Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability

Volume 38, Issue 2, Summer 2025

Special Issue

Disabled, Racially Minoritized, and Invisible: The Intersectionality of Race and Disability in Higher Education

JOURNAL OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND DISABILITY • VOLUME 38, ISSUE 2 • Summer 2025 • Pages 451-542

AHEAD Association on Higher Education And Disability®

AHEAD Association on Higher Education And Disability®
16810 Kenton Drive, Suite 220
Huntersville, NC 28078 USA
www.ahead.org

Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability

The *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* is published in accessible formats. Please contact AHEAD to discuss hard copy subscription requests. All members of the Association on Higher Education and Disability receive the *Journal*.

ISSN 2379-7762 (Print) ISSN 2328-3343 (Online)

Table of Contents

Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 38(2)

Note From the Guest Editors

Disabled, Racially Minoritized, and Invisible: The Intersectionality of Race and Disability in Higher Education

Daniel J. Blake[1]
Julia Rose Karpicz[2]
Kat J. Stephens-Peace[3]
Gabriel Rodríguez Lemus, Jr.[4]

In "Not Another All White Study: Challenging Color-Evasiveness Ideology in Disability Scholarship," Stapleton and James (2020) challenged JPED's audience, and higher education researchers at large, to name and critique the "perpetual centering of Whiteness in higher education disability research" (p. 215). At the time of its publication, we were each trying to make sense of, and navigate, the academy as disabled graduate students of color at institutions across the U.S. We had not yet met each other but connected soon after online through sharing our lived experiences and interests in scholarship at the intersections of race, disability, gender, sexuality, and other axes of identity.

This special issue, "Disabled, Racially Minoritized, and Invisible: The Intersectionality of Race and Disability in Higher Education," is one of the ways in which we are responding to Stapleton and James's (2020) call to action and carrying the torch forward. There is an irony in us, as early career scholars, serving as editors of a special issue, which is typically a role taken on by scholars who are further along in their careers. Since we met, three of us have completed our doctorates, two of us have begun tenure-track faculty positions, and one of us has taken on a leadership role in university disability services. We have carried out the labor of leading this special issue while dissertating, navigating the job market, and balancing full-time employment in and outside of the academy.

Yet, the opportunity to carve out space for the critical scholarship in these pages—recruiting authors and guiding their manuscripts through multiple stages of the review process—has been worth it. We sought to cultivate a review process that acknowledged the vulnerability it took for authors to put forth their ideas and challenge conventional norms in higher education disability research. At times, we had to interject our editorial perspectives when we found that reviews were not culturally responsive nor receptive to the theoretical positioning that authors put forth. We encouraged authors to push back against implicit suggestions that JPED's audience is uninterested in engaging with the historical and theoretical underpinnings behind authors' work. We responded to Stapleton and James' (2020) question of "Who gets valued as knowledge creators?" by committing to leading a process in which disabled scholars of color would be valued and affirmed (p. 218).

The articles in this issue derive from research conducted both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a tipping point in bringing conversations about the intersections of racism, ableism, and access to the mainstream. Increased attention to police killings of disabled Black people occurred within a broader context in which the human toll of the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare vast socioeconomic and health inequities experienced by communities of color.

This special issue, following Stapleton and James (2020), can be seen as belonging to a lineage of critical work taken on by disabled scholars of color such as Christopher Bell (2006), who satirized the field of Disability Studies as "White Disability Studies" (p. 275). Such critiques led to the emergence and circulation of #DisabilityTooWhite (Thompson, 2016) across social media platforms. As we brainstormed and planned this special issue, we grappled with the various ways in which #DisabilityTooWhite manifests across the applied field of higher education, and the tangible consequences they have for disabled students, staff, and faculty of color.

The articles in this special issue make significant contributions in investigating the intersections of race

[1] Georgia State University; [2] Worcester State University; [3] Ball State University; [4] The University of Texas at Austin

and disability in higher education. While there is much to gather and learn from these studies, we draw particular attention to two themes for practitioners to consider: (a) how race-evasive orientations to disability undermine identity development for disabled students of color, and (b) how disability services offices (DSOs) operate as racialized spaces.

The articles in this issue highlight how a race-evasive orientation to disability undermines identity development for disabled students of color. Forber-Pratt et al. (2020) identify disability identity formation as inherently relational; building a sense of connectedness to disability community contextualizes individual experiences as part of a broader, shared experience with access, disability culture, and ableism. Scholars in this issue highlight how disabled students of color are not provided with race-conscious spaces that honor disability culture, history, and community, but instead are socialized into understanding disability as an individual experience. In "Critical Care as Anti-Racist Disability Activism: Subverted Truths Around Mental Health and Wellness of Black and Brown Students on a College Campus," Dr. Nickie Coomer, Dr. Mercédès A. Cannon, Vicente Preciardo Blas Taijeron, and Tahamina Prity highlight the ways students of color with mental disabilities navigated multiple Terrible Sticky Truths (TSTs), "persistent, yet often subtle, deficit-oriented narratives that are considered 'common sense,'" such as academic success being a reflection of individual merit rather than structural privilege. These TSTs compelled students to "push through" or deny their disability experience to "be successful."

In "An Awakening Consciousness: Underrepresented and Racially Minoritized Disabled College Student Experiences" and "Blackness Distorts: A Qualitative Exploration of Race and Disability in Black Women Graduate Students," Dr. Warren Whitaker and Dr. Kat Stephens-Peace respectively demonstrate how the racial identity formation of disabled students of color is facilitated through community connection, including family, religious and faith-based networks, online communities, and postsecondary programs and centers. These various spaces contributed to a racialized self-consciousness that allowed disabled students of color to identify the structural causes of racialized oppression and to understand how their educational experiences are shaped by these structures. This connectedness facilitated self-discovery and was a protective factor against racial battle fatigue (Quaye et al., 2019), which helped students persist and succeed. By contrast, these same students perceived disability as an individualized experience of illness or impairment that they had to manage on their own. As Dr. Stephens-Peace highlights, Black disabled women saw disclosure of disability identity as increasing their vulnerability and opportunities for scrutiny, which pushed them to mask their disability to survive graduate school.

The articles in this issue powerfully document how disability services offices participate in this culture of scrutiny. In "It Looked Like a Jail Cell: Policing of Racialized and "Disabled Students' Bodyminds in Higher Education," Dr. Danielle Mireles and Claudia Chiang-Lopez document the prevalence of suspicion in disability services policies and practices. Examples include placing disabled students in windowless exam rooms, under the gaze of office security cameras, and denying access to items like sensory fidgets or food that are not institutionally approved (by faculty or as a formal accommodation), as well as treating disabled students of color with suspicion when they seek informal support through disability services. Bea, a Latina student with diabetes who went to disability services to ask for juice after their blood sugar dropped, was questioned by front office staff: "Who are you? Why are you here? *Why should I believe you*?" That question—*Why should I believe you?*—exemplifies the underlying ethos of social control that shapes "traditional" approaches to individual accommodation. As Coomer et al. explain in "Critical Care as Anti-Racist Disability Activism: Subverted Truths Around Mental Health and Wellness of Black and Brown Students on a College Campus," this culture of suspicion compelled disabled students of color into a defensive position, having to convince organizational actors that their disability and access needs were legitimate and that they were trustworthy and reliable.

Thus, while disability services offices might conceptualize their work as race-neutral, the scholarship in this issue highlights how universities and disability services offices function as racialized spaces. Ray (2019) describes racialized organizations as reinscribing racial ideologies by mediating the agency and access of racial groups. This happens as "organizational routines habitually connect racial schemas to social and material resources," enabling racial inequality to be reproduced even where there may not be conscious efforts to discriminate (Ray, 2019, p. 33). We can see these routines at work in "It Looked Like a Jail Cell: Policing of Racialized and "Disabled Students' Bodyminds in Higher Education and Espoused vs. Enacted: Institutional Racial Cognizance and the Realities of Black Disabled Students." Both articles highlight the impact of bio-certification—requiring supporting documentation from a licensed provider before approving accommoda-

tions—on disabled students of color, who are more likely to experience barriers in accessing care as well as inaccurate diagnoses and medical racism when care is accessed. Although AHEAD advises disability services professionals to use students' self-reports as primary documentation of disability—as they have the most direct experience with their disability (AHEAD, 2023)—these articles highlight how disability services still privileges and often requires "up-to-date" medical documentation before approving any accommodations. For example, in "Espoused vs. Enacted: Institutional Racial Cognizance and the Realities of Black Disabled Students," Anna Acha and Dr. Danielle Mireles highlight how the majority of disability services offices within the University of California system provide information about medical documentation requirements, but rarely mention self-report as a valued (and valid) source of information. Drawing on Coomer et al.'s framework, these routines reveal a TST that guides disability services work: offices often treat disabled students of color as unreliable narrators of their own experience while reinforcing the legitimacy of racist systems (e.g., healthcare) to uphold their own institutional legitimacy.

Collectively, these studies affirm that universities are not race-neutral spaces and that disability services is not an exception. While disability services offices often push for disability to be integrated into institutional diversity work (as it should be), these studies demonstrate that there often is not a reflexive and reciprocal engagement to intentionally address how practices, policies, and cultures within disability services offices preserve long-standing racial structures. For example, as Anna Acha and Dr. Danielle Mireles document, the mission statements, policies, and practices of disability services offices are often color- and race-evasive, treating disability as an identity experience that is not shaped through race and racism. In practice, this race-avoidant approach constrains the agency and access of disabled students of color, whose needs are too often denied and delegitimized.

Higher education has a responsibility to its students, staff, and faculty to make meaningful contributions at the nexus of race and disability. These studies invite practitioners to explore culturally sustaining approaches within disability services. For example, practitioners should consider the impact of carceral cultures within testing environments that often do not exist in classroom spaces (e.g., monitoring students on cameras, holding cell phones and belongings in a separate area, checking snacks and beverages to ensure they do not have writing on them). In addition, practitioners should consider reviewing disability services websites, assessing institutional policies related to crisis response, and developing spaces and programs that center disability culture and intentionally facilitate disability identity development—regardless of whether a student has formally "documented" their disability. The growing population of racially minoritized disabled students deserve to be supported and taught within and beyond the classroom in ways that affirm their humanity and learning, which also implicates broader institutional policies and practices related to the hiring and retention of racially minoritized disabled faculty and staff. Readers should review and consider how Dr. Cannon's framework for "Accessible Education Services Communities of Practice (AESCoP)" may offer a path forward, expanding beyond individualized compliance and toward more relational and collective approaches to access that prioritize the experiences and participation of disabled students of color.

Lastly, what this special issue raises does not end here. There is a continual need to think about intersections of disability, race, gender, sexuality, and other axes of identity in ways that uplift, and to interrogate policies and practices that harm disabled people in and around higher education and student affairs. This special issue serves as an ongoing call for scholars to continue building and expanding on this work in ways that ask important questions and lead to action.

References

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). (2023). Supporting accommodation requests: Guidance on documentation practices. *AHEAD*.https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/accommodations/documentation

Bell, C. (2006). Introducing White disability studies: A modest proposal. In L. J. Davis (Ed.), *The disability studies reader* (pp. 275–282). Routledge.

Forber-Pratt, A. J., Merrin, G. J., Mueller, C. O., Price, L. R., & Kettrey, H. H. (2020). Initial factor exploration of disability identity. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 65*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1037/rep0000308

Quaye, S. J., Karikari, S. N., Allen, C. R., Okello, W. K., & Carter, K. D. (2019). Strategies for practicing self-care from racial battle fatigue. J*ournal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity (JCSCORE), 5*(2), 95–131. https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2642-2387.2019.5.2.94-131

Ray, V. (2019). A Theory of Racialized Organizations. *American Sociological Review, 84*(1), 26–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418822335

Stapleton, L., & James, L. (2020). Not another all White study: Challenging color-evasiveness ideology in disability scholarship (Practice Brief). *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33*(3), 215-222. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1281055.pdf

Thompson, V. (2016) #DisabilityTooWhite, Twitter. Retrieved August, 30, 2024 from: https://x.com/vilissathompson/status/1526926208360923137?s=46&t=GPAvnmVHA7eP4uxJNu1ZMQ

About the Authors

Daniel J. Blake is an assistant professor of higher education in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at Georgia State University. He earned his Ph.D. in higher education at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. Blake's research focuses on organizational culture, policy, and practice in higher education, with particular attention to how race, gender, and disability shape career experiences in the academic workforce. He can be reached by email at: dblake11@gsu.edu.

Julia R. Karpicz is the Associate Director of Student Accessibility Services at Worcester State University. She earned her Ph.D. in Higher Education and Organizational Change the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research examines access labor in academic and non-academic spaces, with a particular interest in how that labor is racialized. As a scholar-practitioner, Julia is interested in how individuals within learn and cultivate the skills needed to live together in just communities. She can be reached by email at: jkarpicz@worcester.edu.

Kat Stephens-Peace received her B.A. degree in Literature and Education from Sarah Lawrence College and Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her student affairs experiences include working in undergraduate and graduate admissions, academic advising, and residential life. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Educational Leadership, at Ball State University. Her research interests include disability studies, critical & intersectional ADHD studies, and graduate student education at the nexus of race and gender. She can be reached by email at: kat.stephenspeace@bsu.edu.

Gabriel Rodríguez Lemus, Jr. (he/él) is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Program in Higher Education Leadership & Policy at The University of Texas at Austin with a dual graduate portfolio in Women & Gender Studies with a specialization in LGBTQ+ Studies and Mexican American & Latinx/a/o Studies. His research examines the experiences of queer and trans Latinx/o people living with disabilities in higher education utilizing art-based participatory methods to posit more liberatory futures. He can be reached by email at: grodriguezlemus@utexas.edu.

Foreword

Lissa Ramirez-Stapleton[1]

"It's better to ask forgiveness than permission."
-Grace Hopper

As a new student affairs professional, I remember chatting with my supervisor about a new program idea. My supervisor cringed, then shrugged and said, "It's a new and interesting idea. Go for it; it's better to ask forgiveness than permission in this case." We shared a few laughs as I knew exactly what that meant. An idea like this meant long meetings, endless emails, and answering several questions that would take more time than just trying the program. This Western adage was coined by Grace Hopper, a White woman, computer scientist, U.S. Navy Admiral, and a woman who lived with her disabilities of depression and alcoholism (Uhl & Marx, 2020). She got her PhD in 1934 and achieved most of her success during a time when women role models in leadership were few and far between (Uhl & Marx, 2020). Some have speculated on the meaning behind her comment. Still, I wonder if it was about pushing women not to wait for men to validate their existence, their desire for an education, or their professional ambitions. Perhaps it was meant to say, "Just do it."

Regardless of her intentions or context, I can identify several times and spaces when the "Just do it" mentality has supported the liberation of marginalized communities. As we quickly approach the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), I am reminded, past and present, of all of the ways permission was not asked for in the fight for fundamental human rights for disabled folks, such as the 1977 San Francisco 504 sit-ins and the Black Panthers providing daily hot meals (Lebrecht & Newnham, 2020), the Deaf President Now Movement of 1988 where Deaf leadership was demanded (Christiansen & Barnartt, 1995), the 1990 "Capitol Crawl" in which individuals put their bodies on the line with the youngest protesters being eight years old (Little, 2024), the current #CripTheVote movement that pushes for disability topics to be at the forefront of political discourse (Hui, 2020); and the countless families that have fought for their children during Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings for them to have access to an equitable education.

In the cases above, not asking for permission made necessary change possible. However, what led me to co-write *Not Another All White Study: Challenging Color-Evasiveness Ideology in Disability Scholarship* in the Fall 2020 issue of the *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* was the shadow or negative aspects of this adage on people with disabilities. We have turned this saying into a practice in higher education that excuses us from trying, leaves marginalized folks out of the conversation, and makes us feel better about ourselves when we are questioned about why we made certain decisions. These thoughts came to me during a summer disability scholars' retreat where I had the opportunity to engage with higher education scholars who were invested in guiding the direction of future disability scholarship.

Each day, I left the conversation wondering where the Scholars of Color were in disability higher education. I was one of only a few People of Color at the retreat. During breakout dialogues and late-night chats, the uninterrogated issue of Whiteness in higher education disability scholarship continued to surface for me and, might I add, without permission. It was allowed to sit in our space. Some folks talked around it, and others acknowledged its continuous problematic presence, but nonetheless, it was talked about as if there was nothing we could do about it except apologize, say we would do better, and move on. I left that retreat wanting to disrupt the culture of its "better to ask for forgiveness than permission" approach when it came to how we supported people with disabilities on our campuses (i.e., students, staff, faculty, and administrators), and specifically question the overuse of this idea in our disability scholarship. *Not Another All White Study* was a rallying cry for me. It was my moment to draw a line in the sand to say, "enough is enough," and to name what had become the norm. I could no longer tolerate the erasure or the lack of consideration of the impact of unnamed White-only disability scholarship, epistemologies, and ideologies on disabled folks of color. This piece was meant to point out that simply adding "only White participants" as a limitation was asking for forgiveness instead of doing the work, embracing patience, and building the relationships required to diversify studies racially. All

[1] *California State University Fullerton*

White-centered research and scholarship that is not named as such goes under the radar and paints broad strokes of what people with disabilities are experiencing, ultimately misrepresenting and misinforming student affairs practitioners (Stapleton & James, 2020).

This special issue is a sign that the rallying cry has been acknowledged, validated, and continued by racially diverse scholars with their own lived experiences with disabilities. As readers engage with the special issue, I hope they continue to grapple with a few ideas. First, what it means to start disability scholarship and conversations with Black and Brown communities at the center. Scholars within this issue are holding a magnifying glass over the status quo: ways that higher education is navigating technology, supporting students, and checking boxes when working with Black and Brown disabled communities. Second, we must question what we have identified as equitable practice and how it might be masking White patriarchal-centered ways of being. The second wave of the Disability Right Movement is upon us. It demands that we move beyond just accommodations and understand the importance of cross-movement solidarity, which requires we embrace intersectionality, interdependence, and collective access (Berne, 2015; Ramirez-Stapleton & Torres, 2020).

Lastly, these scholars begin to show us ways to hold Whiteness accountable, to question it, not underestimate its impact, and require it to be transparent in disability scholarship and our practice with students with disabilities. The scholarship in this issue and future dialogues about this work can foster a culture of shared responsibility between scholars, practitioners, and higher education in general (Stapleton & James, 2020). No one person is fully responsible for how we got here, and no one person will help us evolve it. As we move forward, let us continue to ask ourselves, "Is it better or easier to ask permission than forgiveness, and on whom does that burden fall?"

References

Berne, P. (2015, June 10). Disability justice –A working draft. Sins Invalid.https://www.sinsinvalid.org/curriculum

Christiansen, J. B., & Barnartt, S. N. (1995). *Deaf president now!:The 1988 revolution at Gallaudet University.* Gallaudet University Press.

Hui, K. (2020). How the #CripTheVote movement is advocating for disability policy. https://www.verywellhealth.com/cripthevote-disability-policy-5087942.

Lebrecht, J. & Newnham, N. (Directors). (2020). *Crip camp* [Film]. Higher Ground Productions.

Ramirez-Stapleton, L.D. & Torres, L. (Eds.). (2020). Disability justice, race & education. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity. 6*(1), 28–39. https://journals.shareok.org/jcscore/issue/view/11.

Stapleton, L. D., & James, L. (2020). Not another all White study: Challenging color-evasiveness ideology in disability scholarship. Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33(3), 213–320.

Uhl, X. M., & Marx, C. (2020). G*race Hopper: Computer pioneer*. Rosen Publishing.

About the Author

Dr. Lissa Ramirez-Stapleton is an associate professor at California State University Fullerton in the Department of Educational Leadership and Program Coordinator of the Masters of Science in Higher Education program. Her research focuses on Deaf students' educational equity and access, identity development, and Deaf educational history with a particular interest in the intersections of race, gender, and disability. Her current research focuses on the historical connections, relationships, and experiences of Deaf student and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. She is also the Executive Director for The Black Deaf Project, a 501c (3) educational Black Deaf and hearing collaborative nonprofit.

Critical Care as Anti-Racist Disability Activism: Subverted Truths Around Mental Health and Wellness of Black and Brown Students on a College Campus

M. Nickie Coomer[1]
Mercédès A. Cannon[2]
Vicente Preciardo Blas Taijeron[1]
Tahamina Prity[1]

Abstract

In this research, we surface, interrogate, and disrupt how Disability[3] law and the work of Disabled activists are appropriated and supplanted in ways that perpetuate the isolation of Disability as an individual experience in higher education. Alternatively, we theorize Disability law in higher education through a collaborative examination of the meaning and impact of mental health and wellness with Black and Brown college students with and without identified, or codified, Disabilities. We surface the presumed Whiteness of Disability by making visible Disability law's emphasis on individualism, paternalism, and "worship of the written word" (Okun & Jones, 2001, p. 3), and the consequence of the overemphasis on individual accommodation and intervention as a substitute for equity. We use the concept of "Terrible Sticky Truths" to highlight the pervasiveness of individualism in conceptualizations of Disability and the concept of "Subverted Truths" (Cannon, 2019) to illustrate the possibilities of reframing Disability in higher education around collaborative and communal accessible educational services and experiences facilitated by emphasizing intergenerational teaching and learning and critical care in work toward collective access.

Keywords: mental health, higher education, mental disability, accessible education service community of practice

The interplay between Disability law, the advocacy efforts of Disabled activists, and the sociopolitical and sociohistorical landscapes of higher education is difficult to parse. In this research, we explore the organizational, social, and cultural threads that comprise "mental Disability" (Price, 2009) on a college campus, as narrated by students of Color[4]. Importantly, we center the narratives of participants to diverge from conventional "Disability analyses" and instead engage in a collaborative examination to surface the "connected knowing" of the participants and researchers (Collins, 2000, 2003). Accordingly, our research questions are:

1. How do current Disability laws and institutional policies in higher education contribute to the isolation of students of Color?
2. How do students of Color narrate their experiences with defining and understanding mental health, wellness, and mental Disability on a predominantly White campus?
3. In what ways can collaborative and communal educational practices, including intergenerational teaching and critical care, be implemented to foster collective access and well-being for Black and Brown college students with and without identified Disabilities?

A central focus of this inquiry is to address the dearth of research that includes Black and Brown participants as both subject and collaborator in research (Stapleton & James, 2020) and includes unveiling the often invisibilized mechanisms of "white suprema-

[1] *Colorado College;* [2] *Indiana University Indianapolis;* [3] The Capital "D" signal that "Disability" and "Disabled" discursively serve to signal a social and political identity and location, bearing both material and symbolic impacts. This usage is significant in the context of Disability identity for Disabled and people with Disabilities and their educational experiences. [4] "Color" is capitalized to signal a racial identity that may not be a legal or codified racial category, but as a non-white, social and political identity that bears both symbolic and material impact.

cy culture" (Okun & Jones, 2001) in the ways that Disability laws are interpreted and applied in post-secondary education. By surfacing pronounced emphases on individualism, productivity, perfectionism, and exclusion in approaches to Disability on post-secondary campuses, we underscore the outcomes of these principles, specifically the undue emphasis on individual accommodation and intervention at the expense of broader equity. In doing so, we rely on the theoretical concepts of "Terrible Sticky Truths" (TSTs) and "Subverted Truths" (STs; Cannon, 2019) to understand the complex and co-constitutive interaction of race, Disability, and other markers of marginalized identities, including gender and gender expression, sexuality, and class (Annamma et al., 2013; Erevelles & Minear, 2010). These conceptual tools aid in illustrating the interaction of broad cultural narratives of overcoming Disability in educational spaces, and the counternarratives students of Color draw upon to "talk back" (Smitherman, 1986) to the tacit, yet persistent, cultural assertions of Disability as an individualized experience.

Importantly, we look to the work of Black and Brown student activists on the campus of a small liberal arts college in the central United States to examine alternatives to this logic. Using the concepts of TSTs and STs noted above, along with Okun and Jones' (2001) understanding of "white supremacy culture," we theorize around mental health and wellness, Disability, and activism. We interrogate the notion of Disability advocacy as the acquisition of individual accommodations, and instead center the narratives of Black and Brown students to frame Disability justice through their ontologies and epistemologies around mental health and wellness. Importantly, we intentionally amplify the voices of students of Color as a response to the dearth of Disability research that includes students of Color as knowers (Stapleton & James, 2020). We aim to bring Black and Brown students' perspectives to the forefront, identifying TSTs and examining the antidotal STs that come from their knowing (Cannon & Thorius, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

Terrible Sticky Truths and Subverted Truths

The theoretical underpinnings of TSTs and STs are derived from Mercédès Cannon's (2019) work with Disabled Black women. Bridging Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) (Annamma et al., 2013) and Black Womanism/Feminism (Collins, 2000, 2003), Cannon (2019) surfaces how Black women with mental health related Disability labels are "talkin' back" to the TSTs that envelop their identities by highlighting how Black and Brown women with Disabilities resist pathological treatment within educational settings marked by ableism, racism, sexism, and classism (Connor & Ferri, 2010; Peterson, 2009). Although we do not draw directly from the essential foundational work of Black Womanisms/Feminism (Collins, 2000,2003), we do draw from Cannon's (2019) work in developing TSTs and STs, which is deeply informed by Black Womanism/Feminism.

Disability Law and the "Retrofit"

In this section, we answer Research Question 1: How do current Disability laws and institutional policies in higher education contribute to the isolation of disabled students of Color?

Common cultural conceptualizations of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) (1990) center the law's presumed protections of the rights of Disabled individuals in public and private employment (Maroto & Pettinicchio, 2014; Shallish, 2015). Although the ADA is one of the most widely recognized Disability rights laws, other Disability-related laws, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA; 2004), also presumably protect the rights of Disabled individuals in the public sphere. Importantly, educational protections afforded by the ADA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and IDEA include the prohibition of discrimination in governmental and federally-funded services, as well as private and public employment, and access to a free and appropriate primary and secondary public education.

Although the accomplishments of the ADA may be widely—and symbolically—understood, the interpretation and "appropriation" (Levinson et al., 2004, p. 363) of the law in higher education settings is culturally and historically situated in the policies, processes, hidden curricula, and, ultimately, neoliberal aims of higher education (Mitchell & Snyder, 2019; Taylor & Shallish, 2019). Because the adoption of the law is situated in cultures that rely on and reproduce systems of oppression, including interlocking systems of ableism and racism, in its application, the ADA becomes a fulcrum of power to enforce and approximate normalcy rather than to envelop Disability and accessibility into higher education landscapes (Albanesi & Nusbaum, 2017; Taylor & Shallish, 2019).

In his book, *Academic Ableism,* Jay Dolmage (2017) challenges the symbolic adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act to instead consider what Disability is and means away from legislation that—in many cases— retroactively mandates isolated accommodations for Disabled people. Dolmage (2017)

argues that these accommodations are often limited by temporality; that is, accommodations arise from a need and are "retrofitted" to a structure, a course, or a human in a way that is meant only to accommodate "for only one (particular person) at one time" (p. 79). Importantly, by describing the "retrofit" approach to accommodation as compelled by the ADA, Dolmage (2017) forces a reconsideration of the law as one that prioritizes the approximation of a prescribed normal. In institutions of higher education, the approximation of normal is actualized through the administration of the ADA through campus offices of Accessibility or Disability Services. The role of this office often includes the interpretation and administration of the ADA through the provision of accommodations for college students. Though these offices can often act in advocacy positions for students, by their nature they often isolate Disability within the student. Even in advocacy roles, however, the rhetorical position a student must occupy to receive accommodations requires that they (a) be afforded the presumption of reliability in narrating their own condition and (b) present a case that ensures the "reasonability of accommodations" (Dolmage, 2017, p. 80). Thus, this compelled normalcy "masquerades as rigor" (Taylor & Shallish, 2019, p. 3) within a "bio-meritocracy" (Taylor & Shallish, 2019, p. 3) that assumes some ways of thinking, knowing, learning, and being are naturally preferable to the conditions of educational institutions. Accordingly, the process of request and provision of accommodation rests on the logic that education is, and must be, competitive to be "rigorous" (Taylor & Shallish, 2019, p. 3). By having to rationalize the need for accommodation, students are put in a rhetorical position of defense of securing learning accommodations and to avoid positioning themselves as at an unfair advantage in the competitive classroom (and elsewhere) (see Dorfman, 2020). Accordingly, rather than systemically accessible schooling, the ADA compels "abeyance structures (that are) allowing for access but disallowing the possibility of action for change" (Dolmage, 2017, p. 77).

