it continues to play a small but significant part in what the professionals have learned and will learn of the world, and of forced migration in particular. The imperialist vision of Orazio is evident in the dichotomy between the enlightened science of psychology, and the "exotic" practices supposedly pertaining to illiterate subjects coming from formerly colonized countries. Orazio seems to automatically downgrade young asylum-seeking and refugee children's intellectual resources, by affirming the difficulty that the white Italian professionals find in having to explain psychology and psychotherapy to illiterate forced migrant children and youth. In response to such intellectual deficit, Orazio adopts a sort of hypocritical sense of empathy toward refugee teens, manifested in her utterance "we have to start from the ground." It seems as if figuratively, and maybe practically, she locates herself and her identity as a white, Italian professional, in a higher scale of intelligence and knowledge.

Additionally, Orazio reduces the cultural mediator to almost a neocolonial tool, who has to present European culture to fellow citizens through the filter of "exoticized" aspects of their own culture. In Orazio's conceptualization, the practice of exacerbating exotic aspects of asylum seekers' culture of origin seems a compulsory requirement for cultural

mediation, which has to perpetuate the hierarchical status quo of the metropolitan colonizer (i.e., Italian institutions) and the new colonized (i.e., forced migrants) (Giuliani, 2015). In the perpetuation of unbalanced power relationships between colonizer and colonized in the host society, asylum-seeking and refugee children's culture is discredited and simultaneously "exoticized" and used for strategic forms of including through SENitizing.

Interestingly, Cheikh, a West African cultural mediator, presents a significantly different account on how he explains issues related to psychotherapy to asylum seekers and refugees in the service where he works:

> I explain to the people I meet here about the service and what the therapy is about … I tell them the doctors here will give them advice to continue their lives, respecting their privacy … and if they trust them they would feel better … I tell them that we also have psychiatrists and that if they have sleeping problems they might give them some medicine to help them … I explain everything we do here because we don't have psychology. I think people have no idea or information about psychology … Sometimes I tell them the psychotherapist is a conciliator … You know, I am really committed to making the patients understand that our service is a serious one…

Cheikh has been working in his role for approximately four years. Because of his identity and personal migration history, he was himself exposed to some forms of racism, and suspicion in relation to his capacity to do his job. In fact, he was the only one, among the professionals and cultural mediators, to undergo a formal job interview and probation period for its position. While most of the white Italian medical professionals joined the service "by chance," or through "personal contacts," Cheikh's work and approach to cultural mediation have been scrutinized for at least two months, as he reported. Despite this, he has been the only one avoiding making reference to exotic aspects of forced migrants' culture. He stated that for the sake of his job he provided a clear account of what psychotherapy is and what the asylum seekers and refugee teens (and adults) should expect from the therapy. When attempting to give a definition of the psychotherapists to forced migrants, he used the term "conciliator," and he stressed the importance of building a relationship of trust with the therapist. From what he reported, Cheikh seems to me professional, competent and on top of his duties, even if the stories that he hears, often from fellow citizens, are controversial and could put him in a

difficult situation because of his own proper nationality and origins. Finally, Cheikh's discourse seems automatically to fall outside any predefined imperialistic and Eurocentric ideologies that flourish among other professionals in mental health services.

It seems useful to note that Italian professionals' attempts to explain disability and psychotherapy to forced migrant children and youth through "exotic" elements, thanks to the help of cultural anthropologists or cultural mediators, does not seem to lead to the dismantling of a medicalized and individualized approach to disability. As Oliver (1990) argues, where anthropologists have discussed disability, it has been within a framework derived from health and illness, and dominated by the medical model, with, of course, few exceptions (see Edgerton, 1976; Farber, 1968). This is because most anthropologists have internalized the personal tragedy theory of disability and have therefore seen disability as a non-problematic category and not one to be subjected to critical analysis. The central problems, therefore in trying to provide an adequate and empirical account of disability cross-culturally, stem from the paucity of existing material and the location of what material there is within personal tragedy theory and the medical model (Oliver, 1990).

Different Contexts, Same Story: The United States Approach of Including Through Individualizing

Italy and the United States are characterized by different processes of policy making, implementation, and educational reforms. Nonetheless, comparative research on inclusive education policies and practices (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021) offer a glimpse of the similarities in the conceptualization of inclusion for migrant children by professionals in contemporary neoliberal economies. While Italy is experiencing the disablement of migrant subjects perceived as "*risky*" and monstrous (Giuliani, 2015, 2020), the same phenomenon has been happening in the United States during the last three decades (Sleeter, 2010). At present, the United States is characterized by an individualized service delivery approach for migrant students, driven by neoliberal principles such as standardized assessment, compliance, and student performance (Migliarini et al., 2019).

Despite several attempts to transform education in inclusive terms, in both the United States and Italy, the system is unchanged. Indeed, both countries attempt to "fit" diverse children in education via exclusionary practices (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021). In light of the current issues that

are affecting the lives and educational experiences of migrant and forced migrant youth at the intersections of race, disability, language, and migratory status in Italy and the United States, I end this chapter by highlighting grassroots forms of resistance by AfroItalians, as a reverberation of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. Particularly, I focus on grassroots and community organizations, whose aim is to address racism and multiple forms of oppressions within Italian institutions and society.

Conclusion: Resistance from Within Activism and Intersectional Inclusion

In a social and political atmosphere poisoned by neo-fascist rhetoric that portrays migration as a threat and migrants as monstrous bodies invading Western civilization, many AfroItalians, other multiply marginalized communities, and Italians have organized and formed grassroots and community organizations to fight against racism, discrimination and all the manifestations of borderland regime discussed thus far. At a time when institutions and political parties pay lip service to principles of equity, the resistance to the status quo operated by such grassroots organizations represent a crucial action toward transformative justice and intersectional inclusive education. *Razzismo è una Brutta Storia* was born in Milan in 2018 through the vision and work of Giacomo Feltrinelli, a book editor, and the Feltrinelli bookshops with the purpose of dismantling racism and various forms of discrimination. The organization is composed of scholars, activists, teachers and educators, Italian, AfroItalian, and from other backgrounds, committed to implement radical decolonial work in Italian society. It was under the sponsorship of this organization that in 2021, I conducted a workshop on inclusive education. I introduced teachers from two secondary schools in Milan to the DisCrit framework, and we focused on positionality and power relations in the classroom. As a result of very interactive sessions, the teachers had the opportunity to reflect and learn DisCrit informed person-centered strategies (see Migliarini et al., 2022). Consequently, they felt more confident and prepared to support the needs of migrant and forced migrant students, living at the intersections of race, language, and disability.

In the spring of 2022, *Razzismo è una Brutta Storia* invited me to consult for the project *CHAMPS, Champions against Afrophobia,*[13] financed

[13] https://stop-afrofobia.org/

by the European Union. I had the pleasure to sit down with a number of young AfroItalians, brought up in Italy and often excluded from the right to be citizens, discussing their experiences of racism and ableism in Italian public schools. Together, we explored possible strategies to rethink the curriculum and improve the professional development of white Italian teachers. The strategies draw significantly on the DisCrit and Raciolinguistic frameworks and, in the near future, they will be published in a framework to be distributed in schools and educational institutions. All of these projects led by Black activists are a testimony of the active work of many young people that are committed to change the Italian education system, by centering the perspectives of those who have been kept at the margin.

Alongside *Razzismo è una Brutta Storia*, there are other organizations such as *Festival DiverCity* and *Italiani Senza Cittadinanza* that work tirelessly to promote diversity in Italian society and campaign to change the citizenship law. In a country where antiracist work has been historically cast as a "white solidarity movement" (i.e., with both Marxist and Catholic undercurrents) (Hawthorne & Piccolo, 2016, p. 2), the emergence of grassroots movements led by AfroItalians represents a major disruption to the operations of the borderland regime. *Festival DiverCity* was born in Milan in 2018 from the idea of Cameroonian doctor Andi Nganso, with the idea of creating an open and safe urban space to talk about differences. Key aspect of this organization is that of creating spaces to reflect on diversity in all its nuances in Italian society. Finally, it sets itself as the place of continuous education over intersectional issues.

In this chapter, I attempted to explore racial inequalities in the context of Italy, and their impact on inclusive education policies and practices. I adopted the DisCrit framework to explore the reverberations and repercussions of borderland regimes and racialization of citizenship on inclusive education policies and practices for students who live at the intersections of disability, race, citizenship, language, and migratory status. My goal was to trace the effects of dysfunctional educational ecologies (Annamma & Morrison, 2018) for Black African migrant youth in Italy, while highlighting similarities and differences with struggles happening in the United States. I began the chapter by exploring the relationship between the borderland regime, racialization of citizenship and inclusive education for migrant youth born in Italy. I attempted to show the fractures in inclusive education that deny full participation for Black African migrant youth. I underscored the tensions that define their citizenship status that are located in internal exclusions, differential inclusion, segregation, and

eventual promotion within social and racial hierarchies (Giuliani, 2015). I analyzed the processes through which forced migrant youth are disabled and over-represented in the macro-category of SEN. I paid particular attention to the processes by which white monolingual Italian teachers construct migration, citizenship, lack of documentation, and language learning phenomena as signs of disability for forced migrant students racialized as Black (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021). Finally, I focused on examples of resistance and intersectional inclusion promoted by AfroItalian grassroots organizations.

Through this chapter, I highlighted the instability of existing inclusive education practices in Italy, particularly for forced migrant youth and reified the very purpose of the borderland regime. By attending to history, context, and power through the DisCrit analytic lens and drawing on the consistent work of AfroItalian activists, it is possible to create new vocabularies and analytical opportunities to deepen our understanding of disability, race, migration, and inclusive education. The integration of the social model of disability with Critical Race Theory's intersectional power illuminates the tensions and disconnects in the Italian context.

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CHAPTER 3

Learning from the Global South: What Inclusive Education in Kenya Has to Offer the United States

Brent C. Elder

My purpose of writing this chapter is to articulate how working in Kenya has reframed my own thinking about inclusivity and the journey toward inclusive learning both in the United States and in countries in the global South. I have found that one way to make more equitable access points in schools for disabled students in the United States is to learn from resilient, resourceful, and creative teachers (and other stakeholders) in countries where they have faced such realities for a long time (Elder & Odoyo, 2018).

Oftentimes, when I am asked about what I do for a living, the conversation goes like this,

New Person:	*Oh, you're a professor? What do you profess?*
Brent:	*Inclusive education and disability rights. Both here [in the United States] and in other countries.*
NP:	*Interesting. Like where?*
B:	*I have worked in western Kenya most often.*
NP:	*Uh … Like you live there?*
B:	*Yeah, sometimes.*

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NP: *Is it safe? Where do you stay? You work in schools there?*
B: *Yes, very safe. I feel safer there than in the United States. Typically, I live with my colleague's family in western Kenya. Yes, I work with teachers in schools there.*
NP: *I can't even imagine what schools there are like. The level of poverty in Africa is scary. It must be a real struggle there. They are lucky to have you there.*

While this conversation is an intentional merging of many similar discussions, I have had about working in the global South[1] over the years, the main points are the same: (a) the global South seems "scary," and (b) schools in places like rural western Kenya are dismal, and are in need of "help" from people from the global North. Of course, many places can seem scary for many reasons (e.g., the gun violence throughout America), and there are countless schools, both in the United States and around the world, that are under-resourced. By "under-resourced," I mean that schools with next to no additional resources are not inherently poor, nor filled with low-achieving students. These under-resourced schools are products of structural inequities that have often been caused by strong (and current) legacies of racism and colonial practices (Elder, 2016; Hall, 1990; Mwaura, 2005). From my experiences in these schools, while under-resourced, are filled with teachers who are able tap into students' existing funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and utilize existing resources to maximize student learning. When it comes to schools in countries in the global South, like Kenya, it is often assumed that these schools would greatly benefit from a charitable intervention from the global North in the form of donated school materials, monetary donations, clothes, and expertise from Northern scholars like myself.

Not only is this assumption extremely problematic, in this chapter, I argue that the education system in the United States has a lot to learn from inclusive education stakeholders in countries in the global South like Kenya. Like any country, Kenya has its struggles with education. However, from my experiences working there since 2010, I believe there are resilient, resourceful, and creative stakeholders (i.e., disabled and

[1] In this chapter and throughout this book, I use terms like "global North" and "Western countries" to reference wealthy countries that have violent colonizing histories (e.g., Western Europe, the United States, Japan). In contrast, I use "global South" and "Southern countries" when referring to countries that have been colonized and exploited by countries in the global North (e.g., the Americas, much of Africa, Australia, Asia).

nondisabled students, their families, teachers, administrators, and disabled and nondisabled community members) whose approaches to disability rights advocacy in their communities have transformative potential in the United States and beyond.

Positionality

In graduate school, I learned I had to be upfront with my positionality as a Western, nondisabled, white, educated male conducting work in a "post-colonial"[2] country. My positionality is inextricably connected to Northern perspectives on inclusive education and disability. Given my privileges as a non-colonized, nondisabled, white, educated, cis-male, I do not claim to represent colonized people. However, I strongly believe in the importance of transnational collaboration so that historically marginalized and colonized people have allies committed to decolonizing practices outside of their respective communities (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Aware of these privileges, I understand my positionality allows me to engage in this work, but only through my own partial Western lens. Through my research enacting decolonizing methods, I actively critique how my work may perpetuate neo-colonial and/or marginalizing systems. My hope is that my colleagues and collaborators, including disabled students and their families, view me as an ally who centers their lived experiences of disability in my work, and as one who actively values their local ways of knowing. While my positionality as an outsider is unavoidable since his epistemological foundations come from my experiences in the Northern academy, I do have extensive experience conducting transnational community-based participatory research (CBPR) and decolonizing research around the world. However, being able to articulate my positionality in this way took years to develop.

While I was presenting at one of my first conferences, a white professor from my university (rightfully) had a lot to say about my whiteness and my research in Kenya. Following the presentation of my paper to a room full of people, the question and answer section of my presentation went something like this:

[2] The impact of colonialism remains and does not "end" even if a country is "post"-colonial (Hall, 1990).

Professor:	*Your work is problematic.*
Brent:	*Um … OK (starts sweating). In what ways?*
P:	*You're too white to do this work.*
B:	*Well, I am working with my Kenyan colleague and I try my best to center the interests of the local stakeholders in inclusive education.*
P:	*Your work is problematic and inherently neocolonial…*

While I did not appreciate this professor's blunt delivery, and her critique was absent of tangible things I could *do* to decolonize my work in Kenya, the interaction had a significant impact on me. Her comments made me think more deeply and critically about my praxis both in the United States and abroad. She was right, I did not state positionality at the outset of my presentation. This is something I have since learned to do within the scope of any work I do. Reflecting on this experience eventually led to a publication (see Elder & Foley, 2015) where I unpacked the gist of what this professor said and am now able to more clearly articulate how I conceptualize my positionality and the things I represent as I work in the United States and around the world.

To make clear my positionality, and to acknowledge my related privileges, during presentations I usually show a picture of myself standing with a group of my Kenyan colleagues. Then, I ask the audience to describe any differences they notice. I hear responses like,

"Your colleagues are dressed more formally than you."
"You are significantly taller than everyone else" (I am 6′8″/2.032 meters).
"You are white."

While these are all accurate responses, I respond with,

Yes, I am white and have to acknowledge the troubling legacy of what people who look like me did to this country. We have to acknowledge the history of colonial violence enacted by white people in Kenya in order to collectively create more equitable ways forward.

One clear colonial legacy I see frequently in schools are classroom posters that say,

No speaking mother tongue.

Another example is when I sit drinking tea with teachers during breaks from teaching. When I am in post-colonial spaces, my graduate school professor is right. I need to be hyper-aware of what I represent. It is my responsibility to leverage my privileges so that my Kenyan colleagues and I can find more socially just ways forward. It is imperative that we openly discuss the histories of colonialism and their modern day manifestations so that we center the narratives of people who have been historically oppressed. In this case, that means using the privileges from my position as a white academic (e.g., grant funding, co-authoring publications) to apply decolonizing methodologies through Critical Disability Studies (CDS), Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit), and CBPR-informed practices in ways that allows stakeholders to decide who best to apply these privileges (if at all) in local communities. To do all of this means we, myself, and stakeholders in local Kenyan communities, have to engage in sustained dialogue and subsequent actions that positions local knowledge at the center of all we do. This means we must co-construct notions of what inclusive education means locally, then set collective priorities based on stakeholder insight, and subsequently leverage scarce existing community resources to find creative ways of creating access points for all students in inclusive classrooms.

Northern Countries Learning from Kenya

So, what does all of this have to do with the United States (and other countries in the global North)? From my experiences in western Kenya, I have learned that on the surface the barriers to inclusive education seem disparate. However, upon closer examination, I find that these educational challenges in Kenya are actually similar to those in the United States and are masked in a different "costume" so to speak. Sure, there are more resource- and material-related barriers for disabled students accessing inclusive education in Kenya than in the United States. However, there is a richness in their community and a strong willingness to collaborate in Kenya that I find very rare in the United States. This communal approach to participation in schools for disabled students helps to identify and remove barriers to inclusion, and in my experience, means there is less red tape related to taking immediate inclusive action. When I work in schools

in the United States, I leverage my experiences in Kenyan schools to take a similar CBPR-based approach to inclusive education-oriented collaboration, so we can start with community values and routinely reflect on actions to enact sustained inclusive change (see Elder et al., 2021). I believe this approach is vital not only because schools in the United States face perpetual budget cuts, but also because schools are becoming increasingly diverse due to global conflict and forced migration.

In the next sections, I introduce how CDS, DisCrit, and CBPR intersect in Kenya, and describe the contexts of inclusive education in both Kenya and the United States. I then connect the promising inclusive practices in Kenya and how they inform and connect to my domestic work in public schools in the United States and offer potential ways forward related to teacher education and school-university partnerships. I conclude the chapter by discussing the implications of applying some lessons learned from Kenya in the United States.

CDS, CBPR, and DisCrit in Kenya

As noted in Chap. 1, CDS and DisCrit have informed my work in various locations around the world. In this section, I describe how I have applied these theoretical frameworks to my work in Kenya, and how I apply these frameworks in the United States.

Recognizing that formal British rule "ended" in Kenya in 1963, and that many of those colonial legacies still exist (e.g., devaluing Indigenous languages, perpetually under-resourced schools, high-stakes British-influenced national exams), it is important to have a mechanism to talk about these realities when engaging in transnational inclusive education work (Elder, 2015). It is also critical to acknowledge the impact of capitalism (Meekosha, 2011), colorism (Mathews & Johnson, 2015), and the neo-colonial systems of power that value capitalism over community, competition over collaboration, and promote a globalized neo-liberalism that continues to oppress and devalue indigeneity and diversity (Hall, 1990; Mwaura, 2005; Zembylas, 2013). For my work in Kenya, this meant developing inclusion committees at local schools that are comprised of a wide range of inclusive education stakeholders (e.g., disabled and nondisabled students, their parents, teachers, administrators, and disabled and

nondisabled community members) (Damiani et al., 2016; Elder et al., 2021). The communicative structure allowed members of the committee to use disability as the "space from which to think through a host of political, theoretical and practical issues that are relevant to all" (Goodley, 2011, p. 157), and to try and enact lasting inclusive change that bears in mind the legacies of colonialism, colorism, capitalism, and other systemic factors I noted above.

Centering the perspectives of disabled students and their families are intersectional tenets of CDS (Meekosha, 2011), DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2013), and CBPR (Elder & Odoyo 2018). These inclusion committees also allowed for sustained discussions about what disability and inclusion means in Kenya (Elder, 2016), and for us to identify the ways in which disabled bodies in Kenya are colonized by nondisabled people through capitalism and globalization around the world (Meekosha, 2011). These committees also provided a forum through which a rights-based and social justice framework can be established and then put into practice through a lens of DisCrit-informed activism (Annamma et al., 2013). In western Kenya, our approaches to the development of inclusive practices were based on CBPR. This approach means that participants in CBPR-informed projects underscore community collaboration as a way to develop practices that have immediate and clear application and benefit to local communities (Israel et al., 1998; Stanton, 2014).

Community-based participatory research approaches began with scholars like Paulo Freire (1970), whose collaboration with oppressed populations contributed to the development of participatory research methods (Barinaga & Parker, 2013). Freire (1970) claimed that the banking model of education (i.e., teachers filling up empty student minds with knowledge) only prepared students to uncritically comply with oppressive teaching approaches that served to maintain systemic oppression. Freire believed that through an active process of dialog and reflection that social and political change could occur. This participatory reflexive process is what Freire called praxis. Through this praxis is how Freire felt historically marginalized populations could live more self-directed and socially just. These cycles of dialog and reflection are the foundations of participatory research (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Schön, 1983), and of my work in Kenya (Elder & Odoyo, 2018).

Participatory research can serve various purposes and be conducted in a variety of ways (Wulfhorst et al., 2008). It can be an approach (Sims & Bentley, 2002), a method, a paradigm (Finn, 1994; Guevara, 1996; McTaggart, 1991), a model (Guevara, 1996; Sims & Bentley, 2002), a framework (Guevara, 1996), or a particular lens through which to view the world (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Participatory research is conducted *with* rather than *on* local communities, which requires collaborators to lead with inquiry that comes from participants' lived experiences (Bamberger & Cahill, 2013; Bhattacharya, 2008; Jurkowski, 2008; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Ochocka et al., 2010; Whyte, 1989; Winkler, 2013; Wulfhorst et al., 2008). For example, in my experience, this meant inviting disabled people from the local community to participate in these conversations from the outset, many of which acknowledged they had never been asked to do such a thing before. This also required accommodating their access needs related to transport, compensation for their time and expertise, considering their spoken and written language access needs, and assurance that they would remain in control of their stories even as we published the findings from our collective work (see Elder et al., 2022).

When approached as a research model, Wulfhorst et al. (2008) note that participatory research promotes participants to guide the direction of research. This means that local participants lead the initial design, formation of research questions, research activities, and the application of outcomes within the targeted community. When resources allow, the research participants conduct the data analysis as well. Implementing forms of participatory research can challenge Northern approaches to scholarship as they emphasize facilitating the co-production of transformative outcomes by both the researchers and project participants (Barinaga & Parker, 2013). These practices connect to Tenet 7 of DisCrit (activism) (Annamma et al., 2013), and the notion in CDS that decolonizing actions are a form of activism (Smith, 1999; Warrior, 1995).

In the next sections, I discuss the contexts of inclusive education in Kenya, and highlight the barriers and promising practices emerging there. I repeat the analysis within the United States context drawing on promising practices in New Jersey. Then, I explore the opportunities that emerge from these analyses highlighting the reciprocal opportunities for growth and development in the context of both countries and contexts.

Inclusive Education in Kenya

I have conducted transnational research[3] on inclusive education in western Kenya in various forms since 2010.[4] I collaborate with my long-time friend and colleague, Benson Oswago, who not only works in the local Ministry of Education as a representative for the Education Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) and establishes and implements initiatives related to inclusive education. These initiatives often revolve around community and parent engagement on development of inclusive education practices and inclusive teacher education (see Elder et al., 2022), and have been funded by small doctoral grants from Syracuse University, where I attended graduate school as well as the Fulbright US Student Program.

This Luo region of western Kenya is an "agrico-pastoral-fishing society" where the number of livestock is a sign of status and wealth, and crops include common beans, sorghum, wheat, and millet (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976, p. 11). This is a patriarchal community where kinship and interpersonal connections and caring for others is highly valued. In practice, this means relationships rooted in respect are critically important. One guiding Luo principle in this region says, "Every relationship and action is definable [sic] in terms of honor and good name" (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976, p. 42).

Promising Inclusive Education Practices in Kenya

With the multitude of barriers complicating the development of inclusive practices in Kenya, coupled with the domestic (e.g., Constitution of Kenya, 2010) and international mandates (i.e., CRPD, 2006) for enacting inclusive education, it has been important for us to ask ourselves *how* we will do this work rather than *if* we should. This is a subtle but important shift in thinking which has shaped our practices in western Kenya. The debate around inclusion (i.e., the *"if"*) is not productive and the impetus for such practices are based in law and years of research. Focusing on the *"how"* has freed us from the debate and helped us focus on what we *can do* in the face of significant barriers to education for disabled students. Also, acknowledging the history of colonialism and disability oppression in

[3] According to Ward et al. (2021), "Transnational research involves research in one country that benefits that country, and where the findings are compared to the extant studies in the larger field" (p. 342).

[4] For more about how I became involved in this particular region of Kenya, see Damiani et al. (2021), Elder (2021), and Elder et al. (2022).

Kenya underscores the urgency of action, and why redistributing power to inclusive stakeholders who are routinely marginalized is foundational to CDS—(Elder & Kuja, 2018) and DisCrit-informed (Annamma et al., 2013) decolonial inclusive action.

