Deficit-Laden Use of Constructs in Anti-Oppressive Curriculum

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"I tell my husband that he should not say, *That's gay*. Instead, he should say, *That's lame.*"

THE ABOVE QUOTATION came from a teacher in an educational leadership preparation program who described how she admonished her husband for using language that disparages gay people. She simply replaced one term associated with a marginalized existence (being gay) for one typically associated with physical disablement (being lame).[1] Derogatory terms, used colloquially and professionally, often reflect deficit thinking about people/groups (Valencia, 1997). Terms that operate as constructs contain several ideas, perform more intellectual labor, and serve as the building blocks of theory about phenomena. As constructs, they carry meanings that rely heavily on empirical relationships (Markus, 2008). We are concerned with how constructs circulating in academic literature support the deficit paradigm, become deficit-laden, in relationship to race/racism and ability/ableism when arguing for inclusion, equity, and/or justice.

Like Goldberg (2016), we ask how "disabled and disability-aware scholars, address the 'perennial' tendency of some of the most intersectional anti-oppressive theories (and theorists) to routinely ignore disability in their substantive analyses?" (p. 59). To address this tendency, we challenge the premise that anti-oppressive theories and theorists ignore disability. Noting that "the ideology of ability is so much a part of every action, thought, judgment, and intention that its hold on us is difficult to root out" (Siebers, 2008, p. 9), we argue anti-oppression scholarship narratively hinges upon cognitive, social, physical, or sensory differences in ability and paradoxically and problematically supports social, mainly racial, justice rhetoric.

This work explores racism/ableism in connection to the Black/White, deficit, and positivist paradigms. Linked to the positivist paradigm, and evident in both communications and education, are ocularcentrism and phonocentrism (Carspecken, 2003). As Bauman (2004) reminds us, in discussing audism and Deaf education, "phonocentrism provides an overriding orientation in which the systems of advantage (education and medicine) form and consolidate power by enforcing a normalcy that privileges speech over sign, and hearing over deafness" (p. 245).

Ocularcentrism and phonocentrism help us to ["make clear," "point to," "illustrate," "make apparent"] make explicit the dependency on "seeing" and "hearing" (about) about deficit-laden language.

As ever-emerging scholars, we are not outside the critique nor free from the structural and systemic forces that help to make us who we are and how we communicate (via writing) to involve ourselves in these matters of concern. We aim to *crip the curriculum*[2] (Erevelles, 2011) by bringing attention to the kinds of work constructs do to advance anti-oppressive curriculum, curriculum leadership, and curriculum theory. Through critique that tears at the limits of the paradigms that threaten to ["blind"] bind us, we hope to spur work(s) and study/studies that refuse(s) a s*crip*ted curriculum (Agosto, 2014) and welcome dis/orderly and dis/orienting reflection.

Relevant Literature

According to the literature discussed below, the deficit paradigm operates via rhetoric that hinges on deficit-laden constructs peppered among arguments in between lines of reasoning, authoritative knowledge, and philosophical orientations. Over time, within professional fields and fields of study, deficit-laden constructs can build up into what Gergen (1990) described as vocabularies of deficit and can be furthered in education (Harper, 2002). We have selected a few key sources that reference curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, or qualitative research to convey current debates and approaches to communicating about racism and/or ableism.

Scholars studying disability literature have suggested that knowledge of literary devices (tropes, narratives, discourses) can be used to discern oppressive language and challenge it. Wolgemuth et al. (2016) conducted a critical construct synthesis (CCS) of academic "literature associated with autism and work in order to show the ways in which academic writing creates labels and people, rather than objectively studies and reflects them" (p. 779). They identified two argumentative approaches, the deficit-laden *intervention story* and the asset-laden *complex story* and recommended that academics experiment with writing that expands work and career possibilities and approaches that, like the CCS, model and promote an "interactive discourse of (poss)ability" (p. 792).

Lightfoot and Gustafson (2000, 2009) used literary based, metaphorical analysis to discern how the assessment practices, such as diagnosing and labeling, rely on metonymy (part used to represent a whole). An example is how test scores are used to divide students into parts (i.e., neurons, minds, motivations) to be examined and labeled as if the label and the process are natural phenomena. They suggested art and literature be used in qualitative research to create subversive, or transformative, fictions to "break down the inevitability of our understandings of factors such as risk, intellectual deficit, and mental health pathology, which enforce the boundary between the normal and the abnormal in our society" (p. 130).