Mental Disability

We draw upon Margaret Price's (2010) framing of "mental Disability" to understand Discourses of mental health and wellness on the college campus that serves as the research site. Occupying a liminal space within Disability discourses, "mental health and wellness" is an important area of Disability to study because individuals who experience times of mental distress may not necessarily adopt a Disabled identity. Importantly, Price (2010) uses the term "mental Disability" as a broad term to encompass a wide range of Disabilities that are attributed or prescribed to the mind through diagnostic processes. We own the political motivation of using the term "mental Disability" to draw attention to the mutable ways in which the presumed wholeness of rationality is denied or afforded people with mental Disabilities, and that this denial or affordance can mark the ways Disability is legible to self and others (Price, 2010). Price (2010) argues for the need for a coalitional term that broadly defines Disability to advocate for those who "live under the rubric of the [D]isabled mind" (p. 122). Thus, the term "mental Disability," as used to encompass a range of Disabilities that presume the self is located in the mind, draws the significance of the role of *power* in the definition, valuation, and implications of Disability (Price, 2010). We accordingly use the term "mental health and wellness" throughout this study to refrain from imposing Disabled identities onto participants, while also acknowledging that mental health and wellness, as well as mental and emotional distress, can be characterized as "mental Disability" (Price, 2009).

Black and Brown Students and Mental Disability. Naming "mental disability" for Black and Brown students bears the weight of "racialized histories of mental illness" (Jarman, 2011, p. 11) that are not automatically applicable to white students. Importantly, extant literature on mental health experiences among college students is limited because most of this research focuses on sample populations that are almost entirely non-Hispanic White (Kosish et al., 2022). Relatedly, Black and Brown students on college campuses are more likely to experience mental distress but less likely to have accessed support services prior to attending college (Kosish et al, 2022). And, importantly, the elevated risks of experiencing mental disability for Black and Brown students, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, are compounded by the impact and effect of racism, whereby racism may be the root cause (Koshish et al., 2022). For example, Black and Brown students are more likely to experience mental distress as a result of "microaggressions, discrimination, imposter syndrome, and negative campus climate" (Kosish et al., 2022, p. 268; see also Hwang & Goto, 2008; Nadal et al.. 2014; Prelow et al., 2006). The relationship, then, between mental disability and interpersonal and systemic racism for students of Color is co-constitutive. In this way, unidimensional approaches to studying mental disability among Black and Brown students on college campuses that focus only on mental disability or racism are not only limited, they are paradigmatically dysfunctional for students of Color. Deeper understandings of mental disability for students of Color require a

theoretical framework for how whiteness operates as a governance mechanism within institutes of higher education, as well as a counternarratives that situate the experiences and knowledge of Black and Brown students as multidimensional, yet subverted, truths.

Whiteness and Disability in Higher Education

Rhetorics of race and Disability are co-constitutive: both identity markers are often co-constructed in tandem with discourses of race and Disability (Annamma et al. 2013; Shallish, 2015; Taylor & Shallish, 2019). Theoretical frameworks such as Critical Disability Studies (e.g., Bell, 2017; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Goodley, 2013; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Minich, 2017) and DisCrit (the explicit naming of the connection between Critical Race Theory and Disability Studies; Annamma et al., 2013) attend to the intersection of race and Disability under systems of oppression. However, there remains a phenomena whereby discourses of Disability that are intended to surface—and disrupt—the oppression of those with identities multiply marginalized through and by racism and ableism (e.g., Erevelles & Minear, 2010), are enveloped into White discourses and the protective folds of Whiteness (Bell, 2017; Beneke, 2021; Leonardo & Broderick, 2011; Mueller & Beneke, 2022) Importantly, surfacing the ways in which Whiteness operates as a cultural phenomenon that can be known through the languages and practices of those who exist within cultures of Whiteness is important to disrupting understandings of Disability as experiences isolated from other marginalized identities and experiences. Critically, surfacing the markers of a "culture of white supremacy" (Okun & Jones, 2001) makes visible the ways in which Whiteness moves to envelop, appropriate, and, ultimately, colonize the knowledges of people of Color around Disability access, care, and justice in favor of individualized accommodation.

Tema Okun's (2001) framework for "white supremacy culture" surfaces the practices within an organization (or culture) that adhere to preferences of the White middle class. Okun and Jones (2001) surface 15 cultural practices that adhere to value systems and taken-for-granted norms that were not explicitly decided upon by a given group (Okun & Jones, 2001). We focus on three of Okun's (2001) characteristics of White supremacy culture to surface the ways in which anti-racist and Disability justice efforts are often appropriated into policies and practices that reproduce inequity, rather than work to address it. We focus our interpretation of Okun's (2001) framework to center the ways in which the "white gaze" (hooks, 1992, p. 338) on Disability in higher education over-emphasizes adherence to the ADA and deprioritizes the intersectional experiences of students of Color. The elements of White supremacy culture that we use to theoretically consider the experiences of students of Color with Disabilities (codified and non-codified) are as follows:

1. Worship of the written word: In considering the ways in which the ADA is adopted into the practices of an institute of higher education, this element of "white supremacy culture" (Okun & Jones, 2001) refers to the willingness to only do enough to legally meet the law, rather than to consider providing genuinely inclusive and accessible learning environments for students.
2. Paternalism: Paternalism refers to the ways that decisions related to Disability services are sought and advocated for by the student, but are ultimately made far away from them, by an administering body.
3. Individualism: Individualism refers to the ways accommodations for Disability are provided to "one student at one point in time" (Dolmage, 2017, p. 79).

Importantly, we draw from relational models of Disability (e.g., Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Reindal, 2008) to reframe access and inclusion for Disabled individuals away from a narrow focus on "individualized" accommodations and toward accessibility decision-making that goes beyond compliance-driven measures like the ADA and Section 504. Instead, we adopt a transformative approach that considers Disabled students of Color communities as "connected knowers" (Cannon, 2019). We illustrate how access intimacy and collective interdependence can guide our understanding of Disability, creating spaces where both Disabled and non-Disabled individuals and groups can thrive (Berne et al., 2018; Mingus, 2011).

Thus, we rely on Dolmage's (2017) conceptualization of "the retrofit" to consider the inadequacy of both accommodation in higher education and onto-epistemological orientations to Disability that assume that Disability can be mediated in the public sphere through isolated, individual approaches. In the following subsections, we present a theoretical framework to consider (a) the broad cultural narratives that derive from cultural interpretations of the ADA and mediate Disability and (b) the ways in which students of Color navigate these onto-epistemological orientations toward Disability that exist within and under the organizational provision of the ADA and among Black and Brown students at a PWI.

Terrible Sticky Truths. TSTs are the persistent, yet often subtle, deficit-oriented narratives that are considered the "common sense" definitions of (pathologizing) labels related to marginalized identities or experiences. The words "terrible" and "sticky" signal the effect of discourses that cultivate negative perceptions of raced and Disabled identities. TSTs can be mobilized through restrictive disablement of cultural narratives and onto-epistemological orientations that understand Disability primarily—or only—as a limiting experience. Importantly, when applied to Disability, TSTs equate material needs for support as a condition of access rather than as a logical outcome of exclusion and as signs of deficit.

Subverted Truths. STs include the lived experiences and connected knowing (Cannon, 2019; Collins, 2000) of those who exist within and under TSTs. STs counteract and dismantle the restrictive narratives imposed by those who seek to undermine one's knowledge and access to resources. Building on the work of theorists of narrative identity (McAdams, 2018; McClean, 2008; Loseke, 2007), we look at the roles of story- and truth-telling as a means to derive the Subverted Truths that lay the foundation for (counter)cultural narratives that empower Black and Brown students to confront TSTs head-on, questioning the presumptions and "truths" assigned to racialized, Disabled identities (Cannon, 2019). Importantly, STs represent the genuine experiences and connected knowing (Cannon, 2019; Collins, 2000) of individuals who exist within and under TSTs. STs counteract and dismantle the restrictive narratives imposed by those who seek to control access to resources.

Methods

Positionality Statement

We are four researchers across two institutions. M. Nickie Coomer identifies as a White and Asian American cis woman (femme), whose racial identity is often ambiguously interpreted by others as either White or, broadly, "not-White." She is connected to the issues examined in this research as a Disability studies scholar and instructor in higher education, as well as someone who identifies as having a mental Disability. Importantly, she deeply cares for her students and their wellbeing, and emphasizes the importance of centering the ways in which students of Color with Disabilities make meaning of and communicate their own experiences of mental Disability.

Mercédès Cannon is a Black woman with a Speech and Language Impairment (SLI) Disability from her youth. As an adult, she has dealt with impairments in her speech, enunciation, and language skills, and has been perceived as uneducable. She has also been pathologized based on her communication style: a pathologization that has been informed and complicated by Eurocentric approaches to speech, grammar, and literacy. Dr. Cannon's positionality informs her interdisciplinary work around the complex interplay of power and oppression at the intersections of race, gender, accessibility, Disability, and humanizing pedagogy in higher education. Nickie and Mercédès are close friends and colleagues.

Vicente Blas Taijeron identifies as a Queer, cis man from Guam and one of the undergraduate participant-researchers of this project. Tahamina Prity identifies as a Black, Muslim, cis woman and is also one of the undergraduate participant-researchers of this project. Vicente and Tahamina are dear friends, and their relationship informs their approach to this research through their critical care for each other. Nickie, Vicente, and Tahamina are connected to each other through the same institution. Nickie and Vicente met at an off-campus protest by engaging in a conversation. As student leaders on the campus, Vicente and Tahamina participated in meetings with campus administration and faculty regarding student mental health on campus. In community with Authors Nickie and Mercédès, Vicente and Tahamina led the development of the focus group questions, as well as led the focus group.

Context for the Study

This study took place on the campus of a predominantly White, selective liberal arts college. In the Spring of 2022, students at this college organized a walk-out to bring attention to the mental health concerns of the student body. The walk-out, colloquially referred to as "Pause Day," was rife with tension. Resulting conversations, however, among students, faculty, and administration surfaced the tensions between accessibility and "rigor," as conceptualized on this campus as competitive, difficult, stressful, and burdensome. Importantly, the discursive implications of accessible curricula as less rigorous surfaced the idea that classroom policies that respect and tend to student mental health and wellness need stand in direct contrast to the competitive rigor that characterizes this school as "selective."

Despite the tension and critiques from and between some faculty and members of the administration, the students' organizing—and their activism—led to changes in curriculum, policy, and culture. The college responded to the students' activism by instituting a 24-hour available online counseling service, many professors responded by including a list of student-recommended commitments to mental health in

their syllabi, and the activism opened doors to broad conversations about mental health and wellness in both public and private conversations, nuancing the situated meanings of that phrase as localized to the college campus. The college also hired a Vice President of Wellness and organized a subcommittee on mental health and wellness that presents quarterly reports on progress toward meeting the demands of students.

We brought together some of the students of Color who were involved in the activism that led to these changes, as well as new students of Color to the campus who volunteered to participate in a focus group about mental health and wellness, Disability, and activism. Participants were recruited through a "snowball method:" student researchers crafted a call for participants and disseminated the call through e-mails and text messages. To protect the privacy of all participants, each participant was assigned a pseudonym in the writing of this research. Furthermore, the recording of the focus group did not include any participants' names or introductions and was stored in a password-protected database. All files were deleted after they were transcribed. Though Nickie is an instructor on the same campus as the students in the study, she had not taught any of the participants in class during the time of the focus group nor has had them in class at the writing of this manuscript. Recruitment methods, focus group questions, and consent forms were all approved by the Institutional Review Board.

All students self-identified as students of Color: student identities include Black, Arabic, Middle Eastern, Eastern Asian, Latiné, and Southeast Asian. Several students also identified themselves as the children of recent immigrants. Eight participants, all undergraduate students of Color, participated in the focus group. The focus group questions, developed by Vicente and Tahamina, included following:

1. How does your activism relate to identity?
2. What are some core beliefs you have about activism?
3. Are there certain experiences on campus that prompted your activism?
4. How did you learn about Disability/mental health activism?
5. Have you seen your activism produce results (e.g., policy or cultural changes)?
6. Have you encountered Disability scholars of Color in your classes?

Using Cannon's (2019) framework for Terrible Sticky Truths and Subverted Truths, we engaged in a narrative analysis to examine the reflexive relationship between cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal narratives (Loseke 2007) through a thematic coding of the transcripts of the focus group. We situated two Terrible Sticky Truths within Okun's (2001) framework for White supremacy culture to draw the connections between mental wellness and Disability and race and ethnicity, as well as to situate students' Subverted Truths as onto-epistemologically rooted in their racial and ethnic identities. This process contextualizes students' Subverted Truths as indivisible from their racial and ethnic identities and makes visible the ways students "talk back" to broader narratives that equate "rigor" with inaccessibility and exclusion.

Findings and Analysis

In this section, we answer Research Question 2: How do students of Color narrate their experiences with defining and understanding mental health, wellness, and mental Disability on a predominantly White campus?

We present these findings by surfacing the TSTs embedded in participants' discourses throughout the focus group, and then by disrupting those TSTs with a corresponding ST that also surfaced in participants' narratives throughout the focus group (see Table 1). Importantly, the STs act as critical reframes of TSTs. Drawing attention to the language of both, it is important to remember that both TSTs and STs exist and are taken as truth. Drawing on Margaret Price's (2010) conceptualization of "mental Disability" as a phrase that encompasses broad experiences of disablement based on the presumption of rationality, it is significant to these findings that we situate participants' interpretation of their experiences within structures of Whiteness as taken-for-granted truths (i.e., TSTs), and that we situate the critical reframes within participant narratives as equally valid–yet subverted–truths. Importantly, these STs are informed by students' race, ethnicity, immigration stories, Disability, multigenerational familial interactions, classroom interactions, and the sociopolitical and sociohistorical global contexts through which these identities are formed.

Terrible Sticky Truth 1, Pathologization: Disability is an Isolated Experience

"Therapy is a White Person's Thing"

The interaction between Whiteness, mental health, and individualism surfaced in students' narratives in varying ways. During some moments of the focus group, participants attended to the disconnect

Table 1

TSTs and STs Concepts of "Talkin' Back"

Terrible Sticky Truth (TSTs)	Subverted Truth (STs)	"Talkin' Back"
Pathologization: Disability is an Isolated Experience	(Re)Defined Identities, Knowledge, and Competence: Mental Health is an Intergenerational and Communal Experience Shaped by Language	Talking Back to Individualism: Critique of individualized approaches to Disability: that language around mental Disabilities, and talking about them as shared experiences constructed in, by, and through relationship, is an iterative, sociopolitical, and sociohistorical process that is both individual and communal
Disablement and Exclusion: Bio-Meritocracy as Rigorous, Natural, and Necessary	(Re)Valued Identity and Community: Educating Each Other is a Non-Competitive Act of Care	Talking Back to Paternalism and Worship of the Written Word: Educating as activism has to rebuke the idea that there is and can be a perfectionist approach to mental disabilities on campus. This emphasizes a coalitional approach to mental Disabilities in higher education, pushing back on assumptions that equate "belonging" with traditional forms of academic participation. This Subverted Truth values access over accommodation.

between their approaches to mental health and their parents', alluding to the ways in which attending to mental health and wellness requires the acknowledgment of an issue, as well as a willingness to accept help for that issue. Relatedly, when students discussed how their experiences of mental health and wellness on campus are couched in their racial identities, they alluded to the idea that a singularly understood experience of mental health and wellness through the "white gaze" (hooks, 1992, p. 338) is not accessible to them. Importantly, apparent in many student participant narratives was the idea that there are some experiences that are difficult, but there is an implicit expectation that they should be able to handle them because these experiences are not as intense or as difficult as those of their family members. As participants explained, this feeling toward mental health and wellness is directly related to intergenerational trauma and the pressure to be grateful for opportunity without complaining; and, importantly, that "therapy" is considered a solution suitable for White people, but not, necessarily, people of Color. We see in participant responses that there is not only an inherently individualistic approach to accommodating mental health and wellness through therapy, but that even accessing therapy is complicated for people of Color who may be more intimately connected (through immediate and recent generations of their family) to the isolating repercussions of colonial violence. Tiana explained this phenomenon:

> I never really considered therapy because I think I grew up in a city and I grew up in a school that was like primarily Black and so there's a lot of stigma in Black communities about mental health and, like, therapy being, like, a White person's thing.

> And so, like, it was just never talked about at my house. And then my mom started going to therapy after she separated from my father and that was the first time where I was, like, oh, okay, like, this is something that could, like, actually be beneficial.

Similarly, John included how mental health in his family is complicated by the traumas of war.

> My family had, like, these mental health issues that they didn't really wanna talk about. And everyone was kind of caged in, like, everything to, the back of their heads, including me. I kind of caged in, almost normalized coming from, like, traumas of war and all that is, [my family] they don't really wanna talk about certain things and they don't wanna talk about, mental health or, like, sexuality and all that.

Paulina indicated similar experiences with being raised with an aversion to acknowledging her own mental health needs.

> Yeah, for me, um, growing up, living on a small island, everyone knows everyone. You have to have a good reputation and, I always had to be good in school. I always had to make sure that I was the perfect student. And I didn't realize how that was affecting my mental health until I came here and I realized that I also, you know, I had major anxiety and I would push that aside during high school. So, until recently when I went to therapy I fully sat down with my anxiety and my trauma and gave myself some self-love. I did all of that in high school while still having this mental illness.

Relatedly, Husto highlighted how the pervasiveness of Whiteness at the college, both culturally and institutionally, fosters an aversion to addressing personal mental health needs. He explained how Whiteness made his own mental health experiences invisible and discussed the interplay between race, gender, and mental health. In explaining the interaction between race, gender, and mental health experiences, Husto discussed how he feels "erased" in favor of racialized and gender perceptions of him.

> I feel unseen a lot. I feel, students on campus are good at talking about certain issues but not good at interacting with those issues on an activist level. Experiences being erased, of constantly feeling racialized [as] a man of Color a[mong] White folks on campus while men of Color can do harm it's often perceived. I'm often racialized as aggressive by White folks here and have been racially profiled in class.

Similarly, Tiana pointedly referred to the way White students will appropriate a narrative of marginalization and signal that they feel displaced on campus by students of Color.

> I overheard this White boy behind me talking about how he didn't get into his top choice because he was White. A lot of White students feel displaced by people of Color. It made me want to, like, I guess be invisible. And not prove that I belong here but show that race is not the only factor in college admissions and maybe you didn't get into your school for other reasons.

The erasure of racial identities on campus is a function of both individualism and paternalism.

This belief is an omnipotent, normalized way of being and thinking on campus and results in conceptualizing problems—including students' experiences of mental health and wellness—through the lens of Whiteness. Such a belief leads to prescriptively hyper-individualized solutions. Importantly, for the study's participants, the focus on individualized solutions occurs both on campus and at their homes, signaling a broader cultural narrative that mental distress or Disability for people of Color disrupts individual success, and should be handled individually or not at all.

Subverted Truth 1, (Re)defined Identities, Knowledge, and Competence: Mental Health is an Intergenerational and Communal Experience that is Shaped by Language

Importantly, students surfaced generational differences in approaches to mental health and wellness. Their generation's willingness to engage in discussions around mental health plays an important role in destigmatizing it for themselves and their families. Students resituate mental health struggles as an isolated and individualized deficit to an experience likely present across generations in their families and peer groups. By discussing mental health as something they experienced in themselves and their relationships, they highlight how their generation's respectful language and attitudes influence their elders. For example, Tiana noted the following:

> I have a parent that has, like, severe mental illness so I grew up around it. My mother goes to mental hospitals a lot so I became an activist as

> a kid. I had more of an awareness of it growing up and as I grew older, seeing it in myself or my friends. We've been educated on intergenerational trauma and how being a minority affects your mental health, especially being singled out. I like how this generation is more open to talking about it and addressing it [like] physical illness, which I think is really cool. The rise in social media and Gen Z voices helped me realized my experiences were not normal, but I wasn't alone. That helped me a lot in realizing it was okay to need help and not be okay sometimes.

Paulina agreed, expanding on the discomfort but necessity of communicating her mental wellness to her parents:

> I appreciate that our generation today is more understanding, more progressive about mental health compared to my parents' generation. It's my goal to tell my parents, "Hey, this is mental health. This is how I'm taking care of myself." I told my parents recently that I went to therapy and they were like—I already knew they were gonna say this (laughs)—but, "I thought you were okay, happy, alright." Even though parents and older generations don't [always] listen to younger generations, don't be shy to tell them, "Hey, this is what I'm doing [to take care of myself]."

Terrible Sticky Truth 2, Disablement and Exclusion: Bio-meritocracy as Rigorous, Natural, and Necessary

As students discussed their understandings and approaches to mental health and wellness, they noted a need to ignore mental health concerns in favor of "just dealing" with hardship linked to their families' sociological markers, particularly as "poor" or as immigrants. Importantly, this notion reflects "bio-meritocratic" (Taylor & Shallish, 2019, p. 9) logics that view inability to succeed as an individual shortfall, leading to exclusion or failure in the broader environment. Coupled with Okun's (2001) White supremacy cultural markers of Individualism and Worship of the Written Word, this focus on isolated experiences of mental health and wellness as a shortcoming ignores the broader, systemic oppressions that often compound the disablement and exclusionary TST experiences of historically marginalized people. A meritocratic attitude of "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" situates immigrants within broader narratives of belonging and overcoming. For example, Mia explains the pressure to have it all together.

> I relate to that a lot. At my high school we had four deaths in two weeks. It was very hard on everybody and the teachers kind of just ignored it. My math teacher [said], "This won't work in college, you need to get it together." And somebody that died was my friend. He was like, "You need to get it together." And you can be an advocate for… "If, guys, if you need any help please let me know." But then he would tell me, "This isn't like you," because I've always been [a] straight-A student and ended up getting a D in that class. He try a tough dad talk, but you need to show kindness in those types of situations.

Ali shared how she understood her own dad's experience to include narratives of gratefulness that do not have room to include the hardships that come with mental health experiences.

> Like my dad immigrated here from India and went through a whole bunch of shit when he was growing up. He managed to do very well for himself and become a doctor. He feels like he can't complain because he's doing well.

Tiana also described an experience of mental health that is specifically related to her family's racial identity.

> I grew up a very anxious child and I never realized that was not normal. I would hear my parents arguing about money and [it made me] anxious about money. Their response w[as] always, "That's not your problem to worry about," but I [was] not sleeping because of it. I always thought it was normal and I didn't understand that my friends also weren't, like, freaking out. It took me a long time to realize that there were resources because no one really talked about it. My grandmother had obsessive-compulsive tendencies but never got help.

Similarly, Khadijah explains how she ignored her mental health because she had to work hard to get to college. She compares her perspective on mental health before attending a selective PWI.

> I always had that sense of mental health [and] wellbeing but I ignored it because I never had that support system a lot of people have. My parents didn't speak English. I knew that I had to get into college [without spending] money because I'm poor and I can't afford it. So I ignored my mental health to get where I am. At college [I] noticed the wealth disparity and how some students cope bet-

> ter with mental health because of their resources. I got involved with student government and ingrained the [importance of] mental health aspect of (college).

Subverted Truth 2, (Re)valued Identity and Community: Educating Each Other is Non-Competitive and an Act of Critical Care

Educating and Advocacy for Self and Family

In direct contrast to a hyper-individualized experience of education, students described experiences in which they educated others. Husto contextualized this type of education as an act of "critical care," emphasizing that activism, specifically related to mental health and wellness, but also broadly, can be kind and stretches beyond an individual's own interests. Khadijah followed up by explaining the following:

> I think, kind of going off of that, and being, like, a Brown woman who has a Disability and first-gen immigrant, my advocacy came from a forced place. I often had to advocate for myself and my family to get a better education and have my Disability acknowledged in the school system.

John shared a similar story.

> Similarly, my father [and] my whole family on my father's side was refugees, and none of them received college educations. My advocacy or activism, activism [focus on] first generations and low-income families because I saw my family struggles to help me thrive and achieve a good education [to] support the family in the future.

Paulina agreed, explaining that educating and advocating goes beyond her own interests.

> To echo on that, I'm a second gen immigrant. Both sides of my family immigrated from the Philippines and my grandparents work[ed] on the sugar plantations. It was really hard for them to provide for my mom and her, and siblings. I'm a huge believer for equity as a minority and a woman, I want everyone from all backgrounds have the opportunity.

Activism Can Be Kind and Rooted in Radical Love and Critical Care

Interestingly and importantly, student participants noted the degree to which their activism— enacted within larger scale demonstrations as well as within interpersonal relationships—can be kind. And that this kindness is, in itself, a radical act that is rooted not in pleasantries or even niceties, but rather dependent on the labor required for honesty about their experiences. They conceptualize this labor as an act toward a greater good. Husto begins this conceptualization of activism through kindness, radical love, and critical care by emphasizing the significance of centering each other's humanity in their activism.

> There's this conception that we need to be critical because we're a field (Race, Ethnicity, and Migration Studies and Feminist and Gender Studies) that hasn't traditionally garnered a lot of respect. But what is activism without kindness and humility and humanity centered? Activism should always be critical, but we should never kind of sacrifice the fact that we're human beings first.

Ali agreed, adding the following:

> Like, activism doesn't always have to be, in my opinion, so aggressive, but, little acts of kindness would show somebody that you're an advocate for them.

Mia acknowledged that as individuals, we are often thrown into situations in which we do not always act on what is right because inequities persist at societal levels. She emphasized, however, the significance of kindness and "grace" in the activist spaces we occupy.

> Sometimes activism can be difficult because individuals don't fully realize exactly what we've internalized. I fully agree that kindness is so important. But I also think that it is possible [that] my actions don't always fully line up with what I know, I truly believe. Reflecting on it you realize this is what society has put into me. Society doesn't want us to be activists. It's not set up for us to push for change, it's set up for us to accept this is how life is. It's an important perspective to look at everything that we've internalized, but grace is important too. Because no one's perfect all the time, including activists.

Tiana relayed a story of a White classmate telling her how "articulate" she is, and described her response to this student as an act of both education and advocacy: that taking up space educates White students, but is also important for advocating for herself and for other students of color.

> After we've been reading this book about women of Color, there's one section saying, not to call a

> woman of Color "articulate." Well she did that. I'm aware of how White of a school this is, but to be singled out, "Wow, it's really surprising that, like, you know what you're talking about." There's still so much work to be done from an activist standpoint because people and things get better over time. Maybe. That made me really realize how important it is to take up space in academic settings to show that not only I can but I should.

The way Tiana frames her own acts of taking up space in academic settings as important for her own growth and learning, but also important for her White classmates' growth and learning requires an important consideration for how Tiana's intentionality in taking up space has effects beyond her own experience. Through her initial shock of her White classmate's comment, Tiana actually reinforces her own worth and positions her embodied experience as part of "the work that needs to be done," presumably not only for herself and her classmate in that isolated interaction, but broadly and over time in the campus community.

Discussion

Complicating TSTs as deficit-oriented cultural narratives that can inform the construction of personal identity, we incorporate TSTs and STs to analyze the relationship between personal identity and cultural understandings of mental health, wellness, and, ultimately, Disability by analyzing the narratives of Black and Brown students at a PWI. Our exploration supports preceding research that has troubled the idea that Disability justice can be achieved through the granting of an individual right, rather than an effort in collective access. This notion emerges in discourse to represent individual accommodations not as an authentic representation of Disability justice, but rather as an emphasis on meritocracy—and bio-meritocracy—perpetuated within (neoliberal) cultural narratives around Black and Brown people, as well as within Disability law and policy. These emphases rely on beliefs about individualism, paternalism, and the significance of the written word, and support the terrible, sticky, rhetorical logic of pathologization, disablement, and exclusion (Cannon, 2019).