Inclusion Committees

One of the first steps we did to begin developing locally relevant inclusive education practices in western Kenya was to develop inclusion committees (see Damiani et al., 2016). We purposefully constructed inclusion committees "as a potential innovative strategy and a critical element of community reform toward disability awareness, and to increase access to primary school education for students with disabilities" (p. 865). Participants were asked to collaborate on the project by my Kenyan colleague Benson, and the committees included: (a) representatives from the local and national Ministries of Education, (b) teachers and administrators in primary and special schools, (c) disabled and nondisabled community members, and (d) parents of disabled and nondisabled children. The following questions, rooted in CBPR, guided our development inclusive practices: (a) How does the formation of an inclusion committee impact students with disabilities accessing primary school education? (b) How do community-based participatory approaches impact how disability is constructed and supported in western Kenyan communities?

Through qualitative interviews with committee members, what we found was that the inclusion committees were a communicative and collaborative structure that "was the catalyst for action on the ground" (Damiani et al., 2016, p. 879). The members of the committee also, "led to the finding that even within a short period of time, a small group of inclusive stakeholders created more access points to inclusive education, and established momentum toward the creation of sustainable practices to benefit disability-related community awareness" (Damiani et al., 2016, p. 879).

Teacher Education in Kenya

In addition to needing to have the community direct the work related to inclusive education, teachers and administrators noted they needed ongoing in-service educational opportunities in order to meaningfully include students with disabilities in their schools (see Elder et al., 2015).

Having members of the inclusion committees identify teacher education as an actionable priority allowed us to design teacher education opportunities that targeted both attitudinal change *and* implementation of inclusive practices simultaneously. I co-designed the teacher education sessions Dr. Michelle Damiani and my Kenyan colleague, Benson Oswago, and the sessions included "four days of content, two days of unobserved independent teacher practice in their respective classrooms, and two days of teacher observations over the course of two weeks" (Damiani et al., 2021, p. 5). The desired outcome of the sessions was that teachers would feel comfortable enacting inclusive practices utilizing existing resources in their classrooms.

The inclusion committee helped identify research questions that guided the design and implementation of the teacher education sessions, which were: (a) In what ways does teacher education on inclusive instructional strategies build teacher capacity and preparedness to support diverse learners in primary school classrooms? (b) How can providing teachers with knowledge of legal responsibilities and instructional strategies have an influence on developing sustainable inclusive practice? (c) How does providing teacher education organized through a disability studies' perspective (e.g., social model of disability and education as social justice) translate into inclusive outcomes for students?

Our findings from qualitative interviews with teachers following these teacher education sessions suggested that with relatively small amounts of teacher education, we can move beyond certain barriers to the development of an inclusive education system in Kenya (Elder et al., 2015). These teacher education sessions helped build the capacity of teachers and administrators, while focusing on all students of the classroom community without segregating students on the basis of disability. We witnessed teachers immediately applying new inclusive instructional approaches in their classrooms. These findings "challenge criticisms of inclusion and the notion that attitudinal barriers preclude any efforts to effect change in practice" (Elder et al., 2015, p. 15). Additionally, the outcomes of this study demonstrate that in a short time and among a small sample of dedicated teachers, administrators, and Ministry officials, a culturally responsive approach to implementing inclusive learning strategies proved beneficial for meeting the needs of diverse primary school students in western Kenya. Finally, from a social justice and human rights' perspective, this study might also develop an expanding awareness and acceptance of

disability as human diversity that contributes to more positive cultural attitudes toward disability and inclusion.

Barriers to Inclusive Education Practices in Kenya

While this Luo community is tight knit and there are many promising inclusive practices emerging in the region, Nthia (2009) identifies limited financial and material resources, inaccessible and inadequate school facilities, a scarcity of qualified teaching personnel, and insufficient support from the Ministry of Education as significant barriers to inclusive education in this region. Nthia (2009) further noted that in addition to a shortage of qualified teachers, there are even fewer resources to hire specialists and additional staff to support disabled students' needs. In addition to the dearth of material support, Kochung (2011) acknowledges that inclusive policies are not enforced which amplifies the existing barriers to inclusive education in Kenya.

According to the National Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2018–2022 (Ministry of Education, 2018), the high cost of schooling and the lack of adequate teacher education, contribute to both disabled and nondisabled students not attending school. Related to the costs of students attending school, the government has increased funding for education in recent years. The World Bank (2022) reported that the Kenyan government spent 19% of their annual expenditure on education in 2018. In 2020, the Kenyan Parliamentary Service Commission reported that government spending on education increased to 29.4% (KSH 497B ~ $4.1B USD) in both 2019–2020 and 2020–2021. This equates to approximately $14.20 USD for primary school students, and $222.40 USD for students in secondary schools (Ngware, 2019).

Forced Migration in Kenya

In addition to fiscal and material barriers to inclusive education, another complicating factor when it comes to accessing (any form of) education in Kenya is nation, ethnicity, and forced migration. According to Adepoju (2016),

> Over 31 million Africans live outside the country of their birth, the majority within the African continent. In fact, the majority of migration is intra-regional or intra-African, especially in west and southern Africa, and only about 25 percent of African migrants go to Europe. (p. 1)

Of this 31 million, Kenya received about 551,000 of those refugees who fled their countries of origin due to issues related to ethnic and religious conflicts, environment-related disasters, low-quality education, and limited employment opportunities. Upon relocation, these refugees usually land in under-resourced neighborhoods with similarly limited opportunities related to healthcare, housing, education, and employment (Adepoju, 2016).

In a more recent report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2022a) cited that the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region is home to approximately 4.95 million refugees due to man-made conflict and natural disasters. As these people flee their countries of origin, they land at refugee camps like Kakuma and Dadaab in Kenya. The UNHCR (2022b) reported that Kenya was host to 555,183 asylum-seekers and refugees (i.e., 233,648 in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Settlement; 233,805 in Dadaab; and 87,730 in urban areas).

These statistics and realities relate to CDS in that global conflict and forced migration will only increase with climate change (World Bank, 2020), and competition resources will force disabled people into extreme poverty (Grech, 2011; Meekosha & Soldatić, 2011). As people flee their countries of origin, they more than likely acquire visible and invisible disabilities from the trauma of dislocation (Elder, 2015). They will also more than likely land in refugee camps and cities where they do not have access to basic life necessities, let alone inclusive education, which means they will live in extreme poverty, and be susceptible to acquiring more disabilities (World Bank, 2020). These realities are exacerbated by the fact that some of these refugees are fleeing ethnic and religious persecution, and thus those intersectional identity markers put them at increased risk for marginalization and persecution (Sarkar et al., 2022).

Above, I have provided a few examples of the impacts of CDS- and CBPR-informed practices that created more access for disabled students in primary schools in western Kenya. These examples of promising practices came about after years of engagement and qualitative interviews with disabled students, parents of disabled students, disabled community

members, teachers, administrators, and members of the Ministry of Education. In the next sections, I shift focus to the context of inclusive education in the United States, and show how I've used my experiences in Kenya to inform how I have developed inclusive education practices in New Jersey.

Inclusive Education in the United States

I began my career in education in residential facilities for students with multiple and complex disabilities in California (see Elder, 2021). It was because of the abysmal living conditions and low expectations for education in that facility that I became an advocate for inclusive education. Once I completed my teacher education program, I began working in an upper-middle class public elementary school where we developed a strong inclusive program for students who in California are labeled as "moderate/severe" in terms of their disabilities. I quickly realized that many fiscal and material resources were wasted because many people do not understand the complexities involved in inclusive education, nor how to implement effective and sustainable practices. This was supported by the inclusive statistics in California where statistics on inclusive education have been sub-par for years. Specifically, in 2018, California was one of the states with the highest rates of placing students in separate classes (National Council on Disability [NCD], 2018). In the same report, California placed 54.07% of disabled students inside regular classes 80% or more of the day, 20.05% of disabled students inside regular classes 40–79% or more of the day, 21.54% of disabled students inside regular classes less than 40% of the day, and 3.31% of disabled students in a separate school or residential facility.

When I started working in public schools in New Jersey as I began my first academic job at Rowan University in 2016, I found the numbers there similarly alarming. New Jersey had (and still does) one of the lowest rates of inclusion in the country (NCD, 2018). In 2018, New Jersey placed 45.99% of disabled students inside regular classes 80% or more of the day, 27.30% of disabled students inside regular classes 40–79% or more of the day, 14.72% of disabled students inside regular classes less than 40%

of the day, and 7.19% of disabled students in a separate school or residential facility (NCD, 2018). These statistics in California and New Jersey, which are both states with considerable resources, show that disabled students are not being educated on an equitable level with their nondisabled peers across the country.

The statistics in California and New Jersey are not in alignment with inclusive legal mandates like IDEA (2004) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), which both helped establish the rules and requirements to ensure that all students have access to equal educational opportunities and outcomes. Still, disparities remain between students of color and white students in achievement, in disproportional representation in segregated special education classrooms, in dropout rates, and in discipline and referrals (Zion & Blanchett, 2011). Additionally, students of color are three times more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts (Nieto, 2015). These disparities point to the need for professional development programs that use disability studies approaches aligned with social justice and critical theories (Ashby, 2012).

Promising Inclusive Education Practices in the United States

Since 2016, working as a professor-in-residence (PIR) in a New Jersey public school has allowed me to fill the inclusive education and DisCrit gaps in PDS literature (see Damiani & Elder, 2023; Elder, 2019, 2020; Elder et al., 2021; Woodfield et al., 2021). Specifically, as a PIR, I was able to develop a PDS steering committee (i.e., a structure similar to the inclusion committee in Kenya) to guide the direction of the development of inclusive practices at my PDS school site.

PDS Steering Committee

Given the historic lack of disability studies-informed (e.g., disability studies, disability studies in education, and DisCrit) inclusive education research in PDS literature, my first step in filling this gap in literature was to provide a roadmap that articulated how we developed a PDS steering

committee as our mechanism for identifying inclusive education goals, forming a plan of action, and then actively reflecting on and adjusting our practices to remove barriers to participation for disabled students at this school (Elder, 2019). Similar to the inclusion committees in Kenya, our PDS steering committee consisted of 23 teachers and administrators who created a year-long plan of action to develop sustainable inclusive practices. To gauge progress on inclusive goals, the PDS steering committee met monthly to reflect on progress, and to identify next action steps. Additionally, I conducted qualitative interviews at the end of the school year to better understand the work we had done, and where we were headed in the subsequent school years.

The results of the efforts of the PDS steering committee included sustained engagement in various activities to increase the number of students with disability labels in inclusive classrooms. While the PDS steering committee did not necessarily have the language of disability studies to describe their goals for students, "the members of the PDS steering committee consistently expressed interest in removing structural barriers to improve inclusive education supports so students with disability labels could access more inclusive settings" (Elder, 2019, p. 26). Through intentional PDS steering committee meetings and reflections, the committee members took actionable steps to dissolve barriers to participation for disabled students, which is a similar outcome to the work of the inclusion committees in Kenya (Damiani et al., 2016).

Intentionally Merging PDS, Disability Studies in Education (DSE) and DisCrit

Following my first year as a PIR and using the PDS steering committee as a mechanism through which I could intentionally infuse a DSE perspective into inclusive education, our focus was to actively begin including more disabled students into general education settings (see Elder, 2020). Like inclusion committees in Kenya, the PDS steering committee was the foundational structure that sustained this work. While the PDS steering committee was beginning to understand how to apply DSE into their work related to desegregation at this school, we were not explicitly labeling our work as "DisCrit." However, due to the disproportionate representation of disabled students of color in self-contained classrooms at this school, the PDS steering committee developed a structure of "action plan meetings" where they identified two disabled students of color at each

grade level and systematically provided proactive and sustained bridges out of segregated settings and into inclusive ones (Elder et al., 2021).

We scheduled action plan meetings three times throughout the school year. These meetings occurred at regular intervals and included the disabled student and their parents/guardians, and related members of the IEP team. These discussions focused on what was going well, what needed more support, and what educational structures needed to be adjusted (or dissolved) to meet evolving student needs (Elder et al., 2018). From four rounds of 1:1 interviews with PDS steering committee members, we found that "that teachers, administration, and staff were dedicated to taking observable actions to support more students with disability labels in inclusive classrooms" (Elder et al., 2021, p. 15). As a result of this foundational DSE work, it has allowed us to evolve as a school and PDS steering committee to be more intentional about infusing a more critical PDS and DisCrit-informed lens into our current work (see Damiani & Elder, 2023). In other words, we have evolved from a DSE framework and into a more intentional DisCrit-informed framework of action. This sustained work on DisCrit-informed inclusive education has allowed us to frame PDS (i.e., school-university partnerships) as one viable way through which schools across the United States can take similar approaches so disabled students of color can receive more equitable inclusive education outcomes (see Damiani & Elder, 2023; Elder & Borrelle, 2022).

Teacher Education in the United States

After becoming an inclusive education teacher, I became convinced that our systems could never become inclusive unless we prepared teachers to become inclusive educators. What drew me to working at Rowan University was the opportunity to work directly in public schools through the Professional Development School (PDS) Network (Rowan University, 2022). Professional development schools provide the opportunity for researchers and teacher educators like me to work alongside pre- and in-service educators in schools. Our ongoing PDS networks thrive on (a) preparing pre- and newly hired teachers in classrooms; (b) helping practicing in-service educators to continue to learn through their practice and new findings from research; (c) engaging in collaborative research efforts to advance educator knowledge about learning; and ensuring that the collaborative work is dedicated to producing improved K-12 student achievement (Leftwich et al., 2020). Participating in this network allowed me to

work in various capacities one full day a week as a PIR working on barriers to inclusion for disabled students at my PDS site.

As I began reading PDS literature, it became apparent that there was a dearth of PDS research on inclusive education, DisCrit, and CBPR. I viewed my position as a PIR as a perfect opportunity to implement some of the effective DisCrit- (Annamma et al., 2013) and CBPR-informed (Elder & Odoyo, 2018) strategies we implemented in Kenya in the context of New Jersey. Because of this opportunity Rowan's PDS network has offered as a way to apply lessons learned in Kenya in a New Jersey school community to increase access to inclusive education for disabled students (see the *Promising Inclusive Education Practices in the United States* section above).

Barriers to Inclusive Education Practices in the United States

Like Kenya, there are many fiscal barriers to inclusive education in the United States. Nationwide, school budget cuts are perpetually looming, and doing more with less is the name of the game. In the United States, a recent study found that the United States education system is underfunded annually by $150 billion. This equates to roughly $5000 per student and disproportionately impacts districts with high populations of Black and Latinx students (The Century Foundation, 2020). While students of color are certainly not provided equitable access to quality education across the board in the United States, when disability is considered, disabled students of color are disproportionately represented in segregated special education classrooms (Annamma et al., 2013).

According to Parrish (2002), African American students are three times more likely to receive intellectual- and behavior-related disability labels, and two times more likely to be labeled as learning disabled when compared to their white counterparts. Similar national trends related to disproportionality have also been found by other researchers (see Fenton, 2016; Gillborn et al., 2016; Kozleski, 2016; Mahon-Reynolds & Parker, 2016). Given these disproportionate realities and the gap in graduation, and increased discipline for disabled students of color, there is an urgency to apply DisCrit-informed activism (Tenet 7, Annamma et al., 2013, p. 11) from stakeholders like myself. Swift action is needed by those, who like me, hold positions of power and privilege within teacher education programs in the United States.

I personally see these race-related barriers to inclusive education daily at my PDS site. Before I enter a self-contained classroom (in any school in New Jersey), I recite the following in my mind,

> *Close your eyes, and imagine what you are about to see. I believe I will see a classroom of between 10–15 students, who are mostly disabled students of color. A majority will be disabled boys of color with behavior-related disability labels, there will be a few disabled girls of color with intellectual disability-related labels, and one or two white boys or girls with learning disability-related labels.*

Sadly, a vast majority of the time, my presumptions are correct. I make this point not to shame the teachers I work with at my PDS site and throughout New Jersey, but to underscore the reality that we have a terribly long way to go to make schools more inclusive and equitable for all, and particularly for disabled students of color. Further, as outlined by the NCD (2018) report, the entire United States needs to do better for disabled students across the board.

Forced Migration in the United States

In addition to issues related to segregation and disproportionality based on race in special education in the United States, the school population is only getting increasingly diverse. Forced migration is not only a complicating factor for education in Kenya. According to the United States Department of Homeland Security (2020a),

> A total of 11,840 persons were admitted to the United States as refugees during 2020, including 5142 as principal refugees and 6698 as derivative refugees. The leading countries of nationality for refugees admitted during this period were the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo), Burma, and Ukraine. The United States provided protection to an additional 31,429 individuals who were granted affirmative or defensive asylum during 2020, including 16,864 individuals who were granted asylum affirmatively by DHS, and 14,565 individuals who were granted asylum defensively by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). An additional 1530 individuals received derivative asylum or refugee status while residing in the United States based on a relative's refugee or asylum grant, and 2528 individuals who approved for derivative asylum abroad and were issued travel documents that allow their travel to the United States. (p. 1)

This means that 90,956 refugees and asylum-seekers came into the United States in 2020 alone. These numbers do not include the 707,362 people who immigrated to the United States and obtained "lawful permanent status" in 2020 (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2020b, p. 5).

Connected to the related section above, people of color are immigrating from or fleeing their countries of origin, and a large number of them are arriving in the United States, a country that continues to struggle with racialized violence and disparities (Migliarini et al., 2022). Even without taking into account the global realities of forced relocation, people of color in the United States receive a separate and unequal education (Erevelles, 2000). As noted in previous chapters in this book, this means that we have much work to do when it comes to creating more equitable and socially just educational opportunities (and beyond) for disabled people of color in the United States. In the next sections, I conclude by discussing some promising CDS- and DisCrit-informed practices that I have enacted in south New Jersey.

Conclusion: Connections Between Barriers in Kenya and the United States

As I have noted above, while Kenya and the United States face vastly different resource- and material-based challenges when it comes to supporting students disabled students in inclusive classrooms, the United States has a lot to learn from Kenya when it comes to building inclusive communities in under-resourced schools. Additionally, just because Kenya is considered a "Southern" country, that does not mean that there are not similarly resourced schools in the United States. Consider Erevelles' (2011) work where she provides a critical parallel between disability and the existing poverty-related conditions exacerbated by Hurricane Katrina in the United States. Through this work, she articulates that intersections of race, poverty, and disability are not relegated to one location like the global South, and instead expresses that stereotypical conditions typically associated with the global South (e.g., helpless, poor, uneducated) are often found throughout the global North but in a different "costume." For example, according to the United States Census Bureau (2020), Mississippi (18.7% ~ 536,535 people), Louisiana (17.8% ~ 802,040 people), and New Mexico (16.8% ~ 346,455 people) have the highest

percentage of people living in poverty. While the realities in which these people living in poverty live may seem markedly different, these numbers will only grow in the United States as global conflict continues and environmental threats continue (World Bank, 2020). This means, through a global perspective, that we have no choice but to examine what has worked related to CDS-informed disability and inclusive education practices in the global South, and see how we can infuse that with effective DisCrit-informed practices in the United States.

In this chapter, I have discussed how CBPR approaches in Kenya have influenced the inclusive education structures and supports I have developed in New Jersey. I have also articulated how the school-university partnership promoted by Rowan University's PDS Network has led to sustained collaboration with a public school with administrators and teachers who are committed to proactively and systematically desegregating their school through disability studies-informed practices. One potential way forward to promote both CDS- and DisCrit-informed CBPR practices *and* school-university partnerships, which would be beneficial to teachers in Kenya as well, is for federal funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to focus on sustained global North-South teacher exchanges where teachers from countries like Kenya can be constructed as the experts on implementing inclusive education practices in under-resourced schools.

As teachers from the United States witness firsthand what inclusion can look like in contexts like rural western Kenya, they can participate in CDS- and DisCrit-informed CBPR practices initiatives to better understand how to leverage existing community resources to promote inclusive practices. Not only would this reframe the global South from a place of needing "help" to a source of expertise, but it would also help teachers who work in low-resourced schools in historically marginalized school districts (e.g., Camden, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles, California; New Orleans, Louisiana) to realize how to more effectively engage their communities to promote sustained inclusive school reform.

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CHAPTER 4

DisCrit Contribution to Inclusive Policies and Practices in the United States

Valentina Migliarini

Contemporary epistemologies of inclusive education derive from the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994). The Statement brings disabled children to the fore, and offers an outline for inclusive education, as the "most effective means of combating discrimination, building inclusive society, and achieving education for all" (UNESCO, 1994, p. iv). According to the Statement, inclusive schools worldwide can provide an effective education for the majority of children, and improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the entire education system. However, noted in the introductory chapter of this book, the Salamanca Statement also presents tensions and contradictions. First, it supports a transformation within the constructed differences of individual children, rather than the institutional mechanisms of schooling. Second, as with any human rights legislation it allows national governments to apply strategies to maintain sovereignty over the definition of inclusion and the implementation of principles enshrined in the Statement (Migliarini, 2018; Miles & Singal, 2010). As a non-legally binding document, it has largely been considered a *symbolic* guideline for national education policies. Additionally, such tensions within the Statement have promoted the construction of difference in pathological terms on a global scale, gradually incorporating children from migrant

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backgrounds and other cultural groups in special education, based on dubious labels such as "*emotionally disturbed*," "*behaviorally disordered*," and "*linguistically disabled*" (Erevelles, 2014; Harry & Klingner, 2014). Hence, despite significant efforts to reduce school exclusions and disproportionality (Artiles, 2011), the levels at which inclusive education is implemented is far from acceptable (Migliarini et al., 2019).

Drawing on a qualitative case study I conducted in the United States, specifically in Kansas and Upstate New York, in this chapter I explore the possibilities of reframing inclusive education policies and practices for secondary education, through a DisCrit lens (Annamma et al., 2013, 2022). I analyze how United States-based educational stakeholders formulate discourses around race and disability and diversity, more generally, within inclusive policies. These discourses are then translated within practices of inclusive education, targeting historically marginalized communities of students in the United States, living at the intersections of race, disability, language, and citizenship status. For this reason, in this chapter, I argue for an expansion of current approaches to inclusive education through the DisCrit framework. I hope that the research findings presented in this chapter can serve as a spark to ignite reflections on how to re-think inclusive education through an intersectional approach.

The data I present in this chapter are part of a qualitative multi-state case study sponsored by the Fulbright Schuman grant program. I conducted this case study during the academic year 2017–2018 in two mid-sized urban school districts in Kansas and Upstate New York. In each state, I developed the case study in two phases. Phase One involved me conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2010) of existing inclusive policies and practices at state and local levels, with a specific focus on historically marginalized communities of students and emerging bilingual students with or without disabilities (Cioè-Peña, 2022). Phase two entailed semi-structured interviews and focus groups with teachers, educators and school professionals from educational organizations and school boards.[1]

Through the case study, I attempted to answer the following research questions: (a) How do educational stakeholders formulate discourses around race and disability within inclusive policies? (b) How are these discourses translated within school inclusive practices? (c) What are the benefits of reframing inclusive policies and practices through DisCrit?

[1] A list of the participants in this case study can be found in Table A.2, Appendix A.

Hence, the case study presented here aligns well with the purpose of this book to expand current models of inclusive education through intersectional, culturally sustaining and contextually grounded approaches.

At the beginning of the research, I analyzed policy documents, such as the *Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention*,[2] *Positive Behavior Support* (Safran & Oswald, 2003), and *Courageous Conversation about Race* (Courageous Conversations, 2023; Singleton, 2020).[3] For Upstate New York, I also analyzed the Commissioner's Regulations Part 152-2 (New York State Department of Education-NYSED, 2015). I collected the policy documents using purposive sampling. As such, I only selected information of specific interest from relevant document sources. Following IRB approval, I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a total of 25 participants, including, general education teachers, special education teachers, English as a New Language (ENL) teachers, school principals and administrators, the Special Education Director of the mid-sized school district in Kansas, and the director of the Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) national technical assistance center.

I was iterative in my process of data collection and analysis, thus CDA of policy documents and interviews happened simultaneously. I selected the participants through a combination of purposive and snowballing sampling. To establish the study's credibility and conformability (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), I conducted member checks with participants and data triangulation with policy documents throughout the data collection process. Other strategies I implemented to support trustworthiness and transferability of findings include data collection over a period of prolonged engagement, and interviews with participants.

I begin this chapter by exploring existing inclusive education policies and practices in both states and districts. I give particular attention to behavior and race policies, and the ways in which they are understood and implemented by teachers and school professionals. I also conduct a critical analysis of the current obstacles of behavior and race policies implementation against the tenets of DisCrit. I then explore the tensions and contradictions within existing epistemologies of inclusive education. Starting from this tension, I look at the possibilities of reframing inclusive education policies and practices through DisCrit, as an interdisciplinary and intersectional lens. Reframing inclusive education through an

[2] https://www.ci3t.org/about
[3] https://courageousconversation.com/

intersectional approach facilitates a shift of policy, pedagogy, curriculum, and teacher education programs toward authentic solidarity with historically multiply marginalized communities of students (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

Implementing School Policies on Behavior and Race

Across all interviews, teachers referred to their schools' behavior management and diversity policies, as "behavior and race policies." For the purpose of this chapter, I use the same terminology to refer to such school policies. Teachers' conceptualization and enactment of behavior and race policies hinged on understanding of compliance, conformity, and procedure (Skrtic, 1987), which were typically focused on student behavior and access to inclusive spaces and opportunities (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021). Although most of the participants expressed different degrees of knowledge, or even unfamiliarity and frustration with state, district, and building-level policies related to behavior and race/diversity, most were able to describe the ways their schools addressed student behavior and diversity, using tiered models of behavior, *Positive Behavior Support* (PBS), *mediating or restorative approaches* (Advancement Project, 2010), and *Courageous Conversations about Race* (Singleton, 2020). The following section focuses on teachers' understanding and implementation of behavior management policies at school and district levels.

Behavior Policies

Maddy, a Grade 8 Special Education teacher in Kansas, believed that the current policy implemented in her school helped her, and her colleagues, to have a "fair" and consistent approach to students' behavior:

> I think it's [behavior policy] consistent across all of the students, it seems to me that like, especially having like having the matrix up on my wall, I think is useful, because it's just, it's I think a lot of students sometimes have told me they feel like they're, um, that they only get told about certain things and other kids get away with it, and said, well, no, it follows the model, like, I think it's, it helps with consistency.

Maddy's quote refers to a specific tiered model of behavioral support adopted by her school, known as the Comprehensive, Integrated,

Three-Tiered (Ci3T)[4] model of prevention (Lane et al., 2020). Tiered models of behavioral support utilize school-wide frameworks for providing quality educational experiences for all students, with increasing levels of support for those students for whom additional support may be required. Examples of such tiered models include Response to Intervention (RTI) (Fuchs et al., 2012), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Horner & Sugai, 2015), Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) (Freeman et al., 2015), Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) (Barrett et al., 2013), and the Ci3T model of prevention, mentioned by Maddy. Each model focuses on specific learning domains, with some models shifting to address students' multiple needs in an integrated fashion.

According to Lane et al. (2020), Ci3T is currently the only tiered model explicitly addressing academics, behavior, and social domains. Other distinctions between Ci3T and other tiered systems include data-informed decision-making in the design process, and data-informed professional learning during initial implementation and sustaining implementation phases. The purpose of the Ci3T model is to provide a framework for facilitating data-informed prevention and intervention for students in academic, behavioral, and social domains (Lane et al., 2019). This is accomplished at the primary level (Tier 1) by developing a school-wide Ci3T plan with an implementation manual detailing roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty and staff, parents, and administrators), as well as procedures for teaching, reinforcing, and monitoring the specific research-based practices, strategies, and curricula attending to all three learning domains. Figure 4.1 shows a visual representation of such a model.

In addition to Tier 1 practices, Ci3T models include practices to provide students with additive support at the secondary (Tier 2) or tertiary (Tier 3) prevention levels (Lane et al., 2020), as Fig. 1 shows. The Ci3T Implementation Manual has tiered intervention grids, another feature of Ci3T models of prevention, to guide educators in connecting students quickly to additional validated interventions such as Check in/Check out (Hawken et al., 2014); or self-regulated strategy development for writing (Harris et al., 2012) at Tier 2; or functional assessment-based interventions (FABI) (Umbreit et al., 2007) at Tier 3. In a Ci3T model, the focus

[4] For an overview of the model and its implementation by school professionals, visit: https://www.ci3t.org/about

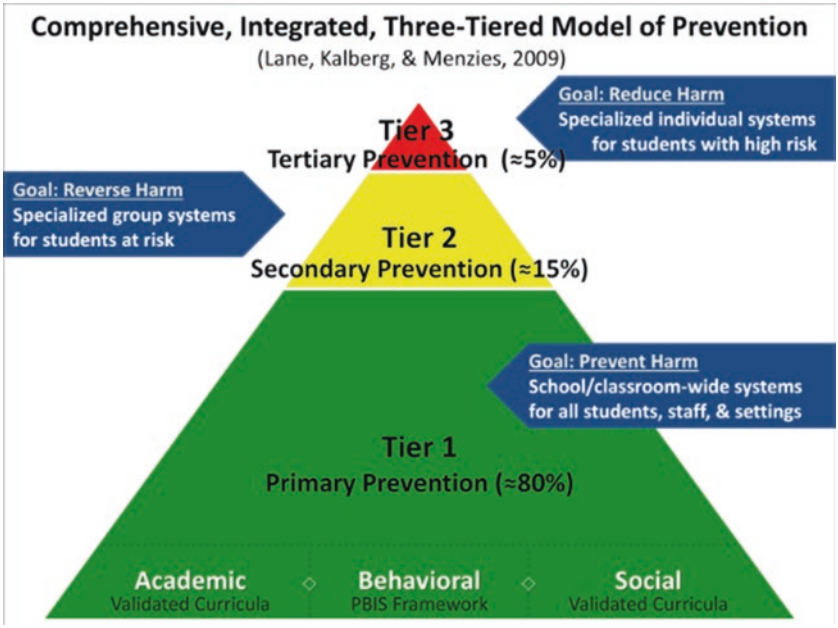

Fig. 4.1 Ci3t model of behavior support. (Retrieved from https://www.ci3t.org/about)

is on preventing challenges from occurring through proactive, evidence-based practices.

All teachers from the middle school in Kansas who participated in the research study shared that they were periodically trained on the implementation of the Ci3T model. Indeed, the school district adopted the Ci3T model as their main behavior policy. Jonathan, the special education school district director, shared his opinion on the benefits of such model:

> Our [behavior] policies are general enough that we can make sure our practices follow and follow the law and do what's best for the kids. We don't have any policies that I'm aware of that makes it difficult to put them into practice. Our policies have always been geared to making sure to meet the needs of students.

Jonathan had a positive attitude on existing behavior policies that the district has, and the ways in which they are implemented within K-12

schools across the district. Ultimately, he seemed to agree with the essence of the Ci3T model, which is to equip educators to support students in academic, behavioral, and social domains through a framework of Tier 1, 2, and 3 practices driven by systematic data collection, data-based decision making, and targeted professional learning (Lane et al., 2014).

In Upstate New York, a context with a more demographically and linguistically diverse student population, teachers affirmed that their schools addressed students' behavior through PBS, as well as mediating or restorative approaches. For example, Rhonda, a middle school English as a New Language (ENL)[5] teacher, explained:

> We've moved a lot more towards a mediation plan for consequences instead of referrals and suspensions, so that's how I see that being implemented in our schools … like reset passes or sort of a check-in system, or a sort of tired warning system, and [students] can be sent to a behavioral intervention center and have time with sort of those tier two groups of, like, specialists if things get … if things escalate.

According to Rhonda, all students were supported through a "mediation plan," part warnings, check-ins with school staff, and an intervention system of "specialists" for persistent behavior concerns. Rhonda mentions the removal of students with significant needs to alternative spaces, where "specialists" provide specific interventions, but acknowledges the ways these students used to be removed from the school entirely before these alternative policies were adopted.

Upstate New York teachers talked about, and often expressed frustration related to, the bureaucratizing of student behavior, as part of the PBS approach. Students and education professionals were responsible for documenting and tracking student behavior in ways which singled students out from peers and forced students to discuss their behavior with adults. Participants expressed ways that students were held accountable for their own membership in classroom and school-wide spaces which implemented the kinds of behavior policies Rhonda described (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021). Interventions currently used in schools within the PBS umbrella

[5] The term is used by the teachers in line with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) policies, such as *Guidance: Determining English Language Learner/Multilingual Learner (ELL/MLL) Status of and Services for Students with Disabilities* (NYSED, 2018a) and *The Blueprint for English Language Learner/Multilingual Learner Success* (NYSED, 2018b).

are built on the foundations of applied behavior analysis (ABA), and repackaged in a more positive, collaborative, and holistic framework (Safran & Oswald, 2003). However, a PBS approach seems to be an increasingly popular alternative to more traditional disciplinary practices, and it recognizes the broad set of relevant variables that can affect a student's behavior (Kennedy et al., 2001).

According to Carr et al. (1999), PBS interventions are designed to be proactive, to prevent problem behavior by altering a situation before problems escalate, and to concurrently teach appropriate alternatives. The goal of PBS is to "apply behavioral principles in the community in order to reduce problem behaviors and build appropriate behaviors that result in durable change and a rich lifestyle" (Carr et al., 1999, p. 3). The use of PBS expanded to include greater numbers of students in general education settings as mandated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 (see Turnbull et al., 2002). Although PBS interventions intended to be inclusive and collaborative, they seem to be in contrast with more progressive and culturally sustaining approaches to behavior (e.g., Bal et al., 2018; Migliarini & Annamma, 2019a; Roscigno, 2019).

All participants in Upstate New York discussed how they also used PBS to extrinsically motivate student behavior and compliance. Rhonda gave a pertinent example of the implementation of PBS, to motivate student's behavioral compliance:

> Students are on a team with a teacher and they earn up to 10 points for how they transition between classes, their behavior … they get points for kindness, they have academic points … and this all culminates in an incentive at the end of the week … they can do … lunch with the teacher … food or snacks, or do a movie or a dance party … all the students who it's just not working for are the ones who don't get it or have a disability or don't understand it.

Rhonda's analysis of her school's PBS system shows when this model works and when it does not work, anticipating some of the implementation tensions that would be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Rhonda explains how new learner subgroups are created to explain the shortcomings of education policy created to serve a specific group of students, such as English Language Learners (ELLs) or subset of educational problems (e.g., student behavior). Following Rhonda's reasoning,

behavior policies and the professionals who implement them can never be solely responsible for the failure or inefficiency of these policies. Rather, a new category of student emerges as the minority who cannot access or "understand" policies due to a presupposed deficit situated within individual learners, and consequently additional tiers of intervention or policy subparts are created to treat these minoritized students (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021). The following section addresses teachers' understanding and implementation of schools' race policies.

Race Policies

In regards to race and diversity policies, the school district in Kansas adopted *Beyond Diversity* (Beyond Diversity, 2009).[6] This equity oriented approach intends to address systemic inequities in education through the collaborative efforts of school board members, administrators, teachers, support staff, community partners, and parents. For these stakeholders understanding this approach and participating in the training constitute the foundation of *Courageous Conversations about Race* programming (Courageous Conversations, 2023). *Courageous Conversation* is a strategy to address racial tensions and raise racism as a topic of discussion that allows those who possess knowledge on specific topics to raise it, and those who do not have that knowledge to learn and grow from the experience (Singleton, 2020). Interracial conversations about race require the participants the strength to facilitate them. Educators, and the broad school community, should overcome their fears of talking about race, and they must find the courage to risk moving beyond it, as well as growing accustomed to the discomfort of abandoning old habits. According to Singleton (2020), to get ready for courageous conversations about race with their students, educators might first learn to engage with their colleagues. In this regard, Jennifer, a Grade 7 social studies teacher in the middle school in Kansas, shared her experience of engaging in *Courageous Conversations about Race* with her colleagues:

> [During the training] I think I learn from other people's perspective. But I also want the kids to know that it's important to … You can't just say something is racist, or say something that is, you know, sexist, or say something

[6] Information about the school district commitment to the program can be found at: https://www.usd497.org/Page/6517

> is hurtful without giving a chance to explain … to let the person that called it that explain it. Because nobody learns anything if you just say that was racist, or that was sexist, or that was discriminatory.

Jennifer highlights how much she has learned from other people's thoughts, feelings, and opinions, shared during the training. Very often, teachers and educators might be afraid of offending or appearing angry, or sounding ignorant in conversations about race, allowing their beliefs and opinions to be misunderstood or misinterpreted. As Singleton (2020) argues, it is through the sharing of honest sentiments, regardless of whether the participant believes them to be embraced by the discussion leader, their peers, or people with different positionalities, that participants in courageous conversations can begin to transform themselves. Jennifer also highlights the importance of explaining the "why" of something racist or discriminatory to students. This obviously implies an incredible work by the teachers to recognize their positionality, unpack their power and privileges, address their dysconscious biases (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017) and their white- ability saviorism (Siuty et al., 2023), that is, the idea that marginalized communities of color can be saved by white teachers.

During the study, I was not able to ascertain whether teachers actually addressed their biases and shifted their understanding of race and racism, for the implementation of a transformative, culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012). Through their discourses, the majority of teachers interviewed in Kansas highlighted the importance of the *Courageous Conversation on Race* training to recognize the problem of racism in a predominantly white, monocultural, monolingual Midwest school environment. Donna, the grade 7 special education teacher, argues:

> Well, I learned a lot about the focus of the district, as far as equity issues and as far as people being able to um, talk freely about these issues and listen. I think listening to each other is very important and that was a focus of the training, um. I don't think that I am changing much about what I am doing but I think um, I am more sensitive to these issues because I have. I have always taught in a very homogeneous setting. Small, rural, Kansas um, tends to be very not racially diverse and um, these things don't come up. And so, I'm starting to be more attuned now to the issues.

Donna self-identified as white American, and at the time of the interview she had just started as a special education teacher. During her pre-service education and training in Kansas she was never prompted to consider race and equity, and their complex intersections with disability. In opposition to this knowledge gap and unwillingness to change the practice of special education that Donna's quote shows other teachers in the same school offered some examples of how the race training and understanding of the policy pushed them to change their pedagogy. Barbora, the 7th grade social studies teacher, shared that after taking the Beyond Diversity training (Beyond Diversity, 2009), she was more reflective and critical of the ways in which diversity is included in the curriculum. Consequently, she adopted a different strategy to talk to her students about *Dias de los Muertos* (the Day of the Dead):

> I contacted someone in the community who is a first-generation Mexican immigrant. And she came in and she presented information about *Dia de los Muertos*, and she talked about the background and the history, and she talked about … I asked her to talk a little bit about cultural appropriation, and so she talked about that. But she gave the students these pictures of what it meant to her and then she added, you know, different … Different groups of people in Mexico celebrate a little bit differently. This is my experience. And she just shared all these wonderful things, and shared pictures and before she came I talked to her about the altar assignment and how she felt about the altar assignment and how I could change it and adapt it and … I conferenced with her before presenting this to my students. And so because of that I think we had … it was a much larger and more meaningful learning experience for the students.

Barbora shared that the students had a very good interaction and discussion with a valuable member of the community. She felt as if this did good for students' knowledge and behavior, and that she should aim at always being culturally relevant in her own subject. Barbora also believed this was a positive example to actually connect to members of the community, who are living often in isolation from the majority of white, middle class communities. Such interaction helped address biases that students, and not only teachers, have of Mexican communities.

John, the grade 7 science teacher had a very hands-on approach to address students' biases, to promote a culturally relevant ecology in the classroom and in the school, and most importantly, to engage in race conversation within and outside the classroom:

> With our advisory classes we have a … a social skills program that we did. And so … on Thursdays, or whatever day that we choose to do it.. Normally it's Thursdays for me. We will … if there is a social problem that is occurring in the school, we might address it right then. Today we had a lesson on using tact.. So being able to.. If you are in a situation that you don't like, how do you respectfully get out of that situation without insulting someone as opposed to just … So we've had to have like probably next week if our principal tells us to, we might next week talk about this in terms of … Guys we are hearing a lot of racial slurs in the hallway right now … how does that make you feel? What are you doing to interrupt that?

As the quote from John shows, there is an attempt to directly address issues of race and racism within the classroom context, so that students are aware of the consequences of racial slurs and bullying. In addition to discussing racism with the students, the teachers also have periodic meetings with all parents, and in these meetings they can share the students' behavior, including any racist incident:

> Just last night we had a Psych council meeting and we told our parents about incidents that are … have occurred within the building um, in the last couple of weeks, of kids using racial slurs or whatnot. And … I think for a lot of our parents it was a little eye opening at that meeting, because they don't necessarily see it from their kid, their kid isn't gonna be the one that goes home and talks about it. But um, we presented it as. This is a problem that we have. We can't just control it here at school. We need help at home, we need help in a lot of different areas.

Teachers attempt to have open and transparent communication with the students' family, and they do so more if they detect that students use racial slurs in the context of the classroom. They try to have a collective approach, including also parents into the conversation and setting clear expectations with the students.

In New York State, the teachers I interviewed were not necessarily trained on *Courageous Conversations about Race*, but they were more exposed to diversity policies focused on urban teaching and multicultural education. This is because of the subject specific focus of the teachers interviewed, mostly ENL teachers, and the significant number of migrant and forced migrant students in the targeted schools. For example, Raquel, a primary ENL teacher, was never part of the *Courageous Conversations about Race* training, but she attended training focused on teaching in

urban settings and multiculturalism. As a result of the training, she reflects on the ways she implements the school diversity policy:

> As an urban school we just try to be very open to all different kinds of cultures. We even have an international day, a school-wide international day. Particular to my classroom, I hang flags up in my classroom, I have a world map, um, I try to be really open about it … read, like, lots of different multicultural books and talk to them about their race, that it's okay to be from another country, that it's great that they speak two languages, and just like really cultivate an accepting environment of it. School-wide I think that we also do a great job of that, too … having an international day, like I said, and having an after-school program for ENL students. I think that that's, um, I think that that's definitely something that we do very well.

In this quote, Raquel speaks about an urban setting as if it is a code for race policy or race relations. It seems clear that the training that she attended was evasive of race, and she was not keen to investigate herself about the systemic oppressions her students were experiencing. As a result, she is socially and educationally constructing the race, ability, and citizenship status of her students in celebratory and exoticizing ways (Migliarini et al., 2019). From Raquel's quote, it seems that diversity and race are perceived as something beyond what her school does on a daily basis. However, race and diversity are intertwined with the everyday workings of school, and the fact Raquel does not question it or grapples with it is a problematic aspect of the policy and its implementation. Similarly, Karen, another ENL teacher in New York State, talks about diversity policy and training in the same color-evasive fashion:

> [I attended the training that was] like a half-day conference … like a half-day superintendent's conference day PD … within the building.
>
> Interviewer: Okay, and was that through the district?
>
> Karen: Yes.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. What did you get out of that? Like, what did you get out of any of the programs you participated in?
>
> Karen: It was quite a few years ago. Um, the main thing I walked away with was basically c*ommon sense* … that, just to be accepting … and, of other people's backgrounds, what they bring with them from home and what they're bringing in with them from school … and how that might affect their learning … and, yeah, that's about it …
>
> Interviewer: Okay.

> Karen: … And not put your own preconceived ideas on it.
>
> Interviewer: So, how did you implement any of that learning in your classroom?
>
> Karen: Um, *I just continued doing what I normally do, because it was all pretty much common sense. And race had—because of what I teach—race had never been an issue.*

According to Karen, race and diversity policy training was delivered to the teachers *una tantum*, sporadically and as a one off yearly session. Similarly to what Raquel said earlier, race and diversity are not considered as integrated within the educational purpose of the school. Their complexities are reduced to "common sense" knowledge that do not bring about any changes in teachers' understandings and attitudes toward racism, and in their pedagogy. Deborah, Raquel and Karen's quotes clearly show how, despite the long history of disproportionality of Black and Brown students in special education (Artiles, 2013; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Harry & Klingner, 2014), special and inclusive education are still largely informed by neutral knowledge, which does not center systemic racism, anti-Blackness and the historical dehumanization of Black and Brown bodies (Artiles, 2023). In both Kansas and New York State, race seems to appear and disappear from schools- diversity and inclusion policies. It is more often than not de-recognized as a key factor determining historically marginalized students' categorization, special education labeling, and ultimately academic achievement.

As we are left to wonder whether historically marginalized students in the United States will get the support that is promised by the policies, in the next section of this chapter, I address the challenges in implementing existing behavior policies, which usually target disabled students of Color (Harry & Klingner, 2014), and students of Color living at the intersections of language and citizenship status.

Tensions in Implementing Behavior Policies

All teachers I interviewed showed an initial agreement to race and behavior policies and their implementation in school. While responding to initial questions about policies, they shared particularly positive comments on the job that their schools are doing in training them on tiered models of behavior management. They argued that, as teachers, they worked well in setting and communicating behavioral expectations, especially those

related to the basic tiers of the Ci3t model, to their students at the beginning of the academic year. They believed that clarity in communication of basic behavior expectations would help considerably in reducing the number of behavior referrals for what they defined as "serious" incidents. Within Kansas' schools, teachers divided Tier 1 and Tier 2 behavior expectations for subject specific areas, and they documented minor behavior referral:

> Maybe not just like in my classroom, but within all the classrooms of the team, we might spend two days teaching two expectations up there and a social studies class might teach a couple of expectations. And … We kind of divide them out. We always talk about all of the expectations, but what we change is the setting. And so, what does it look like to have expectations in the classroom, vs. what does it look like to have expectations at the cafeteria. You try to pre-correct as much as you can … We have a tendency to think of a minor referral as always something that needs a punishment, and to me, a minor referral is really just your documentation. You don't necessarily have to have a punishment with each one of them, it is more of a, ok, you weren't working in class today so here's a referral. If we start to see two or three of them, now we know it's a pattern and now we need to implement some sort of intervention and now we need to … To be able to … Now we can start recording whether or not that intervention is working.

John's (the Science teacher) opinion to document students' small behavior incidents seems to center students' needs, and to embrace the idea that discipline is a tool for learning rather than for punishment. However, an analysis of Josh's narrative through an intersectional lens, such as the DisCrit (Migliarini & Annamma, 2019a, 2019b), raises interesting questions: (a) How is the minor behavior referral documentation practically used by teachers and school administrators? (b) Does it effectively help students improve their behavior and facilitate their learning or is it stored to further stigmatize them, and classify them as underachieving academically? When prompted with similar follow-up questions, Josh reiterated that the documentation of small behavior referrals is supposed to support students. However, he gave evasive answers on how such a referral process impacts on the educational experiences of disabled students, students of Color, and other historically multiply marginalized communities of students (e.g., Annamma, 2018).

Not all teachers working in the same school as John, shared his opinion about behavior policy implementation as a smooth process. Jennifer, the

Grade 8 Social Studies teacher, affirmed that she perceived the implementation process as highly bureaucratic, and as a "tick-box" exercise:

> Sometimes you just know as a teacher that this kid … like we don't need to jump through Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 to say that this kid needs help and probably needs to be assessed for, you know, a learning disability or an emotional need. But we have to go through all the bureaucracy of it [the Ci3T model] and you have to document, document, document and I get it, but it takes sooo long and it is so frustrating to see that kid suffer and struggle and not be able to get them the services they need, and you just get mired down in all of it.

Jennifer was frustrated by the need to constantly document small and major behavior incidents of students, especially those who she perceived as needing a special needs diagnosis, without an immediate and targeted intervention.

Jennifer's quote highlights two important aspects that need to be considered for the purpose of this chapter. First, she discussed tensions and obstacles of the Ci3T model from the perspective of a teacher implementing it. Although the literature, reviewed earlier, presents the Ci3T as a collaborative model responding to all students' needs (Lane et al., 2014), some teachers may find its different tiers, and interventions associated with them, as highly bureaucratic and time consuming. Also, Jennifer's view on the model entered in stark contrast with that of the SPED school district director, revealing the contesting nature of behavior policy implementation in school. Second, Jennifer believed that teachers have the capacity to recognize when a student has a learning or emotional disability. Hence, they should have more immediate agency in labeling and support provision processes. The subjective judgment of teachers in labeling students with learning and emotional disabilities is what concurs to reproduce a disproportionate number of marginalized students being referred, labeled, and placed in special education, particularly in the categories of learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbance, or behavior disorders (Harry & Klingner, 2014; Losen & Orfield, 2002). The diagnosis of these categories is problematic because it relies on the subjective judgment of school teachers, like Jennifer, rather than biological facts (Kliewer et al., 2006).

In addition to the complexities of the process of tiered interventions, some teachers discussed the lack of support from administrators, as an obstacle to behavior policy implementation:

> I feel like it was more of an osmosis type thing. Here is the Ci3T plan, and now you need to use it. And that's not saying that we didn't have professional development … We did. You know, We went over these things. But, I think the disconnect was when we did interventions, and we said ok, I've done some interventions.. I need outside [administrators'] help … You know we were trying things … and it's turning into discipline referrals and then we felt like those referrals weren't being addressed … And … So we felt like we were trying to keep with the plan, but once it got to a certain place, it just fell apart.

According to Barbora, the Grade 7 Social Studies teacher, when a teacher starts a behavior referral, whether it is for a minor or major referral, such a process gets interrupted once it reaches administrators. Teachers do not always obtain the kind of support they had hoped for, in order to support the learning and emotional needs of their students. Barbora's quote speaks to the lack of collaboration and often mutual understanding between academic and administrative personnel in the process of policy implementation.

Another obstacle to effective implementation of the tiered models of behavior management that teachers observed is its effective impact on students, especially those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds:

> I know that Ci3T is a lot more than just giving out [school] money, but there are so many kids who, it doesn't seem like rewarding them with the [school] dollars is changing their behavior or improving their academics. But all they want to do is use that money to buy candy or stuff from the stores. I mean a lot of the kids who don't really need the money, the … money, that reinforcer, they'll say no thank you. And then the kids who really need it, they are all about collecting it, and they'll even take it from other kids who have left it behind or thrown it in the trash. And so, they aren't making the connection between, oh you are getting this for following the school's behaviors. And it's not changing their behaviors.

Jennifer, as many other participants, described using token economies to appeal to students' interests, as students could "purchase" access to school-wide events, preferred activities, or tangible goods using tokens or points earned each time they demonstrated desired behavior. Jennifer, as other teachers, did not fully understand differences or overlaps in supports, interventions, and consequences, as all students had an obligation to accept assigned consequences and fully participate in the interventions designed to address specific behaviors or incidents.

Although token economies are used as part of the tiered model of behavior, to extrinsically motivate students' behavior and compliance, Raquel, an ENL teacher in Upstate New York, expressed gaps and described complexities in this model:

> I think that positive behavioral support is very helpful … I like the idea of anticipating different things that are gonna happen with students and reinforcing their good behaviors … I have noticed, however, we do have some, like, events … some school-wide events, like a dance party, where if you earn enough compliments [PBS tokens] then you get a dance party. And there will be students who–they know by Monday that they are not going to have enough compliments to attend the dance party on Friday, and it just ruins their whole week … and it's all downhill from there …
>
> Aside from that, I think that there could be a kid who has a very bad week or a very bad couple weeks, and then does one good thing, and expects to just go to the dance party!

Raquel conceptualized interventions in their district's PBS policies merely as rewarding "good behaviors" without consideration for addressing social, emotional, psychological, or communication needs, or "disciplinary problems," through explicit instruction or services. Both referred to Ci3T and PBS as, ultimately, a reward system for "good behaviors" of individual students with access to shared activities or celebrations (e.g., dance parties). In their critique, they framed the ineffectiveness not as a problem with how they and their colleagues implement the models, but rather as a problem of students' differences and noncompliance (i.e., their real emotional responses to being left out of fun shared activities if they do not earn enough "compliments" or tokens) within the token economy.

Jennifer and Raquel's responses reflected a cultural deterministic approach to behavioral supports (Bal, 2018). In its earliest iteration,

developers of PBS framed it as "culture-neutral" (Sugai et al., 2000) in an attempt to emphasize its wide applicability and efficacy. As Bal (2018) affirms, later iterations of PBS began to rely on a cultural deterministic approach which constructs students' "home cultures" as the root of students' undesired behavior in school settings. Following this framing, school-based professionals are allowed to identify the differences between home and school cultures but are not necessarily expected to critique or change any elements of their own cultural environment (i.e., the school building and classrooms) (Stinson et al., under review).

In Raquel's perspective, the failure of PBS was attributed to students' inherent differences, rather than how PBS policy is understood or implemented by teachers. Similarly, Maureen, a general education teacher in a second grade class in Upstate New York, in which more than half of the students were from migrant background, interpreted behavioral policies and interventions as collaborative tools to confirm and locate deficiency already suspected of students due to their negative constructions of race and language status. She explained:

> I start documenting an intervention that I've been working on, and then I would present that intervention to SIT [student intervention team] if I didn't see, you know, massive progress, and then the SIT team, which is consisting of teachers, and AIS [academic intervention services] teachers, and administration … We sit down and we talk about student positives, what they're lacking, what we think they might need, and then possible interventions to make them more successful … I had a student last year who desperately needed services, and I really was shocked by how he got brushed under the rug for so long, and, I mean, he finally has special ed (sic) services, and I mean severe disability services, um, but, it just breaks my heart that I couldn't do more for him in the year that I was with him, you know?

Raquel and her colleagues engaged with PBS as a policy framework which compelled them to reward desired behavior without intervention to explicitly teach and support new ways to self-regulate, communicate needs and feelings, or practice social skills. Rather, students, especially negatively racialized emergent bilingual students, who did not comply with teachers' expectations for desired responses to the PBS interventions were either: (a) denied access to positive, meaningful, and shared school experiences, or (b) labeled as deficient or disabled and relegated to 'services' rather

than increased opportunities for affirmation, learning, or belonging at school. Through their implementation of PBS, Raquel and her peers could "identify 'true cases' of behavioral problems that are free from cultural influences" (Bal, 2018, p. 152).

Ci3T and other tiered models of behavioral management, such as PBS, have been traditionally derived from individualistic, psychological orientation. As we have seen from teachers' quotes, behavioral management has been conceptualized as correcting and preventing disruption caused by the difficult students, and about reinforcing positive comportment of the good ones (Migliarini & Annamma, 2019b). At a time when education is seen as the right for the privileged, racial disparities in discipline and achievement have been normalized and accepted as natural at the expenses of multiply marginalized students, it is urgent to address problematic aspects and tensions within the implementation of existing behavior policies through an interdisciplinary, intersectional lens such as DisCrit. DisCrit shifts the questions that teachers ask from "How can we fix students who disobey rules?" to "How can pre-service teacher education and existing behavioral management courses be transformed so that they are not steeped in color-evasion, deficit based perspectives, and silent on interlocking systems of oppression?" Applying a DisCrit perspective in schools provides an opportunity to (re)organize classrooms, moving away from "fixing" the individual, be it the student or the teacher, and shift toward justice. When teachers understand: (a) ways students are systematically oppressed, (b) how oppressions are (re)produced in classrooms, and (c) what they can do to resist those oppressions in terms of pedagogy, curriculum, and relationships, they can build solidarity and resistance with students and communities. DisCrit, as an applied framework, has the potential to prepare future teachers to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interactions and active engagement in learning focused on creating solidarity in the classroom instead of "managing." This results in curriculum, pedagogy, and relationships that are rooted in expansive notions of justice.

The following section of the chapter continues with an exploration of the ways in which current epistemologies of inclusive education in the United States, which then translate into behavior and race policies, have been co-opted by positivist special education approaches, and informed by neutral knowledge on race and other forms of systemic oppression.

Current Epistemologies of Inclusive Education in the United States

In the United States, calls for education reform initiatives tend to echo in reaction to episodic internal political movement and social trends, especially at the state and local level (Hunt, 2011). However, in alignment with the Salamanca Statement, United States education reforms in the past 25 years place students with special education needs at the center of state and federal policy which change as new categories of "pupils" are defined. This ad hoc approach to education initiatives has produced reform efforts focused on education standards, standardized assessment, and compliance, all of which emphasize a rhetoric of accountability and student performance (Migliarini et al., 2019). This, along with established systems of power and control, works to justify exclusionary practices under the guise of "service delivery" and individual rights to education (Ferri & Ashby, 2017), as well as the articulation and emphasis on states' rights. Because of the autonomy afforded to systems at the state and local level, this subtly supports a gradual approach to equity for multiply marginalized student groups in schools, despite dramatic changes in the broader social and political landscape of the United States (Ferri & Connor, 2005).

As a primary example, the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* (2015) turns federal and state education systems' attention toward schools deemed "lowest-performing" by requiring schools to disaggregate and report demographic and achievement data for minoritized student groups, including migrant children. Compliance with these accountability measures is directly tied to schools' access to federal funding. As a result, state and federal education systems relentlessly deliberate over student classification and reclassification with specific education labels, such as "English Language Learner" (ELL)[7] (NYSED 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This deep concern for student categories is pervasive, often framing the way schools and educators conceptualize inclusive policy and practice in the classroom.

The teachers and school professionals interviewed in Kansas and Upstate New York spoke about the tensions and complexities of implementing race and behavior policies. They also shared definitions of inclusive education practices, and barriers to them, which are still largely

[7] Same to the label "English as a New Language (ENL)." In this chapter ELL and ENL are used interchangeably, following the language used by policies and teachers.

operationalized via epistemologies of special education and defect craft ideology, as Artiles (2023) calls it. Also, very little or no Disability Studies in Education or Critical Race Theory in teacher education programs, both general and special, along with lack of inclusive programs, continue to propagate traditional special education epistemologies and practices. Teachers in Kansas attempted to define inclusive education beyond disability and special educational needs, and tried to focus on how to be inclusive and culturally relevant with students of color, and LGBTQ+ students. However, their narratives showed that they measured inclusive education by the number of students placed in regular classrooms, instead of actual participation and belonging. Such perception of inclusive education is implemented until when a student becomes a "threat" to the teacher, and a disruption to the "normal functioning" of the classroom:

Matt: So, my reason to remove a student would be for safety, and a medical reason as well. If there's a medical need for a student they could not receive in that environment the student may need a specialized classroom, for the safety of that student and other students.

Patricia: Well, other than safety and health I don't think they should ever be pulled out, but I think they should have some choices whether they would like to.

Matt is a Grade 8 physical education teacher, and Patricia is an administrator working in the school in Kansas. During the first focus group with teachers and administrators, they were both very supportive of inclusive education, following the school policy and district's philosophy. However, the above quotes show a manifestation of the "defect craft": when students can be "fixed" then inclusive education is good and possible, when they cannot be fixed then othering processes begin, under the guise of safeguarding, or the neoliberal idea of individual choice. When students are perceived as "threats" then inclusive education is operationalized through individual "pull out" strategies, and the students become the unique responsibility of special education teachers. In fact, inclusive education seems to be the unique job of special education teachers, who are the only ones invested in adjusting instructions for students:

> So we have Donna, and she is fabulous because I can send her an assignment and she can modify that pretty quickly and make some changes for the kids so it's more accessible. When possible we have paras[8] in our classroom to help meet the students' needs. You know we try to do as much one on one with them as we can, kinda check in with them, see if they understand the directions, see how they are doing. (Barbora, Social Studies, Kansas)

Barbora's idea of inclusion clearly stems from special education, and is influenced by neoliberal reforms in education, predicating individualized interventions, attention to assessment standards, and the organizing of teaching through students' level of ability. Such ideology of inclusive education seems to be shared also by teachers interviewed in Upstate New York, who had a pervasive and deep concern for students' categorization:

> [I]f you're the special ed teacher in the room, the special ed kids are your kids, and like, the gen ed kids are the gen ed teacher's kid … I feel like even the administration even forgets about the kids or students with disabilities … and it's just like okay well … that's their plan. They have a label … Like when we even go through and look at data, they'll immediately go, like, 'Oh, are they ENL? Oh, do they have an IEP?' and it's like, 'Nevermind interventions for them—they have ENL or they have an IEP' and it's like, okay, they are getting something, but does that mean they should be forgotten about?

Andrea is a white special education teacher who worked in a third grade inclusive classroom.

In the above excerpt, Andrea highlights how students' classifications of disability and ELL (same as ENL) status are primary signifiers of what kind of service is available to them and who will teach them. Andrea explains how ELL students and students with disabilities are also confined to have relationships only with teachers that offer them their individual services, with rare possibilities for interactions and learning with other teachers, administrators, or even students. Consequently, their educational and social experiences at school are compromised by the reification of the

[8] Short for paraprofessionals. The paraprofessional is a student's first resource when they need extra learning support. These professionals also help students understand test questions and homework questions, so that students' work is on par with their counterparts outside of the special education program at a given school (Giangreco et al., 2010).

labels assigned to them. Similarly, teachers experience individualization, as they have few opportunities to interact with all the students and teachers in an inclusive classroom. Andrea's experience reflects the confusing identification process presented by national and school policies, whereby individual students (and teachers) are formally and informally assigned to categories which eventually determine their participation and highly restrictive "opportunities" for inclusion.

Special education teachers are not the only professionals whose ideology of inclusive education is limited by the culture of including through individualizing enacted through ad hoc policy and implementation. In an interview with Raquel, a white ENL teacher, she describes the inclusive mechanisms of the elementary school where she works. She explains,

> So, we have special education inclusion classrooms. Every grade level has one special education inclusive classroom, and we also have ENL students who are in regular education classrooms, and so they get seen by their ENL teacher and they get services outside of their classroom and inside of their classroom. So I think that that's very inclusive because, even though they're being pulled out for 36 minutes a day, I think that it's really nice to let them get supported in their classroom with their peers…

To Raquel, inclusion is essentially special education, wherein students are treated with individualized interventions in specific physical spaces. This clinical perspective of inclusion is advanced by her reference to ELL students "being pulled out for 36 min a day." This is in reference to the New York State Commissioner's Regulations Part 154 Units of Study, wherein ELL students are required to receive segregated ENL instruction for varying amounts of minutes per week depending on their assessment-based proficiency level (NYSED, 2015). In Raquel's example, she is providing this specialized instruction for a seemingly arbitrary number of minutes, 36, to remain in compliance with state regulations and reduce the amount of time ELL students spend outside their mainstream classrooms. Raquel tries to minimize the stigma of removal by reflecting on how "nice" it is that ELL students are allowed to receive language support in the mainstream setting, but it is clear that students with different abilities should be helped by the appropriate professional, whether it is the ENL, special education, or general education teacher.

Another theme emerging from the interviews is highlighting barriers to inclusion. All of the teachers interviewed agreed that major barriers to

implementing inclusion in practice are collective planning time, consistent interactions with members of staff, and the availability of resources. Teachers argue that general education, special education, and ENL teachers are not given enough time to plan together, or even interact, to cooperatively address students' needs. In addition, teachers feel they are not provided with the right resources to implement changes in the curriculum. Hollie, an ENL teacher, explains such barriers:

> Barriers would definitely be planning time, so it's rare to have common planning time with everybody … And then I think in general about resources, and feeling like, okay, I'm provided with this curriculum, I need to have that version of this thing for this student and make sure all things are in place … If I'm thinking about inclusion I'll have a student who comes from a self-contained special ed [sic] classroom to my standalone class and that's me, and my students so in that case I feel like a barrier it's just not having the staff so that if she might need somebody to work closely with her then it's me and then my other students are doing something independently. So, I think, not having staff and planning time. But being able to co-teach is more facilitating because we're both there.

Hollie highlights the need for additional instructors to be able to co-teach every class, especially those with a significant number of ELLs and students with disabilities. Interestingly, she does not provide practical examples of how the curriculum should be modified collectively to create an inclusive setting. This suggests a gap in the enactment of inclusive education policy, despite the strong assertions of Blueprint, which emphasizes "collaborating … in order to address the multiple needs of ELLs/MLLs" (NYSED, 2018b, p. 2). Moreover, Hollie's reference to co-teaching seems to respond to an idea of inclusion stemming from special education, and based on neoliberal reforms in education, that predicates importance of individualized interventions, attention to assessment standards and the organizing of teaching through students' levels of ability (Migliarini et al., 2019).

Other important barriers to inclusion are the consideration of students' intersectional identities, and knowledge of the students' life history, when designing and reflecting on educational practices, within a school culture where students are separated according to their label. In relation to this matter, Hollie argues:

> For us, a difficult thing has been the lack of information given to us about ESL, and that's kind of the sticking point, because every year we have a student that is technically at the level, and you know they are non-verbal, so on the English test they are not going to score very high, no matter what language they know … I had a bad experience where a special education teacher and I talked to each other and kind of said, oh well, this isn't probably the best setting for the student to come, they are better off in this other setting [special education] where everything is very differentiated for them all day. But then, at the end of the year she says, 'Oh well, my student hasn't been given the ESL service all year.

Hollie shows how teachers have insufficient knowledge of the educational pathway of ELL students before arriving in the United States. Holly argues that all teachers, particularly ENL teachers, do not receive enough culturally relevant information to be able to understand and account for students' culture and attitudes. Additionally, Hollie highlights that her school, as well as the district as a whole, is not equipped to offer training on intersectional education practices that would respond to the needs of multiply marginalized students. Just as Andrea has argued, Hollie reinforces this idea of individualized service offered according to the label given to the student. If a student's identity is intersectional, he is only able to access one support service. In the case of ELLs with disabilities, such students are only able to access special education or ELL services. This is because state and school policies in New York state still rely on building individual categories related to disability, ability, and language proficiency, despite the erroneous assumption that intersectional needs will be met.

Importantly, teachers seem to lack reference to an intersectional framework, such as DisCrit, that could help them formulate a different approach to inclusive education that would create functional and ecological classrooms (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). For this reason, Helen is skeptical of the idea of inclusion, and she keeps referring to a special education paradigm when it comes to ELLs students:

> I was thinking about the definition of inclusion and I thought back to college and I was always thinking about the least restrictive environment to prevent students with social access and access to curriculum. I really feel like inclusion derives from an extreme special ed and, in general, the stigma is still there … So, I feel like we've done well in our district since we have gone from self-contained to not-appropriately placing students … I feel in our district inclusion has turned into a big mess of just various disabilities that it

> almost takes a superhero to differentiate them … So, we get students' tasks for inclusion, and these tests do not have comments for expectations, so we are setting kids up for failure.

Helen clearly identifies the need for reframing inclusion through an intersectional framework that would offer more practical strategies to respond more critically and effectively to the needs of multiply marginalized students. Her argument reveals a frustration between the theory of inclusion that she learned in college, and the reality that schools continue to rely heavily on individual practices and standardized assessment. Following her personal teaching experience, Helen believes that inclusion is just a theoretical utopia that, if applied into practice, can become a "big mess." Thus, for her, the existing model of inclusion is done not so much to help the students, but more for the preservation of teachers' comfort: that is, teachers would feel pity in excluding a disabled student from an inclusive classroom. Helen's account, and those of all the other teacher participants, show how complex and controversial the issue of applying inclusion in school settings is, especially when targeting ELLs and disabled ELLs.

In the final part of this chapter, I illustrate how DisCrit as an intersectional and interdisciplinary framework, can enrich existing pre-service teachers' beliefs about relationships in the classroom and connect these relationships to larger projects of dismantling inequities faced by multiply marginalized students. In this section, I explore the affordances of DisCrit for (re)framing existing epistemologies of inclusive education through an intersectional lens.

Conclusion: DisCrit Affordance for Intersectional Understandings of Inclusive Education

In this chapter, I explored the tensions and contradictions of existing inclusive policies and practices in the United States K-12 education system, through a DisCrit lens. I analyzed how educational professionals in Kansas and Upstate New York understand federal, national, and school policies on behavior and race, as well as the tensions that they experienced implementing them. Tensions that were particularly evident when trying to apply the policy to respond to the needs of students living at the intersections of race, language, ability, and migratory status. Twenty-five years after the introduction of the Salamanca Statement (1994), the United

States and other countries have yet to address the over-representation of students of Color, and other multiply marginalized groups in special education. This is because the Salamanca Statement, and other policies such as the UNCRPD that are legally binding, reinforced the practice of assigning a label to children who differentiated from an established norm, while existing education systems remained unquestioned. In other words, Salamanca and UNCRPD did not manage to strengthen a transformative agenda for inclusion; instead, it paved the way to a tamed version of inclusive education (D'Alessio et al., 2018; Iqtadar et al., 2021), as it failed to disrupt established education systems and routines. Its potentially revolutionary power was diluted by discourses of special needs education and additional, individualized resources, reducing it to a tool of containment and immunization of existing education systems.

As the data presented in the chapter highlight, most of the inclusive education institutions in the United States are still disabling multiply marginalized students, putting them at increasing risk of micro-exclusion.[9] A possible way to address and overcome such issues is by reorganizing its conceptual framework in light of an intersectional stance to inclusive education (Artiles et al. 2011; Annamma et al., 2016; Erevelles, 2019; Sarkar et al., 2022). Primarily, this can help educational stakeholders at the international level to shift from a deficit perception of individual difference toward an authentic transformative view of inclusion. It will also influence the way in which the Statement is implemented at the local level, since attention will be given not just to the characteristics of children but also the system in which they operate (see Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Practitioners will better understand the ways students are systemically oppressed, how these oppressions are (re)produced in classrooms, and what they can do to counter and resist those oppressions in terms of pedagogy, curriculum, and relationships.

A commitment to an intersectional approach to inclusive education of international policies, such as the UNCRPD, and national policies, such as IDEA in the United States, could address much of the ableism, racism, and intersecting oppressions that are reiterated through current inclusive education policies and practices (Padilla, 2022). Reflecting and modifying these policies through an intersectional perspective will improve the achievement, behavior, and categorization of migrant students and all students. Without explicit commitment to address the interconnection of

[9] Forms of exclusions happening in fully inclusive educational contexts.

racism and ableism, the continuation of intrinsically disabling practices and policies will persist. Finally, an intersectional approach to inclusive education can guide educators to understand how multiple forms of discrimination push students out of schools, and lead parents to mistrust schools and education.

To conclude this chapter, I share an example of the possibilities of DisCrit to prepare future teachers and school professionals for the creation of an authentically inclusive learning environment. In such a learning environment, teachers can promote positive social interactions and active engagement in learning, creating solidarity in the classroom instead of managing (Migliarini & Annamma, 2019a). This is important because, while a disproportionate number of non-dominant, racial, and ethnic groups from immigrant population and lower social class continue to be labeled in the categories of learning and emotional disabilities, in the field of special education very few theories have challenged commonly accepted notions of disability and research the ways in which race and disability interact with each other. DisCrit scholars have developed a response to such color-evasiveness (Migliarini & Annamma, 2019a) within the field of special education to examine the processes in which students are simultaneously raced and disabled. DisCrit scholars center the embodiment and positioning of students of color labeled with a disability to highlight how racism and ableism are interdependent (Annamma et al., 2013).

In the academic year 2017–2018, when I conducted these case studies in Kansas and New York state, I had the opportunity to co-teach with Professor Annamma, my Fulbright mentor, a course called "Managing and Motivating Secondary Learners," designed for pre-service teachers. We taught this course very differently than traditional classroom management courses which are typically focused on strategies rooted in behavioral compliance. Instead, we spent the first third of the course exploring the routes through the school-prison nexus experienced by students of Color. Students in the course learned about the ideologies and practices of exclusion that are traditionally implemented in classrooms that surveil and punish multiply marginalized children. In the second third of the course, we focused on developing a pedagogical philosophy rooted in hope, solidarity, and relationships as an alternative to forced compliance. Finally, we provided students an array of strategies and they had to identify how they align with their own pedagogical philosophy, which they developed over the course of the semester.

Throughout the course, we, as the researchers/instructors, gathered data on students' shift in attitudes and beliefs on classroom management. We made several moves to highlight student voice and resistance including reading narratives of students who experienced segregated classrooms (Connor, 2008), out-of-school discipline (Crenshaw et al., 2015), and youth incarceration (Winn, 2011). By the end of the course, pre-service teachers reported that they gained knowledge of work that reframes behavior from individual acts of discipline to understanding discipline in context (Noguera & Wing, 2006), that relates to the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2008), and that highlights how teachers enable specific students (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016). Pre-service teachers' participation and engagement in the course indicated that, although DisCrit as a conceptual framework was unfamiliar to them, they were very much inspired and moved by such a nontraditional way of conceiving behavior and classroom management and the ways they have contributed to inequitable educational opportunities for some students.

To be in solidarity with multiply marginalized students means not only recognizing the systemic oppressions students face, but also expecting and welcoming their responses to that violence. Relationships are built on an authentic understanding of where individuals are situated in context (Migliarini & Annamma, 2019b). Educators must seek to build relationships with multiply marginalized students rooted not in obedience but in solidarity and expansive notions of justice. Solidarity should be considered "in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 7). Each of these things must be present in educators' pedagogical philosophy, a belief in reciprocal relationships wherein students are partners, a commitment to responsibility for the outcomes that students experience, and shared goals with students that are explicitly articulated.

A DisCrit-informed praxis of inclusive education suggests that educators must be the source of this reframing of relationships, because though they may often feel powerless in the face of federal, state, and local policies as well as administrative directives on many aspects of their teaching, educators still possess the power in the classroom setting in relationship to their students (Migliarini & Annamma, 2019a). As such, it is the job of educators to welcome student resistance, in the form of engaging, refusing or disconnecting from the curriculum, and to connect it to historical and present-day collective resistance movements (Annamma, 2018). To clarify, it is not that the classroom is absent of behaviors that need to change.

Educators must reframe these behaviors as expected and welcome. This process of reframing and reconceptualizing students' behavior shifts teachers' response to those behaviors. DisCrit, as a theoretical framework, highlights intersecting oppressions faced by multiply marginalized students of color, and provides an opportunity to grow substantive classroom relationships rooted in solidarity. Finally, a DisCrit approach for behavior management and inclusive education can lead the way for teachers and educators to gather, preserve, and grow the futures and the lives of multiply marginalized students of color and to consider them as invaluable resources in the classroom.

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CHAPTER 5

The Experiences of Deaf New Americans Accessing Education in the United States

Brent C. Elder

This chapter comes from a larger on-going research study about Deaf New Americans' (DNA) experiences facing discrimination when attempting to access healthcare and education in the Northeast United States (see Schwartz et al., 2022). A common barrier cited by members of this community was their lack of access to a formal education in their country of origin as well as interacting with inaccessible education systems once they arrived in the United States. In this chapter, I highlight the stories of three refugee women leaders in the DNA community as they attempted to educate themselves and their children in the United States. These Deaf women are a part of the Nepali, Bhutanese, and Burmese diaspora communities, which are communities that have steadily grown in number in this region of the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2023). Through semi-structured interviews with these three women, their stories indicate that significant barriers to education for them and their children remain, particularly for individuals who arrive in the United States with limited English language skills, few economic resources, and relatively little education. The stories these women told highlight systemic challenges in accessing various educational systems where educators were not prepared to teach them English nor other various language skills that would have assisted them in finding gainful employment. Their stories also highlight

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the struggles they encountered when attempting to support their own children in receiving high-quality education in American schools.

This specific region of the Northeastern United States where these women live has roughly 50 refugees for every 10,000 residents. This makes it the fifth largest point of entry for resettlement in the United States. Refugees arriving in this region are typically fleeing poverty, famine, civil strife, and more recently, the effects of climate change (APM Research Lab, 2020). While the three women represented in this chapter identify as Deaf, many other refugees who resettle in this part of the United States have acquired psychological and/or physical disabilities (Schwartz et al., 2022). Upon arrival, DNAs and their children are required to attend an "Education Center" which was designed to meet the educational needs of hearing refugees and their children. This region's school district developed the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) (referred to from here on as the "Education Center") in 1978 in order to accommodate the increasing numbers of refugees arriving in the local community. The main objective of the Education Center was to educate refugees, both Deaf and hearing, by providing them with the necessary skills to become productive members of their local community. The services the Education Center provided included: (a) employment training, (b) career counseling including support with job placement, and (c) spoken English courses. This Educational Center also established a class for Deaf refugees in an attempt to help them acquire language skills so they could find gainful employment.

In the following sections, I outline the global context of disability, as well as the legal rights to education and employment for refugees with disabilities in the United States. Then, I present the structure of this exploratory case study, and present the integrated frameworks of Deaf Studies, Disability Studies, and Disability Critical Race Studies in Education (DisCrit) which guided me in presenting the opportunities and limitations of inclusive education for DNAs. Then, I present quotes from the participants, connect them with relevant disability studies literature, and conclude with the implications of this work.

Global Context of Disability and Inclusive Education

According to the World Health Organization (2021b), "Over 1 billion people are estimated to live with some form of disability. This corresponds to about 15% of the world's population, with up to 190 million (3.8%)

people aged 15 years and older having significant difficulties in functioning, often requiring healthcare services" (p. 1). Additionally, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that more than 1% of the world's population is subjected to forced migration due to human rights abuses and persecution, violence, and conflict. This means that approximately 1 in 95 people (or 82.4 million) experience these realities. When also taking into consideration the numbers reported by the International Organization for Migration (2021), they estimated that in 2017 there was an additional 3.4% of the world's total population, or 258 million, forced migrants around the globe. While these statistics are compelling, these numbers are considered conservative, and likely much higher, as many refugees and migrants may acquire unreported invisible disabilities (e.g., anxiety disorders) at a higher rate than the population at large.

After World War II, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided refugees with education as a fundamental human right, but is *not* legally binding. Similarly non-binding is the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) which outlined that "inclusive schools are the most effective means of combating discrimination, building inclusive society and achieving Education for All" (UNESCO, 1994, p. iv). The most recent international access to education for marginalized groups like refugees is the legally binding United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006). While Article 24 of the CRPD requires the development of an inclusive education system, it does not specify *how* to provide such an education to multiply marginalized populations like disabled refugees. Other related international instruments: include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). While these international education commitments are critical, when it comes to the actual *provision* of educational support for refugees with disabilities in locations like refugee camps, these statements and treaties do not provide adequate educational access for the world's most vulnerable populations (Elder, 2015a).

Around the world, disabled children have historically been excluded from education. According to the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) (2021), "Youth with disabilities are among the most marginalized and poorest of the world's youth population and are more likely to face severe social, economic, and civic disparities as compared with those without disabilities, even in developed countries" (p. 1). When considering people with hearing-related impairments, the World

Health Organization (WHO) (2021a) reports that approximately 5% of the world's population, or roughly 430 million people, experience some form of hearing impairment. The WHO (2021a) report goes on to state that many children with hearing loss and deafness do not have access to schooling at all. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) acknowledges the impact of COVID-19 and states,

> The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on access to education has significantly impacted deaf learners. Around the world, deaf children and youth lack access to quality bilingual education in national sign languages, and parents of deaf children lack support for learning sign languages. (p. 1)

These realities faced by people with hearing loss and deafness around the world are particularly important to understand as they are forced to migrate from their home countries and find themselves relocated as DNAs in the United States. As noted in Chap. 3, related to forced migration, as global conflict and forced migration increases with climate change (World Bank, 2020), competition for already scarce resources will continue to force disabled people into extreme poverty and encourage them flee their countries of origin (Grech, 2011; Meekosha & Soldatić, 2011). As a result, these refugees will likely acquire a variety of disabilities from this forced dislocation (Elder, 2015b). As experienced by the participants in this project, these refugees will be housed in refugee camps with restricted access to life necessities and education (World Bank, 2020). These realities exacerbate the barriers to education and employment DNAs face once they arrive in the United States (and other countries).

The Right to Education and Employment

The American disability rights law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004), guarantees disabled students a free and appropriate public education that is individualized to meet their unique needs alongside their nondisabled peers in the least restrictive environment. The IDEA (2004) was originally enacted as the Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. This legislation supports children aged 3 to 21, however, the law does not support disabled students older than 21, which renders many DNAs in this region of the United States ineligible for services. Additionally, simply placing a sign language interpreter in an educational setting such as the Educational Center, as required

by the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), is not always effective. This is due to the reality that DNAs require (and prefer) more complex communication support than just an interpreter in a classroom.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) (2008), is a federal law that governs the administration of higher education programs. The purpose is to provide educational resources to colleges and universities in the United States, and to allocate financial aid to postsecondary and higher education students. As there is no mention of Deaf refugees in this statute, by the law's very definition it excludes refugees with disabilities who arrive with limited or no formal education. The HEOA (2008) asks three main questions: Inclusion: Are all students including those from rural, economic, and racial backgrounds, included in higher education?

1. Alignment: Does the educational program lead to job skills? Are students offered classes and an education that teaches the soft and hard skills that are most demanded in the job market?
2. Attainment: Are students graduating with a higher education certificate or degree, and at what rate do access and completion obstacles prevent good outcomes? How can we improve education pathways so that more students attain higher education outcomes? Are additional pathways needed in addition to high school, and existing academic degrees such as a Bachelor's?

Being that refugees with disabilities are not included in the scope of the law, they are also excluded from accessing resources for higher education that could lead to job skills or a higher education degree.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) is the national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. The earlier iteration of the law, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002), represented a notable progress for American children, particularly as it highlighted where students were succeeding and where they required additional support, regardless of gender, race, socio-economic status, disability, language, or other markers of difference. As it relates to DNAs, as long as they were of school-age, they would qualify to receive an equitable education under this legislation.

Educational Barriers

In addition to providing a foundation on legal mandates for education in this chapter, it is also important to make it clear that Deaf parents also face other educational barriers, particularly related to communication, when attempting to support their children in school. These additional barriers were routinely mentioned by multiple participants in this project (Schwartz et al., 2022). Historically, Deaf parents have reported that they have limited contact with their children's school, which causes frustration and a lack of trust with school-based stakeholders (Mallory et al., 1992). This disconnection often requires that hearing children act in roles of interpreters or "messengers" between the school and the parents, which can cause ineffective and/or incomplete communication (Mallory et al., 1992, p. 230). To improve home-school communication, it is imperative to consider parent communication preferences, which should include an array of options including: (a) engaging sign language interpreting services, (b) using communication technologies, and (c) considering the holistic family unit when developing educational supports for Deaf parents with hearing children (Mallory et al., 1992).

Employment Barriers

In addition to educational barriers, DNAs also face additional obstacles related to employment. For DNAs in the United States, in 2021, the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported.

> 17.9% of disabled people had a job, which was down from 19.3% in 2019. Similarly, the unemployment rates for persons with and without a disability both increased from 2019 to 2020, to 12.6% and 7.9%, respectively. Data on both groups for 2020 reflect the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and efforts to contain it. (p. 1)

Focusing specifically on these statistics that focus on deaf employment, the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes reported that "In 2017, only 53.3% of deaf people were employed, compared to 75.8% of hearing people. This is an employment gap of 22.5%" (p. 4). These statistics were also supported by the WHO (2021a) finding that adults with hearing loss and deafness experience a much higher unemployment rate. Among those who are employed, a higher percentage of people with

hearing loss are in the lower grades of employment compared with the general workforce.

Exploratory Case Study

As noted above, this chapter is part of a larger project on the educational barriers that DNAs face in their community (see Schwartz et al., 2022). In this iteration of the project, I highlight the stories that three of the DNA participants told during our semi-structured interviews in June 2021. I chose to highlight the narratives of three DNA women because not only are they leaders within this particular community, but also because they told impactful stories of the oppressions they faced when they attempted to educate themselves in their countries of origin and after they reached the United States. They also expressed frustration with the barriers they face when attempting to be active participants in the education of their own children.

To analyze these data for this iteration of the project, I used the stories told by these participants as an exploratory case study. Exploratory case studies help researchers better understand a particular phenomenon by helping them identify important research questions that can lead to new approaches to research (Yin, 1994, 2012). Through this approach, I do not intend to make causal statements about participants' education, nor do I claim to include the entirety of people who identify as Deaf or hard of hearing people. Rather, I used exploratory case study methodology to explore the educational experiences of these three Deaf New Americans, both in their countries of origin and in the United States.

In addition to using exploratory case study methodology, me and my colleagues also utilized a community-based participatory (CBPR) approach. Through a CBPR lens, we attempted to engage participants in ways that initiated actions that provided immediate and clear benefits to the DNA community (Israel et al., 1998; Stanton, 2014). Due to funding restraints, we could not engage the participants in all aspects of the project (i.e., analysis and publication) (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). However, from the start of the project, the participants collaborated with me to formulate research ideas and questions, and to guide research directions (Wulfhorst et al., 2008). By using a CBPR approach, our intention was to promote action-oriented research focused on equity, as well as to promote socially just outcomes that fit the evolving needs of the DNA community (Beh et al., 2013). In this project, this meant co-presenting with

participants on emerging data at a national conference as well as co-publication of an article (see Schwartz et al., 2022).

In the initial iteration of this project, we conducted semi-structured interviews with eight DNAs. We intentionally interviewed those participants because they had varied experiences attempting to access education both in their country of origin and in the United States. The participants with children also shared stories of the barriers they experienced when trying to support their own children's education in the United States. The participants identified as a group of activists and organized themselves around a common goal of breaking down barriers to communication in their community. Participants expressed that their willingness to participate in this project was their way of showing their collective commitment to equitable community access and to communication justice. While all eight interviews in the initial round of interviews were critical and moving, in this chapter I present a more in-depth version of the stories of three participants: Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma.[1]

I chose these three participant's stories because they each expressed a desire to continue to share their experiences through publication in the hopes it could help DNAs with similar stories in the United States and around the world. Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma identify as refugees, and all three reported they spent many years in refugee camps before relocating to the United States. Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma identify as Deaf (i.e., culturally Deaf), and Kanchi and Bhavaroopa noted their first language was some form of local/home sign language. Hayma, whose first language was not a form of sign language, lost her hearing over time and has since self-identified as Deaf for many years.

In the initial iteration of this project, we conducted eight semi-structured interviews that lasted between 45-minutes and one-hour. We conducted the interviews at a local church in the neighborhood where most participants lived. We used consistent semi-structured interview questions as a guide for each interview. We started with open-ended questions that eventually led to narrower, more focused questions depending on participant responses. We encouraged participants to communicate in their preferred language, which for all participants was Nepali Sign Language. We provided a Deaf interpreter who was fluent in both

[1] All participant names are pseudonyms.

American Sign Language (ASL) and Nepali Sign Language (NSL),[2] and an ASL interpreter. Kanchi's role in this research was critical because all participants used NSL, and were not necessarily conversant or fluent in ASL. American Sign Language and NSL were central to the project since spoken English was not the preferred language of any of the participants. During the interviews, I recorded the interviews on my phone, and took hand-written notes. I would occasionally ask clarifying questions.

To connect to a point I made in the CBPR section, due to time and fiscal constraints which are common in such small-scale projects, I could not involve participants in all aspects of the project, which included the data analysis portion of the project. Given my research background and experience conducting CBPR, for this chapter, I did all of the analysis, and I conducted member checks with each participant to verify the quotes and interpretations in this chapter (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Theoretical Positioning

In this chapter, in order to frame the complexities and nuances of the lived experiences of these three DNAs, I utilize four intersecting theoretical frameworks: (a) Deaf Studies, (b) Disability Studies, and (c) DisCrit. In the sections below, I introduce these frameworks and their application to this project.

Deaf Studies

For centuries, society has marginalized Deaf people and characterized them as "biologically deficient beings in need of cures or charity in order to be successfully assimilated into society" (Ladd, 2005, p. 12). In this chapter, I draw on Deaf Studies, a field of study that promotes Deaf culture, centers the experiences of Deaf people/the Deaf community, and intersects with other fields of study (e.g., disability, education, law, history, etc.). The notion of "Deafhood" is critical to this project and central to Deaf Studies. It is a liberating philosophy in the Deaf community and resists the historical and current oppressive oralist and colonizing practices forced upon the Deaf community by the larger hearing society (Kusters & De Meulder, 2013; Ladd & Lane, 2013). Deafhood is critical in Deaf

[2] The Deaf interpreter is Kanchi, who is also one of the DNAs whose story I present in this chapter.

communities as it unites members of the international Deaf community, and affirms their lived experiences as Deaf people and the value they add to non-Deaf societies (Ladd, 2005).

Disability Studies

Complementing Deaf Studies, this research is also framed in Disability Studies. This means that I view deafness as a natural and valuable aspect of the human condition (Baglieri et al., 2011; Hehir, 2002), and I locate deafness at the intersection of the social practices and policies dealing with Deaf people and the physical condition of hearing loss. Meaning, the disabling factor is not a person's hearing loss, but society's failure to accommodate the Deaf community. This approach supports the idea that many Deaf people do not consider themselves disabled. Rather, they believe they become disabled when they interact with inaccessible spaces in their communities (e.g., an event lacking sign language interpreters, a television without captions, people who do not know sign language) (Padden & Humphries, 2009a, 2009b). Guided by the principles of Disability Studies, I privileged the lived experience and narratives of disabled people (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012), including those who are deaf or hard of hearing. In addition to approaching this project through a lens of Disability Studies, which positions participants as powerful agents in charge of their lives (Mercer, 2002).

DisCrit

Recognizing that one theoretical framework is insufficient in capturing the complexities of these three women's lived experiences, I use DisCrit as an overarching way to weave these frameworks together to better understand the intersecting realities of deafness, disability, race, and nation in this chapter. Specifically, I use Tenet 1 to focus on ways that racism and ableism circulate interdependently, Tenet 2 to value multidimensional identities, Tenet 4 to privilege the voice of marginalized populations, and Tenet 7 to use the chapter as a way to promote activism within the DNA community. When taken together, these theoretical frameworks and approaches to research can help in centering the perspectives of disabled people, the largest minority on the planet. In the next section, I discuss my positionality and how I view myself and my role as I relate to the participants, and deafness in general.

Positionality

While I have described my positionality in previous chapters, here I describe my positionality in relation to deafness. While I am nondisabled and do not identify as a member of the Deaf community, I am conversant in ASL and I view my research with Deaf communities as one example where I work to counter the negative perceptions of deafness and deafness. Foundational to my community-based work is allyship,[3] which is particularly critical between researchers and historically marginalized communities. Having allyship and trusting research-based relationships allows both researchers and participants to have informed partners outside of their respective communities. Examples of this allyship in practice is the co-authorship and publication that me and members of the DNA community engage in (see Schwartz et al., 2022), and co-presenting at national and international conferences in order to disseminate our work in ways that have positive impacts on members of the DNA community.

Access to Deaf Culture, Sign Language, and Dismantling Barriers

To better understand Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma's narratives, I applied qualitative research methods (i.e., constructivist grounded theory approach and constant comparison method) to conduct data analysis (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). This approach allowed me to simultaneously collect data and begin to analyze findings (Charmaz, 2005). To guide analysis, I followed Bogdan and Biklen's (2007) coding procedures in three phases: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. By doing this, I identified three salient themes from the interview narratives (Creswell & Miller, 2000), and organized and maintained the data with Dedoose software (Lieber & Weisner, 2023). Through this process, I was able to focus on data related to participants' understanding of the barriers to education they faced.

[3] Allyship is "an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person in a position of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group" (The Anti-Oppression Network, 2015, p. 1). This requires me to commit to "a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people" (The Anti-Oppression Network, 2015, p. 1).

In this section, I introduce three themes that emerged from data analysis. The themes are: (a) introduction to Deaf culture, (b) the need for sign language, and (c) barriers faced in education. In each theme, I introduce an excerpt from each participant, connect it to relevant literature and discussion, and transition to the next quote.

Introduction to Deaf Culture

During the interviews, a common theme mentioned by Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma was the importance of Deaf culture in their lives. While Bhavaroopa grew up with many Deaf people in her family, Kanchi and Hayma had very limited exposure to the Deaf community in their younger years. In this first excerpt, Kanchi describes her first experiences actively searching for a Deaf community in her refugee camp in Nepal.

> Kanchi: I tried to talk to the deaf people, and they pointed me in the direction of the building where the hearing staff were. The [hearing] people actually ran the program at the deaf center … I went in there, and as soon as I got in they asked me my name … I will never forget that moment. That was like the beginning. They asked me, 'What is your name?' I signed 'Kanchi' [my hand shaped like a fist on the back of my head] … I didn't know any signs, so that was the first thing I signed to them when they asked me my name … I showed them my sign name, and they explained to me about [Deaf culture]. I said, 'Oh my goodness, I want to go and learn. I want to go to school, and I want to learn sign language …' Before that, I felt like I was peering in at the Deaf students, and thinking, 'I want to go there …' I wasn't allowed in before because I had never been formally introduced to the staff, and I didn't have any way to tell them I was deaf.

In this excerpt Kanchi describes the thrill of discovering a Deaf community that she never had access to because she was never given the opportunity to learn sign language. Due to the intersections of racism and ableism Kanchi experienced at her refugee camp, she did not even know being a part of this community was an option (DisCrit Tenet 1). These education and language barriers denied her a means to communicate her desire to even be a part of this community. This connects with literature

that labels Kanchi's discovery of her Deaf community as a core element of her Deaf identity (Leigh, 2009), and that was when she began assuming her Deaf identity (McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011). In this quote, Kanchi also explains that when she realized she was not alone in her experience as a Deaf woman. After finding her community, she became motivated to go to school, to learn sign language, and to be a part of this multiply marginalized community. Feeling isolated and inferior from a lack of meaningful education and equitable life opportunities is cited as a common experience in Deaf communities (McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011). While Kanchi describes her excitement about discovering a Deaf community and then being motivated to learn, in the next excerpt, Bhavaroopa explains that she grew up in a Deaf family, but was not given an opportunity to receive a well-rounded education.

Bhavaroopa: We have deafness in our family. My mother was Deaf, my aunt is Deaf, my uncle is Deaf, my sister is Deaf, and I am Deaf. So we have genetic deafness in our family … I didn't go to an official school. I went to a disability center [in the refugee camp] and they taught me sign language, Nepali Sign Language. I didn't really have an opportunity to go to school. Before I got married I went to the center to be taught Nepali Sign Language, but then after I was married there was no opportunity to go to school. I was responsible for cooking and taking care of the family and my in-laws.

Unlike Kanchi, Bhavaroopa comes from a Deaf family, but was not afforded the same educational opportunities that Kanchi had. However, Bhavaroopa was raised in a family where her multidimensional Deaf identity was supported (DisCrit Tenet 2). Like Kanchi, Bhavaroopa also spent years in a refugee camp in Nepal where she only received access to learning sign language. However, this was her only opportunity to go to school, and due to family-related duties as she got older, her access to higher education was limited. This connects with global literature that confirms that deaf people are undereducated or denied educational access altogether (WHO, 2021a). Further, the WFD (2021) calls on all governments to ensure deaf people receive equitable access to education in national sign languages, "including access to instruction by sign language-proficient teachers and the provision of visual learning materials" (p. 1). By

Bhavaroopa's quote above, she was only provided sign language instruction while she was denied access to learn other content.

In the previous two excerpts, both Kanchi and Bhavaroopa describe being denied access to equitable education in refugee camps before coming to the United States. In Hayma's excerpt below, she describes the possibilities of when Deaf people are provided with more equitable access to educational opportunities *and* the power of when that access to education is provided by strong Deaf role models.

> Hayma: At [a public organization for shared education services], that was the first time I had ever met a Deaf role model. It was the first time I've ever seen a deaf person before. I've met some deaf people here and there, but not someone who is brilliant. Never a brilliant Deaf person, and not a Deaf teacher who was brilliant. I was just so inspired by her. It was so inspiring to meet her because I had only seen negative aspects of deafness, and now here was a person that was a positive role model.

Disability representation matters (Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012), and in this quote, Hayma directly describes the importance of representation and how that has shaped her education, career, and her life in general. This is particularly important as Hayma recognizes that people with intersectional and multiply marginalized identities like her do not historically get access to education, nor a platform for their stories to be amplified (DisCrit Tenet 4). In this excerpt, Hayma is connecting to the notion that disabled persons may feel empowered when they see themselves in people in positions of influence and power, and when they are included in key decisions about their own lives, hence the slogan "nothing about us without us" (Charlton, 1998, p. 3).

The Need for Sign Language

In the previous section, Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma discussed their various experiences negotiating barriers to education, how they came to be a part of their respective Deaf communities, and the importance of seeing one's self represented in personal spaces and in society at large. In this section, Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma discuss the critical role that sign language plays in their Deaf identities. In this first excerpt, Kanchi describes

the experience of one family of a deaf child who received misinformation from a doctor regarding their daughter's deafness.

Kanchi: We want someone that can really support parents and show them what their rights are, so they can attain the dreams for their children. I feel really bad because [locally] there's one family that didn't know what to do when they found out that they had a deaf child. I wasn't living here at that time … but the doctors convinced the parents that their child was fine. The doctors convinced them that their child can hear, and that their child will be fine … So now, their daughter is definitely not hearing, she is nine years old, and she doesn't have any language. She doesn't speak … and doctors convinced the parents that they didn't need to do anything extra. And now I really wished there was someone, a mentor, a Deaf mentor that could go with them and help them learn about language and all that kind of stuff.

With this quote, Kanchi touches on many critical issues when it comes to hearing parents learning that their child is deaf. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) (2021), "More than 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents" (p. 1). This underscores the urgency that hearing parents who learn their child is deaf must have early and accurate information related to sign language, and should be delivered by doctors who are informed about the cultural and linguistic needs of deaf children (Humphries et al., 2019). This quote also connects to the ableist ways in which deafness and ableism intersect in families with hearing parents and deaf children (DisCrit Tenet 1). In order to support hearing families of deaf children getting connected to Deaf communities, as Kanchi suggests, Humphries et al. (2019) recommend parents search online to learn about local and national deaf community centers, deaf education services, in addition to reading articles and books. Connecting to parents with these types of support early on could help to minimize the linguistic deprivation family situation that Kanchi describes above.

In addition to the need to educate parents about how best to support the linguistic needs of their deaf child from an early age, Deaf parents, especially DNA parents, need to be supported so they can understand their rights when it comes to accessing services for themselves and their

families. In the next excerpt, Bhavaroopa describes her experience trying to learn ASL so she could continue to receive benefits as she relocated to the United States.

Bhavaroopa: I was told that if you didn't go to [the Education Center], you wouldn't get benefits. So that's why everybody went. We were terrified of losing our benefits. You know, we didn't have jobs, we had to continue to get our benefits, so that's why we continue to go to [the Education Center] even though I wasn't learning anything. The Department of Social Services said, 'You have to go to [the Education Center] or you won't be able to get any benefits' … They would teach us very basic signs like 'mother' and 'father,' but they didn't teach us anything beyond that. We needed a lot more language … That wasn't what we needed for communication. I left [the Education Center] and instead I started to learn on my own. I would take from Nepali language, sometimes I would ask Kanchi to sit and help me and go from Nepali to English. That's the way I learned what I needed to do to pass my citizenship test. [The Education Center] didn't help me in those areas. [The Education Center] school really didn't teach anything at all about helping me become a citizen. [The Education Center] really kind of controlled what it is that we were able to learn.

Here you see Bhavaroopa and the larger DNA community being oppressed with education once again. At this school, Bhavaroopa and her fellow DNAs find them in a Catch-22. They must endure ineffective language access in order to access benefits to survive. When Bhavaroopa said the Education Center "wasn't what we needed for communication," she was connecting to the call from the WFD (2021) for classroom instruction to be taught by Deaf educators fluent in ASL. Had this been the case at this Education Center, the Deaf teacher, through lived experience of audism and deaf oppression (DisCrit Tenet 1), would have recognized how this group of DNAs were being further oppressed by ineffective education and language access. Further complicating matters for Bhavaroopa and others at this school, since they were older than 21, they did not qualify to request interpreters as outlined by the IDEA (2004). Additionally, they

were also not eligible to access the benefits of the HEOA (2008) as they arrived in America with limited formal education.

While Bhavaroopa described yet another set of barriers to education and language access, in the excerpt below, Hayma describes a rich, accessible, and meaningful educational opportunity for her and her fellow DNAs.

Hayma: Now the Deaf New Americans, when they get to the farm, they'll have much more time to work in the field because they don't have to take these sorts of meaningless classes … They aren't just sitting and waste time in their opinion watching the teachers lecture to them because it really just goes in one eye and out the other. They see what's being taught, but they don't retain it. But instead we get them to the farm and then they actually watch us do it. They experience it themselves. They watch what we're doing, they do it themselves.

It is similar to how Deaf children are taught … [DNAs] and their children really need to focus on American Sign Language first … In the school system they tend to focus on lip reading and ASL is not even sometimes really used. A lot of the kids have cochlear implants … and so they decide that they don't need American Sign Language because they have the implant. And then, you know, they're not really Deaf, they're hearing. That's what they seem to think. So American Sign Language is removed from their education. It's very sad.

The DNA farm that Hayma mentions is a product of the DNA collectively advocating for education and language access that is beneficial to their community. The farm is a place where DNAs can bond through their shared lived experience of marginalization, can learn from and with one another based on their funds of knowledge and expertise developed by their role in agriculture in their native countries (Schwartz et al., 2022). In a sense, the farm has become a place that celebrates the multidimensional identities of the DNA in this community (DisCrit Tenet 2). The farm, which is a few acres, has become a central focus of the lives of DNAs, and it affirms their commitment to sustainable farming, communication, and education practices that benefit their community. The farm is also

culturally important for the DNAs because it binds the community members together in a communal activity. Additionally, the farm represents a Deaf Studies approach to building community in that it is a place for DNAs to resist the recurring oppressive oralist and colonizing practices forced upon the Deaf community by the larger hearing society, as noted repeatedly in this project by Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma (Kusters & De Meulder, 2013; Ladd & Lane, 2013). It also provides a space where the cultural and communication needs of the DNAs are not only supported, but anticipated, which allows for members to celebrate their identities (DisCrit Tenet 1), privilege the diversity within their own communities (DisCrit Tenet 2), and create a space for activism and resistance (DisCrit Tenet 7).

Barriers Faced in Education

While the previous two sections intersect with education in various ways, here, Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma discuss the specific barriers they faced either with their local school district broadly, with their children's education, or with their personal educational experiences. In this first excerpt, Kanchi describes the DNA's struggles related to members of the local school system interacting Deaf culture.

Kanchi: The Deaf New American community, they really had a lot of struggles with the [local] school system. Most of the teachers have never had any exposure to Deaf culture and don't really care about the Deaf parents. Teachers just ignore them. They just think, 'They're a deaf person and they're people that have challenges with English …' But as a result, the Deaf New Americans they just basically stay home and work, they don't really get involved in their kids' schools … [Employees of] [the local school district] show up at deaf people's houses and they just talk to the kids. They don't tell the parents anything, and then they leave … And students have IEPs and the parents aren't even aware that their children have IEPs. [The IEP team] just gets together without the parents then they'll say, 'Your child has an IEP,' and the parents are like, 'I have no idea. I had no idea what was happening.'

In her quote, Kanchi references multiple things. The first is the need for educators to be aware of the needs of students with Deaf parents. Simply ignoring Deaf parents and teachers liaising with students is what Singleton and Tittle (2000) describe as hearing children being "messengers" between the school and the parents, which is not an effective way for educators to build home-school partnerships even though it is assumed as such by many. This discriminatory approach to communicating with families highlights the intersections of racism and ableism in schools (DisCrit Tenet 1). Additionally, holding IEPs without parent input nor the parents being present is illegal as outlined by IDEA (2004). So, as this school district looks for ways to improve service delivery and relationships with Deaf parents/families, school leaders and teachers should consider the provision of services and support as they would for other linguistically diverse families. Primarily, the school needs to provide appropriate and understandable methods of communication and interaction (Singleton & Tittle, 2000). In this case, it would require the school to privilege the needs of the parents (DisCrit Tenet 4) by hiring an interpreter, unless the family has another alternative interpreter they trust. This approach could not only improve daily interactions with Deaf parents, but it could most certainly promote a more collaborative and inclusive IEP process.

Similar to how Kanchi described Deaf parents being excluded from the IEP process, in the next excerpt, Bhavaroopa explains how she is similarly excluded from all aspects of her children's education.

Bhavaroopa: I'm not aware of what's really going on with my children's education at their school. I don't know if their grades are good or if they're bad. I don't know how they behave. We don't have any parent conferences. During COVID, I had to go to work at 9: 00 in the morning, and so the kids were home and I didn't know. I didn't know when they started school, when they finished school, there was no communication from the school about what they were doing. And then they just told me that my son failed. In 2020 my son failed. He failed school because I had no information … They never called me to go into parent-teacher conferences … My son and I went to the school and the teachers were talking to my son, they didn't address me directly so I was basically left out of the entire conversation. So then

> we went home and my son filled me in on a little bit of what happened but not all of it. I never got complete access to the information.

Bhavaroopa's quote highlights what can happen when Deaf parents are systematically denied access to communication and their children's education. Deaf parents being systematically denied their right to communicate with the school also has implications that impact their children's ability to access education. In this case, Bhavaroopa's son experienced school failure. To prevent Bhavaroopa's situation from happening to other Deaf parents/families, research suggests schools do the following: (a) taking a whole-family approach that includes the provision of accessible guidance and counseling services that promote intellectual, social, and emotional development, (b) developing a comprehensive language and communication foundation which includes the provision of sign language interpreters, (c) training school personnel on the needs of Deaf families, (d) supporting the social support and inclusion of Deaf parents in the school community, and (e) regularly engaging Deaf-led organizations in issues related to supporting Deaf families (Calderon & Greenberg, 1997; Kanwal et al., 2022). Engaging Deaf-led organizations to help advocate for these parents would also help schools to promote an activist stance in how they support Deaf parents (and other marginalized families) at their school (DisCrit Tenet 7).

In this final excerpt, Hayma shares what can happen when Deaf students are exposed to Deaf educators who understand the daily struggles of being Deaf in a hearing world.

> Hayma: It's hard because with a hearing teacher, learning is a much slower process. With a Deaf teacher, we have shared experiences. A Deaf teacher is familiar with deafness. It's within them. They have that commonality. They know what I need. They know how I can be successful. But you know a Deaf teacher has already gone through these things and they know, they know they've already experienced it. They realize that I can take what I have learned from them, and then transfer that to another Deaf individual.

What Hayma describes in this quote aligns with what Clark et al. (2020) identify as best practices in Deaf education. Specifically, Clark et al. (2020)

suggest a bilingual approach to Deaf education which includes "(a) bimodal bilingual early intervention protocols, (b) the development of strong bimodal bilingual language foundations, and (c) align bimodal bilingual research to practices in the P-12 Deaf education system" (p. 1341). Part of a bilingual approach to P-12 Deaf education involves what Hayma calls for in her quote, which is highly qualified teachers who are trained in Deaf education as this translates to greater educational outcomes for Deaf children (Chen Pichler et al., 2014). In addition to having highly qualified teachers, research shows the Deaf education system is in urgent need for training and on-boarding of deaf professionals in the field (Crace & Rems-Smario, 2017; Hamilton & Clark, 2020). This approach would promote the development of positive Deaf identities in classrooms (DisCrit Tenet 3) and underscore the importance of Deaf students learning from Deaf teachers (DisCrit Tenet 4) who have a shared history of oppression with their students.

A Plan of Action at Home and Abroad

Due to the location of DNAs being in the United States, in this section I provide both domestic and international implications and next steps based on the stories shared by Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma.

Domestic Ways Forward

Educational practices and policies in the United States related to DNAs must take into account this community's lack of formal education to learn a native signed and spoken language in their home country (DisCrit Tenet 5). Thus, they arrive in the United States without a means to learn English as a second language. Not having fluency in a native language and ASL adds to DNAs' difficulty in mastering English, which is one way to enjoy a better life in the United States. However, evidenced by the stories told by Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma, the effective way to teach Deaf students requires the employment of Deaf instructors who are trained in best practices in Deaf education and who possess native fluency which can promote stronger educational outcomes for foreign-born Deaf students (DisCrit Tenet 4). Training Deaf teachers to teach Deaf students is not a new idea, but it must be at the center of a strategy to reform educational practices involving Deaf refugees (Schwartz et al., 2022).

In a position paper on their website, the WFD (2021) calls on all governments to ensure deaf students receive equitable access to information and education in national sign languages, which includes access to instruction by sign language-proficient teachers along with providing students with access to visual learning materials. This will require infusing more teacher education programs, both in the United States and globally, with Deaf Studies- and DisCrit-related coursework (see Elder & Borrelle, 2022). As noted by Bhavaroopa, none of the instructors for the DNAs in the Education Center were "sign language-proficient," let alone Deaf themselves. Additionally the material, if any, presented to the DNA did not aid in visual learning because they learned nothing from the Education Center. Further, related to supporting communication between DNA parents and their children's schools, school districts should regularly invite DNA parents to forums where they can give their insights about how to better promote school-home partnerships that center the communication preferences of Deaf parents (DisCrit Tenet 4). To improve such communication, school districts should: (a) engage sign language interpreting services, (b) use communication technologies, and (c) consider the whole family when developing educational support for Deaf parents with hearing children (Mallory et al., 1992).

An additional area of reform requires an ongoing dialogue between DNAs, who are foreign-born and have fluency in both ASL, their native sign language, *and* a working knowledge of English, who can influence the school districts where DNAs live. By connecting local school district leaders with DNA leaders, it is possible to infuse more DNA perspectives into educational policies and practices that affect this community and their children (DisCrit Tenet 7). To promote such a dialogue, the DNA holds an annual conference in July each year where education is one of the important issues on the conference's agenda. The hope is to promote an on-going dialogue with key stakeholders in education, such as teachers, administrators, lawyers, and politicians, and articulate how and why Deaf teachers need to be part of the solution in educating DNAs. It is only when DNAs acquire some proficiency in English reading and writing skills that they will be able to acquire gainful employment *and* be in a position to better support their children in American schools.

International Ways Forward

As the UN is responsible for operating and maintaining refugee camps in Nepal and elsewhere, related UN organizations must rethink their support of educational programs that neglect the communication needs of Deaf refugees. The UN and other related agencies such as the World Bank and WHO need to allocate resources, both human and fiscal, that support language acquisition for Deaf refugees (DisCrit Tenet 2). As the WFD points out, instructors must consist of Deaf teachers trained in education practices and policies that are focused on Deaf students. One potential approach to educating Deaf refugees is to replicate the successes enjoyed by Deaf children of Deaf parents (Lieberman et al., 2004). From birth, Deaf children need to be exposed on a daily basis to signed language. This approach will help these children to grow up mastering English because they have a language, ASL, that serves as a bridge to English as a second language (Schwartz et al., 2022). Reinforcing this message to international education organizations about the critical need to expose Deaf children to sign language from birth is foundational if we hope to privilege the needs of these Deaf people and their families (DisCrit Tenet 4).

The stories shared by Kanchi, Bhavaroopa, and Hayma suggest that there needs to be an international mandate aimed at improving policies and practices related to Deaf education in DNA's home countries so this population can acquire a meaningful education (DisCrit Tenet 5). This education should not just focus on sign language, but also include classes such as math, science, history, and the acquisition of one's native language. As Schwartz et al. (2022) suggest, international organizations such as the World Bank and the UN should develop an agenda that promotes Deaf education around the world. Part of this reform must include the provision of Deaf educators trained in Deaf education and sign language.

One place where this dialogue about international Deaf education and activism (DisCrit Tenet 7) could begin is the annual meeting of the Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP) which takes place in New York City each June. Bringing together stakeholders like the World Federation of the Deaf, Gallaudet University, Rochester Institute of Technology, UNICEF, and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) Office at events like COSP is one way to share information about what is needed to successfully educate DNAs in their new language, English.

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CHAPTER 6

Moving Forward: DisCrit-Informed Person-Centered Strategies for Inclusive Education

Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder

On a hot day at the beginning of summer 2023, I [Valentina] *attended a very important meeting organized by the headteacher of a comprehensive school in Rome. All teachers in the school were asked to attend the meeting before breaking off for the much needed summer holidays. The purpose of the meeting was to collectively discuss and change the design and implementation of the Personalized Teaching Plan (Piano Didattico Personalizzato [PDP]) for students identified with special educational needs (SEN). According to the headteacher, the PDP needed to be transformed into an accessible tool to actively support the learning of disabled students. The headteacher was not present at the meeting, and the discussion focused more on how to make the PDP writing and implementation process easier for teachers. This included how to avoid uncomfortable conversations with families and community members of disabled students. Indeed, teachers were discussing "what to write" to describe the disability of the students, following their subjective judgment on the suspected diagnosis. When arguing about the sections of the document to re-write, they emphasized the importance of maintaining parts where they could talk about students' lack of learning progress, disrupting behavior and "poor" engagement with the academic subjects. Teachers' deficit-based perceptions of students was clear throughout the meeting. In particular, they classified multilingualism as a "cultural disadvantage," putting students from migrant backgrounds at risk of not understanding teachers and classmates, and ultimately not performing well … Finally, teachers were noticeably defensive against my proposal of*

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> *having parents and students' representatives attending such meetings, and actively participating in shifting inclusive tools and practices. Teachers affirmed that the relationships with parents can be highly confrontational, with awkward power dynamics, where parents believe to be more knowledgeable about education. Instead, students were dismissed as "too immature" to discuss issues of disability and inclusion.* (Notes from Valentina's research journal)

This vignette takes us into the core tensions of inclusive education practices in the Italian context. The PDP and other inclusive tools such the Individualized Education Program (IEP) were introduced by the Italian Ministry of Education through the Ministerial Circular of March 2013. The PDP was designed to facilitate the learning of students labeled as having special educational needs, who do not have a medically certified disability (D'Alessio, 2014). Instead, the vignette shows that teachers use the PDP to construct a disability diagnosis with the only purpose of gaining extra classroom support, while leaving their curriculum and pedagogy unchanged. Additionally, the PDP does not contain strategies to periodically monitor students' learning progress. Hence, if a student is given a PDP, teachers' expectations of their academic achievement remain limited (Migliarini et al., 2022).

Tensions and contradictions in the design and implementation of the PDP become more evident when teachers address the educational requirements of students living at the intersections of multiple forms of oppression, such as race, ability, language, migratory and citizenship statuses. The comment on multilingualism in the vignette gives us a hint on white monolingual Italian teachers' attitude to construct poverty, migration, and language learning as signs of disability (Migliarini & Cioè-Peña, 2022). Teachers often use students' proximity to the white Italian norm and nondisabled status as a metric for ascertaining their ability or belonging in certain learning contexts. Such attitudes explain the significant increase of migrant children in Italian classrooms being identified as having special educational needs (Italian Ministry of Education [MIUR], 2014a). They also mirror the historical color-evasive approach of Italian society toward issues of race relations and racism in education, as Chap. 2 of this book demonstrates.

Race neutral understandings of inclusive education coexist with the intensifying global teacher education and recruitment crisis.[1] In Italy, the

[1] Report on Teacher Shortage in OECD Countries: https://www.oecd.org/education/research/oecdreportwarnsofgrowingriskofteachershortagesinoecdcountries.htm

number of special education teachers has dropped significantly in the last five years. Consequently, the Ministry of Education has put in place a fast-track system of teacher training and recruitment. Regardless of qualifications and experience, teacher candidates can now access a permanent position within 3 years.[2] The fast-track system generated frustration and disagreement among in-service teachers and public intellectuals, who argued that this system only offers teacher candidates superficial pedagogical knowledge.[3] Leaving teacher candidates with limited knowledge of students' learning styles, cultures and backgrounds, may well reinforce the "defect craft" processes (Artiles, 2023), already stigmatizing historically marginalized students.

As critical scholars, it is our duty to analyze the emerging tensions within existing inclusive education policies and practices, and locate them within the current de-professionalization and precarization of the teaching operated by governments in Italy, and globally (Giroux, 2021). Our analysis is intended to be a constructive one. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to present DisCrit-informed person-centered strategies to reframe PDPs and other inclusive tools, such as the IEP. We draw on findings from a qualitative case study carried out in Rome,[4] as well as data gathered during multiple teacher training sessions across Italy, to advance practices that inform the design and implementation of PDP and IEP, through non-deficit, intersectional, and culturally relevant approaches. The purpose of this chapter is not to simply critique teachers for what they do "wrong," but to generate a constructively critical dialogue between scholars and practitioners. A dialogue that can advance a new epistemic culture of inclusive education drawing from intersectional and indigenous theories (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

We begin this chapter by describing inclusive education tools used in Italian public schools. Next, we outline DisCrit's affordance to reframe the design and implementation of PDPs and IEPs in the Italian context. This is followed by our presentation of practical strategies to

[2] Information on the new recruitment system of special education teachers put in place by the Italian Ministry of Education:https://www.orizzontescuola.it/docenti-di-sostegno-oltre-13-mila-assunti-in-ruolo-2400-con-la-call-veloce-per-le-supplenze-si-va-verso-i-100-mila-posti-in-deroga/

[3] Petition against the fast-tracking of special education and general teachers: https://www.orizzontescuola.it/no-al-reclutamento-dei-docenti-senza-verificare-che-conoscano-la-loro-disciplina-lappello-degli-intellettuali/

[4] A list of the participants for this case study can be found in Table A.3, Appendix A.

reconceptualize these tools in the Italian school contexts through a strength-based, culturally relevant lens. We intend to highlight how, even in an inclusive context (Ferri, 2019), multiply marginalized students can fall into the cracks of the education system because they are served through single-axis approaches, such as the macro category of SEN, that do not account for intersectionality.

Inclusive Tools in Italian Public Schools

The intention of IEPs and PDPs in Italy is to support three categories of students: (a) students with disability diagnoses according to Law 104/92; (b) students with learning-related disabilities (e.g., dyslexia), according to Law 170/2010; and (c) students who struggle meeting academic standards, and who are from marginalized socio-cultural backgrounds but do not have a medically certified disability diagnosis, as established by the Ministerial Circular of March 2013. While IEPs and PDPs are intended to be progressive tools for the inclusion of students with disabilities, in reality they are the products of a longstanding medicalized history of disability,[5] and ableism which influences a criterion for "functioning."[6] As a result, teachers focus on student deficits and rehabilitation (D'Alessio, 2014). With the increasing numbers of migrant students in Italy, both with and without disabilities, the Ministry of Education has pushed to introduce PDPs for *all students* classified as having a learning disorder (Law 170/2020) or for those with linguistic and socio-cultural support needs.

[5] The medical model of disability is driven by the imperative to "healthy normalcy," whose defining characteristic is the location of disability within the individual with biological impairments, ignoring macro-socio political contexts of racism, ableism, and other intersecting systems of oppression.

[6] With the passing of the Interministerial Decree n. 182/2020, the old procedure that required local health authorities to issue a Dynamic Functional Profile (originally passed in 1994) has been substituted with the writing of a functioning profile based on new identification and assessment criteria resulting from the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (World Health Organization, 2001). However, a court ruling passed last September 2021 has canceled the decree 182/2020. Consequently, the Italian Ministry of Education has passed new guidelines for the writing and implementation of the IEP. The new IEPs will become compulsory starting in the school year 2021–2022. Despite the Ministry of Education's clear attempt to focus more on environmental barriers to participation and less on individual functioning (MIUR, 2009), the International Classification of Functioning is nevertheless still used to boost the medical perspective of disability (D'Alessio, 2007, 2011).

While the PDPs can support students without disability labels, the IEP has traditionally remained designed only for students with a medical disability diagnosis.

Even with recent attempts to revise IEP and PDP policies so they solicit more active participation of students and their families (MIUR, 2020), the reality of implementation relies mostly on medically based teacher council decisions and ministerial guidelines. Additionally, IEPs and PDPs are not easily reviewed over time, and many marginalized students remain labeled as "needy" over the years. As a result, IEPs and PDPs remain as the main supportive tools for these students, but instructional methodologies and curriculum do not change. This means students are pathologized and positioned as deficient rather than identifying teachers as providing inadequate response to diversity and difference in their classrooms. Subsequently, while migrant students are generally expected to make academic progress, their learning is not routinely monitored, and these students are not provided with individualized instruction they require to succeed in the same manner as their nondisabled peers. While IEPs and PDPs are two specific supports for multiply marginalized students, co-teaching is considered another inclusive practice promoted by disability policies such as Law 517/1977 and Law 104/1992. Through these policies, co-teaching is described as a practice where classroom teachers and support teachers have parity in instruction and classroom management. In practice, however, support teachers often only follow the lead of classroom teachers. This imbalance of teacher power within the co-teaching partnership further represents a "deficit" perspective. Rather than teach all students, many support teachers and other school professionals such as teaching assistants, are then obligated to mainly support students with IEPs and PDPs.

Although IEPs, PDPs, and co-teaching are considered to be "inclusive," these tools and approaches do little in practical ways to engage multiply marginalized students and their families. Rethinking these tools and approaches, especially when considering assessments and transitions into different grades are places where reform is needed. The approaches we propose in this chapter are connected to DisCrit, and help us to advocate for an epistemological shift to the writing and subsequent implementation of IEPs and PDPs in Italian classrooms. Due to the significant increase in migrant students in Italian schools with SEN (MIUR, 2014b), and the

evidence of color-evasive attitudes of Italian teachers, when discussing the intersections of race and disabilities in schools, it is important to explicitly call out the ways in which ability and race are intersectional and influence the construction of an imagined normalcy in schools (Annamma, et al., 2013; Banks, 2017). The "norm" (e.g., white, male, nondisabled, straight, middle class) represents a desired standard through which all others are compared. Students who fall outside these imagined normative standards are labeled as disabled. Furthermore, students from such multiply marginalized backgrounds are the ones most at risk of being pathologized or experiencing discrimination through the processes of drafting and the implementation of the IEPs and PDPs.

Through the DisCrit-informed person-centered approaches presented in this chapter, we emphasize the importance of centering multiply marginalized students and their families in the IEP and PDP design and implementation processes. While all seven tenets of DisCrit[7] inform our work, for the purpose of this chapter, we focus on *Tenet One*, which highlights how racism and ableism circulate interdependently; *Tenet Three*, which offers that the construct of race and ability are built in the social consciousness and that these productions have material consequences; and *Tenet Six*, which considers whiteness and ability as properties. In this chapter, we seek to examine how DisCrit-informed approaches can be applied to person-centered planning (PCP) and strength-based practices to address entrenched inequities in education (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Connor & Gabel, 2013). Such an application situates multiply marginalized students, specifically disabled migrant students, as valuable members of the school community who have vital decision-making power in the development and implementation of IEPs and PDPs. The next section of this chapter presents DisCrit-informed person-centered approaches that we presented to Italian teachers and school professionals.

[7] The seven tenets of DisCrit are: (1) DisCrit focuses on ways that racism and ableism circulate interdependently; (2) DisCrit values multidimensional identities; (3) DisCrit emphasizes social constructions of race and ability; (4) DisCrit privileges the voices of marginalized populations; (5) DisCrit considers legal and historical aspects of disability and race; (6) DisCrit recognizes whiteness and ability as property; (7) DisCrit requires activism (Annamma et al., 2013).

Reframing Inclusive Education Though Person-Centered Planning (PCP)

The vignette and excerpts that we use in this chapter constitute data gathered during an on-going qualitative case study with teachers in a comprehensive school in Rome, and a number of teacher training on reframing inclusion through DisCrit in Milan and Turin, between 2020 and 2023. Through this case study, we aim to expand the person-centered strength-based approach for IEPs through the intersectional framework of DisCrit (Migliarini et al., 2022). Consequently, we attempt to show *how* teachers have understood DisCrit, PCP strategies, and started transforming the design and implementation of IEPs and PDPs into more equitable inclusive and culturally responsive tools centering multiply marginalized students and their families. Our data collection procedures involved three focus groups with six white, Italian school professionals, including one English teacher, one Italian teacher, three support teachers, and the head teacher. We collected data during teacher training sessions in Milan and Turin, where there were teachers coming from other parts of Italy, such as Florence. We chose school professionals based on their engagement with inclusion and diversity in the school, their roles, and their number of years in service. We have used pseudonyms for all participants. Teachers in training sessions agreed to have their thoughts and opinions shared for the purpose of this research. Valentina translated the interview excerpts we present in this chapter from Italian to English. The following excerpts are useful to highlight how teachers implemented IEPs and PDPs in their own contexts, and the extent to which the DisCrit- informed person-centered strategies have pushed them to transform the design and implementation of such tools.

All teachers we have interviewed from Rome, Milan, and Turin, shared a frustration about the purpose of PDPs and IEPs, as well as their design and implementation. For example, Alessandra, a special education teacher in a secondary school in Milan argues:

> An obstacle to the implementation of PDPs and IEPs is that they are written *only* by the classroom coordinator, the PDPs, or by the special education teachers, the IEPs. They get filled out as a ticking box exercise and then they are left as words on a piece of paper, communicated to the families and the student, but not to other teachers.

Alessandra's comment highlights how despite the existence of inclusive policies and tools, their implementation happens through epistemologies of special education and individualized practices. Just as we saw happening in the US context, in Chap. 4, IEP and PDP writing is not collective, but it is exclusively done by the special education teacher, or the classroom coordinator. The rest of the classroom teachers have limited or no involvement at all in IEP and PDP writing. Alessandra's perspective also reminds us that schools' procedures are key in manufacturing students with disabilities (Tomlinson, 2017). Through individualized procedures like those that Alessandra refers to, the cause of disability continues to be located within the student and not in external social, political, and organizational processes (Skrtic, 1987).

Antonia, an Italian teacher in a comprehensive school in Rome also agrees that both IEPs and PDPs are highly institutionalized tools that are not actually supporting the learning progress of disabled students:

> We tend to use these tools [IEPs, PDPs] because we don't see any progress in students' learning. We are forced to use them because we don't see any improvement … I'm not sure, but I think we simplify curricula too much and the students just get used to this and they don't challenge themselves, and we don't challenge students. Even when we tried to move the students out of the IEPs or PDPs we realized that they were lost.

Antonia's quote highlights how tools designed to be inclusive can become means by which schools justify why some students do not progress and/or do not progress according to grade/age standards (Goodley et al., 2018). PDPs and IEPs are used during assessment meetings to control students' learning and achievement, while teaching strategies remain unquestioned. The over-bureaucratization and institutionalization of IEP and PDP design and implementation are perceived as problematic issues by all teachers interviewed. Manuela, a special education teacher in Florence, argued:

> As teachers, and support teachers, especially those of us who have precarious working conditions, we feel highly constrained by the procedure and process established by the school, by the Ministry of Education. We don't have the freedom to meet the students' families often, or their communities, and ask them different questions than those in the tools, to get a different perspective about who the student is, or what they can do.

It is through this institutionalization of procedure that the over-representation of multiply marginalized students in special educational needs categories gets reproduced within schools that already are dysfunctional ecologies (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Interestingly, only few teachers develop a critical perspective of this constrained mode of inclusion, while others approve of it and develop an antagonistic relationship with families and communities of marginalized students, as the opening vignette of this chapter shows.

Alessandra, a special education teacher, discussed one way in which she put her critical perspective into practice at her school in Milan. Alessandra shared the story about one of her disabled students from Peru:

> I would like to share one good example of a non-institutional meeting we, in my school, had with the mother of a student from Peru. The mum of this student was initially invited to attend a standard PDP meeting with the classroom coordinator and other teachers, and she did not say anything for the entire meeting. We later discovered that she was intimidated by some personal questions from teachers regarding their residence permit and migratory status. So, as the support teacher, I decided to hold an informal meeting without the interpreter, and with a few teachers and other Spanish speaking parents in the school, who volunteered to help the mum and the student understand the bureaucracy of the school. We have noticed how the mum was more engaged, talkative about the family and education experience of her son. She also learned more quickly how to get by using the electronic attendance system, for example.

While not an official or "sanctioned" meeting by the school, Alessandra used her critical understanding of the intersecting factors that were impacting this Peruvian mother's ability to be effectively at the center of the decision-making process for her disabled child. By connecting this mother to other parents in the school, Alessandra subverted the school's policies and procedures in positive ways that benefitted this disabled child and his mother.

The following section of the chapter introduces two DisCrit-informed person-centered strategies that were shared with Italian teachers, to help them develop a more intersectional attitude toward inclusion. Teachers were told that these strategies could be implemented in their contexts as a series of field tasks. These field tasks can be useful to both pre-service and in-service teachers and should be completed under the supervision of a

more experienced colleague. We describe each component of DisCrit-informed strength-based inclusive practices and their implications for teaching.

Overview of PCP

> All teachers in our school have a difficult, conflictual relationship with parents. Especially parents of disabled students from migrant backgrounds. It is difficult, but we should try to shift teachers' attitudes. (Emilio, PDP Coordinator, Rome)

> We should establish a different relationship with them, which will help them see the school not just as a place where to leave their children, but also a place where they can develop significant relationships. (Antonia, Italian Teacher, Rome)

As Emilio, the school's coordinator for the design and implementation of PDP, and Antonia state above, it is imperative that teachers actively develop relationships with multiply marginalized families. Hence, we introduced PCP that, if used proactively and regularly, can provide a foundation for teachers to develop strength-based relationships with families that promote cultural humility and cultural competence and in teachers (Haynes-Mendez & Engelsmeier, 2020; Nomikoudis & Starr, 2016). Proactively and regularly bringing families into the PCP process is one approach to encourage parent participation in PDP and IEP meetings. This approach also helps teachers gather information about students and their families in order to develop strength-based PDP and IEP. There are many approaches to PCP, but whatever the approach, it is critical that the location of the meeting be in a location that is comfortable for the disabled student, their family, and their support network. Some various approaches to PCP are: McGill Action Planning System (MAPS) (Vandercook et al., 1989), Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (Pearpoint et al., 1991), Essential Lifestyle Planning (Smull & Harrison, 1992), and Personal Futures Planning (Mount, 2000).

With the multiple ways to enact PCP, we choose MAPs (Vandercook et al., 1989), given Brent's experience in implementing this strategy, both in the US and various international contexts. See Appendix B for an overview of the MAPs process. When conducting MAPs, the teacher co-facilitates the meeting with another stakeholder who writes/draws ideas on poster paper hung on the wall. As deemed appropriate by the family,

any stakeholders in the student's life should be invited to the meeting, including parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, neighbors, social workers, therapists, and teachers. MAPs adheres to six central tenets (Pearpoint et al., 1991): (a) all students belong in the regular classroom; (b) general education teachers can teach all children; (c) necessary supports will be provided when needed; (d) quality education is a right, not a privilege; (e) outcomes must be success, literacy, and graduation for all; (f) creative alternatives will be made available for populations who do not succeed in typical ways.

MAPs is a collaborative planning process that brings together key actors in a student's life. It involves a student and his or her peers, family, and teachers to aid in the identification of that student's goals and dreams and the educational and community resources for making them come to fruition. MAPs is comprised of seven essential elements: (a) graphic recording; (b) hospitality; (c) key professional people attend and take part in discussion, as do a student's parent(s) or guardian(s); (d) a student, his or her siblings, and friends attend and take part; (e) key issues are addressed; (f) a follow-up meeting/check-in is scheduled; (g) a concrete plan of action is developed and subsequently implemented.

An important tenet of holding a MAPs session is that it is proactive, and can facilitate the development of authentic relationships between teachers and multiply marginalized disabled students and their families. Outcomes of adopting a PCP approach can include: (a) increased family participation and satisfaction with the IEP process along with an increased teamwork and collaboration from the start (Weishaar, 2010), (b) increased teacher learning about the cultural complexities of families (Haynes-Mendez & Engelsmeier, 2020), and (c) establishment of a strength-based foundation for an IEP. MAPs has been used effectively for supporting students in the general education classroom. Two facilitators—the MAPs recorder and the process facilitator—are employed to move the process through MAPs' essential questions, which we indicate in Table 6.1.

While Vandercook et al. (1989) suggest a non-school location as a way to increase parents' participation, due to confidentiality reasons, in Italy meetings must be held outside the school settings, and IEP and PDP documents must stay within the confines of the school. One outcome of this approach is that while the development of IEPs is meant to be co-constructed along with parents and an interdisciplinary team, their design is usually the result of the work of a single teacher, as we highlighted earlier. In a post-COVID-19 reality, setting up virtual meeting options can

Table 6.1 Person-centered planning (PCP)—The MAPs process

1. Who is the person?
2. What is the story of the person?
3. What is the dream of the person?
4. What is the nightmare of the person?
5. What are the person's gifts, strengths, and talents?
6. What are the person's needs?
7. What is the plan of action?

increase family participation in IEPs. However, migrant parents may not have access to internet connection nor technological devices, and these realities can represent additional barriers to collaboration with the IEP or PDP team. Organizing non-institutionalized meetings, like Alessandra did in Milan, is important as PCPs can help to reconstruct multiply marginalized students in strength-based ways and produce documents that can help disseminate this information to members of the IEP and PDP teams. MAPs is not intended to take the place of an IEP. It can be a powerful way of personalizing an IEP so that it sets in motion a process for fully including a student in his or her school or community. In this sense, it is not merely an "academic exercise" or a "neutral tool" but is rather both "talk and action" (Pearpoint et al., 1991).

Field Task #1: Conducting a PCP

When implementing a PCP, the teacher identifies a multiply marginalized disabled student and connects with the family. Then, the teacher introduces the concept of PCP to the family and collaborates with them to set up a time and location for the meeting. The teacher encourages the family to invite stakeholders to the meeting. During the meeting, the teacher facilitates the meeting and they work together to document the information shared during the meeting. Following the PCP, the teacher writes up a report that synthesizes the information and shares it with the family and stakeholders.

Implications of PCP for Teaching

Conducting PCPs is a proactive communication structure that establishes collaborative relationships with families. This approach lets families know

that while the process does take more time and energy to coordinate, that the teacher is committed to making that time in order to genuinely focus on learning the strengths and needs of the student and their family. Rather than checking necessary boxes as required by legal documents, a PCP centers the family's narrative and lays the foundation for a more collaborative and strength-based IEP/PDP moving forward. Within the Italian context, conducting PCPs is part of the routine procedure to design PDPs. However, the language barriers remain an issue, especially when teachers have to connect with migrant parents. Having cultural mediators and interpreters alongside teachers is a great opportunity to realize this task (Migliarini et al., 2022).

PCP Connections to DisCrit

Person-centered planning aligns well with DisCrit as it is a strategy centering the lived experiences of historically marginalized youth in schools. It is not a tool that promotes teachers speaking for marginalized students, however teachers should aim to work with families to dismantle structured inequities in the education system. This strategy helps teachers to acknowledge the legitimacy of different cultural heritages, it promotes the building of significant connections between home and school, is based on authentic solidarity, and assists teachers in identifying and integrating non-dominant cultural materials into the curriculum (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). By using this strategy, teachers are offered an opportunity to know the interconnected forms of oppression that students experience inside and outside the school and then make instructional choices that counter those oppressions (Migliarini et al., 2022).

Overview of Ecological Assessments

> We can get organized as a school, but for some students if they don't fall into certain specific categories, we cannot provide them with any sort of assistance. But just teachers and the class council organize themselves to provide support. (Stefania, Headteacher, Rome)

Promoting the use of ecological assessments is one way, as Stefania describes above, that schools can get organized and support multiply marginalized students who arrive at their school. An ecological assessment is an observation-based assessment meant to be used in different

school-related settings over a period of time to get a more-accurate picture of what the student is good at and what they need to be successful in an inclusive setting (Downing et al., 2015; Hayes et al., 2020). The assessment presumes an inclusive classroom and is meant to provide a holistic view of students and can be used in any environment (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013). Ecological assessments help teachers to examine naturally occurring routines, what students without disabilities are doing, and whether and how students with disabilities are performing the same sorts of activities and actions. These assessments encourage teachers to fill the gaps with existing school resources (e.g., support from peers without disabilities, small group instruction). It is important to use ecological assessments over a period of time with multiple team members who regularly interact with the student. Conducting ecological assessments can be a great asset for the design and implementation of PDPs. It can allow for a better observation of how multiply marginalized students engage in lessons, something which is currently missing from the PDP process.

Field Task #2: Conducting an Ecological Assessment

While conducting a PCP is a critical skill for teachers to learn, they also need to know how to analyze an inclusive environment and be able to identify existing supports that can be leveraged for disabled students. They need to determine the gaps in the environment which would pose barriers to supporting disabled students. To do this, we suggest assigning teachers a Field Task #2, which is an ecological assessment. This involves providing teachers the following steps to completing the field task: (a) Identify between 10–15 (more if needed) steps of the activity (e.g., how students without disabilities engage with the lesson); (b) Identify the natural cues present in the environment (e.g., students line up when they hear the bell); (c) Identify the skills needed to perform the task; (d) Assess the student with a disability's performance of the task; (e) Identify the discrepancy analysis (e.g., why the student did or did not complete the task, "The student may not have performed the task because they do not understand that the bell means to line up"); and (f) Suggest an intervention (e.g., identify the skills needed to teach/supports needed, or teach a peer to remind the student with a disability that the bell has rung and they need to line up). See Appendix C for a sample filled-out ecological assessment and template.

Implications of Ecological Assessments for Teaching

Conducting ecological assessments allow teachers to understand student strengths and the areas in which students need more support. Since ecological assessments take place in inclusive school settings that the student frequents, this approach to assessment can provide useful instructional techniques and recommendations for student support that moves away from merely placing labels on students and toward addressing their in-class academic supports (Hayes et al., 2020). Ecological assessments can also help to reduce the stigma of labeling students, and they eliminate the challenges of misdiagnosis as the focus of assessment is not identification, but rather identifying what the *teacher* can do to support the student. Put simply, the goal of ecological assessments is to keep students *in* the general education class rather than justify the removal of the student *out* of that setting.

Ecological Assessment Connections to DisCrit

Conducting assessments of classroom environments aligns with the principles of DisCrit classroom ecology that allows teachers to recognize classrooms as spaces that center multiply marginalized students as valuable resources whose lived experiences and everyday knowledge must be built upon (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Spratt & Florian, 2015). In light of a DisCrit classroom ecology, this task helps teachers to refuse deficit-oriented master-narratives about learning, ability and behavior of multiply marginalized students that animate dysfunctional classrooms. Implementing ecological assessments allows for the creation of trust relationships based in solidarity between students and teachers. Additionally, students' actions are perceived as strategies of resistance, often in response to interpersonal and state violence (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Through ecological approaches to assessment, teachers can teach students self-determination and self-knowledge (Annamma & Morrison, 2018).

Teachers' Understanding and Implementation of PCP and Ecological Assessments

Following the first stage of the case study, and initial teacher training sessions where the teachers learned about PCP and ecological assessments, we asked teachers to adopt such strategies in their respective school

contexts across Italy. We held follow-up conversations with teachers and asked them to share their impressions and experiences. We set up these conversations virtually via zoom or email exchange after a period between three and four months following training sessions. All teachers shared positive views, and everyone agreed that both these strategies were helpful in building relationships based on authentic solidarity with the students and their families and communities, as well as questioning their own biases. Alessandra and Manuela, special education teachers in Milan and Florence respectively, argued that PCP and ecological assessments helped teachers to operate beyond institutional constraints, and start a more genuine and open dialogue with students' families. In particular, Alessandra shared that:

> I feel that they [PCP and ecological assessments] really helped in creating a sense of community, not just the inclusion of different students within the classroom. I feel that these strategies encouraged us to create an authentic community of learners.

Alessandra felt as if both strategies helped teachers being more creative, and less pressured by the school's bureaucratic process, in supporting students living at the intersections of race, ability, and migratory status. She shared that the positive and more authentic relationships with the families, perceived as truth holders about their children (Migliarini & Annamma, 2019), had a positive impact on the learning experience of the students. In her opinion, PCP and ecological assessments are instrumental in transforming the classroom and the school environment into a community of learners (Rogoff, 1994).

In the comprehensive school in Rome, the headteacher Stefania and the PDP school coordinator Emilio believed that PCP and the ecological assessments encouraged teachers to have an inward analysis, allowing for a critical scrutiny of their biases. Stefania argued that:

> These strategies helped us to recognize that the kind of biases are many and these increase with the conditions of families, discrimination in terms of language, poverty and social conditions of course. As a school we still tend to say they have difficulties in speaking, they have difficulties in integrating because of the work we have to do in school, and it's very difficult that the school provides documentation in any other language. Because there are so many languages, or I remember when I was saying that most of the students speak Urdu or Indian. So if we are going to provide information in different

> languages we would help them. But we haven't got the resources to do so. So, as a school we fall into the idea of representing a barrier, despite all the willingness to support the students.

Stefania's quote shows that the strategies helped some teachers become aware of their dysconscious ableism (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017), as they worked to actively include students living at the intersections of race, language, ability and undocumentedness. Some teachers started to be aware of their distorted understandings of ableist and racist oppressions, allowing for the reproduction of "normalcy" to pathologize students (Broderick & Lalvani, 2017). Stefania's quote also demonstrates acquired awareness on how the school frames learning of the power majority language (i.e., Italian) as a route to full inclusion for migrant and forced migrant students. There seems to be an emerging understanding that teachers' perception of multilingualism as a "disability" results in the violent integration of migrant students into a monolingual and monocultural education setting (Migliarini & Cioè-Peña, 2022). Ultimately, some school professionals in Rome realized that their biased approaches to serving migrant students influence the likelihood of their inclusion in the host society. Hence, the PCP and ecological assessment strategies served as the catalyst for changing some of their pedagogical practices.

After a four-hour training session focused on implementing PCP and ecological assessments, Francesca, an Italian teacher in Turin, said that these strategies pushed her to shift her pedagogical philosophy:

> These strategies pushed me really to know more about the students, to look for their unique way of being. They really pushed me to always look for what that specific student can do, and not only what he or she cannot do. I look for their potential, always considering what they desire, what they are scared of, and what they find challenging during their educational journey. Now, I pay much more attention to the kind of relationship I build with them.

Francesca's quote highlights a pedagogical shift occurred after gradually understanding how to implement PCP and ecological assessments, in the context of her classroom. She seems to be invested in countering the "defect craft" ideology, operating even in legally inclusive contexts such as Italy (Migliarini et al., 2019). She does so by trying to understand the students' social and emotional background, their dreams, fears, and ultimately their potential. She seems to have taken onboard the proposed

strategies to build relationships based on critical emotional praxis (Zembylas, 2013). She is more aware of how historical, social, cultural, and political factors impact on the emotive of students with multidimensional identities (Hernández-Saca, 2019).

Although teachers were initially confused about DisCrit's tenets, and the actual implementation of PCP and ecological assessment in their highly institutionalized school context, they have all successfully engaged with them. Teachers went from struggling to imagine the endemic nature of ableism, racism, and whiteness as property, to understanding and feeling how migrant students have been pathologized and perceived as maladjusted in the host society (King, 1968). The above quotes show how, despite initial difficulties, teachers tried to use the strategies to engage in personal, interpersonal, structural critical practice toward professional-, program-, and system- level renewal of inclusive education tools. Such critical practice seems to have generated counter-hegemonic actions and choices that enable critical affective practices (Wetherell, 2012), when engaging migrant students and their families toward transformative justice and humanization (Annamma & Handy, 2019).

Conclusion: The Impact of DisCrit-Informed Person-Centered Strategies to Inclusive Education Beyond Italy

In this chapter we have shown the value of applying DisCrit-informed person-centered strategies to reconceptualize inclusive education in Italy through an equity lens. Drawing on an initial pilot case study carried out in a primary school in Rome, and with teachers from Turin, Milan, and Florence, we have provided teachers with intersectional and culturally relevant strategies to (re)design IEPs and PDPs. Based on what these teachers reported, by using PCP and ecological assessments in their schools, these teachers have been able to better support disabled migrant students in mainstream settings. We have argued that existing inclusive practices in mainstream schools can *increase the exclusion* of migrant students and their families. We have used vignettes and excerpts from the initial pilot case study to offer a perspective into some of the issues that Italian teachers in public schools face when addressing the educational requirements of students living at the intersections of race, language, citizenship, and disability. In light of policies governing inclusive education tools in Italy, we have

presented DisCrit's affordances to reframe the design and implementation of IEPs and PDPs.

Amidst the increase in migration influx into Southern Europe, the COVID-19 crisis, and the over-representation of migrant students in the SEN categories, in this chapter we have highlighted how the IEPs and PDPs in Italy are still informed by "deficit" understandings of disability. As a result, the ways in which these inclusive tools are designed and implemented legitimate temporary and permanent exclusions of multiply marginalized students from effective and meaningful learning in mainstream schools. The field tasks we have presented have the potential to help teachers across Italy to create critical spaces where they can question the medical epistemology informing the "functioning" model of disability, ideally counteracting ministerial constructions of difference within education systems. By applying these tools, teachers have the opportunity to better understand how multiple marginalizations push students out of schools and lead parents not to trust educational institutions. Informed by DisCrit and through the practice of the described field tasks, teachers could demand more effective decision making over the IEP and PDP design for families, especially those from marginalized backgrounds. In doing so, teachers have the chance to gather, preserve, and grow the future of multiply marginalized students and indeed all students.

While in this chapter we have focused on in-service teachers, this is not to say the field tasks could not be embedded within teacher education programs, provided that professors and pre-service teacher supervisors were versed in the tenets of DisCrit. We have chosen to focus on in-service teachers as this project was designed to directly support and benefit the teachers and students that are currently working in Rome, Turin, Milan, and Florence. The field tasks we have presented in this chapter are not meant to be absolute or prescriptive in their presentation and application in schools. Rather, they are examples of starting points where teachers can use the templates in the figure and the appendix in this chapter and modify them to make them relevant in their respective school settings. We consider this the start of an ongoing conversation with the teachers working within the project in Italy and beyond. The strategies we have presented are not exhaustive and not in any order of efficacy. However, they constitute a starting point to reframe inclusion through an equity paradigm. We feel it is our responsibility as academics and practitioners to publish research that can actually be used in inclusive classrooms to benefit all learners.

We hope that the field tasks we presented in this chapter are not only used by partner teachers in Italian schools, but that they are also critiqued and modified by others, in various contexts, who actually apply them. The implications of PCP and conducting ecological assessments for inclusive policy and practices in Italy, and elsewhere, are vast. These strategies can help in promoting critical reflection and action for all teachers, while encouraging them to empower and love multiply marginalized students, their families, and their communities. For this reason, we have conceptualized this chapter as an invitation for teachers, families, and researchers to reach out and share what they have tried, what has been successful and challenging, with their local and national communities.

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CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Toward Intersectional Inclusive Education

Valentina Migliarini and Brent C. Elder

The research projects we feature in this book took place in different geographical contexts, and at times of multiple crises, which have impacted us at personal and professional levels. When I (Valentina) conducted the study in Rome, presented in Chap. 2, I just gave birth to my son Gabiel, a mixed-race Black presenting boy, and made the decision of raising him as a single mother in the cis-hetero patriarchal state of Italy. At that time, the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean had hit a two-decade peak, and so did the racist attitudes of many Italians, making Gabriel and me targets of violent discriminatory narratives and hostile gazes. Moving to the US and subsequently to England, from where I conducted the studies presented in Chaps. 4 and 6, deepened my awareness how the different socio-cultural contexts, racism, ableism, and other forms of oppressions work together to sustain unquestioned standards of "normalcy."

In all these contexts, inclusive education policies and practices did not account for the intersections of racism, ableism, and anti-Blackness in schools and society (Dumas, 2016). As a researcher and as a mother, resisting the pathologization of Gabriel during his first year of school, in a monocultural, monolingual education setting in the Southeast of England, I *personally* realized that race appears and disappears in the special

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education categorizing processes. In fact, all existing models of inclusive education that I studied are effectively evading collusive forms of oppression. To make things worse, the COVID-19 pandemic and other converging social and environmental crises, amplified the inadequacies of the promises and shortcomings of international inclusive education policies.

Throughout all the projects I (Brent) present in this book, as well as the work I have co-produced with Valentina, the US (and a growing number of other countries) experienced an increase in school shootings. Since 2018, there have been 175 school shootings that have resulted in deaths, and 31 such school shootings to date, as I write in this October 2023 (Education Week, 2023). Being that I often work in public schools in the US as well as at a university, which are also frequent sites of gun violence, this threat has felt very real to me. Consider the additional gun violence statistics in out-of-school contexts in the US, and at the time of writing, there had been 541 mass shootings in 2023 alone (Gun Violence Archive, 2023). For me personally, when I am in large crowds, I find myself thinking, "Will I be shot today? Will I witness someone's murder?" While morbid, the current context in the US warrants this type of thinking. Then, considering the other types of violence enacted on others who live at the intersections of race, disability, and other marginalizing markers of identity and difference, the US becomes an exponentially more dangerous place. All of these realities (and more) influence parents' choice of schooling their children, and complicate the context of inclusive education, as well as the notions of who actually "belongs" in schools. With each school shooting headline, I wonder, "What could we as educators have done differently so that this shooter could have felt more included in school and in society? Could that have stopped them from making this desperate choice?"

Working abroad is one form of respite for me from the violence in the US. I recently lived and worked in Malawi for seven months on a project related to inclusive early grade reading. While working in Malawi has its own set of unique challenges related to the post-colonial inequities (e.g., 200+ students in a classroom, no electricity, few learning materials, sometimes only a teacher with a piece of chalk), I never felt a threat of violence the way I do in the US. As I read and watched the news about guns and racialized violence coming out of America, I felt relieved that I was living in a place where I did not have to fear getting shot. While in Malawi (and many other places in the global South) there are other significant related threats to daily survival related to the history of colonial violence (e.g.,

food insecurity, no access to clean water, lack of infrastructure, high rates of unemployment), but there was not a pandemic of gun violence.

Zooming back into Malawian classrooms, while I was working with teachers on issues related to the development of sustainable inclusive education practices, I encountered teachers who had a willingness to collaborate and try new things, and to maximize scarce existing resources to educate all children. As I noted in Chap. 3, when working like this in the global South, I learn so much about collaboration, doing more with less, creativity, resourcefulness, and resilience that I think schools in the global North could greatly benefit from. Additionally, given the global trends of forced migration we have discussed throughout this book, schools in the US (and other Western countries) are only becoming more diverse. As we experience this increased diversity of students in schools, school policies and practices continue to not adequately support multiply marginalized students. Hence, the impetus for us writing this book.

The resurgence of anti-Blackness and the color-evasive nature of inclusive policies and practices internationally, made us question whether race inequality is a "state of exception," whereby equity rights for multiply marginalized communities can be diminished, superseded, or even rejected (Agamben, 2005). This book is our modest attempt to build a new epistemic culture of inclusive education, as a form of resistance to such "states of exception." Through each of the projects we present in our text, we hope we have offered teachers, educators, families, and communities the tools that will expand inclusive education intersectionally, while challenging the status quo. We intentionally targeted the systemic dimensions in which inclusive policies and practices are implemented with the hope to change the process by which multiply marginalized students are supported in schools. In brief, we attempted to go beyond a simple description of the problems, and offer *practical* pathways to disrupt tensions and limitations of current models of inclusive education, with the goal of changing education systems. Taken together, we hope this collection of chapters will motivate others to take up similar work, improve upon it, and share the successes and challenges they encounter as a result.

Inclusive education is not usurping individual rights of nondisabled students and giving more to disabled students within neoliberal systems of education, as some historically claimed (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). We are convinced that inclusive education is about creating classroom ecologies (Annamma & Morrison, 2018) built around interdependence, authentic relationships of solidarity, and providing an engaging, accessible

curriculum centering the knowledge and experiences of marginalized students. We encourage the reader to reflect on the content of each chapter, and then decide which critical inclusive actions to take in their respective educational spheres of influence. Ultimately, we view this book as just the starting point for so much more *intersectional* critical inclusive work to come.

What Comes Next?

As for every issue explored, theorized, and researched, even more questions are raised. The complexities in each country's education system and the interconnected tensions within the implementation of inclusive education open up new possibilities for discussion. Hence, here we share some observations on current international debates on inclusive education, before we delineate our way forward. In spite of renewed public and institutional attention to matters related to equality, diversity, and inclusion, inclusive education remains a contested concept. Countries such as Belgium, England, and Canada are still permeated by the "separate but equal" ideology, feeding into the existence of special schools[1] to provide for the education of disabled students. In England and Canada, special schools have been historically linked to colonial racism. Specifically, colonial racism in England shaped the context for the labeling of children of the Windrush[2] generation as "subnormal" and created the legacy of disproportionate discipline, exclusion, and identification of children from racialized backgrounds with emotional and behavioral categories of special educational needs (Coard, 1971, 2021). In Italy and the US, inclusive education legislation is much more progressive; Italy has dismantled special schools, and the US is in the long process of doing so, while traditionalists in special education continue to resist (e.g., Kauffman, 2020). However, even in a context like Italy, forms of micro-exclusion within mainstream education settings persist, with an over-representation of Black, Brown, migrant, and other marginalized children in special education (Chap. 2; Chap. 6).

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-special-schools-and-colleges

[2] To explore more in detail the history and the variation of the terms West Indians, Caribbeans and Black British please refer to: https://zakiyamckenzie.com/2020/09/04/caribbean-vs-west-indian-bame-vs-poc-whats-in-a-name/#page-content

In the global South, there is a promising emerging trend in disability inclusive development. Large international development organizations like USAID are increasingly partnering with/sub-contracting to smaller organizations to infuse Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into their inclusive education projects (Hayes et al., 2019). Specifically, these smaller disability inclusive development organizations, like Inclusive Development Partners (IDP),[3] are applying UDL in innovative ways in under-resourced countries, where critical teacher reflection is infused in professional development (Freire, 1970), and where teachers are utilizing existing resources and local knowledge to increasingly meet the needs of all learners in inclusive classrooms (Niad & Badio-Dennis, 2022). What is progressive about this approach is that applying critical teacher reflection *and* a UDL framework in such settings presumes that disabled students are present in all classrooms from the outset, so it is up to the teacher to critically reflect on the diversity of their students and to leverage local materials and knowledge to make lessons and the classroom space as accessible as possible from the start. This approach promotes inclusive strategies that can be done with existing school resources (e.g., chalk, plastic bottle caps, cardboard letter cards), and students are encouraged to actively engage (e.g., thumbs up/thumbs down, think-pair-share, turn and talk) in lessons (Elder & Foley, 2015). These critical and interactive UDL-based approaches disrupt traditional lecture-based instruction common in low-resourced settings around the world, and promote critical teacher reflection, and active student engagement. All of these practices have the potential to disrupt hegemonic and colonial education practices, to increase student achievement, and to promote sustainable inclusive education practices (Damiani et al., 2021).

As we have seen in each of the chapters in this book, notions of inclusive education and disability identity are complex and dependent on different geographical contexts. Across all school-based interviews, there were some teachers who associated inclusive education with special education practices, and others who were unsure of how to implement inclusive education given the pervasiveness of neoliberal school reforms. The most common question that emerged from the interactions with teachers and school professionals across these countries is: *How* can inclusive education be implemented while actively moving away from the pervasive pathological lens that dominates schools as institutions of normalization?

[3] See https://www.inclusivedevpartners.com/

Ball and Collet-Sabé (2022) affirm that within the current configuration of European and Western schools' equity and inclusion are impossible. They believe that educational researchers looking for the "phantasmatic ideal" of inclusion, in which power dynamics are dissolved, in contemporary schools, are embracing a "redemptive perspective" (p. 987). The authors used the work of Foucault (1979) to argue that schools, as modern institutions, represent a method of serialization, normalization and distribution that functions to produce a "threshold of describable individuality" (p. 1919). Consequently, they develop an epistemological critique of modern schools, questioning basic issues about them as institutions, as a set of practices, arrangements and techniques aimed at governing individuals in a continuous, regular, and permanent fashion. Lastly, Ball and Collet-Sabé consider whether the school is a solution to the problem of education, or rather a constant and ineluctable source of educational problems.

Like Ball and Collet-Sabé (2022), we acknowledge the normalizing forces of schools, in the global North, and how these get uncritically transferred in the global South (Grech & Soldatić, 2014). We understand that there is an expectation of assimilation as a necessary precursor to inclusion (Migliarini & Cioè-Peña, 2022; Phuong & Cioè-Peña, 2022). As DisCrit and CDS scholars, we embrace abolitionism over reform (Payne-Tsoupros & Johnson, 2022), because international human rights and inclusive laws were not forged within intersectional politics, and often fall short of achieving equity (Morgan, 2022), as well as being co-opted in the service of white supremacy (Shallish et al., 2022). We are very much aware that schools are, above all, places where inequities are verified. They are not a place where inequities are reduced or challenged. However, our purpose in writing this book was not to dismiss school and inclusive education as inherently "bad" or "ineffective." Our aim was to help teachers and educators, operating in constraining institutional environments, to develop critical intersectional reflexivity on the collusive nature of oppressions, and their impact on students living "at the margin of margins" (Padilla, 2022, p. 151). We intended to provide disruptive epistemological frameworks, like DisCrit and CDS, into the field of inclusive education to support teachers and educators in cultivating solidarity-driven learning spaces (Annamma et al., 2022). We cannot ask teachers and students facing multiple crises to dismantle oppressive systems immediately. But if we help them to consciously disrupt points of tension within inclusive education policies and practices, then they can hopefully finally begin to center

marginalized communities of students, and account for their experiences, insights, and knowledge. We can then move forward to create liberatory educational landscapes and expansive notions of justice (Annamma, 2018), both in the global South and in the global North.

Now, let us answer the question, "What do we mean by intersectional inclusive education?" For us, it is an epistemology leading to a critical understanding of the intersections of racism, ableism, migratory, and citizenship status, and language at personal, interpersonal, structural and political levels, and how these are mediated by discourses and materialities (Hernández-Saca et al., 2018). Intersectional inclusive education illuminates intersectional levels of dehumanization, given the legacies of colonization and the socially engendered nation-building policies and practices, that have historically been undergirded by capitalism, imperialism, and nationalism (Migliarini et al., 2022). Intersectional inclusive education recognizes multiply marginalized students as agents of their own social, emotional, and political futures (Turner & Mangual Figueroa, 2019). It disrupts racist and ableist conceptualizations of the identity of multiply marginalized students, often relegated to positions of precarity in education practice and research. Intersectional inclusive education can help to move toward enacting counter-hegemonic policies and practices and can lead to a new *praxis*. In such praxis, multiply marginalized students are not perceived as maladjusted in the host society (King, 1968). Teachers can engage in personal, interpersonal, structural, and political transformation toward professional, program, and system-level renewal for continuous improvement and learning (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007).

Given these premises, we ask, "How can teachers implement intersectional inclusive education?" We answer this question taking inspiration from Annamma and Morrison's (2018) DisCrit classroom ecology. Following this ecology model, inclusive education has to expand toward culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Culturally responsive teaching acknowledges the legitimacy of students' cultural heritage, builds connection between home and school, values students' own cultural resources, and integrates non-dominant materials into the curriculum (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Culturally sustaining pedagogy promotes cultural and linguistic competence of students and their communities, while offering access to dominant cultural competence (Paris, 2012). Teachers implementing intersectional inclusive education recognize that the existing curriculum, both in the global North and South, is established within the structures of white supremacy and its intersectional

oppressions are erased (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Such an incomplete curriculum leaves students unprepared to face power imbalances in their lives. Hence, teachers need to have the knowledge and power to transform the curriculum so that it links past and present systemic injustices. Examples of curricular topics addressing historical inequities include racial inequalities in housing, migratory status and citizenship recognition, ways racial difference has been historically associated to deficit, crime and disability, and reproducing policing and punishment of multiply marginalized communities (Erevelles, 2014).

Teachers should build relationships based on authentic solidarity and move away from models of classroom and behavior "management," which is intended to "fix" disruptive students. Within a model of intersectional inclusive education, renewed attention should be paid to building relationships based on love, care, and hope. Subsequently, teachers should be taught and encouraged to recognize that multiply marginalized students enter the school and classroom environment with emotions that are reactions to the systemic inequities they face in their daily lives (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). Teachers should be able to actively (and critically) understand how students feel about the violence of inequities and allow space to think about how to change the system. In these ways, teachers can promote forms of resistance, recognizing the practices and knowledge that multiply marginalized students bring into the classroom. We believe that this transformed model of inclusive education can address racism, ableism, and intersectional oppressions. We believe it can impact marginalized students' achievement, behavior, and transform disability labeling. This is one possible way to go beyond race-neutral policies and practices of inclusive education.

To facilitate the understanding of how intersectional inclusive education could be applied outside of the US, we refer to a community *praxical* event, which happened in Italy in 2019 and that it is described in detail elsewhere (Migliarini, 2020). Through the synergy of school professionals, local and international school organizations and community members, "I Am Hip-Hop: Beats, Rhymes and Culture" was designed to subvert normalized perceptions of disabled and nondisabled refugee youth as "illiterate" and "uneducable." Participants to this event, both from Italian and migrant communities, were offered a platform to (re)create meanings, identity, and to showcase their talents and knowledge, while building a new and safe network of friendships. Participants from Italy, learned about cultural excellence and languages of the African diaspora. In so doing,

they had an opportunity to address their biases on African cultures, often devalued or exoticized (Migliarini, 2017). The artifacts produced and the conversations that happened during the event, represented a call for local teachers and educators to bring Hip-Hop education in their classrooms, as an innovative teaching and learning tool. After the successful experience of Terni, several schools across Italy rely on artists and community members, from disabled or nondisabled migrant backgrounds, to teach literacy and other curricular subjects through the lens of intersectional inclusive education.

Final Considerations

When we started our various research projects related to these chapters, there was a lot of skepticism among academics and teachers in Europe in relation to the expansion of inclusive education through DisCrit and CDS approaches outside of the US context. In 2014, I (Valentina) was told that DisCrit would impose a North American understanding of racism and ableism on European, specifically Italian, education systems. Fast forward to today, and a lot of teacher preparation programs in universities across Italy include DisCrit as a framework to account for the ways in which race, disability, and citizenship status impact on the educational experiences of migrant students. There now seems to be a progressive acknowledgment of the inadequacy of current models of inclusive education for responding to the complex needs of the marginalized student population.

As a doctoral student in 2012 when I (Brent) first stumbled across CDS as a field of study, I could not believe how large the gap was in literature related to CDS and inclusive education in the global South (see Damiani et al., 2021). Fast forward 11 years, and CDS is being applied in various ways throughout the global South, which has included organizations like USAID, UNICEF, and the World Bank making disability inclusive development a universal priority by 2025 (see Chap. 2). While the level of understanding and critical application of CDS-informed practices by these organizations is admittedly a work in progress, the global conversation around critical and intersectional inclusive education has certainly begun. Given the global trends related to both DisCrit and CDS, critical practitioners around the world *must* take steps to amplify the innovative work they are doing to change marginalizing education systems. We hope readers recognize this book as an invitation to contribute to and shape these conversations.

In concluding this book, we want to be clear that at no point did we think of applying uncritically DisCrit and CDS across the different countries in which we worked. We made every possible effort to grasp the nuances of these frameworks and how we implement them, as we traveled with them through different contexts. In doing so, we tried to fulfill their expansive potentials. Simultaneously, we were careful in avoiding the cooptation, misappropriation, and misuse of the frameworks. We tried our best to avoid the application of both DisCrit and CDS without careful engagement in their tenets and with local communities. We are aware of the dangers of bringing frameworks conceptualized in the global North into the global South. Hence, we took the time to center our reflexivity as researchers, making sure that DisCrit and CDS would authentically elevate the voices and experiences of students in the global South, or coming from the global South. Ultimately, DisCrit and CDS scholars take historical struggles of marginalized populations at heart. Hence, these frameworks can serve as powerful approaches through which to illuminate, inform, and transform current global struggles related to inclusive education.

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Appendix A

Table A.1 Chapter 2 Participants' list

Pseudonym	*Country—City*	*Profession*
Giuseppe	Italy—Rome	Medical Doctor
Francesco	Italy—Rome	Social Worker
Nadia	Italy—Rome	Pediatric Neuropsychiatrist
Zara	Italy—Rome	Teacher
Alessandro	Italy—Rome	Social Worker
Orazio	Italy—Rome	Social Worker
Cheikh	Senegal-Italy—Rome	Cultural Mediator

Table A.2 Chapter 4 Participants' list

Pseudonym	*Country—City*	*Profession*
Maddy	United States—Kansas	Grade 8 Special Education Teacher
Jonathan	United States—Kansas	School District Special Education Director
Rhonda	United States—New York	English as New Language Teacher
Jennifer	United States—Kansas	Grade 8 Social Studies Teacher
Donna	United States—Kansas	Grade 7 Special Education Teacher
Barbora	United States—Kansas	Grade 7 Social Studies Teacher
John	United States—Kansas	Grade 7 Science Teacher
Raquel	United States—New York	ENL Primary Teacher

V. Migliarini, B. C. Elder, *The Future of Inclusive Education*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-49242-6

Pseudonym	*Country—City*	*Profession*
Karen	United States—New York	ENL Primary Teacher
Maureen	United States—New York	Primary General Education Teacher
Matt	United States—Kansas	Grade 8 Physical Education Teacher
Patricia	United States—Kansas	Administrator
Andrea	United States—New York	Primary Special Education Teacher
Hollie	United States—New York	ENL Primary Teacher
Helen	United States—New York	ENL Primary Teacher

Table A.3 Chapter 6 Participants' list

Pseudonym	*Country—City*	*Profession*
Alessandra	Italy—Milan	Secondary Special Education Teacher
Antonia	Italy—Rome	Secondary Italian Teacher
Manuela	Italy—Florence	Secondary Special Education Teacher
Emilio	Italy—Rome	Primary PDP School Coordinator
Stefania	Italy—Rome	Headteacher Comprehensive School
Francesca	Italy—Turin	Primary Italian Teacher

Appendix B

Field Task #1: An Overview of MAPs

Making Action Plans (MAPs) or McGill Action Plan System

MAPs, a widely used approach to person-centered planning, adheres to six central tenets (Vandercook et al., 1989):

- All students belong in the regular classroom
- General education teachers can teach all children
- Necessary supports will be provided when needed
- Quality education is a right, not a privilege
- Outcomes must be success, literacy, and graduation for all
- Creative alternatives will be made available for populations who do not succeed in typical ways

MAPs is a collaborative planning process that brings together key actors in a student's life. It involves a student and his or her peers, family, and teachers to aid in the identification of that student's goals and dreams and the educational and community resources for making them come to fruition. MAPs is comprised of seven essential elements:

V. Migliarini, B. C. Elder, *The Future of Inclusive Education*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-49242-6

- graphic recording
- hospitality
- key professional people (attend and take part in discussion, as do a student's parent(s) or guardian(s))
- a student, his or her siblings, and friends (attend and take part)
- key issues (are addressed)
- a next meeting (is scheduled)
- a concrete plan of action (is developed)

MAPs has been used effectively for supporting students in the general education classroom. Two facilitators—the MAPs recorder and the process facilitator—are employed to move the process through MAPs' eight essential questions:

1. What is a MAP?
2. What is the story?
3. What is the dream?
4. What is the nightmare?
5. Who is the person?
6. What are their gifts, strengths, talents?
7. What are their needs?
8. What is the plan of action?

In concluding a MAP meeting, the process facilitator asks one final question: *Will you give me one word or phrase to sum up your experience of this MAP?*

MAPs is not intended to take the place of an IEP. It can be a powerful way of personalizing an IEP so that it sets in motion a process for fully including a student in his or her school or community. In this sense, it is not merely an "academic exercise" or a "neutral tool" but is rather both "talk and action" (Vandercook et al., 1989).

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Appendix C

Field Task #2: Ecological Assessment Example and Template

Functional/Ecological Assessment of Learning Environments

Student Name: Kevin

Grade: Second grade

Class: Morning routine

Student Characteristics: Kevin follows the routine well with prompts. He follows directions well from others, but rarely expresses himself verbally during this time of day.

Activity: Journal, daily oral language (DOL), math problems, packet work

Key: + = independent; P = partial assistance; -- = refusal or full assistance

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-49242-6

Peers without disabilities inventory	*Natural cues*	*Target student performance (+/-)*	*Discrepancy analysis*	*Intervention strategies (e.g. adaptations, prompts)*
Enter the class	Bell rings, teacher opens door, routine	--	Kevin did not do this independently because he may not have understood the teacher's directions. The teacher did not provide directions to Kevin in his first language (L1).	A peer prompted Kevin to enter the class. Give praise to the peer for being a helper. Provide Kevin a communication board that has both his L1 and his emerging second language, Italian (L2) so he can request help if needed. This way we honor both his native language and encourage the development of his L2. This approach can be modified and replicated for other emergent bilingual students in the class as well. An additional strategy can be to have Kevin review his schedule provided in both L1 and L2 upon entry to the class so he is aware of expectations for the day. The teacher can use Kevin's schedule as a model for the rest of the class to know what will happen that day. This promotes Kevin's way of accessing an alternative schedule as a valid and important inclusive support.

(*continued*)

(continued)

Peers without disabilities inventory	*Natural cues*	*Target student performance (+/-)*	*Discrepancy analysis*	*Intervention strategies (e.g. adaptations, prompts)*
Sit at your desk	Presence of desks, teacher direction	--	Kevin did not do this independently because he may not have understood directions. The teacher did not provide directions to Kevin in his L1.	A peer prompted Kevin to enter the class. Give praise to the peer for being a helper. Provide Kevin a communication board that has both his L1 and his L2 so he can request help if needed. Have a peer model for Kevin what to do. Have this peer support vary each day so all students have the opportunity to learn from and with Kevin.
Take out writing journals	Routine, teacher direction	--	I think Kevin is used to a peer prompting him to do this. The usual peer was absent.	Provide Kevin with an icon with both his L1 and L2 that could serve as a reminder of what to do when he gets to this point in the morning routine. Since all students are familiar with how to support Kevin's communication strengths and preferences, having another peer do this should be an easy support.
Editing a Daily Oral Language (DOL) sentence on the board	Routine, teacher direction, presence of DOL sentence on the board.	P	Kevin was able to do this independently because his teacher wrote the DOL sentence with a highlighter in his journal and asked him to trace the words.	Continue providing Kevin with visual support in both his L1 and L2 when he is engaged in a writing activity.

(*continued*)

(continued)

Peers without disabilities inventory	*Natural cues*	*Target student performance (+/-)*	*Discrepancy analysis*	*Intervention strategies (e.g. adaptations, prompts)*
Solve three triple-digit math problems on the board	Routine, teacher direction, presence of math problems on the board.	+	Kevin did this independently because math is his favorite subject, and the teacher provided him with a calculator.	Since Kevin did this independently, there is no discrepancy, and no intervention needed. Share his successes with his family, and ask if there are current strengths and interests that can be further incorporated into his math work.
Packet work	Routine, teacher direction, presence of packet on desks.	P	Kevin required a verbal prompt from the teacher to get started, but then he completed his work independently because his teacher had previously modified his packet to align with his language preferences and supports, his strengths, and his IEP goals.	Continue modifying Kevin's packets according to his IEP goals with particular attention to his L1 and L2 support needs, as well as his strengths and interests.

Functional/Ecological Assessment of Learning Environments

School: _____
Grade/Age:_____
Environment/Class:_____
Activity:_____

Student Characteristics:_____
_____

Key: + = independent
P = partial assistance
-- = refusal or full assistance

Peers Without Disabilities Inventory	Natural Cues	Target Student Performance (+/-)	Discrepancy Analysis	Intervention Strategies (e.g., adaptations, prompts)

Index[1]

A

American Sign Language (ASL), xxi, 35, 39, 125, 127, 132, 133, 137–139
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), xxi, 8

C

Community-based participatory research (CBPR), xxi, 14, 55, 57–60, 62, 65, 70, 73, 123, 125
Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered (Ci3T), xxi, 85–87, 96–98, 100
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), xxi, 4, 8–10, 61, 119
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), xxi, 119
Critical Disability Studies (CDS), x, xi, xxi, 4, 10, 13, 14, 16, 57–60, 62, 65, 72, 73, 174, 177, 178
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), xxi, 82, 83

D

Deaf New American (DNA), xxi, 15, 117, 123, 126, 127, 131–134, 138, 139
Disability Studies (DS), x, xxi, 10
Disability Studies in Education (DSE), x, xxi, 68–69
DisCrit, x, xi, xvii, xxi, 1, 2, 4, 10–16, 24n2, 25, 26, 32, 38, 41, 46–48, 57–60, 62, 67–70, 72, 73, 82, 83, 95, 100, 106, 107, 109, 110, 118, 125, 126, 128–133, 135–139, 147, 149–151, 150n7, 153, 157, 159, 162, 163, 174, 175, 177, 178

[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

V. Migliarini, B. C. Elder, *The Future of Inclusive Education*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-49242-6

E
English as a New Language (ENL), xxi, 83, 87, 92, 93, 98, 101n7, 103–106, 181, 182
English Language Learners (ELL), xxi, 87n5, 101, 101n7, 103, 104, 106

I
Inclusive Education, vii, xii, xvii, 8–10, 16, 70
Individualised Education Programs (IEP), xxi, 69, 103, 134, 135, 146, 147, 148n6, 149, 150, 152, 154, 155, 157, 163, 184, 188
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), xxi, 67, 88, 108, 120, 132, 135

M
McGill Action Planning System (MAPs), xxii, 154–156, 183–184
Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Universita' e della Ricerca (MIUR), xxii, 28, 32, 148n6
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), xxii, 85

N
Nepali Sign Language (NSL), xxii, 125

P
Person-centered planning (PCP), xxii, 150–162, 164
Piano Didattico Personalizzato (PDP), xxii, 15, 145–147, 149, 150, 152–155, 157, 158, 160, 163, 182
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), xxii, 85
Positive Behavior Support (PBS), xxii, 84, 87, 88, 98–100
Professional Development School (PDS), xxii, 67–71, 73

R
Response to Intervention (RTI), xxii, 85

S
Special Educational Needs (SEN), xxii, 27, 31–34, 37, 38, 42, 48, 145, 148, 149, 163

U
Universal Design for Learning (UDL), xxii, 173