In Canada, Titchkosky (2015) identified deficit-laden constructs and phrases, used within social justice scholarship linking race and disability, that constitute impairment rhetoric. She stated:

> Still we say *color blind, deaf to the call of justice, suffering from historical amnesia; blind to structural oppression, limping under the weight of inequality; an amputated self, simply crazy, subject to colonial aphasia, agnosia, even alexia; nothing but a deformed autonomy*

made to fit a crippled economy—devastatingly disabled. What compels such impairment rhetoric? It is obviously steeped in ableism punctuated with medical overtones. (p. 1757)

In answering the question of what compels impairment rhetoric, she argued that the answer lies in the medical model of disability and the positivist paradigm.

Titchkosky (2015) further claimed that impairment rhetoric is evident in critique. By hurling *ableist* as a *diagnostic slur* or making the *medicalized claim* that "injustice is disabling" one produces a diagnostic moment that brings forth a sense of certainty and satisfaction. Instead, she suggests social justice advocates trade in "the pleasure of the certainty that comes with the act of highlighting what is wrong" in order to maintain a critical impulse and seek possibilities for social movement (p. 15). She offered Fanon's (1967) use of amputation as an example of an enlivening metaphor for anti-racism agency (i.e., becoming whole and part, crossing borders).

She further imagined its use to address issues such as the so-called "natural disasters" in Haiti and the displacement of Native/First Nations Peoples in Canada. This use of *amputation* to cut across contexts and metaphorically flesh out relationships among material conditions, biopolitics, situations, and statuses such as *disaster, refuge(e),* and *displacement* (of bodies and body parts) provides a model for anti-oppressive curriculum. While activism of the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the radical reconceptualization of curriculum studies, recent developments in scholarly-activism support its re-examination, including how *amputation* and other such metaphors of materiality *crip the curriculum.* According to Erevelles (2011), *crippin the curriculum* can come through the deployment of a "transnational historical materialist analytic that explores the political, economic, and social interconnections between the metropoles, the colonies, the ghettoes, the prisons, and other segregated social institutions" (Erevelles, 2011, p. 33). Likewise, re-radicalization of curriculum studies can be aided by interconnections among unruly bodies, and their difficult to contain limitations and excesses, that materialize in the analysis of who/what is *cripped, queered, womanist,* etc.

Both Titchkosky (2015) and Lightfoot and Gustafson (2009) drew on postcolonial literature to provide examples of how such literature retains the holism and complexity of life by blurring the distinction between what is part, whole, real, imagined, fictional, and *true to life*. These authors provided textual examples of how constructs such as amputation and mental illness were reimagined into stories of resistance. Titchkosky's (2015) examples of how one might apply the amputation metaphor are reminiscent of intersectionality exemplified in the burgeoning critical race theories and studies of education concerned with racism/ableism.

Also relying on literature and the arts, Mitchell, Snyder, and Ware (2014) make use of *crip theory* at the intersection/ality with queer theory (McRuer, 2006) to advance *curricular cripistemology*. They argue *crip*/queer cultures, histories, and art are latent curricula; already there but requiring one to read differently and reject so-called "best practices" that amount to heteronormative, ableist, individualistic, neoliberal conditions for inclusion. Such practices and conditions can be resisted using *crip arts of failure*, namely *fortunate failure,* which is to fail at being assimilated under the guise of inclusion. For Mitchell et al. (2014), "curricular reform must come first because it changes faculty and students' facility with crip/queer ways of knowing" (p. 310), which "from a curriculum cripistemological standpoint, are otherwise absent from normative teaching approaches" (p. 303). Embedded in their comment is a reference to *standpoint*, a construct we argue is an example of ableist language. We make this argument using disability scholarship provided by Mitchell and Snyder (2006, 2013), the first two authors of Mitchell et al. (2014).

Across this literature, intersectionality was used to explore issues of oppression and identify sources of agency. Authors modeled levels of analysis (individual, global, and interdisciplinary) and recommended creative approaches to research, communication, and education. In order to reduce the vocabulary of deficit, they advocated for the use or creation of metaphorical constructs that are asset-oriented, empowering (i.e., *crip/crippin*), and *flawed* by any measure—flawed *by* any measure.