Talkin' Back to Individualism

Importantly, by bridging Dolmage's (2017) conceptualization of individualism as a discursive catalyst for the consideration of Disability accommodation as an "abeyance structures" (p. 77) and Okun & Jones' (2001) framing of individualism as an element of "white supremacy culture," we consider how student participants reframed their individualized experiences away from isolation and instead situated their experiences as relative to their families and peers. We name this as participants' "Subverted Truth" of *(Re)defined Identities, Knowledge, and Competence: Mental Health is an Intergenerational and Communal Experience that is Shaped by Language*. Participants animate this truth in the ways they talk about their own experiences as they relate to those of their peers and families. For example, even though Tiana may not have directly "talked back" to her White classmate who commented on how "articulate" she is, Tiana situated her reaction—though internal—in the work of the Black women she was reading in her class and her commitment to "taking up space" as part of a broader, collective action. Relatedly, John, Tiana, and Paulina contextualized their generational discourses with mental health and wellness as part of their families' intergenerational learning around mental health and wellness as contextually informed, not only a sign of individual deficit. When Paulina mentioned that her parents reacted to her seeking therapy as she "thought they would" by contrasting the need for therapy with being content and happy, she illustrates the generational conceptual shift in thinking through the need for mental health support as a need that derives not from a lack of mental wellness and fortitude, but rather as a need that can coexist and promote mental health and wellness.

Talkin' Back to "Paternalism" and "Worship of the Written Word"

In connection with how students consider their experiences as communal and part of broader, collective understandings around mental health and wellness that are shifting away from individualized deficits are the ways in which participants also consider their roles in critical care for themselves and both their White and peers of Color. "Paternalism" is directly related to "Worship of the Written Word" because if we rely on legally afforded, individual rights as proxies for Disability justice, then we, as a society, tacitly endorse that idea that Disability justice can be afforded to us through laws and policies often developed well outside of individual, relational networks, and that justice can be achieved by the adherence to or compliance with these laws.

We frame the ways that student participants "talk back" to paternalistic, individual rights-centered conceptualizations of Disability justice through a "Subverted Truth" of *(Re)valued Identity and Community: Educating Each Other is Non-Competitive and an Act of Critical Care*. During the focus group, Husto discussed the ways in which his racialized and gen-

dered experiences on campus often lead to a feeling of being both hyper-visible and invisible at the same time. Because his actions, beliefs, ideologies, and general embodiment are perceived by his peers as being "radical," he feels as though there is not also space for him to tend to or care about his own mental health and wellness for fear that when he does, his experiences are wrapped into the narratives of "aggression" that already surround him.

Because taking care of his mental health and wellness are inseparable from the ways in which his embodied experience is marginalized by race and gender, Husto communicated that he has to be extremely intentional in the way he not only takes care of himself, but also in his interpersonal relationships across campus. Incredibly, and perhaps unfairly, Husto also emphasized that activism should center kindness, humility, and humanity. John, Mia, Khadijah, Paulina, and Tiana all agreed, sharing varying instances of how their own experiences have had to require "grace," whether with their family or with their peers and the broader campus community. Positioning their activism as acts of critical care that are non-competitive even though they exist in a competitive academic setting subverts the idea that accommodating mental health and wellness is a only a top-down effort, administrated by academic offices. Instead, student participants aptly, if not beautifully, described networks of care that occur through their racialized, gendered, and (dis)abled embodied experiences.

Implications: Accessible Education Service Community of Practice

In this section, we answer Research Question 3: In what ways can collaborative and communal educational practices, including intergenerational teaching and critical care, be implemented to foster collective access and well-being for Black and Brown college students with and without identified disabilities?

As we acknowledge the necessity of individualized accommodations for Disabled students, we must also recognize that these accommodations are narrowly based on Disability diagnoses and the limitations individuals face in their daily functions and while they are in an academic setting. If we broaden Disability justice to include collective approaches to Disability, then Disabled students should not only receive protection from discrimination through legal accommodation, but should also receive support in the forms of collective, critical care. A collective, critical care approach to mental health and wellness on a college campus, for example, talks directly back to the TSTs of pathologization (individualism), disablement, and exclusion that often undergird student experiences of discrimination.

Accessible Education Service Community of Practice (AESCoP)

Mental health advocacy and activism rooted in kindness, empathy/critical understanding, grace, and the critical care of students of Color extends beyond a mere challenge to discomfort, and instead names and critiques the ways in which Whiteness operates to define mental health and wellness challenges, as well as prescribes the meritocratic efforts necessary to overcome them. By surfacing the logics of Whiteness and White supremacy culture within Disability law, we highlight the pitfalls of an overly individualistic and exclusionary approach to accessibility in postsecondary education. This finding necessitates a critical shift from individual accommodation to a more comprehensive pursuit: equity through *communal engagement*. In her role as the director of accessible education services in higher education, Mercédès Cannon has developed a framework for an Accessible Education Services Community of Practice (AESCoP). Within this community of practice, a consortium of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and external supporters collaborate to establish relationships between accessibility services offices and other administrative, student-facing offices on postsecondary campuses. Members of the AESCoP transcend standard ADA-compliance-focused services by invoking Mia Mingus' (2011) concept of "access intimacy," emphasizing ongoing personal connections, shared responsibilities, and the acknowledgment of vulnerabilities in providing accessible educational opportunities. This approach to accessible postsecondary education moves away from individualized accommodations and toward Interdependence in Action, treats everyone as equals, supports diverse needs, and fosters genuine belongingness, thus forming a nurturing environment for all stakeholders involved.

Furthermore, AESCoP integrates the principles of Disability justice, challenging ableism— centering not only Disabled students but also Disabled students of Color. In this model, members of accessibility service offices prioritize the voices of Disabled students of Color as connected knowers whose perspectives on inclusivity, equity, and accessibility are valued and respected. This active integration of access-intimacy, interdependence, and Disability justice principles enhances the work of collective access, collaborative and communal accessibility services, and critical care for Disabled students of Color and challenges the endemic inequities individuals face at the intersections of race, gender expression, and ability. Through this

transformative approach, AESCoP centers belongingness, where companionship, affiliation, and connectedness redefine the educational experience for all involved and align with the values and goals of Disabled students to fundamentally change the landscape of inclusivity in higher education.

Practitioners must reevaluate their methods for engaging Disabled students of Color and question how their practices might align with an AESCoP approach. Critical questions include: Are our interventions truly fostering equity, or are they merely superficial accommodations? How can faculty be encouraged to adopt a collective approach, ensuring access is not just an obligation but a shared responsibility? Practitioners must consider how to create meaningful educational experiences that prioritize collective access by fundamentally reevaluating pedagogical approaches. This transformative shift will redefine educational opportunities to learn and grow and pave the way for a genuinely inclusive higher education landscape.

References

Albanesi, H. & Nusbaum, E. (2017). Encountering institutional barriers and resistance: Disability discomfort on one campus. In E. Kim & K.C. Aquino (Eds.) *Disability as diversity in higher education: Policies and practices to enhance student success* (pp. 185-199). Routledge.

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D., & Ferri, B. (2013). Dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 16*(1), 1–31.

Bell, C. (2017). Is Disability Studies actually white Disability studies? In L. Davis (Ed.) *The Disability Studies reader* (5th Ed.) (pp. 406–415). Routledge.

Beneke, M. R. (2021). Mapping socio-spatial constructions of normalcy: Whiteness and ability in teacher candidates' educational trajectories. *Whiteness and Education, 6*(1), 92–113.

Berne, P., Morales, A. L., Langstaff, D., & Invalid, S. (2018). Ten principles of dis-ability justice. *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly, 46*(1), 227–230.

Cannon, M. (2019). *Because I am human: Centering Black women with dis/abilities in transition planning from high school to college*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University School of Education-Indianapolis]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global.

Cannon, M., & Thorius, K. K. (2024). Fighting anti-Black ableism with a dis/abled Black woman's critique of social systems. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1-24. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2025.2470926

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.

Collins. P. H. (2003). Some group matters: Intersectionality, situated standpoint, and black feminist thought. In T. L. Lott & J. P. Pittman (Eds.), *A companion to African American philosophy* (pp. 205–229). Blackwell.

Connor, D. J., & Ferri, B. A. (2010). I was the special ed girl: Urban working-class young women of color. *Gender and Education, 22*(1), 105–121.

Dolmage, J. (2017). *Academic ableism: Disability and higher education.* University of Michigan Press.

Dorfman, D. (2020). Fear of the Disability con: Perceptions of fraud and special rights discourse. *Law & Society Review, 53*(4).

Erevelles, N., & Minear, A. (2010). Unspeakable offenses: Untangling race and dis-ability in discourses of intersectionality. *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies, 4*(2), 127–145.

hooks, b. (1992). *Black looks: Race and representation*. Routledge.

Hwang, W. C., & Goto, S. (2008). The impact of perceived racial discrimination on the mental health of Asian American and Latino college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 14*(4), 326–335. doi: 10.1087/1099-9809.14.4.326

Jarman, M. (2011). Coming up from underground: Uneasy dialogues at the intersections of race, mental illness, and disability studies. In C. M. Bell (Ed.) *Blackness and disability: Critical examinations and cultural interventions* (pp. 9–30). Michigan State University Press.

Kosish, T., Lau, A. S., Gong-Guy, E., Congdon, El, Arnaudova, I., Schmidt, M., Shoemaker, L., & Craske, M. G. (2022). Enhancing racial/ethnic equity in college student mental health through innovative screening and treatment. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 49*, 267–282. doi: 10.1007/s10488-021-01163-1

Leonardo, Z., & Broderick, A. A. (2011). Smartness as property: A critical exploration of intersections between whiteness and Disability studies. *Teachers College Record, 113*(10), 2206–2232.

Levinson, B. A., Sutton, M., & Winstead, T. (2004). Education policy as a practice of power: Theoretical tools, ethnographic methods, democratic options. *Educational Policy, 23*(6), 767–795. doi: 10.1177/0895904808320676

Loseke, D. R. (2007). The study of identity as cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal narratives: Theoretical and empirical integrations. *The Sociological Quarterly, 48*(4), 661–688. doi: 10.1111/j.1533-8525.2007.00096.x

Maroto, M. & Pettinicchio, D. (2014). The limitations of Disability antidiscrimination legislation: Policymaking and the economic well-being of people with Disabilities. *Law and Policy*, 1–37. doi: 10.1111/lapo.12024

McAdams, D. P. (2018). Narrative identity: What is it? What does it do? How do you measure it? Imagination, *Cognition and Personality, 37*(3), 359–372. doi: 10.1177/0276236618756704

McClean, K. (2008). The emergence of narrative identity. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2*(4), 16851702. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00124.x

Mingus, M. (2011). Access intimacy: the missing link. *Leaving Evidence*. Retrieved from: https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/

Mitchell, D. & Snyder, S. (2019). Minority model: From liberal to neoliberal futures of Disability. In N. Watson & S. Vehmas (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of Disability studies* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 45–54). Routledge.

Mueller, C. O. & Beneke, M. R. (2022). Whiteness and ability: Discourses in Disability history curriculum legislation. *Educational Policy*, 1–34. doi: 10.1177/08959048221127986

Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M. (2014). The impact of racial microaggressions on mental health: Counseling implications for clients of Color. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 92*(1), 57–66. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00130.x

Okun, T., & Jones, K. (2001). White supremacy culture. Dismantling racism: A Workbook for social change groups. Retrieved from https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info

Peterson, J. A. (2009). Aint nobody gonna get me down: An examination of the educational experiences of four African-American women labeled with dis/abilities. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 42*(4), 428–442, DOI: 10.108/10665680903245284

Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2018). *Care work: Dreaming Disability justice*. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Prelow, H. M., Mosher, C. E., & Bowman, M. A. (2006). Perceived racial discrimination, social support, and psychological adjustment among African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 32*(4), 442–454. doi: 10.1177/0095798406292677

Price, M. (2009). *Mad at school: Rhetorics of mental Disability and academic life*. University of Michigan Press.

Price, M. (2010). Mental disability and other terms of art. *Profession, 2010*(1), 117–123.

Reindal, S. M. (2008). A social relational model of Disability: A theoretical framework for special needs education? *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 23*(2), 135–146. https://doi.org/10.1080/ 08856250801947812

Shallish, L. (2015). Just how much diversity will the law permit?: The Americans with Disabilities Act, diversity and Disability in higher education. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 35*(3). doi: 10.18061/dsq.v35i3.4942

Smitherman, G. (1986). *Talkin and testifyin: The language of Black America* (Vol. 51). Wayne State University Press.

Stapleton, L., & James, L. (2020). Not another all White study: Challenging color-evasiveness ideology in Disability scholarship. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33*(3), 215–222.

Taylor, A. & Shallish, L. (2019). The logic of bio-meritocracy in the promotion of higher education equity. *Disability & Society*, 1–25. doi: 10.1080/09687599.2019.1613962

About the Authors

Dr. M. Nickie Coomer received her B.S. in Special Education degree in Urban Education Studies from Miami University, M.Ed. in School Counseling from the University of Cincinnati, and Ph.D. in Urban Education Studies from Indiana University- Indianapolis. She worked as an elementary special education teacher for ten years before returning to school and is currently a professor in the Education Department at Colorado College. Her research focuses on relational models of disability and hermeneutic justice for children labeled as having emotional and behavioral disorders. She can be reached at ncoomer@coloradocollege.edu.

Mercédès A. Cannon received her B.A. degree in Continuing Studies from Indiana University Indianapolis, her Master of Science in Education in Counselor/Counseling Education, and her Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Urban Education Studies from Indiana University Indianapolis. Her experience includes working as a faculty-student liaison and as an Associate Director of Accessibility Services in post-secondary education, while also serving as a Clinical Assistant in Counselor/Counseling Education. She is currently the Director of Accessible Educational Services, the disability office in the Division of Student

Affairs at Indiana University Indianapolis. Her research interests include transitions from high school to college and accessibility in postsecondary education at the intersections of disability rights and justice. She can be reached by email at: mecannon@iu.edu.

Vicente Preciardo Blas-Taijeron is a proud indigenous CHamoru son of Tamuning, Guam and received his BA degree in Liberal Studies with a specialization in Ethnic Studies and Queer Movement from Colorado College. His experience includes working in higher education in various student and professional roles most recently as an ADEI peer mentor, spiritual fellow, student body president, trustee and, currently, a Residence Director at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. As an incoming graduate student at New York University in Media, Communication and Culture his research interests include AAPI urban activism as it relates to media representation, soundscapes and formations of Pacific Islander and Asian American identity. Vicente can be reached through email at vbt2008@nyu.edu.

Tahamina Prity is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in the Comparative Study of Religion at Harvard University. She can be reached by email at tprity@college.harvard.edu.

Espoused vs. Enacted: Institutional Racial Cognizance and the Realities of Black Disabled Students

Anna Acha[1]
Danielle Mireles[2]

Abstract

Formed within the policies and laws of racist, antiBlack, and ableist systems, disability support services (DSS) offices remain the primary institutional intermediaries to access for Black disabled postsecondary students.[3] The historical development and functional primacy of DSS demand an examination of espoused institutional awareness and commitment to supporting Black disabled students; we characterize this aspect as "racial cognizance" and employ two complementary approaches to examine its prevalence. First, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of University of California DSS websites explores multimedia indicators of racial cognizance. Second, we engage with interview data from four Black disabled women discussing the challenges they have encountered with DSS. We contextualize emergent themes from our CDA with these student narratives to discuss how DSS websites continue to employ color and race-evasive language, policies, and practices that privilege documentation and legal compliance over the access needs of Black students.

Keywords: accessibility, race, blackness, disability student services

Introduction

Federal legislation requires postsecondary students to disclose a medical diagnosis supported by documentation to obtain individualized accommodations support from disability support services (Cawthon et al., 2014; Dorrance et al., 2023; Evans et al., 2017; Mireles, 2022). These policy and praxis logics—which are, by nature, contingent on deficit conceptualizations of disability, "color-evasive" (Annamma et al., 2017), and uphold medical expertise as the end all be all—do not address, dismantle, or oppose the ongoing structural inequities that shape Black disabled students' experiences in higher education (Annamma et al., 2013; Boone & King Berry, 2007; Feagin & Bennefield, 2014; Karpicz, 2020; Mireles, 2022; Nolan, 2022). Black disabled students must navigate through academic and social environments grounded in whiteness[4] while facing further disablement through a compounded legacy of exclusion, exploitation, healthcare disenfranchisement, and dehumanization (Adebayo et al., 2020; Artiles, 2011; Baynton, 2017; Feagin & Bennefield, 2014; Schweik, 2009; Yssel et al., 2016). Despite their espoused role as facilitators of access (Dolmage, 2017; Evans et al., 2017), DSS offices functionally gatekeep access, maintaining a culture of compliance dictated by policies enmeshed in antiBlack and ableist structures that legitimize certain lived experiences of disability within the institution while further delegitimizing and disenfranchising others (Dolmage, 2017; Dorrance et al., 2023; Mireles, 2022). DSS offices have developed within the confines of compounding oppressive systems, and it is imperative that we examine the intersectional awareness of these offices as a salient component of culture to better assess their functional commitment to supporting Black disabled students.

[1] University of California, Riverside; [2] University of Nevada, Las Vegas;
[3] We intentionally employ varied lexicality to align with the language used in analyzed documents, cited sources, and participant narratives (disability alongside dis/ability, antiblackness instead of anti-blackness, person-first and identity-first language, variations in capitalization, etc). We leverage this lexical disruption as a form of liberatory violence (Leonardo & Porter, 2010) that honors disability, race, and Blackness as experiential aggregates that manifest a multitude of presentations, identifications, and lexicalities.
[4] While APA mandates the capitalization of all racial/ethnic groups (American Psychological Association, 2019), the construction of whiteness as a racial categorization exists only as the result of intentional and repeated exclusion and oppression (Harris, 1993); to equate whiteness alongside other racial/ethnic groups dismisses the perpetually adaptive, exclusionary, and exploitative reality of white supremacy. As such we use lowercase 'white' and 'whiteness' throughout our writing (Daniszewski, 2020; Laws, 2020).

Public universities exist, by social contract, to serve the public, though who is included in that public has nominally (if not practically) evolved (Douglas, 2007). The public effectively served by public institutions includes Black disabled individuals. An estimated 22.7% of Black adults in the US had disabilities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Courtney-Long et al., 2017), which has increased both physical and psychological chronic disablement across the globe (Santomauro et al., 2021) while disproportionately impacting Black communities (Badalov et al., 2022; Bassolas et al., 2021, Cokley et al., 2022). Cognizance of the multifaceted, systemic dehumanization and disenfranchisement of Black disabled individuals demands the interrogation of public university support of Black disabled students. We chose to strategically examine the DSS office websites of the nine undergraduate-serving University of California (UC) institutions in Fall of 2021: Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara. California has the fifth largest Black population (2.8 million) and ranks as the second most diverse state (Pew Research Center, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Of the 67% of Black Californians between the ages of 25-64 who have attended higher education, 47% do not earn a degree, despite the UC system leading in Black student completion rates; four-year graduation rates are approximately 20 percentage points lower for Black UC students than their white peers (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2021). A multitude of compounding systemic factors contribute to the ongoing oppression of Black students, and recognition is a cardinal, subminimum requirement for rectification. Institutional websites serve as the primary information gateways for students (Brown et al., 2016; Grim et al., 2021; Kim, 2020; Meyer & Jones, 2011), and this interrogation will contribute to the limited postsecondary racialized disablement literature (Mireles, 2022) by examining how DSS websites at University of California institutions acknowledge and address systemic inequities.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2022), about one third (37%) of individuals with disabilities inform their college about their disability. In 2022, the Office of the President of the UC system revealed the UC system is *underserving* students with disabilities on their campuses—something we had long suspected, but did not have the data for. While the NCES (2018) reports 19.1% of the pre-pandemic undergraduate student population is disabled, only 7% of the total UC student population received accommodations (University of California, 2022), which suggests there are Black disabled students who are not getting institutional support. In addition to the CDA conducted by first author, Anna Acha, we draw a subset of interview data from another research study conducted by second author, Danielle Mireles, which examined the experiences of ten racialized undergraduate students who identified, had been labeled, or had the lived experience of disability at four-year colleges and universities in California. Of the ten students, two identified as Black (Tiffany and Kennedy) and two as AfroLatina (Marisol and Andrea). We center their counternarratives in the analysis to contextualize and further expand upon our findings from the discourse analysis. We consider the following two questions:

1. In what ways do DSS offices display their racial cognizance to (potential registrants) students?
2. What are Black students' experiences registering for Disability Student Services and disability accommodations?

The Invisibilization of whiteness in Disability Student Services

The construct of disability has been enduringly employed as an acceptable tool of dehumanization for Black bodyminds[5] alongside other marginalized populations over time (Artiles, 2011; Evans et al., 2017). In the 1800s and 1900s, the sociocultural association of "physical, intellectual, and psychological flaws, deficits, and deviations" (Baynton, 2017, p. 28), laid the foundation for the concurrent legislative authorization of Jim Crow and Ugly Laws (Baynton, 2017, p. 28; Schweik, 2009). Schweik (2009) explains that Ugly Laws "functioned to sort people on the streets and into institutions by race as well as disability" and that these "two kinds of segregation were not so much comparable as inseparable" (p. 185). These laws sought to restrict the visibility of disabled, Black, and Black disabled bodyminds from public spaces (Schweik, 2009).

This association and subsequent devaluation contribute to ableist rhetoric within Black protests for humanization. Historically, disability supports were often denied to Black disabled individuals as their dis-

[5] Schalk (2018) defines bodyminds as the convergence of multiple intersectional experiences, recognizing multiple sites of oppression and collective resistance across physical and cognitive domains. She argues that "because (dis)ability has been used by dominant social discourse to reference, define, and regulate other social systems," an intersectional analysis of disability representations is crucial for understanding their implications for race, gender, class, and sexuality (pp. 40-41).

abilities were considered inherent to Blackness (Pickens, 2019). As sociocultural value, legal agency, and wealth (read: whiteness) were associated with access to education, education access was limited (Evans et al., 2017). For example, though opportunities were made available to the d/Deaf and blind children of the white elite in the early 1800s, and later Black d/Deaf and blind students, educational opportunities for Black and disabled people were widely restricted and segregated throughout most of the 1800s and early-to-mid 1900s (Evans et al., 2017; Madaus, 2011; McCaskill et al., 2020).

Capitalist labor demands were the primary drivers of postsecondary disability access in the 20th century, which prioritized the reintegration of veterans into the workforce after World War I (Chamusco, 2017). Though the Vocational Rehabilitation Act helped to provide education access to disabled WWI veterans in 1918, Black veterans' disabilities were considered "endemic to the colored race prior to enlistment... readily detectable by the trained medical professional or racial anthropologist" (Lawrie, 2016, p. 88), discrediting claims and limiting access to education (Pickens, 2019). Though the Civil Rights Act (CRA) mandated nondiscrimination protections for a multitude of identities in 1964, a venture to incorporate disability as a protected class in 1972 was unsuccessful as Black activist leaders and CRA policy actors feared compromising the effectiveness and ideology of the nondiscrimination protections (Davis, 2016). These actions perpetuated the artificial dissociation from disability in the context of humanizing Blackness (Artiles, 2011; Baynton, 2017), and influenced the development of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act (Davis, 2016). Therein, Section 504 provides federal non-discrimination protections for individuals with disabilities (Chamusco, 2017) but lacks the racial cognizance of the CRA. Similarly, the ADA in 1990 was drafted by adopting Black civil rights tactics for disability, primarily by white policymakers (Davis, 2016).

Most recently amended in 2008, the ADA mandates reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities in multiple spheres, including higher education (ADA, 1990). Education for All Handicapped Children Act designated funding specifically for K-12 students with disabilities in 1975 (Chamusco, 2017, Madaus, 2011). Renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, reauthorized in 2004, and amended in 2015, IDEA details funding, familial rights, and school responsibilities, including the provisions of free needs assessments, least-restrictive placement, and accessible education (IDEA, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). These mandates, while lauded for increasing high school persistence and college enrollment, are most effective for white students who are less likely to be placed into segregated special education classrooms or funneled into the school-to-prison pipeline (Annamma, 2017; Boone & King-Berry, 2007; Tefera & Fischman, 2020).

This legislation also does not cover undergraduate and graduate education (Cawthon et al., 2014). Though there have been postsecondary additions to IDEA, those mandates focus on vocational and pre-college programs, rather than undergraduate and graduate institutions (IDEA, 2004; Madaus et al., 2014), effectively ending active institutional support as Section 504 and the ADA become the primary legal influences in higher education (Cawthon et al., 2009). In essence, these two pieces of legislation require postsecondary institutions make "reasonable accommodations" (Cawthon et al., 2009, p. 457) for students who can meet the prerequisite standards to prove their disablement through documentation that demonstrates that their disability "creates a 'substantial limitation' to [a] 'major life activity'" (Evans et al., 2017, pp. 102–103; see also Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990; Simon, 2011). The linguistic requirement of reasonable accommodations then promotes a culture of compliance in higher education (Shallish, 2015), and avoiding litigation takes precedence over cultivating a norm of intersectional student support (Cawthon & Leppo, 2013). We assert that this is the primary characterization of compliance culture in higher education: the language used in disability rights law functionally prioritizes avoiding potential student lawsuits over students.

Compliance as Institutional Violence

Colleges and universities approach structural support for students in ways that are single-identity focused (Duran & Jones, 2020; Mitchell & Means, 2014) and "cater toward the majority within minoritized communities" (Duran & Jones, 2020, p. 282). This approach is in large part due to the ways in which higher education compliance is guided by federal legislation, which has privileged whiteness. As Piepzna-Samarsinha (2019) explains, "spaces where a white-dominated, single-issue, civil rights approach that depends on the ability to use lawsuits to achieve disability liberation leaves many of us behind" (p. 40). This "us" includes poor, working-class, queer, trans, and Black, Native, and/or People of Color who do not have the same access to resources to (a) always get the medical documentation required by DSS (Dorrance et al., 2023; Mireles, 2022) or (b) have the ability to challenge these powerful institutions when they fail to provide access to accommodations (Karpicz, 2020).

Documentation obtained from free IDEA assessments may be the only option for Black low-income students, as the alternative requires navigating the financially inaccessible and systemically racist medical-industrial complex (Adebayo et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2017; Feagin & Bennefield, 2014); however, these systems are not always accepted by students' institutions (Evans et al., 2017). While the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) recommends institutions include self-report (AHEAD, 2012), this practice is not ubiquitous, and students with insufficient documentation may not qualify for services (Banks, 2014; Dorrance et al., 2023; Kafer, 2013; Madaus & Shaw, 2006; Mireles, 2022). Banerjee et al. (2021) analyzed the DSS websites of 299 postsecondary institutions across four institutional Carnegie classifications (doctoral, master's, baccalaureate, and associate) and found that while 89% mentioned disability documentation, only 30% explicitly referenced "self-report" or "interactive process" (p. 36). Other analyses of DSS websites bring attention to a range of issues without intentionally engaging race: discrepancies between the accessibility of DSS information and actual utility across public community colleges (Jackson & Jones, 2014), marginalization of disability content within broader diversity frameworks on university websites (Gabel et al., 2016), discrepancies between awareness and utilization of disability services, often exacerbated by administrative and communicative barriers (Kim, 2020), and the representation of autism on community college websites, wherein 29.8% omit autism-specific content entirely and discussions are often framed in deficit-oriented terms (Nachman & Brown, 2020). A deliberate examination of race that challenges embedded whiteness has yet to be conducted, despite the reality that access to disability documentation for accommodations—arguably, the major contention in DSS discourse (Banerjee & Lalor, 2021)—is fundamentally racialized.

This issue of racialization extends broadly into the literature where "[w]hite scholars often research about and with a mostly [w]hite disabled student population" which invisibilizes whiteness and (re)produces color-evasive discourses about disability and higher education (Stapleton & James, 2020, p. 216). It is important to note that much of the research focuses on students needing to develop 'self-advocacy skills' without consideration as to why Black students may not seek care from their institutions or feel comfortable identifying as disabled (Acha & Mireles, 2021). Lakshmi-Samarasinha (2019) explains that "people's fear of accessing care didn't come from nowhere" but "came out of generations and centuries where need[ing] care meant being locked up, losing your human and civil rights, and being subject to abuse" (p. 39). For many racialized and minoritized communities, care has been leveraged in carceral ways such as imprisonment and institutionalization (Bailey and Mobley, 2019; Ervelles and Minear, 2010; Piepzna-Samarsinha, 2019; Puar, 2017).

The foundation of DSS is ingrained with anti-Black carceral logics that normalize control, surveillance, and punishment as necessary regulations masquerading as compliance, fairness, equity, or care (Annamma, 2016a; Weaver & Lerman, 2010). DSS relies on this narrative to perpetuate a compliance culture that systemically prioritizes minimizing institutional legal risk over providing optimal support for students. Higher education compliance culture "eclipse[s] an understanding of disability history, social collectives, culture and emerging disciplines that transcend biomedical interpretation" (Shallish, 2015, para. 6). Between widespread campus actors, unfamiliarity with influential federal policy, and the single-identity (read: white) conceptualization of disability in influential federal policy, the space for engaging disability beyond a single-issue lens is limited, which ultimately impacts Black disabled students as well as other racialized and minoritized students such as undocumented, queer and trans, and students of Color (Mireles, 2022; Acha & Mireles, 2024; Dorrance et al., 2023; Karpicz, 2020).

Theoretical Frameworks

We use disability critical race theory (DisCrit) and theorizations of antiBlackness to meaningfully engage not only how race and disability intersect, but center Blackness to consider the racial cognizance of DSS websites. Negotiating the deficit-centric, often race-evasive ideology of special education discourse in K-12 education, and the invisibilization of disability in critical race theory discourse in legal and educational spaces, DisCrit expands on the legacy of critical "intellectual ancestors such as James Baldwin, W. E. B. DuBois, Yuri Kochiyama, and Bayard Rustin," existing in the scholarly nexus of disability studies and critical race studies (Annamma et al., 2016a, p. 1; see also Stapleton & James, 2020). Centering the intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989) experiences of disabled students of Color, DisCrit conceptualizes the interconnected social construction of race and ability, examining "the processes in which students are simultaneously raced and dis/abled" (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 5) by acknowledging the insidious and cyclical nature of oppressive systems. The first tenet of DisCrit asserts the cyclical and invisiblized nature

of race and dis/ability reinforces conventional "notions of normalcy" (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 11). We consider the role DSS websites play, specifically the racial cognizance of these pages, in positioning certain lived experiences, such as "medically acceptable, doctor approved" as legitimate while delegitimizing and further marginalizing others (Kafer, 2013, p. 12). The second tenet of DisCrit calls into focus the multidimensional identities of our students and rejects essentialist definitions of identity. We highlight documentation practices in our paper because "we recognize that equity for queer, trans, and Black people also has been overwhelmingly about access to adequate medical care" including the right to deny care (Bailey and Mobley, 2019, p. 11). Last, we focus on the fourth tenet of DisCrit, which centers the stories of racialized and disabled people, by highlighting the counternarratives of four Black undergraduate students who identified, had been labeled, and had a lived experience of disability to contextualize the findings in our discourse analysis.

To clarify and support our engagement of DisCrit, we consciously align our work with the theorization of antiBlackness. Contemplating the works of Hartman, Tillet, and Wilderson, scholar Dumas (2016) asserts that "antiBlackness marks an irreconcilability between the Black and any sense of social or cultural regard" (p. 13). From its conception, Blackness has existed in opposition to humanness without a concrete historical pivot that delineated the subhumanity of Black enslavement to the recognition of Black humanity, or the intentional deconstruction of antiBlack systems of oppressive violence (Dumas, 2016). However, antiBlackness itself is not so concerned with remedying racial inequalities via recommendations for practitioners operating within confines of Black ahumanity; it seeks a more profound conceptualization of Blackness, subhumanity, and normative targeted violence. The explicit intent of our work, however, is action-focused: We examine Black dehumanization in disability services to create a foundation that allows us to identify avenues of support for Black disabled college students. We use the term "anti-antiBlackness" to position the systemic subhumanity of Blackness as a required starting ground of student support.

Methods

As a Black, multidis/abled, queer, ciswoman and a multidis/abled, queer nonbinary Chicanx, we actively and recurrently leverage our marginalized and privileged positionality as a critical reflexive tool that informs our navigation of the literature and our qualitative inquiry to consider how racial cognizance is engaged (or not engaged by) disability student services (Alridge, 2003; Marecek, 2003, Stapleton & James, 2020). Our paper draws from two studies based in California: the first, a discourse analysis on DSS websites across the UCs, which was conducted by Anna Acha in 2021; and, second, a qualitative study by Danielle Mireles about the experiences of racialized undergraduate students who identified, had been labeled, or had the lived experience of disability at five campuses in California from 2019-2020.

The default information-seeking behavior of young adults in the digital age is asking the internet (Given et al., 2023). Institutional websites are the first and primary information interaction hub about their school and potential resources for the majority of students, particularly for first-time first-year students, first generation college students, and low-income students (Brown et al., 2016; Grim et al., 2021; Hodge et al., 2020). Broadly speaking, discourse analysis is a qualitative approach to language analysis that focuses on social context, commonly used by social scientists to deconstruct spoken/written matters of cultural significance (Miles, 2012). Critical discourse analysis (CDA), more specifically, deconstructs "social structures and discursive strategies that play a role in the (re)production of power…[d]iscourse (the words and language we use) shapes our role and engagement with power within a social structure" (Miles, 2012, p. 450). This CDA uses Pauwels' (2012) approach to consolidate a range of anthropological and sociological perspectives into a series of steps that deconstruct and synthesize websites as data repositories that illuminate the "expressions of norms and values, expectations, roles, [and] goals" that impact human and organizational behavior (p. 247). The six steps include (a) capturing initial sensory and emotional responses to assess the website's design impact; (b) documenting and categorizing visible elements and notable absences that reflect the site's cultural functions; (c) analyzing textual, visual, and auditory content to decode cultural meanings; (d) examining the layout and navigation to understand user guidance and cultural messaging; (e) identifying diverse perspectives and assessing their alignment with cultural goals; and (f) operationalizing cultural concepts to decode broader narratives. This structured progression facilitates a strategic in-depth analysis of cultural expressions in institutional websites (Pauwels, 2012), and contextualizing this work with DisCrit enables us to recognize and interrogate the indicated compounding realities of racist and ableist systems (racial cognizance) within our data unit of choice: DSS websites.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following Pauwels' (2012) model with a Dis-Crit frame, I (Anna Acha) interrogated the language, organization, and visual presentation of California postsecondary DSS websites in the UC system. Data were collected from nine UC institutions in October 2021, through ethnographic observational notetaking techniques associated with in-personal sociological fieldwork in a virtual space (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Emerson et al., 2011; Hart, 2017; Pauwels, 2012). First, a preliminary overview was performed of each DSS website to capture cursory researcher responses to the look, feel, and language of what was seen (e.g., How easy are these websites to locate? How easy are they to navigate? How do I react to what I perceive? Do I, as a Black disabled student, feel welcome?). Second, salient emergent topics were collected and organized (e.g., What language is repeated? What ideas are featured most prominently? What is missing?). In addition to looking for themes in the language, this investigation included strategic keyword searches through two browsers (Google Chrome and Safari) to account for potential platform-related errors (loading issues, case sensitivity, optical character recognition errors). The keyword database was developed from our literature review, incorporating terms that functionally relate to DisCrit and indicating some degree of racialized reflection on the part of the DSS office (seen in Tables 1 and 2). As we examined the text, other salient terms and phrases were incorporated as they presented themselves.

In line with Pauwels' (2012) multimodal website analysis framework, first author, Anna Acha delved into the field notes as data with an intra-mod-al, cross-modal, and negative analysis (e.g., What specific linguistic, typographic, auditory, and visual signifiers do we see that relate to racial cognizance? How do they connect? What is missing, and why?), and deconstructed the voice and intended audiences of the websites (e.g., What point of view is favored in these websites? Who are they constructed for? How does race manifest?). The website observation field-notes and discourse keyword synthesis were treated as datasets (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Acha conduct-ed inductive, open coding of the field notes, treating each bullet entry as a piece of data using Google Docs and Dedoose (Emerson et al., 2011). After creating the initial list of codes from the first passes of close read-ing, both authors focused on coding, code memos, and integrative memos to streamline our findings deductively by engaging DisCrit and reflexive praxis to make meaningful connections between data points (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Emerson et al., 2011; Pauwels, 2012). This resulted in two charts (Tables 1 and 2), which cataloged explicit and implicit markers of racial cognizance, and two emergent themes: the phenotypic vs. the explicit, and documentation as default.

We also analyze interview data from a larger study that examined the experiences of 10 racialized undergraduate students who identified as disabled or had a lived experience of disability in California. We focus on the counternarratives of these four students (Marisol, Tiffany, Andrea, and Kennedy) as they relate to our research questions and findings from the website analysis. Counternarratives, a methodological approach in critical race theory, allowed us to both "privileg[e] voices of marginalized populations, traditionally not acknowledged within the research" (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 12) and engage in "an act of methodological resistance" (Locke et al., 2022, p. 155). Counternarratives also allowed us to meaningfully center the epistemologies of Black and AfroLatina students as a much-needed disruption of "essentialized [w]hite understanding[s] of disability" that have emerged from decades of color-evasive higher education disability research (Stapleton & James, 2020, p. 218). Building on the work of Annamma and colleagues (2017), Stapleton and James (2020) define color-evasiveness as "a racist ideology rooted in white supremacy to avoid accountability, acknowledgement, and identifying historical or continuous, race-based discrimination while instantaneously allowing race neutral justification, laws, policies, and beliefs to persist as normal" (p. 216). By centering their counternarratives, we aim to highlight the ways disability accommodations, policies, and practices are not race-neutral, and to reposition Black and AfroLatina students who identify, have been labeled, and have the lived experience of disability as "knowledge creators" (Stapleton & James, 2020, p. 218).

Findings

Tables 1 and 2 display the frequency of salient utterances in the mission statement samples (as labeled or implied by website markers including "about us," "our mission,") on both explicit and potential markers of racial cognizance related to antiBlack institutional barriers. These tables aggregate similar key search terms in ways that do not compromise their context in the dataset. For example, the terms "white," "whiteness," and "white supremacy" are distinct but interrelated concepts that were included as potential indicators of racial cognizance; however, none were used in meaningful ways, so they are thematically consolidated in the aggregate. Pauwels' (2012) multimodal model revealed a variety of useful information about generalized accessibility in the

Table 1

Mission Statement Utterances - Explicit Markers of Racial Cognizance

INSTITUTION	TERMS*						
	Race **Racism** **Racist**	**Students of color** **SOC** **S.O.C.**	**People of Color** **POC** **P.O.C.**	**Black**	**black**	**White** **Whiteness** **White supremacy**	**Intersection** **Intersectional** **Intersectionality**
UC Berkeley Disability Access & Compliance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UC Davis Student Disability Center	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UC Irvine Disability Services Center	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UCLA Center for Accessible Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UC Merced Student Accessibility Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UC Riverside Student Disability Resource Center	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UC San Diego Office for Students with Disabilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UC Santa Barbara Disabled Student Program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UC Santa Cruz Disability Resource Center	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note. * Terms have been aggregated in this table when applicable (e.g., if they cover similar/related concepts without compromising the presentation of the data)*

Table 2

Mission Statement Utterances - Potential Markers of Racial Cognizance Related to AntiBlack Institutional Barriers

INSTITUTION	TERMS*			
	Compliant Compliance	Documented Documentation	Systemic	Justice
UC Berkeley Disability Access & Compliance	1**	0	0	0
UC Davis Student Disability Center	0	1	0	0
UC Irvine Disability Services Center	0	0	0	0
UCLA Center for Accessible Education	0	0	0	0
UC Merced Student Accessibility Services	0	0	0	0
UC Riverside Student Disability Resource Center	0	4	0	0
UC San Diego Office for Students with Disabilities	0	0	0	0
UC Santa Barbara Disabled Student Program	0	0	0	0
UC Santa Cruz Disability Resource Center	0	0	0***	0

Note. *Terms have been aggregated in this table when applicable (e.g., if they cover similar/related concepts without compromising the presentation of the data) **Compliance occurred three times but was omitted twice as the institution was stating their name within their statement. ***Systemic was used once with regard to systemic medical conditions (i.e., conditions affecting the entire body) rather than mentions of systemic barriers, antiblackness, or racism; for this reason, the utterance was excluded as a potential marker of racial cognizance.

data, but the engagement of DisCrit highlighted two salient, emergent themes: first, UC DSS websites display a preponderance of documentation information/requirements with little to no information supporting students without documentation (documentation as default) which aligns with current research on DSS CDAs (Banerjee et al., 2021); and second, most UC DSS websites leverage Black and non-Black POC images without explicit, intentional, and ongoing incorporation of their realities into policy and practice (the phenotypic vs. the explicit). Documentation, specifically as a barrier, was also mentioned by four participants who talked about DSS registration requirements, with two participants specifically discussing their experiences navigating barriers to obtaining documentation.

Documentation as Default

Three out of nine institutions included potential markers of racial cognizance related to antiBlack institutional barriers (Berkeley, Davis, and Riverside), which included the terms compliant/compliance and documented/documentation. Potential is included alongside Table 2 keyword markers because the context could signify the acknowledgment of ongoing antiBlack access barriers or the continued reaffirmation of those barriers. For Riverside, the latter was true, rather than a commitment to support students facing documentation barriers. While this appears to be true for Davis' mission as well, its homepage explicitly outlines the process for "make a request for services without documentation," (UC Davis Student Disability Center, n.d., para. 2). Similarly, Berkeley's use of the compliant/compliance utterance in the context of the mission alone did not reflect racial cognizance in their mission, but other explicit racial cognizance

markers were found throughout our exploration and analysis of its website.

Common throughout all the websites was the necessity of medical documentation, listed alongside documentation requirements and examples. These requirements list medical provider credentials, and several explicitly exclude online diagnostic services and provide recency specifications. Beyond Davis' one-sentence homepage mention, there are no indications that students without documentation have a shot at receiving accommodations support from these offices. When we consider how the UCs only accommodate 7% of disabled undergraduate and graduate students, it is clear that disabled students are underserved in this system.

Students' counternarratives also highlighted how documentation requirements and related policies and practices made it difficult for them to register and obtain support on campus for their disabilities. Marisol, a 34 year-old AfroLatina student with physical and mental disabilities from childhood cancer, had transferred to a four-year public university where she had registered with DSS and was studying to become an attorney. Marisol recounted how it was difficult to get basic information about registering for DSS online at her four-year college even though she had received support previously from her two-year college.

> Um, I went online and tried to get information, I even called and the lady was like "There's a process for this" and I said "Okay, I understand that but I'm just curious what's your process in this." "Well, you need to come and make an appointment." So, despite that frustration over the phone, I couldn't even get the basic information.

Marisol explained how the whole process felt like a "cat and mouse game" and how, when she did go in-person, the staff told her, "The information is right there on the wall."

Tiffany shared a similar experience to Marisol. She was 27 years old at the time of the study and planned to go into neuroscience because of her own experience being diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury after a car accident when she was 19. Tiffany, like Marisol, had also been registered for support at community college, but had trouble registering at her four-year institution.

> [M]y counselor…told me that I should go back to my doctor and have them rewrite my disability verification…and say that things are moderately or severely impacted…I-I don't understand why I would say that like if that's not true like, you know?…and then like it's just a hassle if I go back to the doctor. First of all, it's going to be hectic to get an appointment and, then when I get that appointment, I have to pay for the form, you know?

Marisol echoed this frustration. She had to go to medical professionals three times before her documentation was deemed legitimate by DSS standards.

> I felt like I was just put in like in this loopholes like, "You gotta be this to do that, you gotta do that to do this" and I'm like, "Are you kidding me? What more do I need?" I mean, the stamp thing [on the documentation] was [a] certified stamp—the whole nine yards. So, I came back and got more documentation and then the next advisor tells me "Well, this has to be…like we have to show…that [your disability] is chronic."

For Marisol, the pursuit of necessary support became a labyrinthine process, burdened with procedural gatekeeping that discourages and exhausts students seeking help. The narrative that students must prove their disability before receiving any support not only undermines their agency but also perpetuates a form of institutional ableism and racism; it norms carceral logics as objectivity where the perceived deservingness (Williams, 2021) of a student, in the eyes of doctors and DSS works, controls their access. This systemic rigidity exemplifies a dissonance between the DSS offices' purported objectives and their operational ethos.

The Phenotypic vs. The Explicit

No institutional mission statements contained explicit markers of racial cognizance. While scattered markers exist in these websites (for example, in the biographies of two staff members, pertaining to their own race and personal ideological standpoints), they were usually vague, difficult to find, and lacking DSS office accountability. These isolated mentions generally allude to the value of intersectional identities and diversity (usually without concretely naming race) rather than adequately addressing that white-centric history and ongoing systemic antiBlackness are rooted in their own policy and practice, which inevitably impacts their accessibility to Black and nonBlack students of Color.

Despite an overwhelming absence (read: omission) of explicit racial cognizance, DSS websites do not shy away from prominently displaying images of phenotypically Black and non-Black POC. The sources of these images are often not provided, but they could potentially be stock images, images of current UC stu-

dents, and images of former UC students. These images evoke idealistic, diverse, welcoming campus environments, despite the offices maintaining policies that effectively bar Black students from receiving support. While some campuses provide images of their staff, others do not; some offices with more phenotypically staff of Color sometimes had greater racial cognizance, but this was not a consistent indicator of ideological commitment or even racial acknowledgment.

These images of a welcoming campus climate did not align with students' counternarratives of their experiences. Both Andrea and Kennedy were not registered for support because of previous experiences with antiBlackness and ableism in their K-12 education, including being bullied by their teachers when they were experiencing difficulty in their classes. Kennedy was the youngest at 19 years old and attended a private Christian college. Kennedy, who was labeled with a disability and placed into her school's resource room from second to seventh grade, advocated to be removed so that she could have the opportunity to attend a four-year college. Kennedy planned to go into a teacher education program after finishing her degree in English. She recounted an experience she had with a white teacher in elementary school that continued to haunt her years later and influenced her decision to not share her disability with other people.

> She was kind of like helping me with the with a math problem and I remember her getting super close to me and being like, "You're going to be nothing but crap"…those were some of the hardest words that you could even hear…it even makes me emotional to this day 'cause it's like, for me, I want to be a teacher and hearing that from somebody that you're supposed to look up to and this they're supposed to be a protector and someone to teach you how to be better…that's where I shut down…I don't want anyone to know that I have a learning disability…

These types of traumatizing experiences are not uncommon for students who navigate antiBlackness and racist ableist microaggressions from educators in PK-12 and higher education but are often not discussed in disability higher education research (Dávila, 2015; Love et al., 2021; Mireles, 2022).

At the time of the study, Andrea was 29 years old and identified as Guatemalan/Black or African American. She had been diagnosed with general anxiety, depression, and adjustment disorder after seeking out support at her university (a public four-year college) where she was also a transfer student. Similar to Tiffany's and Marisol's experiences, Andrea did not find the DSS office at her campus welcoming, which led to her not registering for support. Not having this documentation available meant that pathways to meet her access needs were foreclosed and unavailable to her. She recounted an interaction she had with a professor where she did not share her disability because she knew it did not matter without institutional backing.

> I didn't share my diagnosis because it's become so commonplace for people to say, like, "Oh, I'm depressed" or "[I] have anxiety" that teachers and other professionals are so wanting to just, like, dismiss it. They're just like, everybody has that like, get over it…. So without having the proper paperwork to say, like, "Oh, I'm in the disability office," it just didn't feel like it was a battle that I wanted to, like, try—even attempt to fight.

In examining the narratives of Andrea and Kennedy, a profound disconnect emerges between the institutional portrayal of diversity on DSS websites and the actual encounters these students have with systemic barriers within these services. The institutions in question utilize phenotypic representations of diversity that, while visually suggesting an inclusive environment, starkly contrast with the experiential realities reported by Black disabled students. This dichotomy between espoused inclusivity and enacted exclusivity reflects a broader trend of performative allyship within the academy that does not substantively engage with the structural inequities facing these students.

Interrupting Disability Services as Usual

Rather than placing blame on disabled, and especially Black disabled, students for not self-advocating, we need to ask how DSS offices have (or have not) "created space for BIPOC people (and secondarily, Others) to identify as disabled, chronically ill, Deaf, or neurodivergent" (Piepzna-Samarsinha, 2022, p. 19). Focusing on documentation over facilitating pathways for Black students to access support can lead to further disenfranchisement. In line with the literature, students' counternarratives reveal recurring barriers to support and experiences with harm and violence that led to these students not feeling safe seeking support in college or encountering barriers which exacerbated racialized harm and violence. Beyond documentation by default, here we see documentation as a demand, mandated by compliance culture. Without intentional counteraction of medical racism, current DSS processes perpetuate race-evasiveness by omitting the reality of the medical industrial complex (Annamma et al., 2014).

Our study is limited to the institutions of one state; while diverse in its offerings, California's sociocultural context differs from both other postsecondary-dense states like Texas, North Carolina, and New York, and postsecondary-sparse states like Wyoming, Alaska, and Idaho (Statista, 2023). Our hope is to replicate this study in multiple areas and eventually develop a macroanalysis of racial cognizance in the US, so this study serves to help build our foundational understanding of DSS racial cognizance. Additionally, websites are not the end-all and be all of DSS. The minimum (racial cognizance) may manifest in ways beyond the visible and functionally accessible confines of DSS websites; after all, this is only one avenue of attack. These university DSS offices may be perfectly willing to circumvent documentation requirements or implement some form of critical pedagogy in their in-house training programs that allow for more nuanced support of Black disabled students during support meetings.

Interviews/in-person ethnographic research demands their own dedicated studies that build upon the work we intend to do here, and we lack the institutional credentials to go complete the registration process at each of these institutions' websites to gain practical insights. Our supplemental interview data begins to paint a picture of in-house practices and how they impact Black students, and none of our collected narratives illustrated more nuanced Black student support. If in-house practice exists that circumvents the racialized barriers instituted by documentation that is not mentioned in their online materials, it begs several questions: Why hide that information from students that could potentially benefit? Low-cognizance online platforms may inhibit the active engagement of Black disabled students. Why leave up information that leads students to believe they are disqualified from services, or, put another way, why not include information that could make services more accessible to everyone?

Offices may seek to avoid registering students who falsely leverage disability as a tool to get ahead; though, it appears in recent years those effectively misusing the label of disability are generally those white enough and rich enough to forge documentation (Price, 2021). There could also be funding concerns as more registered students would increase the workload of DSS staff members. However, quiet acts of acknowledgment do not disrupt systemic inequity; by perpetuating white hegemonic footholds in supposedly antiracist, anti-antiBlack, anti-ableist policies as normative, we avoid what violently threatens whitecisheteroableistpatriarchy. However, "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon…[w]ithout any period of transition, there is a total, complete, and absolute substitution…it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding" (Fanon, 1965, pp. 33-35). Silence only serves oppressive violence, and we cannot continue to perceive violence as the sole property of whiteness. Violence can be a subversive tool of liberation for the systemically repressed, wherein all systemic threats (even those that appear functionally nonviolent) to white hegemony are conceptualized as humanizing violence (Applebaum, 2017; Fanon, 1965; Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Our restorative, antiracist, antiableist work must be unapologetic. It must be visible. Liberation is, by nature, loud.

Black Disabled Futurities on College Campuses

Combating inequity first demands recognition of that inequity–DSS offices that do not recognize the historic and ongoing ableist antiBlackness that is embedded in the foundation of their policy and practice cannot adequately support Black disabled students. This is a minimum requirement, a baseline. To serve the public, we must serve Black disabled students; to serve Black disabled students, we must work toward collective liberation; to work toward liberation, we must understand compounding and insidious oppressive systems that impact current Black disabled realities in policy and practice. Before any transformative work can occur, we must know our baseline. We must know if we meet the minimum. Color-evasiveness does not serve our students (Stapleton & James, 2020). DSS websites are a salient part of the conversation regarding Black disability support in higher education, but they are far from the only piece. The counterstories of Marisol, Tiffany, Kennedy, and Andrea further support the notion that the facilitators of access have become the gatekeepers. Future work should expand the website analysis and interview collection to vary across location and institution types. For example, most disabled students and most students of Color in higher education attend community colleges (Ngo & Sundell, 2023). Exploration of UC system schools to California Community Colleges (CCC), California State University (CSU), and private California postsecondary institutions would offer valuable insights into the racial cognizance baseline of schools expecting high volumes of Black disabled students vs. institutions that prioritize white/abled-centric meritocratic admissions policies. There may also be variations in institutional response to Black disabled student needs in different locations. Exploring the higher education makeup of different states to create comparison groups would help create a more robust picture of the current state of racial cognizance in DSS. In the spirit of loud, visible, and unapologetic liberatory praxis,

it is crucial that DSS evaluate their policies and the practical approaches to support Black dis/abled students by actively combating systemic racial inequity.

References

Acha, A., & Mireles, D. (2021, November 5). "Beyond access:" Abolishing compliance culture in higher education. In A. K. Wilke (Chair), Understanding disability matters: postsecondary education's need for research and action [Panel presentation] 46th Annual Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Acha, A., & Mireles, D. (2024). Abolishing Compliance Culture in Higher Education. In Watson, K., Cisneros, N., Pérez Huber, L., & Vélez, V. *Like a path in tall grasses: A handbook of race and refusal in higher education*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Adebayo, C. T., Walker, K., Hawkins, M., Olukotun, O., Shaw, L., Sahlstein Parcell, E., Dressel, A., Luft, H., & Mkandawire-Valhmu, L. (2020). Race and Blackness: A thematic Review of communication challenges confronting the Black community within the U.S. health care system. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 31*(4), 397–405. https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659619889111

Alridge, D. P. (2003). The dilemmas, challenges, and duality of an African-American educational historian. *Educational Researcher, 32*(9), 25–34. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032009025

Allen, E. M., Call, K. T., Beebe, T. J., McAlpine, D. D., & Johnson, P. J. (2017). Barriers to care and health care utilization among the publicly insured. *Medical Care, 55*(3), 207–214. https://doi.org/10.1097/MLR.0000000000000644

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq. (1990). www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm

Annamma, S. A. (2017). *The pedagogy of pathologization: Dis/abled girls of color in the school-prison nexus.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315523057

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D. J., & Ferri, B. A. (2013). Dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability, race ethnicity and education. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 16*(1), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.730511

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D. J., & Ferri, B. A. (2016a) Introduction: A truncated genealogy of DisCrit. In Connor, D. J., Ferri, B. A., Annamma S.A., (Eds.), *Discrit: Disability studies and critical race theory in education* (pp. 1–8). Teachers College Press.

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D. J., & Ferri, B. A. (2016b) Touchstone text: In dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability. In Connor, D. J., Ferri, B. A., Annamma S.A., (Eds.), *Discrit: Disability studies and critical race theory in education* (pp. 9–32). Teachers College Press.

Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D., & Morrison, D. (2017). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: Using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race & Ethnicity in Education, 20*(2), 147–152.

Annamma, S. A., Morrison, D., & Jackson, D. D. (2014). Disproportionality fills in the gaps: Connections between achievement, discipline and special education in the school-to-prison pipeline. *Berkeley Review of Education, 5*(1), 53–87. https://doi.org/10.5070/B85110003

Applebaum, B. (2017). Comforting discomfort and complicity: White fragility and the pursuit of invulnerability. *Hypatia, 32*(4), 862–875. https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12352

Artiles, A. J. (2011). Toward an interdisciplinary understanding of educational equity and difference: The case of the racialization of ability. *Educational Researcher, 40*(9), 431-445. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X11429391

Association on Higher Education and Disability. (2012). *Supporting accommodations requests: Guidance on documentation practices.* https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/accommodations/documentation

Badalov, E., Blackler, L., Scharf, A. E., Matsoukas, K., Chawla, S., Voigt, L. P., & Kuflik, A. (2022). COVID-19 double jeopardy: the overwhelming impact of the social determinants of health. *International Journal for Equity in Health, 21*(1), 76. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-022-01629-0

Bassolas, A., Sousa, S., & Nicosia, V. (2021). Diffusion segregation and the disproportionate incidence of COVID-19 in African American communities. *Journal of the Royal Society Interface, 18*(174), 20200961. https://doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2020.0961

Banerjee, M., Lalor, A. R., Madaus, J. W., & Brinckerhoff, L. C. (2021). A survey of postsecondary disability service website information. *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 26*(2). doi.org/10.18666/LDMJ-2021-V26-I2-10860

Banks, J. (2014). Barriers and Supports to Postsecondary Transition: Case Studies of African American Students With Disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 35*(1), 28–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932513512209

Baynton, D. C. (2017). Disability and the justification of inequality in American history. In Davis, L. J. (Ed.), *The disability studies reader* (5th ed., pp. 17-34). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315680668

Boone, R., & King-Berry, A. (2007). African American students with disabilities: Beneficiaries of the legacy? *The Journal of Negro Education, 76*(3), 334–525.

Campaign for College Opportunity. (2021). *The state of higher education for Black Californians*. https://collegecampaign.org/publication/2021-state-of-higher-education

Cawthon, S. W., & Leppo, R. (2013). Accommodations quality for students who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing. *American Annals of the Deaf, 158*(4), 438–452. https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.2013.0031

Cawthon, S. W., Nichols, S. K., & Collier, M. (2009). Facilitating access: What information do Texas postsecondary institutions provide on accommodations and services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing? *American Annals of the Deaf, 153*(5), 450–460. https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.0.0064

Cawthon, S. W., Schoffstall, S. J., & Garberoglio, C. L. (2014). How ready are postsecondary institutions for students who are d/deaf or hard-of-hearing? *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 22*(13). http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v22n13.2014

Chamusco, B. (2017). Revitalizing the law That "Preceded the Movement": Associational discrimination and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. *The University of Chicago Law Review, 84*(3), 1285–1324. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26457107

Cokley, K., Krueger, N., Cunningham, S. R., Burlew, K., Hall, S., Harris, K., Castelin, S., & Coleman, C. (2022). The COVID-19/racial injustice syndemic and mental health among Black Americans: The roles of general and race-related COVID worry, cultural mistrust, and perceived discrimination. *Journal of Community Psychology, 50*, 2542–2561. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22747

Courtney-Long, E. A., Romano, S. D., Carroll, D. D., & Fox, M. H. (2017). Socioeconomic factors at the intersection of race and ethnicity influencing health risks for people with disabilities. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, 4*, 213–222.

Crenshaw, K. (1989) Demarginalizing the intersection of race and xex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989, Article 8.

Daniszewski, J. (2020, July 20). Why we will lowercase white. *The Definitive Source*. blog.ap.org/announcements/why-we-will-lowercase-white

Dávila, B. (2015). Critical race theory, disability microaggressions and Latina/o student experiences in special education. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 18*(4), 443–468. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2014.885422

Davis, L. J. (2016). *Enabling acts: The hidden story of how the Americans with Disabilities Act gave the largest US minority its rights.* [Kindle edition]. Beacon Press.

Douglas, J. A. (2007). *The conditions for admission: Access, equity, and the social contract of public universities.* Stanford University Press.

Dorrance, J., Havard, J., Luna, C., & Young, O. K. (2023). Awe of what a body can be: Disability justice, the syllabus, and academic labour. *Performance Matters, 8*(2), 50–71.

Dumas, M. J. (2016). Against the dark: AntiBlackness in education policy and discourse. *Theory Into Practice, 55*(1), 11–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1116852

Dyson, A. H., & Genishi, C. (2005). *On the case: Approaches to language and literacy research*. Teachers College Press.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd Ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Fanon, F. (1965/2004). *The wretched of the earth.* Grove Press.

Feagin, J., & Bennefield, Z. (2014). Systemic racism and US health care. *Social Science & Medicine, 103*, 7–14. doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.09.006

Given, L. M., Case, D. O., & Willson, R. (2023). *Looking for information: Examining research on how people engage with information*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Hart, T. (2017). Online ethnography. *The international encyclopedia of communication research methods*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0172

Hodge, L., Wilkerson, A. & Stanislaus, E.P. (2020). How can we help you?: An exploration of what institutional websites reveal about first-generation support services. *Metropolitan Universities, 31*(1), 92–112. https://doi.org/10.18060/23360

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004). https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title20/chapter33&edition=prelim

Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, queer, crip*. Indiana University Press.

Karpicz, J. R. (2020). "Just my being here is self-advocacy": Exploring the self-advocacy experiences of disabled graduate students of Color. *JCSCORE, 6*(1), 137–163. doi.org/10.15763/issn.2642 -2387.2020.6.1.137-163

Kim, S. Y. (2020). College disability support offices as advertisements: A multimodal discourse analysis. *Discourse Studies, 23*(2), 166–190. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445620966921

Lawrie, P. (2016). *Forging a laboring race: The African American worker in the progressive imagination*. New York University Press.

Laws, M. (2020, June 16). Why we capitalize 'Black' (and not 'white'). *Columbia Journalism Review*. https://www.cjr.org/analysis/capital-b-black-styleguide.php

Leonardo, Z., & Porter, R. K. (2010). Pedagogy of fear: Toward a Fanonian theory of 'safety' in race dialogue. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(2), 139–157. doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2010.482898

Locke, M. A., Guzman, V., Hallaran, A. E., Arciniegas, M., Friedman, T. E., & Brito, A. (2022). Counternarratives as DisCrit praxis: Disrupting classroom master narratives through imagined composite stories. *Teachers College Record, 124*(7), 150–173.

Love, H. R., Nyegenye, S. N., Wilt, C. L., & Annamma, S. A. (2021). Black families' resistance to deficit positioning: Addressing the paradox of black parent involvement. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 24*(5), 637-653. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2021.1918403

Madaus, J. W. (2011). The history of disability services in higher education. *New Directions for Higher Education, 154*, 5–15. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.429

Madaus, J. W., Grigal, M., & Hughes, C. (2014). Promoting access to postsecondary education for low-income students with disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 37*(1), 50–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143414525037

Madaus, J. W., & Shaw, S. F. (2006). The impact of the IDEA 2004 on transition to college for students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 21*, 273–281. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5826.2006.00223.x

Marecek, J. (2003). Dancing through minefields: Toward a qualitative stance in psychology. In P. M. Camic, J. E. Rhodes & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design* (pp. 49–69). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/10595-004

McCaskill, C., Lucas, C., Bayley, R., & Hill, J. (2020). *The hidden treasure of Black ASL: Its history and structures*. Gallaudet University Press.

Miles, B. (2012). Discourse analysis. In N. J. Salkind (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of research design* (pp. 368–370). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412961288.n115

Mireles, D. (2022). Theorizing racist ableism in higher education. *Teachers College Record, 124*(7), 17–50.

Ngo, F., & Sundell, D. M. (2023). Inequities at the intersection of race and disability: Evidence from community colleges. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2023.2170436

Nolan, S. L. (2022). The compounded burden of being a black and disabled student during the age of COVID-19. *Disability & Society, 37*(1), 148–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.1916889

Office of the President, University of California. (2022). *Update on supporting students with disabilities at the university of California*. https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/regmeet/jan22/a6.pdf

Pauwels, L. (2012). A multimodal framework for analyzing websites as cultural expressions. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17*(3), 247–265. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01572.x

Pew Research Center. (2021). *The growing diversity of Black America*. https://www.pewresearch.org

Pickens, T. (2019). *Black madness: Mad Blackness*. Duke University Press.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2022). *The future Is disabled: Prophecies, love notes and mourning songs*. arsenal pulp press.

Price, S. G. (2021). Invisible victims: Combatting the consequences of the college admissions scandal for learning-disabled students. *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems, 54*(3), 461–502.

Santomauro, D. F., Mantilla Herrera, A. M., Shadid, J., Zheng, P., Ashbaugh, C., Pigott, D., Hay, S. I., Vos, T., Murray, C. J. L., Whiteford, H. A., & Ferrari, A. J. (2021). Global prevalence and burden of depressive and anxiety disorders in 204 countries and territories in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Lancet, 398*(10312), 1700–1712. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02143-7

Schalk, S. (2018). *Bodyminds reimagined:(Dis)ability, race, and gender in Black women's speculative fiction*. Duke University Press.

Schweik, S. M. (2009). The ugly laws: Disability in public. New York University Press.

Shallish, L. (2015). Just how much diversity will the law permit? The Americans with Disabilities Act, diversity and disability in higher education. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 35*(3). http://dx.doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v35i3.4942

Simon, J. A. (2011). Legal issues in serving students with disabilities in postsecondary education. *New Directions for Student Services*, 134, 95–107.

Statista Search Department (2023, June 1). Number of higher education institutions in the United States in the academic year of 2020/21, by state [infographic]. *Statista*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/306880/us-higher-education-institutions-by-state/

a, L., & James, L. (2020). Not another all white study: Challenging color-evasiveness ideology in disability scholarship (Practice Brief). *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33*(3), 215–222.

Tefera, A. A., & Fischman, G. E. (2020). How and why context matters in the study of racial disproportionality in special education: Toward a critical disability education policy approach. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 53*(4), 433–448. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1791284

UC Davis Student Disability Center (n.d.). *Welcome to the student disability center - Good to go!* https://sdc.ucdavis.edu/

U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: *2010 Census and 2020 Census*. https://www.census.gov

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *About IDEA*. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/

Williams, K. (2021). *Chasing ghosts: How disability support providers in higher education make sense of and actualize the "spirit of the law"* (Publication No. 2021-37216) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Georgia]. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/

Yssel, N., Pak, N., & Beilke, J. (2016) A door must be opened: Perceptions of students with disabilities in higher education. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 63*(3), 384–394. doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2015.1123232

About the Authors

Anna Acha earned her B.F.A. at New York University (NYU), her M.Ed. at North Carolina State University (NCSU), and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Riverside (UCR). Anna has worked in Student Affairs at New York University (NYU) and Duke University, and the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM). Her research interests focus on Black and Brown disabled students in Higher Education. She can be reached by email at anna.acha@email.ucr.edu.

Danielle Mireles, Ph.D., is an interdisciplinary scholar-activist whose work is embedded at the intersections of racial, disability, and health justice. They received their B.A. degree in Deaf Studies from California State University, Northridge and their M.A. and Ph.D. in education from the University of California, Riverside. They are currently an Assistant Professor in Cultural Studies, Multicultural Education, and International Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. They can be reached at mailto:danielle.mireles@unlv.edu.

An Awakening Consciousness: Underrepresented and Racially Minoritized Disabled College Student Experiences

Warren E. Whitaker[1]

Abstract

There has been considerable research examining racialized experiences and disabled experiences separately in higher education. Disabled student experiences have been marked by having to navigate institutional oppressive racist or disabled structures to meet the educational needs required to succeed on campus. There has been minimal research examining the combination of racialized, disabled experiences in higher education. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to illustrate how six underrepresented and racially minoritized (URM) disabled students experience race and disability while navigating higher education. Disability Critical Race (DisCrit) framework guided the research and interpretation of the results. This study used an identity-first language approach to connect race and disability to participants and provide autonomy and control of individual and collective racialized, disabled experiences. Through semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups, this study found that students perceived racialized experiences more tangibly than disabled experiences, there was a lack of representation on campus needed to meet URM disabled students' needs, and building URM disabled students' community created asset-based perceptions of racialized and disabled experiences. These findings should help higher education administration, faculty, staff, and students create supportive programs, initiatives, structures, and strategic planning that dismantle inherent racist and ableist structures, prioritize URM-disabled students, and provide more equitable higher education experiences and outcomes.

Keywords: underrepresented and racially minoritized, disability, college students, race, higher education

Introduction

With the continued increase in disabled students enrolling in higher education, there is a need for research that examines disabled experiences within college campus environments (Kimball et al., 2016; Faggella-Luby et al., 2017). More importantly, greater attention must be paid to racial and disabled intersectional experiences in higher education. Research has typically been centered on white disabled experience. At the same time, underrepresented and racially minoritized (URM) students have had to navigate, negotiate, and pursue disability justice despite limited recognition or opportunities to tell their story through scholarship (Bell, 2011; Ramirez-Stapleton et al., 2020). To advance disability justice through scholarship, research must examine URM disability experiences while empowering URM students to tell their stories, highlight their voices, and advocate through scholarship (Bell, 2011; Miles et al., 2017). Diversity initiatives and programming need intersectional approaches that incorporate disability into discussions along with traditional identities such as race, sexuality, gender, and religion, among other identities students bring with them to higher education (Miller, 2018; Peña et al., 2016). Using intersectional approaches can help illustrate how students perceive their experiences with multiple identities on campus (Crenshaw, 1991).

Identity development occurs through environmental experiences and involves diverse identity characteristics (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). All identities that students bring with them to college have the potential to influence or inform their experiences at any given time. Disability identity development focuses on how physically and invisibly disabled people conceptualize themselves in the context of being disabled. Models have included various thought processes and

[1]*Molloy University*

beliefs about how disability identity develops. Disabled students use these categories to make intentional connections to their experiences. While race in the context of higher education has been highlighted in scholarship, there has been a lack of explicit identification of racism and racist structures, processes, and policies that directly influence the lives of URM students (Harper, 2012). For example, while higher education scholarship has examined disproportionate campus engagement by white students versus racially minoritized student populations, there has been less research on the racism encountered by racially minoritized students, including interactions with white faculty and racism in the residence halls that may influence their willingness and ability to engage with their campus (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Considering the newness of the disability identity model and the inconsistencies of the racial identity development models in higher education, it is essential to gain insight into how students make meaning of being a URM disabled student on a higher education campus.

Using intersectional approaches provides a greater range of meaning for multiple identities among college students daily (Berger & Guidroz, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Griffin & Museus, 2011; Miller, 2018). Disability identity has been viewed in isolation, with minimal exploration of intersections of other marginalized identities (Shaw et al., 2012). This paper uses identity-first language to reclaim the disability identity while promoting the autonomy of existence (Botha et al., 2021; Dunn et al., 2015).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand how URM disabled students perceived racial and disabled identities during their experiences on higher education campuses. This study can serve as an extension of discussions and conversations related to postsecondary education and first-year college experiences by focusing on how URM-disabled students make meaning of their college experiences. In this current research, I explored this topic through interviews with current URM-disabled students on higher education campuses. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do URM college-disabled students make meaning of their perceptions of racial and disabled experiences on higher education campuses?
2. In what ways do URM disabled students' self-perceptions about race and disability influence their higher education experience?

Racialized Higher Education Experiences

Higher education scholarship and institutions have, at times, intentionally omitted the systematic oppression of racist structures that have marginalized underrepresented, minoritized racial student populations on campus (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Harper, 2012). However, underrepresented racially minoritized students have been making meaning of racial experiences in their navigation of higher education campuses. Meaning has been made by combining previous racialized experiences and learning about race through academic and social experiences in higher education institutions (Johnston-Guererro, 2016).

Underrepresented and racially minoritized students at PWIs have had to navigate microaggressions such as deficit-based expectations by their professors by seeking alternative support systems on campus for their academics while addressing trauma caused by this racialized experience (Carroll, 1998; Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2023; Franklin, 2019; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Smith et al., 2016; Steele, 2003). Being underrepresented, combined with experiencing stereotypes, including deficit-based thinking, racial and ethnic jokes, and racialized hostility, can amplify marginalization (Hope et al., 2018; McGee, 2016; Yosso et al., 2009). URM students have also felt exploited by higher education institutions and seen as the racial "token" representing the campus' performative diversity initiatives and activism (Mills, 2020). For example, Black racialized experiences on PWI and HSIU campuses have been perceived as their expectation from faculty, leadership, and staff as not being able to succeed, which has resulted in limited opportunities for professional growth, with the only places of refuge and value for Blackness on campus being Black cultural centers (Harper et al., 2018).

While higher education has provided opportunities for URM students to explore their ethnic identities, some Latinx students have grappled with limited representation and colorism between the diversity of country origins or ethnicity and have, instead, chosen to reject white supremacy and embrace their Latinx identity, considering the dynamics related to their institution (Cole, 2009; Mena, 2022). Racialized experiences create opportunities for Latinx students to embrace their diverse ethnic identities while seeing the differences between different Latinx cultures (Von Robertson et al., 2016). Hispanic Serving Institution Latinx students have experienced linguistic and ethnic stereotypes (i.e., every Latinx student is Mexican) that created a campus perception that Latinx students were a monolithic population (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2023; Gooden & Martin, 2014).

Indigenous students are often tasked with the difficult decision of choosing to leave their communities to obtain degrees in professional fields at PWIs that can ultimately allow them to give back to their communities upon graduation (Cech et al., 2017). Indigenous higher education experiences have been marked by egregious institutional displays of demonstration, including campus celebrations of historical inaccuracies (e.g., Columbus Day observances) and representations of negative stereotypes, such as universities having Indian-themed mascots (Fish & Syed, 2018). While many Indigenous students have enrolled on higher education campuses, institutions still need to adequately support their matriculation through graduation (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Jackson et al., 2003).

To combat racialized experiences, strategies such as Beasting and openly challenging racial microaggressions by emphasizing values from the Black community have been utilized to assert Black intellect and culture into discussions as a counternarrative to the dominant, white discourse in higher education (Morales, 2021). Another strategy has been to create and utilize social counter places as a way to create community, reaffirm race and ethnicity, and build a sense of belonging that can be beneficial to a thriving campus experience for underrepresented racial minoritized students (Robertson et al., 2016; Solorzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). URM students are most successful when universities enable them to integrate their ethnicity and culture into their college experiences (Guillory, 2009).

Disabled Higher Education Experiences

The white Disabled Experience

While there has been a continued increase in disabled student enrollment in higher education, most higher education disability scholarship has focused on and been conducted by white scholars through the lens of the white, disabled experience (Newman et al., 2011; Miles & Forber-Pratt, 2017; Toutain, 2019). This has led to an evasive conceptualization of disabled experiences that ignores the historical impact of racist structures and systems and uses race neutrality to show laws and policies as normative, thus resulting in a white understanding of disability (Stapleton & James, 2020). In addition, limited numbers of racially diverse scholars and URM-disabled student participants have contributed to this failure to gain a more URM, disabled understanding of the disability experience. This white-focused disability research fails to grasp the importance that racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds have played in shaping their understanding of disability identity (García-Fernández, 2014). Pearson (2010) described the need for disability intersectional research to have the same rigor often applied to scholarship related to intersections of other social identities (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, sexuality).

White-focused disability research related to the disabled higher education experience has typically focused on academic achievement, social and peer interactions, and acquiring supportive services. The white, disabled experiences have been marked by feelings of inadequacy and the belief that they must work harder than their non-disabled peers to succeed academically on campus (Brewer et al., 2023; Kimball et al., 2016). Disability disclosure is a timely and laborious process that white disabled and URM-disabled students experience with different influences and desired outcomes (Samuels, 2003; Wilke et al., 2024). White disabled students have navigated disclosure through perceptions of how the campus responds to Disability (Wood, 2017). Hesitation may result from confusion of different messages from the campus climate about disability that may indicate stigma. Perceptions of unwelcoming places have included campus classrooms and dormitories (Aquino et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017). It has been understood that perceived disability identity can be fluid and contingent on a multitude of factors, including how disability may be defined in the campus environment (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013). Therefore, it must be viewed as a continuous process that may be unique to each disabled student.

The URM Disabled Experience

URM-disabled students have taken significantly more cautious approaches to disability disclosure. Approaches have been from an internal cost-benefit analysis and self-advocacy perspective of disclosure that prioritizes self-preservation (Karpicz, 2020). Knowing the negative implications and consequences of how their racial identities were perceived by systems of power on campus have shown to create a cautious mindset predicated on survival (Banks, 2017; Connor, 2008; Hernandez-Saca, 2016). Disclosure for URM disabled students could risk causing psychological and emotional strain that could compound existing racialized microaggressions, such as minimization of life experiences and alienation from classroom activities (Banks, 2017; Connor, 2008, 2009; Dávila, 2015).

The Disabled Experience

Requesting accommodations, once enrolled in higher education, has become a challenge for both white and URM-disabled students who may not

have had any responsibility and control in requesting or utilizing accommodations in their secondary education experience (Anctil et al., 2008; Newman & Madaus, 2015). Higher education institutions have historically provided limited information about available accommodations, which makes it harder for disabled students to identify accommodations to request and impacts their ability to build self-determination skills (Fleming et al., 2017; Hong, 2015).

Many higher education faculty and staff are also not equipped to work with disabled students in general due to a lack of disability-related knowledge and understanding of students' needs and experiences (Evans et al., 2017; Sniatecki et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2006). White disabled higher education students are often met with deficit-based attitudes from faculty who are hesitant to provide reasonable accommodations and often attempt to persuade students to enroll in alternative courses or majors that may be less challenging considering their Disability (Beilke & Yssel, 1999; Hong, 2015; Perry & Franklin, 2006). URM disabled students, often being met with resistance for their racial identification, are aware of the further limitations, educational access, and blatant resistance that will come from faculty with any requests for additional classroom support (Hernández-Saca, 2016; Petersen, 2006; Wright, 2012).

With the plethora of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to create more equitable higher education experiences, the disabled experience of both white disabled and URM disabled students, and disability in general, has been left out of many diversity-related conversations on campus (Baker et al., 2016). Campuses should focus on creating environments and developing personnel who see racial, disabled, and cultural accessibility as a priority and strategy for increasing campus enrollment (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Harper et al., 2018; Jackson et al., 2003; Zehner, 2018; Vaccaro et al., 2015).

Considering the plethora of white, disabled higher education scholarship, in addition to how color evasiveness has allowed racial and disabled identities to be studied in isolation, this study seeks to provide a nuanced examination of racialized, disabled student experiences on higher education on campuses. Race and disability have been historically marginalized in higher education settings and the target of multiple forms of discrimination, such as microaggressions (Annamma, 2016; Stapleton & James, 2020). Race can add to the already complex understanding of disabled experiences, including decisions of disclosure (Karpicz, 2020; Owens, 2015; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). This study provides insight into how racist and ableist systems in higher education are experienced by URM-disabled students (Annamma et al., 2013; Dolmage, 2017). This knowledge can be pivotal in creating systems and policies that support URM-disabled students and offer opportunities through interaction with key stakeholders (Patton et al., 2016).

DisCrit

This study employed Disability Critical Race (DisCrit) as an analytical lens to examine how URM disabled students make meaning of disabled and racial experiences while navigating racist and ableist higher education systems and practices to develop counternarratives (Annamma et al., 2013). DisCrit is comprised of seven tenets that can be used to support its use as a framework (Annamma et al., 2013), as follows:

1. DisCrit focuses on ways that the forces of racism and ableism circulate interdependently, often in neutralized and invisible ways, to uphold notions of normality.
2. DisCrit values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race or dis/ability class, gender, and sexuality.
3. DisCrit emphasizes the social constructions of race and ability and yet recognizes the material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or dis/abled, which sets one outside of the western cultural norms.
4. DisCrit privileges the voices of marginalized populations, which are traditionally not acknowledged within research.
5. DisCrit considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens.
6. DisCrit recognizes whiteness and Ability as Property and that gains for people labeled with dis/abilities have primarily been made as the result of interest convergence of white, middle-class citizens.
7. DisCrit requires activism and supports all forms of resistance.

DisCrit examines how race, racism, disability, and ableism are intertwined into the interactions and structures of higher education (Crenshaw, 1991; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). This study utilized Tenet Two to emphasize the complexity of negotiating multiple marginalized identities and the role of stigma and segregation (Annamma et al., 2016). Tenet Four was also used in this study to prioritize URM disabled student stories and how they navigate their world. This

approach shifts the discourse to an asset-based one, with URM-disabled students having the autonomy to tell their stories while being centered as creators of knowledge and scholarship (Annamma et al., 2014; Connor, 2008; Ferri & Connor, 2010).

Research Design

A phenomenological research design with a constructivist approach was employed for this study. Phenomenological research explores the everyday experiences of individuals surrounding a phenomenon to make meaning (Bhattacharya, 2017). Using a constructivist approach allows URM disabled students to socially construct and translate how they make meaning of disability and race while on a higher education campus. This research design and worldview approach broadens the focus on disability and race while also taking into consideration other factors, such as environment and personal interactions that influence perceptions and the complexity of identity development (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peña et al., 2016; Smith-Chandler et al., 2014).

Positionality

As a Black-disabled male with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, this study emerged from my firsthand experiences as a student in higher education and my professional experiences as a doctoral faculty member. In conversations and discussions, it was easier to make sense of racial experiences as a Black male. Conversations related to disability were more complex and were met with skepticism and accusations that I was requesting accommodation to gain an unfair advantage. It always felt like being Black was the most salient of my identities, and being disabled was something I had to add on. It was challenging to consider the impact of both identities in college. Being an insider in this research resulted in a safe environment for participants to be authentic in their reflections and descriptions of navigating higher education through race and disability identities. Interviews provided participants with opportunities to make sense of how racial and disability dynamics shaped their experiences. While I was in these spaces as a researcher, there were reciprocal learning moments where new ways of thinking about race and disabled identities emerged that will be valuable as I continue to prioritize URM disabled voices in higher education research and practitioner spaces.

Setting and Participants

This study utilized purposeful sampling procedures to obtain participants. Email solicitations to disability services offices, student organization lists, and social media announcements were used to recruit participants. To be included in the study, students had to be full-time college students, identify as Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx, or multiracial, and identify as disabled in the following categories: Health-related (e.g., irritable bowel syndrome), learning (e.g., Learning Disabled), or socioemotional (e.g., Anxiety). Students who volunteered in the study received compensation for their participation with their choice of a $20 Amazon or Starbucks gift card code that I purchased from my funds. Students did not have to be affiliated or registered with their disability services office.

Six students participated in this study. Students represented one public and two private predominantly white higher education institutions (PWIs) in the Northeast, with enrollments ranging from 7,000 to 24,000 students—five students identified as female, and one participant identified as male. Four students were out-of-state residents, and three were first-generation students. Four students had contacted the disability services office at least once since arriving on their college campus. All the students had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) at some point in their high school education. Three students were currently using accommodation from disability services at college. These accommodations included extra time for assignments, separate testing, modified class schedules, locations, residence hall locations, and priority registration. Table 1 shows participant demographics for this study.

Data Collection

Data were collected through two individual, semi-structured interviews and one focus group interview. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility and the opportunity to consider alternative methods and explanations participants use to explain how they make meaning of their experiences that are not directly related to the scripted interview questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Interviews were conducted via Zoom or Google Hangout and were scheduled based on the availability of the participants. The duration for each interview and focus group was 60 minutes. Interviews were recorded using audio devices, and electronic audio files were transferred to DropBox for file storage before being sent out for transcription.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Race	Disability	College	Class Standing	Major
Janice	Black	Learning Disabled	Private	Sophomore	Sociology
Rhonda	Black	Lupus	Public	Junior	Education
Jordan	Black/White	Anxiety	Public	Sophomore	Business
Kele	Indigenous	Anxiety	Private	Sophomore	Undecided
Aja	Black	ADHD	Private	First-year	Undecided
Juana	Latinx	Bipolar Disorder	Public	Sophomore	Pre-Med

The first interview was designed to obtain background information from students and gain deeper insight into their understanding of their racial and disability identities. There were questions related to racial and disability self-identification, in addition to questions about how they felt during experiences with race and disability. This initial interview was in alignment with DisCrit Tenet One that focuses on the forces of racism and ableism that circulate interdependently, often in invisible ways, in the lives of URM-disabled students (Annamma et al., 2013; Johnstone, 2004). From there, I asked questions about the perceived feelings associated with both identities.

A second interview was conducted with participants that focused on their experiences and interactions with race and disability on campus. Participants were asked how campuses met needs and how URM-disabled students sought or advocated for racial and disability support on campus. They were asked about disclosure and perceived responses by peers and other stakeholders on campus. Aligned with DisCrit Tenet Three, this interview examined the impact of being labeled with racial and disability identities on a college campus.

Four of the six participants were able to attend a focus group interview. This interview was audio recorded and centered on collective experiences and what it meant to be in conversation and community with other racially diverse and disabled college peers. The group generated recommendations for better awareness of and shifting the narrative about URM-disabled students in higher education. A conversation about the greater disability community, including URM physically disabled students, occurred. Like Tenet Four, this focus group highlighted the voices of the URM disabled students who have been absent from traditional scholarship (Annamma et al., 2016). It also served as a mechanism to champion disability as a community (Johnstone, 2004). After completing the twelve interviews and the focus group, audio files were emailed to a transcription service.

Analysis

Data transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose for analysis. An inductive coding approach was used to ensure that the study was flexible and open to what the data were saying (Miles et al., 2014). First, in vivo coding was used in the primary analysis to extract meaning from the literal words spoken by participants (Strauss, 1987). Then, several preliminary themes (e.g., "new understanding") were generated during this process. Next, a focused coding approach was applied to highlight the most significant codes to generate the most meaningful categories from the data (Charmaz, 2014). For example, the codes "disclosure," "peer acceptance," and "uncertainty" were related to encounters URM disabled students had on their college campuses. Finally, the codes were clustered together and renamed "Peer Relationship Development," which was more helpful in making analytic sense of the data (Saldaña, 2021). I attempted member checks with all participants to confirm the data interpretation and to see if any new developments had occurred in their experiences since data collection. Three participants responded to the inquiry. Their feedback was received and compared with the data to determine if it was supported. Participants indicated that they had met virtually as a group two times since the study and had formed a group chat.

Limitations

Limitations of this study included that students were enrolled at PWIs, but the findings may be transferable to URM disabled student experiences at colleges with other designations (e.g., HBCUs, HSIs, community colleges). This study captured the perceptions and experiences of predominately URM-disabled students with sophomore class standings during one moment in time and did not capture initial URM-disabled student perceptions of college or changes in perceptions over time while on campus. Only three of the six students in this study were registered with disability services, so I do not know the extent to which being affiliated with disability services influences URM disabled student experiences. This study does not capture the full range of disabilities, and there must not be an attempt to generalize racial and disabled experiences on all college campuses. Other diverse college experiences encompass other identities besides race and disability that were not captured in this study. I could only reach some participants for the follow-up member checks after data collection to inquire about updated experiences and review data interpretation and analysis.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the influences of racial and disability identities of students of color with disabilities on higher education campuses. URM disabled students' perceptions of race and disability yielded the following emergent findings: Race was a more tangible identity for students to perceive than disability, and higher education campuses lack representation and support to meet URM disabled student needs and engage in disability community-created asset-based perceptions of race and disability.

Students acknowledged they needed to embrace disability like they did race, but they had difficulty synthesizing racial and disability experiences. Participants quickly expressed college experiences with race while having difficulty discussing disability experiences beyond medical model thinking, which views disability through the lens of medical intervention, rehabilitation, and cure (Shakespeare, 2006). For some students, while college represented a new educational experience, it also shed more light on how disability identity was present to them than prior experiences. The findings from this study align with DisCrit to provide counternarratives of disability and race perceptions in higher education experiences from the students' perspectives.

Race More Tangible than Disability

Students in the study were familiar with race's role in their everyday interactions and lives. Due to attending PWIs, students were very aware of how their racial identities were marginalized. Some students were also from predominantly white communities and were hypersensitive to racism and racist structures in education; they could identify stereotypes and microaggressions encountered on campus and at home. This awareness resulted in students seeking refuge in spaces or programs specific to racial groups (e.g., Latinx Students United), which they believed would help them succeed and remain on campus (Baker & Robnett, 2012).

Aja came to college from an urban environment and lived in an apartment complex with predominantly Black and Brown residents. She went to school with very few white students, so college was a culture shock at first. She said, "I had to think if I wanted to go through with going to college here with all these white people." While Aja had heard stories about racism and seen incidents on social media and television, she had rarely interacted with white people. Through her experience as a participant in organizations for people of color before college and during her first semester, she learned how building community could help fight against inequities. Aja was a part of several student-of-color mentoring programs throughout high school. She vividly recalled how those experiences led to her seeking community with people of color upon entering college:

> There were no white people in my hood. I do not know where the white students in my school came from. So, it was crazy that in my first class, a white girl talked about my hair to her friends. I do not know what she said, but I knew I needed to be around my people, so I joined the Black Students United organization that day. After joining this group, I found out others went through this.

Jordan and Lana grew up in suburban environments and were used to being marginalized in educational settings. Both of their high schools were predominantly white. Although Jordan identified as biracial, he felt his school identified him as Black. He said, "I just feel like I am more in touch with my Black side and have been seen as Black by others my whole life." When he came to college, he found community more easily with Black students and other students of color. With them, there was never any discussion of him being multiracial, and Jordan felt more at ease and accepted by other Black and Brown peers in the community.

> I felt very isolated in my neighborhood. My mom was Black, and my dad was white. In school, people would ask me why Black people were good at rapping and assumed that my skills in sports were because I was Black. I remember being asked by my teachers in school what I thought about Barack Obama being the first Black president. I could not wait to get out of there. Here, I fit in more with Black and Latinx people. I find we have more in common, and I like being around them. I joined the Black student group and multicultural posse, and it feels like I have always known everyone in the group. It feels like I found my home.

Lana experienced some similar incidents growing up and believed federal legislation and immigration debates contributed to the racist experiences she had in high school and college. She said, "They talk like they know what being an immigrant is, and then you hear other white people use what they say on TV to say why people that look like me should not come here." She described how coming to college and joining the Latinx student organization made her comfortable and eased the transition to college:

> During high school and my first year here, white students in my classes or the student center would ask me if I was a dreamer and would yell that I was taking away college from American students. I was born in America, and I do not speak Spanish fluently. When I saw the flyer inviting me to join the campus Latinx student organization, I was initially nervous. After attending the meeting, I immediately joined and benefitted from the support of all the members. I joined other student cultural groups and believe our school has a strong foundation of students of color leaders.

When discussing experiences with being disabled, students were less clear about their identity and provided more prescriptive accounts of experiences. They perceived disability as an identity through medical model lenses that they needed to fix their impairment. URM students described their disability identity as a part of them that needed a remedy so they could continue to live life and do well in class (Asch & Fine, 1988). Kele described her disability identity the following way, "I have anxiety issues and tend to get nervous in places with many people or when I have to take exams. I go and talk with a counselor to get rid of my anxiety so I can do what I need to do in class or with my student groups." Janice came from a predominantly Black and Brown neighborhood. While she knew of Black and Brown disabled students from seeing students in special education classes in high school, it was not something she thought about in college. She did not view her disability like other peers in her special education who may have been identified with a learning disability or emotional disturbance. She said, "Teachers could not help me in school, so those special classes or whatever would not work for me." Janice perceived her disability as personal and something that needed medical surveillance and intervention to get her through challenging days.

> I have lupus, so I may miss some classes if I have flare-ups with rashes, if I am sore, or if I get fevers. I am on meds and can talk to or go home to see my doctor if I need to. My doctor helps me get my lupus to the place where I can function. It ain't that big of a deal. It is not like autism or something like that.

Janice's experience highlights the diverse range of perceptions of how disabilities are manifested in people's lives. Janice seemed to be aligned with the medical model, thinking that she and her lupus disability would be fine if she were able to see a doctor and get the medicine to alleviate her symptoms. This thinking embodies the belief that disabled people must assimilate to the normative standards of society instead of the disability informing and creating Janice's societal and college experience and expectations (Drum, 2009).

The dominance of racialized experiences was prevalent and explicit in student recollections of experiences in higher education. Racial identity is often more polarized and connected to diversity and equity discussions in education than disability. URM disabled students were quick to use terms such as "racist," "racism," and "discrimination" during conversations about race. They utilized race-related student organizations to build community and culture on campus. Disability, on the other hand, proved more difficult to grapple with. Explanations and descriptions came more from a medical model mindset. URM disabled students used terms such as "help," "fix," and "overcome" what was wrong with them. Prioritizing race while medicalizing disability may be related to students' hesitation in actively disclosing an additional marginalized identity.

Lack of Representation to Meet URM Disabled Students' Needs

When discussing experiences on campus, it was clear that institutions were perceived as having deficit views of race and disability, with more support provided for racial identities. These views resulted in students being selective in disclosing their disabili-

ty for fear of experiencing additional marginalization and microaggressions. Disclosure was viewed as only required for students needing help with academics or social situations and only in one-to-one private spaces. Kele said, "When I know midterms and finals are coming, I will make an appointment to talk with my counselor to schedule times to meet before I take my tests." Anticipating potential negative consequences from educational interactions and performance often drives disability disclosure decisions (Samuels, 2003). For the students in the present study, these consequences included undesirable interpersonal interactions, bullying, disbelief, and other potential adverse interactions. Students wanted to do anything to avoid unnecessary stress in their higher education experiences.

Juana believed that she had found support for her racial identity on campus. As a pre-med major, she believed that disclosing her disability would result in peers and others thinking that she was unfit for the medical profession. She said, "I did not want to give them another reason to think I could not do the work." Juana already had seen the lack of Latinx students in the pre-med major and thought that disclosing her disability would provide more ammunition for further marginalization of Brown students. She described her reasoning:

> There are very few Latinx students majoring in pre-med. I already know they see me as less than the white and Asian students. If I told them about my bipolar disorder, it would give them another reason to see me as lower than they were. It is an everyday fight just being a Latinx and female student. I do not see how telling them about my disability would benefit my situation.

There was also a lack of URM disabled students on campus who disclosed invisible disabilities. It was easier to align with peers and friends with the same racial identity. However, disability was not a common topic of discussion unless physically disabled peers were observed or part of peer groups. Rhonda said, "If we look alike, then I know we have that in common, but if someone got ADD, they are going to have to tell me." They did not know how to approach talking about it, and since it was invisible, they believed they could alleviate any unnecessary stress and anxiety by not talking about it. Due to the tendency for invisible disabilities to be subjectively perceived by others, a dilemma and potential reluctance to disclosure may occur (Evans et al., 2017; Evans & Herriott, 2009). To address this dilemma, greater focus must center on knowing how to "rightfully" describe it so peers understand. Participants believed others in their racial groups may have identified as disabled, but they did not know who they were. Kele discussed how she knew many Indigenous students, but conversations related to disability never surfaced.

> I do not know if there are any other Indigenous students with anxiety on campus. It is not something that we talk about. I do not go to our student organization meeting and say, "Who has a disability?" I have a friend from home who is Indigenous and in a wheelchair. That is the only way I could tell. She does not know I have anxiety, either.

During the focus group, students discussed how white people conduct formal discussions and conversations about disability at their campuses. They were cautious in their conversations with white people because they believed they could not understand their experience. During the study, multiple students commented about how this study and talking with a Black disabled researcher allowed them to have more authentic conversations about their perceptions of race and disability. Janice said, "You being Black and having a disability makes it easier for me to talk about being Black and having my issues with lupus." Jordan discussed how having himself or the researcher engage in conversations about disability while disclosing could help more men, especially Black and Brown men, disclose and have asset-based dialogues about disability. He said, "I just feel that many Black and Brown men, including my boys, fear any conversation about disability and see it as a weakness. If you and I could talk about being Black and disabled with them, I think it could help them."

Community-Created Asset-Based Perceptions

A significant finding of this study was the power of being in a community and engaging in dialogue with other URM-disabled college students. During the focus group, students began reconsidering how they viewed their disabled identity and shifted toward more asset-based thinking. Lana said, "Maybe having a disability may help me to understand better future patients I could have." There was a desire to embrace this identity like they embraced their racial identities. They discussed seeing their disability as a uniqueness of their identity that strengthens their experiences. Although still fearful of the potential double marginalization, they sought ways to create more platforms and safe environments to highlight URM disability on their respective campuses. After the study, I followed up with three of them to ask about their progress. All three had indicated that it was still a work in prog-

ress, and they were trying to be strategic in their exploration and wanted to identify URM individuals in administration and faculty disability co-conspirators who could serve as mentors and supportive structures in pursuit of achieving this goal. Higher education institutions must utilize intentional approaches, using URM disabled students, to create campus spaces conducive to disabled student narrative sharing and community building while also considering power and privilege dynamics (Breneman et al., 2017).

Rhonda discussed how comfortable and relieved she felt being able to talk about her disability in the same way she talked about her race. She always wished she could have had conversations like during our interview and the focus group but was hesitant to discuss being disabled with her Black friends for fear of rejection. Knowing other URM disabled peers increased her confidence and willingness to approach future conversations. Rhonda stated:

> An enormous weight has been lifted off my shoulders in this conversation. I needed this space, and now that I know there may be other URM disabled peers, I am going to try to be more open about my disability to my friends and educate them.

Juana discussed how dialogue with other URM disabled peers made her reframe her thinking to see potential vulnerabilities as strengths. She believed this experience would allow her to be unapologetic in her racial and disabled identities moving forward. She said, "Look at us! Black, Brown, Indigenous, disabled, and beautiful. Like, my bipolar makes me who I am as much as being a Latina if people cannot understand that it is their loss."

After participating in the study, the students interviewed generated strategies and ideas for continuing to be in the community. They thought about forming a URM disabled student alliance across institutions. They believed that creating a safe space would potentially create more URM disability disclosures and more pathways to obtain support for both identities. Kele was very vocal about the power that this community could have moved forward.

> If this is powerful, imagine what we could do if we could have a group like this with more of us. We could do so much work and help people, and our schools celebrate and support disability like they do Indigenous, Black, and Latinx students. We could truly make a difference.

It became evident that participants began to see the potential power and influence their community could have by creating safe structures with opportunities to champion URM disabled college student experiences that could ultimately lead others to disclosure and community.

Discussion

Higher education institutions must prioritize and ensure that disability is included in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives designed to support historically marginalized populations. During the interviews for the present study, it became evident that URM disabled students were able to find a community on campus to support their racial identities but had more difficulty finding similar supports and representation for race and disabled identities. This finding is consistent with Shallish (2015), who found that colleges need more intention in incorporating disability into diversity by using the term "disability" and defining it instead of using terms like "inclusion" or "inclusive" that may only infer welcoming of disability. Institutions must be explicit within their disability plans, policies, and procedures to fully meet the needs of disabled students on campus. In addition, disability, like race, should be intertwined within the campus and not relegated in isolation between disability services offices (Harbour, 2008; Korbel et al., 2011).

Like with other studies (e.g., Brewer et al., 2023 Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2023 Franklin, 2019; Kimball et al., 2016), this study found that URM disabled students experienced race and disability by deliberately withholding disability disclosure in academics as protection against professors or peers trying to dissuade them from pursuing their majors. The URM disabled students in this study, while already feeling marginalized by professors with lower expectations due to race, did not want to give their professors any additional opportunities to marginalize further, lower expectations, and suggest alternative majors by disclosing their disabled identity (see also Annamma et al., 2013; Patton, 2016). They understood the potentially traumatic outcome that could be caused by race and disability stigmas. URM disabled students actively utilized cost-benefit analysis approaches influenced by their campuses when considering disability disclosure as a way to prevent any further marginalization from peers or faculty. This finding concurs with previous research that found that racially and disabled minoritized students examine their higher education environments to inform them on what information to share that will have minimal discrimination (Hope et al., 2018; Wood, 2017; McGee, 2016; Yosso et al., 2009).

This study revealed that creating a community that embodies racial and disability diversity can lessen the stigmas, stereotypes, and deficit thinking (see also Banks & Hughes, 2013). The community was seen as an opportunity to build connections and form a new counternarrative to support higher education racialized and disabled experiences on respective campuses, a finding consistent with other research (e.g., Von Robertson et al., 2016; Yosso et al., 2009). This group experience helped URM disabled students realize that they were not alone in their journey and that similarities with other participants could be an influential asset to their success on campus (see also Morales, 2021; Whitaker et al., 2021). Like Joseph (2018), community involvement allowed students to evolve their understanding and perception of race and disability through other perspectives.

This evolution can result in new individual and collective ways of thinking. For instance, in the present study, new ways of thinking allowed URM disabled students to generate strategies to organize and resist racism and ableism embedded in higher education practices (see also Dolmage, 2017; Petersen, 2009). There is a greater need for an equitable education that prioritizes interconnections in planning and programming between race, disability, racism, and ableism, thus creating a "collusive symbiosis" that dismantles policies in higher education that have historically centered whiteness and able-minded and bodied thinking (Annamma et al., 2022).

Recommendations

Colleges that desire to create socially just campuses must prioritize race and disability in diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, processes, and structures (Nunes, 2021; Sheef et al., 2020; Whitaker et al., 2021). Institutions may need to implement more flexible, URM disabled student specific initiatives that focus on addressing their needs to have a successful student experience on campus, especially considering the current attack on DEI in higher education and the elimination of DEI-related offices and initiatives in some states (Friedman & Vlady, 2023; Mireles, 2022). This approach will help create an asset-based perception of disability throughout campus, providing support and programming regarding racial, gender, and other identities within DEI (Leake & Stodden, 2014).

Creating this environment can also result in institutions allocating more funding to provide adequate disability support and resources to make the campus accessible while lessening the need for disability disclosure and self-advocacy (Karpicz, 2020). Higher education institutions should implement mandatory training and professional development for administration, faculty, and staff related to Universal Design to create a campus that offers students many ways to access their education (Dwyer et al., 2023). Implementing this training can create a more equitable higher education environment for URM disabled students that can catalyze increases in the allocation of financial resources for support that may substantially lessen the need to utilize self-advocacy skills (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016; Karpicz, 2020; Pendakur et al., 2019).

A socially just higher education institution will also have to find ways to ensure accountability measures are implemented for URM disabled students to provide a range of diverse and individualized accommodations throughout campus (Bernard-Brak et al., 2010; Herbert et al., 2020; Marshak et al., 2010; Stein, 2013). URM disabled students' successful navigation of campus requires this support for any chance to receive access to an equitable education. This mindset can also help in creating an asset-based perception of disability on campus while providing support and programming with other historically marginalized racial and gendered identities often associated with DEI initiatives (Leake & Stodden, 2014).

URM disabled students in the study had difficulty conceptualizing how both racism and ableism showed up in their lives. Increasing URM disabled representation in students, administration, faculty, and staff on college campuses can help to build support in the development of self-advocacy and a more informed understanding of how racism and ableism operate to constrain the progression of URM disabled students at college (Annamma, 2013; Karpicz, 2020; Mckinney et al., 2021; Vargas et al., 2020). In addition, increased representation could provide an opportunity to highlight and create programming with implicit focuses (due to DEI-focused higher education bans) on racial and disabled student and employee needs in higher education that can, in turn, develop campuses that are more conducive to URM disabled members of the campus community (Agarwal et al., 2014; Arbona & Jimenez, 2014; Banks, 2013; Cory et al., 2010; Harbour et al, 2017). URM disabled students will be able to connect with both racial and disabled identities while successfully attempting to matriculate through higher education. This connection may help them in their search to establish a community by allowing them to build relationships with other URM disabled students who can be pivotal in their overall health, well-being, and success on higher education campuses (Stapleton, 2015).

Conclusion

Providing research that focuses on how URM disabled students make meaning of both racial and disabled identities adds voice and definition to higher education, race, and disability research. This study demonstrates how URM disabled students conceptualize and navigate racial and disability identities in higher education. It also demonstrates the power of being in a racialized and disabled community and how collective voices and experiences could be the catalyst in moving higher education institutions to address ableism in addition to racism in their practices, thus working toward an actual socially just higher education experience (Mingus, 2018; Patton et al., 2016). More research and work are needed to accurately represent the impact of racism and ableism on students in higher education scholarship (Abes, 2019; Harper, 2012). More specifically, there is a greater need for more "activist-oriented" scholarship that centers on the voices of URM disabled students (Annamma et al., 2013). This research will reflect a commitment to addressing the intersectional nuances and complexities that include race and disability within the entire higher education experience (Lester & Nusbaum, 2018). This knowledge and critical understanding can help move higher education research and institutions toward recognizing the depth of complexity of perceptions and experiences URM disabled students bring when they enroll on campus.

References

Abes, E. S. (2019). Crip theory: Dismantling ableism in student development theory. In E. S. Abes, S. R. Jones, & D. L. Stewart (Eds.), *Rethinking college student development theory using critical frameworks* (pp. 64–72). Routledge.

Agarwal, N., Calvo, B. A., & Kumar, V. (2014). Paving the road to success: A students with disabilities organization in a university setting. *College Student Journal, 48*(1), 34–44

Anctil, T. M., Ishikawa, M. E., & Tao Scott, A. (2008). Academic identity development through self-determination: Successful college students with learning disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 31*(3), 164–174. https://doi.org/10.1177/0885728808315331

Annamma, S. A. (2014). Disabling juvenile justice: Engaging the stories of incarcerated young women of color with disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 35*(5), 313–324. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932514526785

Annamma, S. A. (2016). *DisCrit: Disability studies and critical race theory in education*. Teachers College Press.

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D., & Ferri, B. (2013). Dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability. *Race ethnicity and education, 16*(1), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.730511

Annamma, S. A., Ferri, B. A., & Connor, D. J. (Eds.). (2022). *DisCrit expanded: Reverberations, ruptures, and inquiries*. Teachers College Press.

Aquino, K. C., Alhaddab, T. A., & Kim, E. (2017). "Does disability matter?" Students' satisfaction with college experiences. In E. Kim & K. C. Aquino (Eds.), *Disability as diversity in higher education: Policies and practices to enhance student success* (47–60). Routledge.

Arbona, C., & Jimenez, C. (2014). Minority stress, ethnic identity, and depression among Latino/a college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 61*(1), 162–168. doi.org/10.1037/a0034914

Asch, A., & Fine, M. (Eds.). (1988). *Moving disability beyond "stigma."* Plenum Publishing Corporation.

Baker, C. N., & Robnett, B. (2012). Race, social support, and college student retention: A case study. *Journal of College Student Development, 53*(2), 325–335. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2012.0025

Baker, D. L., Schmaling, K., Fountain, K. C., Blume, A. W., & Boose, R. (2016). Defining diversity: A mixed-method analysis of terminology in faculty applications. *The Social Science Journal, 53*(1), 60–66. doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2015.01.004

Banks, J. (2017). "These people are never going to stop labeling me": Educational experiences of African American male students labeled with learning disabilities. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 50*(1), 96–107.

Banks, J., & Hughes, M. S. (2013). Double consciousness: Postsecondary experiences of African American males with disabilities. *The Journal of Negro Education, 82*(4), 368–381. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.82.4.0368

Barnard-Brak, L., Lechtenberger, D., & Lan, W. Y. (2010). Accommodation strategies of college students with disabilities. *The Qualitative Report 15*(2), 411–429. doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/ 2010.1158

Beilke, J. R., & Yssel, N. (1999). The chilly climate for students with disabilities in higher education. *College Student Journal, 33*(3), 364–364.

Bell, C. M. (Ed.). (2011). *Blackness and Disability: Critical examinations and cultural interventions* (Vol. 21). LIT Verlag Münster.

Berger, M. T., & Guidroz, K. (Eds.). (2009). *The intersectional approach: Transforming the academy through race, class, and gender.* University of North Carolina Press.

Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. Taylor & Francis.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). From bi-racial to tri-racial: Towards a new system of racial stratification in the USA. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 27*, 931–950. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000268530

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Racism without racists: Colorblind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States* (4th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.

Botha, M., Hanlon, J., & Williams, G. L. (2021). Does language matter? Identity-first versus person-first language use in autism research: A response to Vivanti. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/75n83

Breneman, D., Eisenman, L., Grigal, M., & Salzer, M. (2017). I am different/and so are you. Creating safe spaces for disability disclosure (a conversation). In S. L. Kerschbaum, L. T Eisenman, & J. M. Jones (Eds), *Negotiating disability disclosure and higher education* (pp. 345–362). University of Michigan Press.

Brewer, G., Urwin, E., & Witham, B. (2023). Disabled student experiences of Higher Education. *Disability & Society*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2023.2263633

Carroll, G. (1998). E*nvironmental stress and African Americans: The other side of the moon*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Cech, E. A., Metz, A., Smith, J. L., & DeVries, K. (2017). Epistemological dominance and social inequality: Experiences of Native American science, engineering, and health students. *Science, Technology, & Human Values, 42*(5), 743–774. https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243916687037

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Sage.

Cole, E. R. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *American Psychologist, 64*(3), 170–180. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014564

Connor, D. J. (2008). Not so strange bedfellows: The promise of disability studies and critical race theory. In S. L. Gabel & S. Danforth (Eds.), *Disability and the politics of education: An international reader*, pp. 451–76. Peter Lang.

Connor, D. J. (2009). Breaking containment–the power of narrative knowing: Countering silences within traditional special education research. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 13*(5), 449–470.

Cory, R. C., White, J. M., & Stuckey, Z. (2010). Using disability studies theory to change disability services: A case study in student activism. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 23*(1), 29–37

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review 43*(6), 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139–168.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.

Cuellar, M. G., & Johnson-Ahorlu, R. N. (2023). Racialized experiences off and on campus: Contextualizing Latina/o students' perceptions of climate at an emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). *Urban Education, 58*(9), 1973–2002. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920927772

Dávila, B. (2015). Critical race theory, disability microaggressions and Latina/o student experiences in special education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 18*(4), 443–468.

Dill, B. T., & Zambrana, R. E. (2009). *Emerging intersections: Race, class, and gender in theory, policy, and practice.* Rutgers University Press.

Dolmage, J. (2017). *Academic ableism: Disability and higher education.* University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9708722

Drum, C. E. (2009). Models and approaches to disability. In C. E. Drum, G. L. Krahn, & H. Bersani Jr. (Eds.), *Disability and public health* (pp. 27–44). American Public Health Association and American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Dunn, D. S., & Andrews, E. E. (2015). Person-first and identity-first language: Developing psychologists' cultural competence using disability language. *American Psychologist, 70*(3), 255. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038636

Dunn, D. S., & Burcaw, S. (2013). Disability identity: exploring narrative accounts of disability. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 58*(2), 148. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031691

Dwyer, P., Mineo, E., Mifsud, K., Lindholm, C., Gurba, A., & Waisman, T. C. (2023). Building neurodiversity-inclusive postsecondary campuses: Recommendations for leaders in higher education. *Autism in Adulthood, 5*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2021.0042

Evans, N. J., & Herriott, T. K. (2009). Philosophical and theoretical approaches to disability. In J. L. Higbee & A. A. Mitchell (Eds.), *Making good on the promise: Student affairs professionals with disabilities* (pp. 27–40). American College Personnel Association and University Press of America.

Evans, N. J., Broido, E. M., Brown, K., & Wilke, A. (2017). *Disability in higher education: A social justice approach*. Jossey-Bass.

Faggella-Luby, M., Gelbar, N., Dukes III, L. L., Madaus, J., Lombardi, A., & Lalor, A. (2017). Universal Design and college students with Disabilities: Does the data equal the Zeal? *Currents in Teaching & Learning, 9*(2).

Ferri, B. A., & Connor, D. J. (2010). "I was the special ed. girl": Urban working-class young women of color. *Gender and Education, 22*(1), 105–121. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250802612688

Fish, J., & Syed, M. (2018). Native Americans in higher education: An ecological systems perspective. *Journal of College Student Development, 59*(4), 387–403. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2018.0038

Fleming, A. R., Oertle, K. M., Plotner, A. J., & Hakun, J. G. (2017). Influence of social factors on student satisfaction among college students with disabilities. *Journal of College Student Development, 58,* 215–228. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0016

Franklin, J. D. (2019). Coping with racial battle fatigue: Differences and similarities for African American and Mexican American college students. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 23*, 1–21. http://dx.doi.org/10 .1080/13613324.2019.1579178

Friedman, H. H., & Vlady, S. (2023). DEI in the culture wars: How to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion without alienating others. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Social and Education Sciences* (pp. 399–413).

García-Fernández, C. M. (2014). *Deaf-Latina/Latino critical theory in education: The lived experiences and multiple intersecting identities of deaf-Latina/o high school students* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin]. https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/items/41161890-c8b0-47df-9557-c0846243739e

Gooden, S. T., & Martin, K. J. (2014). Facilitating college success among emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions: Multiple perspectives yield commonly shared diversity goals. *Journal of Public Management & Social Policy, 20*(1), 1–28.

Griffin, K. A., & Museus, S. D. (Eds.). (2011). *Using mixed methods to study intersectionality in higher education. New directions in institutional research, Number 151* (Vol. 113). John Wiley & Sons.

Guillory, R.M. (2009). American Indian/Alaska native college student retention strategies. *Journal of Developmental Education, 33*(2),14–16.

Guillory, R. M., & Wolverton, M. (2008). It's about family: Native American student persistence in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education, 79*(1), 58–87. doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2008.0001

Harper, S. R. (2012). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *The Review of Higher Education, 36*(1), 9–29. doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2012.0047

Harper, S. R., Smith, E. J., & Davis III, C. H. (2018). A critical race case analysis of Black undergraduate student success at an urban university. *Urban Education, 53*(1), 3–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916668956

Herbert, J. T., Coduti, W. A., & Fleming, A. (2020). University policies, resources, and staff practices: Impact on college students with disabilities. *Journal of Rehabilitation, 86*(4), 31–41.

Hernández-Saca, D. I., & Cannon, M. A. (2016). Disability as psycho-emotional disablism: A theoretical and philosophical review of education theory and practice. In M. Peters (Ed), *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Springer doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-532-7_456-1

Hong, B. S. (2015). Qualitative analysis of the barriers college students with disabilities experience in higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 56*, 209–226. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0032

Hope, E. C., Velez, G., Offidani-Bertrand, C., Keels, M., & Durkee, M. I. (2018). Political activism and mental health among Black and Latinx college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 24*(1), 26. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000144

Jackson, A. P., Smith, S. A., & Hill, C. L. (2003). Academic persistence among Native American college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(4), 548–565. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2003.0039

Johnson-Ahorlu, R. N. (2012). The academic opportunity gap: How racism and stereotypes disrupt the education of African Americans. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 15*, 633– 652. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2011.645566

Johnstone, C. (2004). Disability and identity: Personal constructions and formalized supports. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 24*(4). doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v24i4.880

Johnston-Guerrero, M. P. (2016). Embracing the messiness: Critical and diverse perspectives on racial and ethnic identity development. *New Directions for Student Services, 154*(2016), 43–55. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20174

Johnston-Guerrero, M. P. (2016). The meanings of race matter: College students learning about race in a not-so-postracial era. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(4), 819–849. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216651144

Joseph, D. H. (2018). *Journeys of resilience: American Indian students with disabilities overcoming barriers to pursue higher education* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Arizona]. Proquest Dissertations & Theses.

Karpicz, J. R. (2020). "Just my being here is self-advocacy": Exploring the self-advocacy experiences of disabled graduate students of color. *JCSCORE, 6*(1), 137–163. doi.org/10.15763/issn.2642-2387.2020.6.1.137-163

Kimball, E. W., Moore, A., Vaccaro, A., Troiano, P. F., & Newman, B. M. (2016). College students with disabilities redefine activism: Self-advocacy, storytelling, and collective action. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 9*(3), 245. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000031

Kimball, E. W., Wells, R. S., Ostiguy, B. J., Manly, C. A., & Lauterbach, A. A. (2016). Students with disabilities in higher education: A review of the literature and an agenda for future research. *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*, 91–156. doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26829-3_3

Korbel, D. M., Lucia, J. H., Wenzel, C. M., & Anderson, B. G. (2011). Collaboration strategies to facilitate successful transition of students with disabilities in a changing higher education environment. *New Directions for Higher Education, 154*(2), 17–25. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.430

Leake, D. W., & Stodden, R. A. (2014). Higher education and Disability: Past and future of underrepresented populations. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 27*(4), 399–408.

Lester, J. N., & Nusbaum, E. A. (2018). "Reclaiming" Disability in critical qualitative research: Introduction to the special issue. *Qualitative Inquiry, 24*(1), 3–7. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417727761

Marshak, L., Van Wieren, T., Ferrell, D. R., Swiss, L., & Dugan, C. (2010). Exploring barriers to college student use of disability services and accommodations. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 22*(3), 151–165.

McGee, E. O. (2016). Devalued Black and Latino racial identities: A byproduct of STEM college culture? *American Educational Research Journal, 53*, 1626–1662. doi.org/10.3102/0002831216676572

McKinney de Royston, M., Madkins, T. C., Givens, J. R., & Nasir, N. I. S. (2021). "I'ma teacher, I'm gonna always protect you": Understanding Black educators' protection of Black children. *American Educational Research Journal, 58*(1), 68–106. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831220921119

Mena, J. A. (2022). From cradle to college: Cultural socialization, identity development, and the college experiences of Latinx students. *Journal of Latinx Psychology, 10*(3), 191. doi.org/10.1037/lat0000207

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* John Wiley & Sons.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Miles, A. L., Nishida, A., & Forber-Pratt, A. J. (2017). An open letter to white disability studies and ableist institutions of higher education. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 37*(3). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5997

Miller, R. A. (2018). Toward intersectional identity perspectives on Disability and LGBTQ identities in higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 59*(3), 327–346. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2018.0030

Mills, K. J. (2020). "It's systemic": Environmental, racial microaggressions experienced by Black undergraduates at a predominantly white institution. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 13*(1), 44.

Mingus, M. (2018, November 3). *"Disability justice" is simply another term for love* [Blog post]. https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/

Mireles, D. (2022). Theorizing racist ableism in higher education. *Teachers College Record, 124*(7), 17–50. doi.org/10.1177/01614681221111428

Morales, E. (2021). "Beasting" at the battleground: Black students responding to racial microaggressions in higher education. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 14*(1), 72. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000168

Newman, L. A., & Madaus, J. W. (2015). An analysis of factors related to receipt of accommodations and services by postsecondary students with disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 36*(4), 208–219. doi.org/10.1177/0741932515572912

Newman, L., Wagner, M., Knokey, A. M., Marder, C., Nagle, K., Shaver, D.,…Schwarting, M. (2011). *The post-high school outcomes of young adults with disabilities up to 8 years after high school. A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)* (NCSER 2011- 3005). SRI International.

Nunes, L. (2021, January 26). New directions for diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. *APS Observer*, 34.

Owens, J. (2015). Exploring the critiques of the social model of disability: The transformative possibility of Arendt's notion of power. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 37*(3), 385–403. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12199

Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Pearson, H. (2010). Complicating intersectionality through the identities of a hard of hearing Korean adoptee: An autoethnography. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 43*(3), 341–356.

Peña, E. V., Stapleton, L. D., & Schaffer, L. M. (2016). Critical Perspectives on Disability Identity. *New Directions for Student Services, 2016*(154). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315765464-6

Pendakur, S. L., Quaye, S. J., & Harper, S. R. (Eds.). (2019). The heart of our work: Equitable engagement for students in US higher education. In *Student Engagement in Higher Education* (pp. 1-16). Routledge.

Perry, S. N., & Franklin, K. K. (2006). I'm not the Gingerbread Man! Exploring the experiences of college students diagnosed with ADHD. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 19*, 94–109.

Petersen, A. (2006). An African-American woman with disabilities: The intersection of gender, race and disability. *Disability & Society, 21*(7), 721-734.

Petersen, A. J. (2009). "Ain't nobody gonna get me down": An examination of the educational experiences of four African American women labeled with disabilities. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 42*, 428-442. doi.org/10.1080/10665680903245284

Ramirez-Stapleton, L. D., Torres, L. E., Acha, A., & McHenry, A. (2020). Disability justice, race, and education. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity (JCSCORE), 6*(1), 29–39. doi.org/10.15763/issn.2642-2387.2020.6.1.28-39

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Samuels, E. J. (2003). My body, my closet: Invisible Disability and the limits of coming-out discourse. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 9*(1), 233–255. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315680668-34

Shakespeare, T. (2006). The social model of disability. *The Disability Studies Reader, 2*, 197–204. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203077887-25

Shakespeare, T., & Watson, N. (2001). The social model of disability: an outdated ideology? In *Exploring Theories and Expanding Methodologies: Where We Are and Where We Need to Go* (pp. 9–28). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Shallish, L. (2015). Just how much diversity will the law permit?: The Americans with Disabilities Act, diversity and disability in higher education. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 35*(3), Article 8. https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v35i3.4942

Shaw, L. R., Chan, F., & McMahon, B. T. (2012). Intersectionality and disability harassment: The interactive effects of disability, race, age, and gender. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 55*(2), 82–91. doi.org/10.1177/0034355211431167

Smith, W. A., Mustaffa, J. B., Jones, C. M., Curry, T. J., & Allen, W. R. (2016). "You make me wanna holler and throw up both my hands!": Campus culture, Black misandric microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 29*, 1189 –1209. dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1214296

Smith-Chandler, N., & Swart, E. (2014). In their own voices: Methodological considerations in narrative disability research. *Qualitative Health Research, 24*(3), 420–430. doi.org/10.1177/1049732314523841

Sniatecki, J. L., Perry, H. B., & Snell, L. H. (2015). Faculty attitudes and knowledge regarding college students with disabilities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 28*, 259-275

Solorzano, D. G., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. J. (2000) Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: the experience of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education 69*(1), 60–73.

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 14*(4), 471-495. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365

Stapleton, L. (2015). When being deaf is centered: d/Deaf women of color's experiences with racial/ethnic and d/Deaf identities in college. *Journal of College Student Development, 56*(6), 570–586. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0061

Stapleton, L., & James, L. (2020). Not another all white study: challenging color-evasiveness ideology in disability scholarship (Practice Brief). *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33*(3), 215–222.

Steele, C. (2003). Stereotype threat and African-American student achievement. In T. Perry, C. Steele, & A. G. Hilliard, III, (Eds.), *Young, Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African-American Students* (pp. 109 –130). Beacon Press.

Stein, K. F. (2013). DSS and accommodations in higher education: Perceptions of students with psychological disabilities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 26*(2), 145–161.

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press.

Toutain, C. (2019). Barriers to accommodations for students with disabilities in higher education: A literature review. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 32*(3), 297–310.

Vaccaro, A., Daly-Cano, M., & Newman, B. M. (2015). A sense of belonging among college students with disabilities: An emergent theoretical model. *Journal of College Student Development, 56*(7), 670–686. doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0072

Vaccaro, A., Kimball, E. W., Wells, R. S., & Ostiguy, B. J. (2015). Researching students with disabilities: The importance of critical perspectives. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 2014*(163), 25–41. doi.org/10.1002/ir.20084

Vargas, N., Villa-Palomino, J., & Davis, E. (2020). Latinx faculty representation and resource allocation at Hispanic serving institutions. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 23*(1), 39–54.

Vogel, S. A., Leyser, Y., Burgstahler, S., Sligar, S. R., & Zecker, S. G. (2006). Faculty knowledge and practices regarding students with disabilities in three contrasting institutions of higher education. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 18*, 109–123.

Von Robertson, R., Bravo, A., & Chaney, C. (2016). Racism and the experiences of Latina/o college students at a PWI (predominantly white institution). *Critical Sociology, 42*(4–5), 715–735. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920514532664

Whitaker, W. E., Lee, M., & Wallace, M. (2021). Ensuring that social justice includes disability. In S. Schoper & A. French (Eds.), *Creating Inclusivity While Providing Accommodations: A Practical Guide to Champion Individuals with (Dis)abilities on Campus* (pp. 6–14). ACPA College Student Educators International.

Wood, T. (2017). Rhetorical disclosures: The stakes of disability identity in higher education. In S. L. Kerschbaum, L. T Eisenman, & J. M. Jones (Eds), *Negotiating Disability Disclosure and Higher Education* (pp. 75-91). University of Michigan Press.

Wright, S. R. (2012). *Oral histories of four urban youth affected by disproportionality in special education* [Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Los Angeles]. https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/concern/theses/vt150m47x

Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review, 79*(4), 659–691. doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.m6867014157m707l

Zehner, A. L. (2018). Campus climate for students with disabilities. In K. Soria (Ed.), *Evaluating Campus Climate at US Research Universities: Opportunities For Diversity And Inclusion*, (pp. 125–149). doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94836-2_6

About the Author

Warren E. Whitaker received his B.A. degree in psychology from Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania and Ph.D. from the University of San Diego. His experience includes working as a school psychologist for Roosevelt School District No.66 in Phoenix, Arizona and served on the planning committee for Project College, a summer on-campus orientation program in San Diego for high school disabled students planning to enroll in higher education. He is currently a professor in the Department of Educational Leadership for Diverse Learning Communities at Molloy University. His research interests include the postsecondary education transition of disabled students, the intersections of race and disability in higher education access and matriculation, as well as how ADHD is conceptualized and addressed within education, academia, and broader society. He can be reached by email at: wwhitaker@molloy.edu.

"Blackness Distorts:" A Qualitative Exploration of Race and Disability in Black Women Graduate Students

Kat Stephens-Peace[1]

Abstract

Few qualitative studies have focused on the experiences of neurodivergent graduate students as they pursue graduate and professional degrees, and particularly, how Black women make sense of their race, gender, and ability while preparing for academic careers. This study provides clarity on how their multiply marginalized identities lead them to make meaning of dis/ability culture, dis/ability identity, and expectations of academic performance and excellence despite experiencing executive functioning challenges. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 Black women graduate students, with special attention to race and dis/ability. Participants lived with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, dyslexia, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and auditory processing disorder. Participants shared the cultural norms and cultural stigmas among the African Diaspora as they relate to dis/ability and described how they sought refuge with other neurodivergent Black women. The article concludes with implications for research and practice, including more programming and pathways for (future) dis/abled faculty and more community spaces focusing on intersectionality.

Keywords: disability, black women, graduate students, ADHD, neurodivergence

Introduction

The increasing diversity of the graduate student population enrolling in higher education is a universal win for institutions and graduate education. However, the pursuit of graduate education provides its own challenges for dis/abled graduate students (Calarco, 2020; Carter et al., 2017). Challenges are expected and can be developmental in graduate education. However, these challenges multiply at the nexus of race, gender, and dis/ability. For graduate students who are racialized and gendered as minoritized, living with "invisible" dis/abilities and neurodivergent conditions can make graduate school even more daunting (Carter et al., 2017; Dwyer et al., 2023). The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of neurodivergent Black women in graduate school living with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, auditory processing disorder, and dyslexia, as their race, gender, and dis/ability collide. Race as an identity intersects with how one makes sense of dis/ability identity and culture.

The present study interrogates Black women graduate students' experiences of "invisible" dis/abilities with consideration to their other salient identities while mirroring the history of community-building within Black feminism and its legacy (Porter et al., 2022). By assessing Black women graduate students racialized, academic, and personal experiences with graduate school, higher education, dis/ability culture, and dis/ability identity, this study gains a deeper understanding of the experiences of Black women graduate students who experience dis/ability and neurodivergence overwhelmingly. Their unique challenges point to further inquiry about the implications of graduate school programs of study and higher education, with the implications of academic ableism (Dolmage, 2017), and how disability leans toward being raced and gendered as White and masculine (Grech, 2015; Lovelace et al., 2021; Stapleton & James, 2020). As a result, this study asks, where is there respite for this student population, many of whom desire to have academic and professoriate careers? In the execution and reflection of this research study, I aim to shed light on

[1]*Ball State University*

the geographies of space and place (within academic institutions) and the self-advocacy these students employ on a regular basis in harmful academic settings. My study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of racialized students with dis/abilities and neurodivergence in graduate school, and can inform policies and practices to support them appropriately (Moriña et al., 2020).

Race and disability shape the academic lives of Black women in higher education (Chapple et al., 2021). The intersectionality of identities remains complex; race and dis/ability as identities collide repeatedly in ways that have implications for both inclusion efforts and the ways exclusion thrives (Peña et al., 2016; Scheef et al., 2020). Representation in dis/ability culture and communities leans heavily toward White and masculine (Bell, 2006). When one's identities diverge from Whiteness and masculinity, as those of the Black women in this study do, to place oneself inside of academic spaces is to embrace the possibility of isolation, erasure, marginalization, and misunderstanding (Dolmage, 2017). Graduate school and academia in general are domains that perpetuates escalating conceptualizations of excellence, intelligence, and faculty understandings of rigor (Price, 2024). Black women navigate these spaces while being vulnerable to anxiety, hypervisibility, invisibility, and academic ableism (Dolmage, 2017; Okello, 2021).

I used the Black Feminist Disability Framework (Bailey & Mobley, 2019) to help explain Black dis/abled women's experience with harmful racialization, racism, racist, and ableist encounters within higher education. Additionally, this critical higher education inquiry is supported by integration of Black Studies and Disability Studies. Bailey and Mobley's (2019) framework summarily invites closer interrogation and understanding of the strength and utility of Black Studies and Disability Studies together, in conceptualizing a gendered, racialized, and dis/abled experience simultaneously. In this paper I intentionally integrate poetry and language often outside of academic norms. My employment of poetry emphasizes, critiques, and provides analysis on what cannot be adequately communicated in academic writing alone (Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick, 2020).

The Period. Of. Masking[2] and Pretending. Is. Over. For. It. Is. Costly. (Stephens, 2022, p. 16)

Defining Terms and Concepts

Neurodiverse and neurodiversity (Chapman, 2020; Kapp et al., 2013) are terms relating to the vast spectrum of neurotypical and neurodiverse ways that people's brains work and operate. Neurodiversity reflects the understanding that no two brains operate the same, with the term neurodiverse reflecting that diversity of brains. Additionally, this is when brains and brain behavior operate outside of neurotypical and "expected" ways. Neurodivergent relates primarily to people whose brains work and operate differently, outside of what is considered normative.

Though person-first language (which places emphasis on the person, then the disability) is commonly used today (Flink, 2019), one aspect of my research is the inherent ways that it points to dis/ability as the (unwelcome) center in the lives of Black women graduate students. As a result, my use of identity-first language (which places the disability before the person), is intentional and mirrors the often-jarring nature of dis/ability in the lives of Black women graduate students, claiming dis/ability explicitly. This population's coming-to-terms with dis/ability as a reality, serves as a visceral insertion into "dis/ability" as conversation, experience, lives, and culture. Whereas they might formerly exist alongside dis/ability (and sparingly so), this educational research project, study, and paper give them their own space to be dis/abled, with impunity. Given this situational, cultural, lack-of-inclusion, and #DisabilityTooWhite—a trending hashtag on Twitter/X (Thompson, 2016)—educational research context, it is an act of subversion to revise the past, to eventually arrive at the contemporary (people-first language), and hopefully the future.

Neurodivergent lived experiences are linked to dis/abilities such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), dyslexia, dyscalculia, Tourette syndrome, and auditory processing disorder. Here, I center Black women graduate students who experience these dis/abilities, and the executive dysfunction related to them. In this paper, dis/ability refers to "the entire context in which a person functions" (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 1). My usage of Black relates to the construct of race and includes a global understanding of Blackness. Black in this context extends beyond race, and, in addition, includes and recognizes ethnic identity as well. Here, Black refers to those with lineage or heritage of the African Diaspora (Afro-Caribbean,

[2] Masking is a term used to represent behavior that some neurodivergent people employ to convey and amplify artificial sameness with neurotypical people. In masking, neurodivergent people mirror neurotypicals and are in a constant state of becoming something/someone other than themselves.

Black American, and Continental African), and who identify as Black. Women in this paper's context refers to those who are cisgender and identify as women and female. Graduate student in this paper's context relates to any Black woman who, at the time of this study's development, was enrolled in a graduate program at an institution in the continental United States.

Positionality Statement

As a dis/abled Black woman, neurodivergent, early career scholar, tenure track faculty member with ADHD, and a former graduate student navigating diagnosis during my doctoral program, this work is personal. Further, my late adult (non-childhood) diagnosis helped me to understand and interrogate the roles that my race, immigrant status, and class status played in the lack of intervention in my urban schooling during childhood (Stephens, 2020, 2022). The lack of psychoeducational testing and the lack of culturally competent educators made it difficult for the Guyanese and Caribbean immigrant community I grew up in to seek testing and support. My diagnosis as a doctoral student was challenging, disorienting, and heartbreaking. It involved a period of mourning the chances in life I had not received. I wrestled with this loss, and it became an opportunity to reflect, embrace my creativity, and seek answers as to how I "made" it to a PhD program without such crucial information. *Did nobody care about Black children in my Brooklyn & Queens neighborhood? What would mi brethren dem mek ah dis? What eyepass would dis bring mi muddah inna di critical immigrant enclave? Why was there silence when I repeatedly failed math, refused to do homework, and hated middle and high school??? How was I even enrolled in a PhD program? When were they going to find out I was a fake, and was my #IslandBrilliance (Bent et al., 2023) and our reasoning sessions for naught? After all, my identity had successfully been shredded to oblivion and I was desperate for information on neurodivergence in Black women. This new word in my life…"dis/ability" was woefully under researched. A match had been lit and my project was born.*

Literature Review

Space, Place, and Harm in Higher Education

Black spatial considerations of space and place (McKittrick, 2006) highlight meaning in and across various geographies. McKittrick (2006) argues that space and place are not neutral, but rather are shaped by power relations and inequalities. The physical and social spaces of graduate school negatively contribute (Ohito, 2021) to the experiences of Black women students with dis/abilities and neurodivergence, as harm is one result of their engaging in higher education. Spatial considerations remain important, as the setting and environment both can be shaped and cultivated by academic institutions, departments, and programs. Inequality and microaggressions based on race and gender alone are not the sole arbiters of injury to Black women collegians. Dis/ability (in)justice, and academic ableism (Dolmage, 2017) exist in part due to misunderstanding and lack of education about the full scope of dis/ability and the diversity of those impacted by it.

The population of Black women in graduate school has grown via successful recruitment and programming efforts that indicate understanding of the value of a diverse student body (Milem, 2003). This benefit of their hypervisibility en route to graduate school does not equate to a sense of invisibility once they enroll and matriculate (Haynes et al., 2016; Showunmi, 2023). Within the space that is higher education, considerations of minoritized students' experiences must not be forgotten. The geographies in and around academia are determinants to whether a gendered or racialized student will excel or fail (Stephens, 2022). McKittrick's (2011) employment of space and place underscores the challenges Black women students experience in academia, as they are seen and unseen.

Blackness and Disability

In consideration of Blackness within dis/ability discourse, it is often written about with separateness of Black and dis/ability (Pickens, 2019). This separateness is starting to disappear with discourse that identifies similarities, and existing alongside the other (Schalk, 2022). Blackness is many things, far beyond what this paper allows for, and in that is a state of being—a racial identity, and a classification system. Blackness is also positioned as the other outside of whiteness. Similarly, dis/ability is positioned as the other outside of ability. Theorizing Blackness on its own including its history, brilliance, arts, and other expressions, becomes diminished without inclusion of its existence within Disability Studies, Mad Studies, and Crip Studies. In Black Disability Studies, Blackness and dis/ability's co-existence upholds that a full expression of Blackness ceases to exist without dis/ability (Hinton, 2021).

Blackness in the context of disability has a long history, with Bell's (2010) seminal work critically bringing together long-ranging discourse highlighting cognitive impairment and slavery, canonical African American literature's engagement with dis/ability and illness, Blackness and war, and dis/abil-

ity in hip-hop music and rhetoric. Lastly, but not absolutely, this story is a continued experience of both existing inside and outside. The ways that Blackness and dis/ability are viewed as outsiders to White and able-bodied culture, Black Disability Studies, for example, bring the two to the center, and away from the margins. Together, Blackness and dis/ability allow for forward-moving conventions of Black culture but done so by centering inclusivity.

Racialization and Disability

Racialization is understood to be the process of sorting, grouping, and "race-ing" groups of people, rather than the formation of race itself (Hochman, 2019). Racialization toward Black people, Black experience, and Black life invites harmful, deadly, and degrading attitudes and behaviors that Black people are subject to. Negative racialization and implicit dis/ableism of Black people is strongly connected to anti-Blackness. The impact of negative racialization of Black people and Blackness continues to share a common thread in history, as it is not a new occurrence. Tyler (2022) posits as much with historical accounts going as far back as U.S. chattel slavery, antebellum, and postbellum of the entanglement of Blackness, anti-Blackness, and dis/ability. Racialization's positioning of Blackness on the fringes, or *outside*, mirrors the categorization of normal or normative, versus the dis/abled mind, body, or person, existing outside of that. In this way, racialization of Blackness and Black people successfully ostracizes and categorizes Black people, alongside ability and dis/ability.

Further, the harm of this racialization is that it impacts various facets of everyday life, policy, and support for dis/abilities in Black communities. It serves to gatekeep solutions, diagnosis, outreach, and support for diverse communities of people with dis/abilities (diagnosed or not) (Artiles, 2013), which has disproportionately impacted Black students across the pk-20 continuum over decades, and, conversely, has the potential to overcorrect, oversupport, overdiagnose, and over research White disabled pk-20 populations (Stapleton & James, 2020).

Academic Surveillance

Part of the challenge with being hyper visible in academia is that it may be predicated and reliant on performance, aptitude, or accomplishments (Macfarlane, 2021). The space itself is a welcoming one when a student meets and surpasses its measurements of excellence, academic rigor, and intelligence. Conversely, the place itself is unbalanced and strife with competition, celebrating non-collegial behaviors, highly individualistic, dependent on repeated feats of excellence and proven academic performance (Guiffrida, 2006; Guiffrida et al., 2012). When academia and higher education both occupy the space and place, it can incubate and cultivate the best and worst behaviors, some of which may threaten its very existence (Okello, 2021). Acknowledging race (Black), gender (woman), and disability (neurodivergence) further complicates any understanding of educational contexts (Annamma et al., 2016). Additionally, the dissonance within visibility and invisibility in academic contexts is often predicated on who (or what) is setting the rules or conditions for dissonance to occur. Multiply minoritized students' experience of the academic gaze is highly dependent on who is doing the gazing, potential benefits to the gazing, and the deemed importance of the gaze. The surveillance of Black bodies is not new (Browne, 2015) and exists in ways that dis/abled Black women students may not be able to overcome. In order to be in the system of academia, dis/abled Black women must allow themselves to be seen and unseen within (the) power structure that is academia.

Disabled Black Women Graduate Students' Compounding Pressures

Contemporary disability and higher education research and scholars continue to advance complex discourse at the nexus of race and disability (e.g., Annamma et al., 2016; Evans et al., 2017; Miller, 2018; Stapleton & Croom, 2017). Conversely, research on graduate school experiences for minority and specifically gendered students with dis/abilities and neurodivergence is scarce (Easley, 2022), which can be traced to scattered focuses which mirror multifaceted aspects of discussions on dis/ability. For instance, medical dis/ability, social and cultural dis/ability all mean different things but exist in the same ecosystem of dis/ability discourse (Barnes, 2019; Hogan, 2019). Students with specific dis/abilities, such as ADHD, autism, OCD, and auditory processing disorder, face unique challenges in graduate school due to their executive functioning. Executive functioning challenges are very disruptive to the elements of reading, writing, thinking, and motivation—all integral to a successful and productive graduate student's output.

Disabled Black women graduate students' engagement with the nuances of their identities as well as compartmentalizing them to succeed in graduate school is often proven difficult. In a system where they might be highlighted as beacons of representation and student success, many were succeeding at a high cost, while suffering silently (Walkington, 2017). Needing support and accommodations as a racialized and gendered graduate student could lend

to opening oneself up to scrutiny and stigma. To bypass the vulnerability and scrutiny that may accompany disclosure, masking becomes more prevalent as a method of survival (Kidwell et al., 2023; Radulski, 2022), especially in academic spaces, which are a graduate student's primary workplace. Deciding whether to disclose or mask (Pearson & Rose, 2021) adds additional pressure to dis/abled Black women graduate students' lives and academic experiences.

Disabled Black Women Graduate Students' Digital Ecosystem

Within the geography of higher education, students' use of social media and the internet is helpful in them making sense of their environment, helping shape their identities, and helping to underscore self-advocacy. The community building aspect of social media use has been chronicled in the academic lives of LGBTQ students and dis/abled students (Miller, 2017). Student's ability to create their own spaces and micro communities is an important aspect of their development, as it can provide "critical opportunities for LGBTQ youth to explore their identities and develop important skills," such as the ability to "rehearse crucial developmental tasks (coming out, cultivating identity, increasing self-confidence, self-acceptance, building relationships)" (Miller, 2017, p. 332). Black women's spaces have historically been a solution to preserve cultural norms while upholding and celebrating each other, sans trauma from the outside world or influences. This is no different in academia where sister circles, women's spaces, and gendered identity centers provide respite (Boveda & McCray 2021; Howard et al., 2016). Disabled Black women's virtual counter spaces provide contemporary solutions using social media and technology to care for themselves and each other while navigating graduate school and less representation in dis/ability research (Blaser & Ladner, 2020; Stapleton & James, 2020), universities' accounting of enrolled dis/abled students, dis/ability alongside other diversity efforts, (Scheef et al., 2020) and among their peers.

Lastly, Black women's ability to produce online or digital spaces and digital culture for their own community building (Quashie, 2004) is present here. Bourdieu's (1993) theory of cultural production encompasses high and low capital in certain social spaces. Bourdieu (1993) also posits that cultural production itself is guided by low levels of economic capital and high levels of cultural capital. The ways in which disabled Black women graduate students make space for each other online (Miller, 2017), helps them solidify community, especially around the topic of dis/ability (Tsatsou, 2020).

Theoretical Framing

My inquiry is guided by the Black Feminist Disability Framework (BFDF) (Bailey & Mobley, 2019), which acknowledges the intersectional experiences of Black women with dis/abilities and the unique challenges they face. The Black Feminist Disability Framework is especially prevalent in academic settings and posits that Black resiliency and survival that inherently exists for *all* Black people is ableist. This Framework notes that Black hypervisibility means Black subjects are barred from weakness while constantly being surveilled. This understanding upholds a superhuman expectation for Black people in their day-to-day life that erases their humanity and precludes them from being dis/abled all or some of the time.

The Black Feminist Disability Framework recognizes the impact of systemic oppression, such as racism, ableism, and sexism, on the lives of Black women with dis/abilities. It also acknowledges the importance of considering the social, cultural, and political contexts in which these experiences occur. This study centers the experiences of Black women with dis/abilities and neurodivergence in graduate school to better understand their intersecting experiences.

This framework complicates the choices Black women must make, choices made for them, and historical rewrites of groundbreaking disabled Black women, such as Harriet Tubman and Audre Lorde. These rewrites miss an opportunity to tell the truth about Black women, while also telling untruths about the impact of individuals living life with multiple marginalized identities (in this case, Disabled Black women). The Black Feminist Disability Framework suggests that members of society, both academic and nonacademic, are being robbed of humanity and their own experiences. The racialized terms of engagement make the lives of and graduate school experiences of dis/abled Black women radically different than their graduate student peers who are racialized and gendered differently. This aspect of race and dis/ability cannot be understated and are reflected in the following research questions guiding this study.

Research Question(s)

Collectively, my study consists of distinct statements of the problems and the research questions that animate them. The study is framed by this main research question that structures my inquiry:

RQ 1: How do neurodivergent Black women graduate students navigate their race and disability while enrolled in higher education?

The secondary questions follow:

- How do neurodivergent Black women graduate students' experience and understanding of Blackness shape their experience in graduate school?
- How do disability and diagnosis color the experiences of Black neurodivergent women as they navigate their graduate studies?
- How does neurodivergent Black women's responsive cultural production allow them to create space in these (sociopolitical) times, despite being ensconced within the places (read environments) that are higher education institutions?

Methodology

My study employed a critical qualitative approach to explore the experiences of Black women graduate students with dis/abilities and neurodivergence experiences enrolled in graduate school. My choices and paradigm as a researcher in this project were informed by my critical worldview and lived experiences. My study employed an additional grounding in its use of Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) as a method for exploring participants' stories. Portraiture was selected as a complement to the Black Feminist Disability Framework but is not foregrounded nor employed as the theoretical framework. Portraiture served more in support of expanding how as a researcher, I could engage more deeply with participants' stories. Portraiture demands a truthful researcher and an observant one. Portraiture as a methodology is a rigorous, intimate, and detailed methodology that prides itself on being a "cross between art and science, its blend of aesthetic sensibilities and empirical rigor, and its humanistic and literary metaphors" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005 p. 4). Portraiture is both analytical and community minded.

Furthermore, I grounded data analysis through employing Poetic Inquiry (Faulkner, 2017; Leavy, 2017), an arts-based research method. Both portraiture and poetic inquiry allowed for deeper reflection and analysis and pushed beyond the limits and capabilities of traditional academic discourse. This methodology dares to invite in innovative and creative languages, with deep creative engagement via poetry and prose. Poetry is a powerful supplement to the honesty, authenticity, and strengths of portraiture. According to Faulkner (2019), "poetic inquiry" can be used "as both a method and product of research activity" (p. 14). Together, portraiture and poetic inquiry allowed for deeper reflection, and push beyond the limits of the capabilities of traditional academic discourse.

Lastly, as a researcher I used accessible methodologies in the construction of the interview protocol and was very mindful to work with the executive (dys)function needs of the participants before and beyond my protocol design and implementation. There is an opportunity for higher education research (and doctoral training) to integrate disability-minded methods, frameworks, and accommodations-centric methods (Brown et al., 2019; Peña et al., 2018). Many best practices and considerations were ascertained from point-to-point, after each level of engagement in the study. Accessible and mindful language had to be considered and put into practice. This necessity was integrated into recruitment materials, survey materials, pre-and post-data collection, and in uniquely designed participant communication and follow up at every intersection. Educational research design and methods have laid foundational guidance for engaging in research (Boveda & McCray, 2021; Fitzwater, 2018) within dis/abled communities, although not specifically with regard to the intersection of race and gender (Bowleg, 2008).

Data Sources

Study participants were enrolled in various higher education institutions across the country. The site of the study was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as (a) all interviews were conducted virtually, and (b) all interviews took place wherever participants had a strong internet connection and a private space to engage in conversation. My study's success was influenced by its specific eligibility qualifications. Due to the prohibitively expensive, inaccessible, and deeply personal experiences related to diagnosis and dis/ability, it was not mandatory that participants have an official diagnosis. Rather, it was enough that participants experienced executive dysfunction symptoms often linked to neurodivergence and cognitive disabilities. By not having diagnosis qualifiers, any interested participant who was otherwise found eligible (Black woman graduate student) could participate freely. This approach was specifically taken to uphold that one could live with a dis/ability sans diagnosis, and their experiences still mattered. Furthermore, while the pathway to diagnosis is more difficult for racialized people, diagnosis "papers" would not be reified as an absolute in my study, nor would it serve as a barrier. I sought participants who identified (or suspected) having ADHD, autism, OCD, auditory processing disorder, dyslexia, and dyscalculia. Eighty percent of my participants identified as having ADHD with the remainder identifying other disabilities. Participants were aged 18-50 and were matriculated graduate students. Eleven of my four-

teen participants were enrolled in doctoral programs, and three in master's programs. All participants identified as Black women.

Data Collection

Demographics survey and screening questionnaires were made available online, with an electronic flyer shared on social media platforms and via professional networks. Demographic questions and screening questions were separate to be considerate of the population's executive functioning and focus challenges, instead of disseminating one long survey that could be quickly abandoned due to overwhelm. Both the survey and screening questionnaires were made accessible via Qualtrics via multiple online modalities (mobile, desktop, tablet). I designed the protocol to ease overwhelm for someone with executive functioning challenges, neurocognitive differences, or limited attention and visual and sensory needs. Additional accessibility tools were in place (Likert scale answer fields, fill-in, multiple choice) and a visible progress bar to indicate survey percentage completion, as well as repetitive and, thereby, predictable language. My digital flyers had accessible color combinations (dark and light contrast), accessible typeface and font. In addition, attention to simple and succinct language was used, avoiding jargon.

Eligible study participants received my pre-written, template email communication that I wrote and programmed to auto send, and re-auto send, serving as timed reminders. I enabled three reminder emails to be automatically sent to participants ahead of their scheduled interviews, in the timeframe of five days, two days, and one day ahead. This approach was used to accommodate for symptoms of executive dysfunction such as time blindness, forgetfulness, object permanence, and cognitive overload.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with participants. With intentional, accessible recruitment and interview protocol in mind, this study was written, facilitated, and completed with the dis/abled community's needs at the forefront. Fourteen participants (see Table 1) shared their experiences during semi-structured interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed. Interviews ranged from 90 to 120 minutes. Participants shared their experiences in graduate school, including their challenges and how their identities have influenced their experiences. Additionally, they discussed their experiences with academic ableism, strategies they used to navigate these challenges, and the physical and social spaces in (and outside of) graduate school and how they contribute to their experiences. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

This study's methodological grounding in portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) was special for its potential for exploration of participants' narratives. Poetic inquiry also proved useful for data analysis. Both portraiture and poetic inquiry allowed for humanizing analysis via journaling and notes taken after interviews. As a result, I, as the researcher, was able to gain "cognitive and sensory" awareness of the data, which helps the "reader to experience the research findings in a visceral way" (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021, p. 66). As a creative and as an intellectual, I was able to remember that "we are drawn to poetic inquiry because it allows research to be an embodied process informed by the lived experience and knowledge of the researcher" (Esposito & Evans-Winters, p. 66, 2021). Poetry and poetic inquiry support my interpretation and analysis of what participants have shared with me.

My data analysis included three coding cycles and one final phase of interpretation, for multi-level analysis and multi-level coding. My first coding cycle has included both inductive and deductive coding (Miles et al., 2013). I began by using deductive codes reflecting the concepts from my interview protocol and the Black Feminist Disability Framework (Bailey & Mobley, 2019). There were 12 codes connected to my first order coding: race and being, race and stigma, race and support, dis/ability and inclusion, dis/ability and self-identification, dis/ability and disparities, higher education and accommodations, good online community, creativity, creating community, adaptive responses, and lastly, new futures. In addition, I used open codes to identify recurrent patterns in participants' experiences and meaning making. Where possible I have used participants' own words for these codes through a process called in vivo coding using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. It should be noted that the NVivo software was merely the technology used to facilitate and execute my analysis process, but I, as a human *and* humane researcher, and as a disabled and neurodivergent researcher, intimated what it could not.

After initial coding, I conducted analysis by examining the patterns in my codes and looking for categories that brought together the most important ideas in my study (Bhattacharya, 2021). Some categories that appeared in my second round of coding included neurodiversity, dis/ability identity, culture, participants' higher education experiences, and categories related to their higher education experiences. Additionally, I compared my coding to prior scholarship on neurodivergent graduate students to ensure that I thought holistically about their experiences.

This approach strengthened my understanding of where my participants' experiences might be underrepresented by existing scholarship. My third-order coding process was a majority inductive process, and I explored the relationships among all categories. My goal was to bring together multiple categories and explore connections between them. A key step in this stage of coding was storying the data (Kinloch et al., 2020). To do that, I looked for verbs that connected one category to another.

After completing my formal three-phase data analysis, I engaged in the portraiture process as a final and interpretive step. I grouped selected representative participant excerpts which were written in a way in which answered research questions were pieced together, displaying their overall and shared experiences. In portraiture, each participant would have brief and storied vignettes spotlighting them. Folding data into research question responses allowed me to narrate the overall participant story, which served as a snapshot of participants' narratives told in a way which highlighted the stories of them. The vignettes were stylized together in my retelling of their narrative and, altogether, serve to repackage their story, from my standpoint as a portraitist.

Reliability

To ensure reliability and credibility in my dataset, I employed member checking during my interviews, by repeating and affirming what was shared with me. In portraiture, the researcher is also referred to as the portraitist (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005), and as the researcher/portraitist, I am positioned to embody the role of being an instrument for *both* a retelling and restorying of participant experiences (Kinloch et al., 2020). As a result, in the methodology of portraiture, it is critical for the researcher/portraitist to engage in ongoing reflection. This reflection was done using journals, research memos, and a critical lens. Research memos and journaling were essential to aid in my poetic retelling of their experiences, as well as substantiating findings. I wrote research memos after each participant interview and journaled my reflections of the process. Original poetry (Okello & Morton, 2022) originates from these memos and journals, to bring forward the experiences of dis/abled racialized scholars in academia.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that one's connection to "dis/ability" as status and identity can occur over lifelong and inconsistent amounts of time, which this study and research design did not account for. As this was not a longitudinal study, I could not have added that context and consideration, which may have underscored the realities and inconveniences of living with dis/abilities. Another intentional choice was to include participants who identified as Black cisgender Women, to not dilute or diminish the experiences of non-binary, transwomen, or other individuals with different expressions and lived experiences of womanhood or gender. I intentionally designed and recruited for cisgender women. Understanding the complexities of identities within identities, in order to understand the Black woman's experience related to dis/ability while in graduate school, I designed a study for and recruited Black women who are at the center of this research and this inquiry.

Findings

I organized the study's findings into three thematic sections: Participants' self-concept of Blackness, healing spaces outside of academia to make sense of dis/ability, and their faith-based beliefs related to diagnosis and medication management. I titled the thematic sections as follows: (a) An understanding of self, an understanding of Blackness, (b) Black women's online healing spaces, and (c) faith as a mitigating factor.

Wherever I come from, and wherever I now exist, it is never void of my Blackness. To live, and to see, and to feel is to know this. My heart and my life do not belie me this. My Blackness is expansive, rich, and every-day. It belongs in every-way.
(Stephens-Peace).

An Understanding of Self, An Understanding of Blackness

This theme emphasizes the participants' journeys of self-discovery, intricately intertwined with their evolving understanding of Blackness. Participants demonstrated a deep sense of knowing about their racial and ethnic identity, which surpasses any barriers imposed by academic institutions and contemporary sociopolitical realities. Despite facing anti-Blackness within the graduate school environment, they remain committed to exploring the essence of their racial and ethnic identities, most often via intellectual pursuits. These findings highlight the tensions they experienced to have others better understand them, often interwoven with an unwavering self-concept of Blackness. No geographic or institutional barrier was greater than their racial and ethnic identity and allegiance. Participants were from the full African Diaspora; any anti-Blackness they experienced in their graduate studies, academic institutions, and

social and political worlds contributed to increased steadfastness and soberness. For Pennie, a fifth-year education doctoral student, it was a "sociopolitical reality that Blackness in graduate school was almost inconvenient" but she herself would not lean into others' limitations. Victoria, a sixth-year anthropology doctoral student reported on respectability politics, others' understanding of her Blackness, and how gender and race "occupy" the academy to set her aside compared to Black men colleagues:

> Blackness distorts…There are many reasons, all are about anti-Blackness, but one is the sort of way in which Blackness is presumed to be made in the collective unconscious of the US. Regarding the Black male academic, the cultural imagination [is], there's Black men and there's everybody else. [Also], I guess for me, everyone will think I have a bad attitude, most likely, and everyone will assume that I'm working on "Black things." To me, unconsciously it's a question of respectability. I don't know if it's respectability, so much as [maybe] the exception. The exception to the rule, not exception as like, [you're] exceptional.

This finding is consistent with the work on Black people and surveillance (Browne, 2015). This "hyper sight" thrust upon Victoria contributes to gendered exclusion (Browne, 2015). This exclusion is, to her, at the benefit of Black men and the expense of Black women, yet she continues to move past it, refusing to dalliance with an observation of her. Instead she acknowledges it and keeps moving forward.

Black Women's Online Healing Spaces

The theme "Spaces That Heal and Places That... (Traumatize)" illuminates participants' experiences within physical and virtual (online) geographies. Black women graduate students have reimagined space through technological and historical community-building, feminist practices (Combahee River Collective, 1977), and creating empowering digital spaces. These spaces counterbalance the harm inflicted by academic institutions (read places), and academic ableism within. Participants also express their exhaustion with shallow institutional diversity and recruitment initiatives, calling for tangible results, and emphasizing the importance of retention. Sabrina, a third-year doctoral student, indicated her exhaustion from initiatives. "Initiatives are great, but what about results? Recruitment is great, but what is recruitment without retention."

These online spaces of their own design and community-building gave them back power and strength. The online community Viola turned to was mostly on social media and other online spaces. The community worked well for her in finding people to work with, to experience the process of thinking and writing with. For Tangi, a doctoral student, the aspect of building community with Black people was especially important in her racially homogenous program. Institutional harm was offset with the fact that many participants shared their desire to enter faculty careers, continuing to commit themselves to academia. Black women continue to highlight that healing spaces are within their creativity, control, and community, in order for them to survive higher education.

Faith as a Mitigating Factor

Participants shared that their faith and religious beliefs prevented them from seeking help or obtaining diagnosis, treatment, and medication. Participants shared that familial pressures and expectations forced them to mask and pretend quite often, so that they did not disappoint family members who held them in high esteem. The familial pressure also reiterated an overreliance on prayer life and church to deal with executive functioning symptoms. Yasmine shared that the Black church compounded her challenges:

> The Black culture aspect, a lot of Black elders said, "Education was the only thing that mattered; we love to see that you're so smart," so that when I needed substantial help, I didn't know who or what to ask. I thought, "You're not hurting that much, you can do it." Also, we weren't outright shamed, but we didn't talk about these things.

The cultural barriers in the Black community toward mental health were meaningful, regardless of country of origin. Similarly for Sam, there was an understanding of more explicit discourse regarding disabilities and treatment, and appropriate solutions. Sam shared [she was] "very strong in my faith. In my church, [it's like] let's pray it away, you need to go to God [and] cast out the demon. But my generation is more open about talking about counseling." Participants were from the Anglophone Caribbean, Continental Africa, and the US, and while there are differences based on ethnic experiences, participants from across the Diaspora shared this overarching connection to faith, religion, and the church that were often at odds with their dis/abilities and receiving help.

Discussion

The Black Feminist Disability Framework's (Bailey & Mobley, 2019) position that there are intersecting identities and experiences that are specific to Black women with dis/abilities remains consistent with the findings of my study. Black women graduate students experience the complexity of their race and gender within graduate school, while navigating their adjacency to dis/ability and dis/ability culture. This finding reflects the Black Feminist Disability Framework's assertion that the goalpost of expectation is inconsistent, ableist, and continually presents pressures, challenges, and unwarranted discord in dis/abled Black women graduate students. Widespread racism, sexism, and academic ableism permeate the experiences of this emergent student community.

Intersecting Identities at the Forefront

Participants' understanding of their race, gender, and Blackness were deeply interconnected. For Victoria, her gender rendered her siloed and secondary to Black men in graduate school. Victoria centered her Blackness against the institution, what goes on in the institution, and who is valued in the institution. Continued cycles of racialized existence contribute to racial battle fatigue (Linder et al., 2019) that many across higher education feel. Their self-consciousness and race-consciousness as Black women never wavered despite the challenges the construct of race and racism provide. Students with a strong racialized identity and development of self may be better equipped, despite racial battle fatigue, to identify harmful rhetoric and policies, and to fervently work toward managing their higher education experience.

A healthy racial identity awareness is positive and informs students more deeply of their own lives, experiences, histories, and futures (Okello, 2020). This understanding also supports the potential for intergroup dialogue and intergroup success. There are understandings of Blackness, from any geographical orientation in the African Diaspora, and there is also the way that they understand (a) how their Blackness is understood by others and (b) how their Blackness is used and interpreted by others. This understanding allows them to assess their environment, and to decide how to engage within it. It also allows Black women graduate students to claim what their Blackness looks like alongside other identities such as dis/ability or at the intersection of gender. Such a claiming provides a road map for survival and sometimes thriving in the academy and is a direct response to the research question, "How do neurodivergent Black women graduate student's experience of and understanding of Blackness, shape their experience in graduate school?"

Technology Use as Survival

Black women's use of technology and the internet allows alternatives for community building. Historically, Black women's connection to each other has inspired feminist groups, thinking, and groundbreaking scholarly contributions (Combahee River Collective, 1977). The Combahee River Collective (1977) is an example of modeled community care and making things plain by writing it down. Black women using social media have provided powerful counter spaces to support each other while navigating graduate school and navigating the unknown of dis/ability. This navigation reflects Black women's historical ability to create (counter) spaces that work for them. In this study, participants push back against the harm done in academia due to racism, sexism, ableism, and other aggressions, by convening on their own terms and continuing a historical path that is decidedly Black and feminist. This finding relates to the research question, "How does neurodivergent Black women's responsive cultural production allow them to create space in these (sociopolitical) times, despite being ensconced within the places (read environments) that are higher education institutions?" By adopting McKittrick's (2011) perspective on space and place, which recognizes their inherent power relations and inequalities, this study highlights the need to reimagine physical, online, social, and collegial spaces within the academy (Luedke, 2023).

Faith, Religion, and Disability

Cultural understanding of how integral faith and religion is within the Black community, reliance on faith and religion has been utilized as a tool for all life challenges. The limiting way dis/ability is generally engaged within the Black community further underscored participants' reticence to engage in diagnosis-seeking experiences and /or taking medication, when faith and religion/iosity may be positioned as the only, rather than together/and. Therapy, mental health, and mental wellness are not oxymorons to faith, religion, religiosity, and the institution that is the Black Church. They can coexist.

Participants' burdens stemmed closely from an overreliance and over obligation on them in their familial communities, their cultural communities, and civic or service communities. This burden of expectation is tied to a burden of both high academic performance and achievement, and is exhausting, dehumanizing, and ableist. Participants expressed an inability to let others down, and obligations to always be present, in all situations, or run the risk of being obsolete in the very professional and academic spaces they have worked hard to enter (Hutcheon, & Wollbring, 2013).

Significance and Future Directions

The present study's implications lie in its potential to inform inclusive policies and practices that better support Black women graduate students and enhance their academic outcomes. Acknowledging and addressing the presence of diverse sub-groups within marginalized communities is crucial for promoting positive visibility and creating inclusive counter spaces. Such initiatives will enable students to thrive and foster a more inclusive higher education environment.

Implications for Research

This study points to the importance of building theoretical models that center space, place, dis/ability, and race. These vectors collide to create unique experiences for Black women graduate students. The spaces (both physical and virtual) created by neurodivergent Black women must be brought into the fold of learning, pedagogy, and the academic climate across contemporary higher education. Culturally relevant and accessible research methodologies are necessary toward equity and equality in research, teaching, and learning. Future iterations of this research will provide opportunities for inquiry on Black and disabled faculty and staff, and at HBCU or majority Black, Caribbean higher education institutions.

Implications for Practice

Disability centers staffed with diverse workers and campus counseling centers staffed with diverse clinicians will shape better and far-reaching interventions. Additionally, faculty hiring practices will benefit from specific and intentionality about increasing the number of dis/abled faculty members, many who will support dis/abled Black women students. Cultural competency in academic spaces extends beyond issues of race and gender and sexuality. The addition of dis/ability as an additional culture, shifts an evolving discourse, and dis/ability labs on-campus with attention to curriculum design, and universal design for learning will make a more accessible environment for all institutional stakeholders.

Conclusion

This inquiry offers a compelling exploration of the experiences of disabled, neurodivergent Black women in graduate school, combining the Black Feminist Disability framework, and Black Disability Studies. Delving into Black women graduate student narratives reveals the complexities of their intersectional identities and the challenges they face within the academic landscape. It serves as a call to action for academia to engage in transformative practices that prioritize the experiences and needs of marginalized students. Ultimately, this research contributes to building a more equitable and inclusive higher education system. When respectability politics and (academic) ableism come into frame, Black women are working to uphold impossible ableist expectations of the strong Black woman.

Strong Black woman meets Supercrip.
This is my story too.
As Diversity's Cream of the Crop, Black Woman's humanity is limited.
YET others just want a reason to clap.
For… Our. Their. My. Existence.
(Stephens-Peace)

References

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D. J., & Ferri, B. A. (2016). A truncated genealogy of DisCrit. In S. A. Annamma, D. J. Connor, & B. A. Ferri (Eds.), *Discrit: Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 1–8). Teachers College Press.

Artiles, A. J. (2013). Untangling the racialization of disabilities: An intersectionality critique across disability models. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 10*(2), 329–347.

Bailey, M., & Mobley, I. A. (2019). Work in the intersections: A black feminist disability framework. *Gender & Society, 33*(1), 19–40.

Barnes, C. (2019). Understanding the social model of disability: Past, present and future. In N. Watson, A. Roulstone, & C. Thomas (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies* (pp. 14–31). Routledge.

Bhattacharya, K. (2021). Embedding critical, creative, and contemplative data analysis in interview studies. In C. Vanover, P. Mihas, & J. Saldana (Eds.), *Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Research: After the Interview* (pp. 371–390). Sage.

Bell, C. (2006). Introducing White disability studies: A modest proposal. In L. J. Davis (Ed.), *The disability studies reader* (2nd ed., pp. 231–242). Taylor & Francis.

Bell, C. (2010). Is disability studies actually white disability studies? In L. J. Davis (Ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader* (pp. 402–410). Taylor & Francis.

Bent, S., Stephens-Peace, K. J., & Smith, A. (2023) Mek Yaad within academia: Afro-Caribbean women finding belonging in the academy. In S. Fries-Bitt & B. T Kelly (Eds.), *Black Women Navigating the Doctoral Journey* (pp. 58–70). Routledge.

Blaser, B., & Ladner, R. E. (2020, March). Why is data on disability so hard to collect and understand?. In *2020 Research on Equity and Sustained Participation in Engineering, Computing, and Technology (RESPECT)* (Vol. 1, pp. 1–8). IEEE.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature.* Columbia University Press.

Boveda, M., & McCray, E. D. (2021). Writing (for) our lives: Black feminisms, interconnected guidance, and qualitative research in special education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 34*(6), 496–514.

Brown, K., Peña, E., Broido, E., Stapleton, L., & Evans, N. (2019). Understanding disability frameworks in higher education research. In J. Huisman & M. Tight (Eds.), *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research* (pp. 19–36). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Browne, S. (2015). *Dark matters: On the surveillance of blackness.* Duke University Press.

Calarco, J. M. (2020). *A field guide to grad school: Uncovering the hidden curriculum*. Princeton University Press.

Carter, A., Catania, T., Schmitt, S., & Swenson, A. (2017). Bodyminds like ours: An autoethnographic analysis of graduate school, disability, and the politics of disclosure. In S. Kerschbaum, L. T. Eisenman, & J. M. Jones (Eds.), *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education* (pp. 95–113). University of Michigan Press.

Chapman, R. (2020). Defining neurodiversity for research and practice. In H. Bertilsdotter-Rosqvist, A. Stenning, & N. Chown (Eds.), *Neurodiversity Studies: A New Critical Paradigm* (pp. 218–220). Routledge.

Chapple, R. L., Bridwell, B. A., & Gray, K. L. (2021). