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David J. Connor, Beth A. Ferri & Subini A. Annamma Eds. (2016) *DisCrit: Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory in Education*. New York: Columbia University. ISBN 9780807756676

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DisCrit places scholars from the field of Disability Studies (DS) in conversation with those from Critical Race Theory (CRT). Specifically, dis/ability is put into conversation with class- and race-based analyses to formulate an intersectional framework¹. The concept of intersectionality has taken on heightened importance within Disability Studies in recent years.² While *DisCrit* is primarily intended for scholars and aspiring academics, the text also directly speaks to people like me, who identify as dis/abled.

One phenomenon that contributors expose is the persistent overrepresentation of Students of Color in special education and/or in self-contained classrooms. Specifically, David Gillborn, Nicola Rollock, Carol Vincent, and Stephen J. Ball write, “[o]n both sides of the Atlantic, there is a longstanding pattern of Black overrepresentation in categories that rely heavily on the judgment of white teachers, who perceive an ‘emotional’ or ‘behavioral’ aberration in the actions of Black students” (p. 52). This volume responds directly to “growing calls for studies that deal with race-dis/ability intersections in more detail...” (Gillborn, Rollock, Vincent & Ball, p. 52). *DisCrit*, as a theoretical orientation, views student behaviors as not “aberrational,” but as a reaction to and/or product of the multiple forms of oppression which interact to shape their educational experience.

¹ A race-based analysis/framing is one that attends specifically and intentionally to issues of racialization and racism.

² See e.g. Kafer 2013; Ben-Moshe, Chapman & Carey 2014; Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018.

Multiple aspects of *DisCrit* piqued my interest from a theoretical perspective. In particular, the creation of a new language to discuss issues of race and racism and disability and ableism. Two examples of relevant terms are “dis/ability” and “color-evasiveness.” While not a new term (see e.g., Rogers & Swadener, 2001), dis/ability implies a greater focus on a person’s unique strengths rather than simply focusing on that person’s weaknesses. The editors state, “[w]e deliberately use the term dis/ability instead of disability... to call attention to ways in which the latter overwhelmingly signals a specific inability to perform culturally... expected tasks... that come to define the individual as primarily... unable to navigate society” (Connor, Ferri & Annamma 2016, p. 6).

Likewise, the term color-evasiveness implies, that people do, in fact, “see color” but that significant segments of the population have chosen, either consciously or unconsciously, to engage in a substantive and collective “politics of refusal” to avoid discussing issues of race and racism, despite the fact, as many recent events make apparent, that racism undergirds the foundation of U.S. society (Simpson 2014, p. 12). Put another way, many people have fallen under what Charles A. Gallagher has termed the “illusion of inclusion” (2008, p. 163). The concept of color-evasiveness represents a more socially aware alternative to the traditionally utilized construct of colorblindness because color-evasiveness “both refuses to position people who are blind as embodying deficit and recognizes the active evasion involved in people’s refusing to discuss race in the face of racial inequities” (Connor et al 2016, p. 6). *DisCrit* provides us with part of the linguistic framework necessary to continue to critically engage with issues related to race and disability. This alternative terminology can also be used to change the academic discourse when discussing these social constructs.

Among the issues discussed within *DisCrit*, there are detailed explorations of which students have access to the privilege of social capital in schools. The distribution or deprivation of social capital does not necessarily follow expected class lines. For example, middle-class Students of Colour with dis/abilities are often subject to many similar forms of educational disadvantage as their economically dispossessed counterparts. In other words, dis/ability serves to counterbalance potential educational advantage that could result from middle-class socioeconomic status. The intersections of race, dis/ability and class often predispose multiply marked students for lower educational attainment. Critically, any lower educational attainment that may result is not based on the educational ability of individual students, but rather on preconceptions of which students can achieve educationally. These faulty preconceptions of typically white middle-class, non-dis/abled students as having the potential to reach the highest levels of educational attainment inform teachers' pedagogy and assessment practices. In this context, the knowledge and capacities of Students of Colour are often disregarded.

One of *DisCrit's* greatest strengths as a text is its level of organization and clarity built around the major principles of DisCrit as a theoretical framework outlined in the first chapter. I would encourage anyone who is trying to build commonality between two fields of study that do not always "communicate" with one another to read *DisCrit*. It should be noted here that this work has a deeper history within Disability Justice (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018) circles to which *DisCrit* represents a critical addition. Specifically, the authors write, "DisCrit privileges voices of marginalized populations, traditionally not acknowledged within research" (Connor et al. 2016, p. 19).

One critique of *DisCrit* is its lack of inclusion of contributors from the Global South, especially given the Disability Rights Movement active in many nations in the Global South

(Charlton 1998; Meekosha 2008; Mutua & Swadener 2013; Singal, Lynch & Johansson 2018; Watermeyer, McKenzie & Swartz 2019). Although *DisCrit* is already an interdisciplinary and cross-national text, the inclusion of a Global South perspective would have created the possibility for additional layers of complexity and highlighted the importance of a transnational analysis of class and race in the larger intersectional framework of *DisCrit*.

The book provides academics across disciplines with a conceptual framework through which to include dis/ability as an intersectional lens of analysis in future scholarship. One opening for such scholarship lies in the fact that *DisCrit* takes as a starting point dis/ability as a social construct, while also attending to the fact that race itself is socially constructed and often utilized by those in power as a tool by which to dis/able certain groups. This intersectional standpoint expands the idea of dis/ability beyond commonly accepted boundaries and into the realm of mainstream society, which is shaped by constructs of race and dis/ability resulting, for example, in the continued lack of access to equal educational opportunity outlined above. I recommend that anyone interested in researching the intersections of race and disability read *DisCrit*.

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