Analytical Framework

Approaches stemming from critical race studies in education have arisen to link race/racism and ability/ableism analytically—via intersectionality. The intersectionality of racism and ableism is increasingly being explored across fields such as education, communications, and law. In part, this change has come in response to the failure of Disability Studies to address race/racism. Oliver (1996/2013) admitted to how, in the 1990s, work that used the social model of disability in combination with other social categories was nascent at the time. More recently, Bell (2017) argued that the field would be better named *White Disability Studies*, where, like in other fields of inquiry, "individuals of color are treated as second-class citizens" (p. 413).

There are at least three strands of scholarship that use intersectionality to examine racism/ableism. Critical Race Theory (CRT) studies in education concern racism, ableism, etc. This strand is most evident in K-12 education and may be most familiar to readers either apart or in connection to Critical Race Disability Theory (DisCrit). The other strands are from outside of education: Black Disability Studies[3] and Intersectional Rhetorics. We make use of the last one because it overlaps with the other strands and also links material conditions to language while implicating curriculum beyond the confines of schooling. We draw from critical disability scholarship (narrative prosthesis) and communications (intersectional rhetoric) to construct our analytical framework.

Narrative Prosthesis and Metaphors of Materiality

Language shapes meanings and creates realities, and its disabling effects are not avoided simply by replacing one word with another, for language provides a schema upon which institutions define their roles in connection to the constructs and narratives (Oliver, 1996/2013). From critical disability studies, we borrow *narrative prosthesis*, to expose "the dependency of literary narratives upon disability" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2013, p. 206). This literary theory helps to explain how dis/ability narratives operate out of "desires to compensate for a limitation or reign in excess" (p. 226). We examine how constructs operate as *metaphors of materiality* (Mitchell & Snyder, 2006), figures of speech, that contain ways of being that are unfleshed out in narratives within anti-oppression scholarship concerning race/racism or racial justice.

Intersectional Rhetoric

Intersectional rhetoric combines critical rhetorical analysis with intersectionality, both of which support critiques of power and the ways power affects freedom and domination in

connection to aspects of individuals' identity. A major proponent of intersectional rhetoric is Kearl (2014, 2018), who claimed that examination of rhetoric using intersectionality requires a close analysis of context, history, and cultural circumstances that empower and disempower. Intersectional rhetoric brings attention to the influences that contribute to the effectiveness of such rhetoric and can be used to expose how curriculum theory plays out in institutions such as courts and clinics. To introduce intersectional rhetoric, we turn to recent examples concerning a legal case over *wrongful birth*.

Using critical intersectional rhetorical analysis, Kearl (2018) examined a legal case in which a White, lesbian mother evoked the medical claim of wrongful birth to seek legal remedy from malpractice when a sperm bank employee mistakenly replaced the sperm she selected (from a White donor) with the sperm of a donor she had not selected (from a Black donor). Her analysis reflects how a socio-medical model of analysis can be fused to illustrate how human rights, medical law, and intersectional discourses of race and disability are intimately involved (i.e., co-implicated, intersectional). Kearl argued the case was an example of how a non-White racial classification (i.e., biracial) can be construed as a birth defect. Black identity was argued by the mother and her legal counsel to be a socially disabling condition that could have been biologically and medically prevented (i.e., abortion); a category with real/material meaning; a hardship that requires material or financial remedy.

Implicated in this case were schooling and curriculum. First, a wrongful birth claim can result in reimbursement for tuition for specialized schooling. Second, the mother filing the lawsuit claimed that her lack of cultural competence to raise a biracial child was one condition among others that would be "psychologically damaging" for her and her child (p. 300). Her argument is not unlike the argument in education whereby a lack of cultural competence is associated with educators' inability to educate those whose cultural backgrounds are different or even incongruent with their own. Despite the history of cultural competence in anti-oppressive (i.e., racial justice, multicultural education) education movements in education, the possibility of learning to competently provide a culturally relevant education at school or at home went unchallenged by the author.

Kearl (2018) engaged disability law, modeled intersectional rhetorical analysis concerning racism/ableism, and implicated curriculum. Her treatment of racism/ableism reflects Erevelles' (2011) suggestion to conduct a "materialist analytic that explores the political, economic, and social interconnections" (p. 33). Likewise, we use an intersectional rhetorical analysis to examine the rhetoric in anti-racist curriculum exemplified in constructs that serve as narrative prostheses using *metaphors of materiality* that invoke tangible bodies or body parts (i.e., a child, genes, melanin, blood quantum).

Who Not to Be/What Not to Do: Negatively Oriented Constructs

This section presents sample constructs concerning impairment related to the ability to see, hear, and think. Included in this sample are *color-blindness*, *color-mute*, *dysconscious racism*, and *racial dyslexia*. These are deficit-laden constructs that are used to advance racial justice by reminding people not to be (blind, mute, dysconscious, dyslexic) racist, and not to perpetuate racism or allow it to proliferate.

Color-Blind/ness

Color-blindness represents "a mode of thinking about race organized around an effort not to 'see' it" (Frankenburg, 1993, p. 145). According to Leonardo (2007), color-blindness has been coupled to the idea that discrimination due to color/race was a thing of the past or a way to reject the idea that race, and, therefore racism and colorism, was real (a scientifically proven biologically-based construct). As a social construct to be denied and ignored, color-blindness became an excuse to evade material issues of race and power. According to Mikulich (2005), Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) "'color evasion' is a more powerful descriptor that does not judge negatively the physical disability of color-blindness" (p. 119). While embracing colorblindness serves to maintain the absence of anti-racism/colorism in curriculum, naming it is a diagnostic slur signaling that it is an impairment to racial justice that curriculum can help diminish or eradicate—teach away.

Colormute

Historically, the term mute was used to indicate a person's lack of voice, as well as those with vocal chords that are functional but unused or underused as a source of verbal expression. Eventually, mute became synonymous with dumb and associated with silence (National Association of the Deaf, 2018). Pollock (2009) defines colormuteness as "an active resistance to describing people as racial" (p. 44), which works to silence issues of racial inequity and maintain race-based socio-political/economic divides. She describes colormuteness as an "American dilemma" that must be addressed to combat racial inequities, particularly in schools (p. 4). *Colormute* associates vocal and verbal inability and silence with deficiency and can imply dumbness/incompetency, which has implications for curriculum where there is an aim to build competency and intelligence with regard to racism/ableism linked to eugenics and White privilege.

Dysconscious Racism as Impairment

Biological conceptions of race metaphorically meet up with medical models of dis/ability in social justice discourses. For instance, Joyce King (1991) described dysconscious racism as an *impaired* or distorted way of thinking about race, which contrasts critical consciousness. She argued that dysconscious racism reflects an "uncritical habit of mind" that forms the basis of knowledge from which people can begin building an argument that "justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the given order of things as natural" (p. 135). Impairment is used to describe a way of being that should be fixed in order to be more critical about what is thought to be "natural" regarding race/racism.

Racial Dyslexia

The following section involves a deficit construct and how it was re-thought after its initial use. Leonardo (2015a) reflected on his presentation at a Disability Studies in Education conference when he used the construct *racial dyslexia* to argue that White people "exhibit a form of racial learning disability when it concerns racial matters" (p. 90). In his reflection, he remarked upon

"the danger of undoing our progressive work as contradictions are contained within the medium of language" (p. 91) and acknowledged his choice of words was tantamount to endorsing ableist discourse. However, his reflection did not extend to "color-blindness" and "race-blindness" (Leonardo, 2015b). This contradiction indicates how narrative prosthesis can be imperceptible even when reflecting on the use of language and responding to the urge to imagine more creative metaphors allowing deficit-laden ability constructs to be taken for granted within anti-racist scholarship.

How To Be and What to Do: Positively Oriented Construct(ion)s of Normative Ability

These positively oriented constructs frame ability (within the norm) as an asset and advance a deficit-laden schema for anti-oppressive curriculum and pedagogy among educators and researchers. Constructs such as *standpoint theory*, *voice, visible or non-visible disability* are deficit-laden in that they prosthetically hinge political positionalities (i.e., be an upstander, speak out) upon normative physical postures and sensory processing. They privilege ways of being, sensing, and expressing resistance to oppression using unimpaired abilities.

Standpoint Theory: Taking a Stand or Stance

Standpoint theory has acknowledged the ways in which experience within a collective shapes their knowledge and vice versa. By centering experiences, this theory rejects notions of positivist epistemology as absolute reality (Harding, 1992). For some scholars, standpoint theory engages narratives and knowledge from a "political/ethical" concern as opposed to an epistemological one (Kokushkin, 2014). Both epistemologically, ethically, and theoretically, the construct *standpoint* problematically sidelines some marginalized positions and positionalities. It isolates others by attaching political and ethical ways of being to a normative way of being, ignoring those who cannot, do not, or find it unbearable to stand.

In addition, *standpoint* is implied in curriculum presupposing a "standing community," and using metaphors of materiality that admonish students to be "upstanders," not "bystanders." According to Sapon-Shevin (2017), children are learning to valorize *color-blindness* and foster *invisibility* in anti-bias curriculum about anti-bullying. The same can be said about the anti-bias curriculum that rests on (normative) abilities and ableist critiques using a deficit-laden construct or constructs to build curriculum and/or theory. In describing standpoint theory, Patricia Hill Collins (1997) stated: "it holds that power can be erased through reducing the significance of group consciousness, group self-definition, and 'voice'" (p. 379). Her reliance on *voice* theoretically entangles standpoint theory in the rhetorical and semantic web of power relations privileging phonocentrism and abilities associated with vocalizing.

Voice as Power: Vocal Ability Raising and Amplifying

Voice has been extensively used as part of the discourse on empowerment, and it is deeply embedded in anti-oppressive discourse and qualitative research with a social justice emphasis (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013; Giroux, 1988; hooks 1989, 1990). Voice provides access to

power, representation, and emancipation from oppression by allowing people to "talk back"—speak to authority (hooks, 1989). It can be deduced that those who lack vocal ability, also lack power. hooks (1989) associated the idea of being voiceless to being oppressed and further argues that true speaking is "a political gesture that challenges politics of domination" (p. 27). Even in critical race disability studies (DisCrit), voice is used as a construct to signify power. Annamma, Connor, and Ferri (2013) claimed "that people of color and/or those with dis/abilities already have voice as a form of academic activism to explicitly 'talk back' to master-narratives" (p. 14).

Ashby (2011) asserted that spoken voice is privileged in American culture, and voice neglects other ways of communicating such as sign language, and therefore, fails to acknowledge individuals who do not use speech as their primary mode of representation. The use of voice and talk reassembles assumptions that bodies can speak, hear, and move in politically active ways, and the uncritical use of the metaphor voice allows it to be regarded as "'natural' or, even worse, 'normal'" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000, p. xiii). Linking the idea of power to an en/abled body with vocal and verbal ability, permitting one to voice (express) something, perpetuates a problematic mode of subjectification that erases individuals with vocal disabilities (May & Ferri, 2005) or renders them as powerless beings. These assumptions and constructions favor normative constructions of bodily abilities and leave little space for individuals who have other ways of communicating and knowing.

Visibility: A Slight of Sight and a Sleight of Logic

An example of anti-oppressive education concerned with learning disabilities and inclusive education comes from scholars in New Zealand. Macartney wrote, "labelled people are hyper-visible and subjected to surveillance" (Wills, Macartney, & Brown, 2014, p. 182). This passive construction forces the question, to whom are labelled people "hyper-visible"? Rhetorically, this construction promotes a default ability (seeing) and a default positionality (seer/sighted). Although being hyper-visible and invisible are framed as negative processes, we contend these deficit-laden constructs are negatively oriented because they infer normative abilities. We wondered, if Macartney and her co-authors (2014) had been speaking directly to parents and/or children who had (also) been visually impaired, would constructs such as hyper-visible or surveil been replaced by constructs such as *hyper-emphasize*, *monitor*, or *police.*

Concerning race/racism, Macartney signaled or stated the children's gender, language, and ability (i.e., she/her, speech-language therapy, dyslexia) but ignored race even after claiming she had become passionate about "anti-racist and anti-bias curriculum" (Wills, Macartney, & Brown, 2014, p. 182). This example reminded us of Bell's (2010) claim that disability studies is, more specifically, White Disability Studies. Scholars/researchers who leave race/racism out of studies about the ableism confronting students and their families allow race/racism to remain *untouched*, *under-emphasized, under-monitored, and under-policed* by curriculum specialists and generalists. The next example is from a Canadian disability studies scholar to whom we referred to in the introduction, Goldberg (2016). Her scholarship provides us an example of disciplinary cross-pollination, itinerant curriculum (Paraskeva, 2016), and curriculum internationalization (Pinar, 2007). Although Goldberg (2016) referred to *voices* and *standpoint,* we attend to her major metaphorical construct, *visibility*.

Goldberg (2016) asked if intersectionality is a disabled framework and then proceeded to *crip* it using curriculum theory. To acknowledge intra-categorical differences within disabled

communities, she parsed them into two theoretical categories: 1) "obvious and stable impairments and disabilities" (OSID), and 2) "invisible and variable impairments and disabilities" (IVID) (Goldberg, 2016, p. 64). As she explained, her concern is with "invisible" rather than (non-) "obvious," and with achieving a literary goal. She stated, "I use the word 'invisible' here for simplicity and recognisability (and because its 'I' vowel makes my proposed initialisms pronounceable as an acronym)" (p. 63). Despite grounding her work in critical traditions (i.e., *crippin intersectionality*) and acknowledging that "critical self-reflexivity…is a hallmark of critical social theory" (p. 66), she footnoted this reflection and wrote she would later revisit objections to the notion of invisibility.

To address the objections within the text, she affirmed what we are arguing with regard to sight but did so using a rhetorical sleight of logic rather than critical self-reflexivity. She wrote:

> That the term 'invisible' makes 'looking' the dominant mode of taking in information may, semantically, erase other equally valid kinds of non-sight-based knowing (e.g., the perceptions of people with visual impairments). Nonetheless, few would contest that PWD's [people with disabilities'] experiences differ depending on the degree to which those around them notice…and sight is, ever-increasingly, the dominant mode through which most people make at least initial appraisals of embodied situations and capacities. (pp. 81-82)

She justified the use of *visible* based on what "most people" do—use the mode of sight, and by arguing that few would contest that sight shapes different experiences, she evaded the critique and validated the erasure underway. Narrative prosthesis is used here as a salve to erase disability via a quick rhetorical fix that "removes an audience's need for concern or continuing vigilance" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000, p. 8).

We anticipated Goldberg (2016) would have said more about ableism/racism given her use of intersectionality, which is an outcome of critical race scholarship. However, she only mentioned race/racism once—in a footnote—within the title of a chapter written by Angela Davis (1982) on racism, birth control, and reproductive rights. Even after writing in another footnote how a reviewer reminded her it was important to acknowledge the Black feminist critical thought that Crenshaw brought into the formalization of intersectionality, Goldberg did not cite Crenshaw and claimed that using intersectionality to link disability to other marginalized experiences was "outside the scope" of her paper. Such statements and treatments reinforce the claim that critical disability studies and its scholars remain unapologetically active in retaining its Whiteness (Bell, 2010; Ejiogu & Ware, 2008).[4] With regard to Goldberg's question of whether intersectionality is a disabled framework, we might ask if intersectionality can be used to support disabled frameworks. At risk here is that curriculum workers will follow suit and lean towards "simplicity and recognisability," repeating this erasure of other ways of knowing, evading self-reflexive critique, and writing race/racism outside the scope of curriculum.

Discussion

Intersectional frameworks are part of the growing attention to racism/ableism. Our model of intersectionality rhetorical analysis stemmed from communications where the examination of racism/ableism continues to work primarily within the Black/White racial paradigm. Additionally,

the deficit paradigm is implicated in scholarship associating racism and ableism and in curriculum theory informing K-12 anti-oppressive education. Future research on the use of deficit-laden language might explore critical disability studies scholarship for ways in which it discursively enables curriculum to evade race/racism. However, Erevelles (2015) cautioned that disability and race should not be conceived of as interchangeable tropes in order to foreground the notion that the ubiquity of oppression for racism and ableism are analogous, not synonymous. Simply put, within the way race/racism and able/ableism are structured in schools in the United States, one could become disabled tomorrow, but one is raced every day.

There is a need for curriculum theorizing to take into consideration the emerging alliances occurring across intersectionalities from various theoretical and global locations (queer, Black, disability studies, queer *crip* studies, decolonial disability studies, afrofuturistic critical race disability studies). Exploring these alliances as potential sites for curriculum theorizing is more urgent as curriculum is becoming neoliberalized and internationalized (Pinar, 2007). Areas conducive to further *crippin* the curriculum might include the following:

- Fascinations with dead metaphors might be reimagined through the construct *necropolitics* (Mbembe, 2008) to further theorize itinerant curriculum related to curriculum epistemicide (Paraskeva, 2016) and *cripistemology* (McRuer, 2006).
- Racism/ableism associated with assisted reproductive technology (ART), such as "wrongful birth" and "wrongful death," could be woven into curriculum via art while taking on problems with the language and intent of the law "*stand* your ground."
- Analyzing titles, soundtracks, and storylines in movies such as *Blindspotting* (López Estrada, 2018) could bring attention to how verbifying a construct (i.e., blindspot) does not make the construct less deficit and how gentrification exacerbates ableism/racism across the able/racial continuum and border(s)/land(s).

We are left wondering what it would mean to bring prominence to other constructs across curriculum concerned with ability.

In addition to using constructs in the form of nouns (*inability, disability, disabled, and non-disabled*), curriculum could rely on constructs in the form of verbs: i.e., *enable, dis-enable, capacitate, and incapacitate*. For example, *enable* carries positive and negative connotations and can be used to indicate the working of politics and power in social contexts and on material existences. Its form *enabling* is used primarily in psychotherapy and mental health occupations to describe a force that empowers people to do what is good or beneficial, as well as to do what is harmful (to self or others). In anti-oppressive curricula, we might ask about enabling conditions and actions that promote benefit and/or harm, rather than disabling conditions that only suggest doing harm (implied by the prefix dis- meaning without, apart, or a negative force). We conclude with questions intended to be incite/ful rather than in*sight*ful.

Concluding Questions

The following questions concern the qualitative use of constructs as metaphors of materiality, namely their semantic and semiotic flexibility when used to communicate about racism/ableism.

- *At what point does the use of a construct devolve into measurement and diagnoses? How can constructs informing racism/ableism curriculum be helped to productively, miserably, and fortunately fail?*
- *How does one recognize when constructs are failing to inspire empowering prosthetics and deliver amputating cuts into the well-fitted containers of suitable use?*

The following set of questions is informed by our analytical framework and themes in the literature, such as the advocacy of arts and humanities to create transformative fictions and imaginary metaphors. More specifically, this set of questions makes use of spectral criticism as an approach to curriculum and elucidates what we refer to as spectral curriculum theory, a materialist criticism emphasizing metaphor. Such questions could be posed by curriculum workers who make use of the construct, *spectrum* (i.e., autism spectrum).

- Is *spectrum* being used to mean an image or apparition?
- Is there *spectral evidence* of autism based on testimony by *spectres,* people not physically present, or hearsay about ghosts or apparitions of the so-called student on the autism spectrum?
- What can foster spectral criticism, while staving off spectral analysis (a statistical technique) that would redirect curriculum theory from spectral education toward special education?

Similar questions can be asked with regard to the construct, *continuum.*

Titchkosky (2015) recommended creatively playing with language, which may result in stumbling upon accidental metaphors. Playing with language such as amputation could begin with the terms dis/abled and able-bodied, their punctuation, and different opinions held by disability scholars about whether or not or when they should be used. These terms may be rejected for how they signal others to think of the parts that make up the whole person/people, just as they may be accepted because they allow people's parts to remain in contact, unlike "people first" language such as "people with disabilities."[5] These slashes and dashes are literary—amputating—devices. Though this work is construed here as a language game, it punctures and punctuates anti-oppressive curriculum across various areas of education, including education research. To be clear, while language may be a game, "oppression is not a game, nor is it solely about language—for many of us, it still remains profoundly real" (Collins, 1997, p. 381). In our attempt to communicate the paradoxical and problematic issues associated with constructs often cited across anti-oppression scholarship informing curriculum, we hope to have failed in a way that allows readers to reap the fortune latent and laden in this work.

Notes

1. According to the Kanigel's (2019) work, *The Diversity Style Guide*, "some people object to the use of the word lame to describe a physical condition because it is used in colloquial English as a synonym for weak" (p. 359).
2. For historical information on the use of *crip* and *crip theory* see McRuer (2006).
3. For more information about Black Disability Studies see Dunhamn et al. (2015).
4. Goldberg (2016) describes her privilege related to her Whiteness and access to education and marginalization related to her queerness, among other things. See footnote number four.

5. The entry in the Disability Language Style Guide described "disabled people" as identity first, rather than people first, language. It is described as a preference among a growing number of disability activists who take "their disabilities to be inseparable parts of who they are" (National Center of Disability and Journalism, 2018, n.p.).

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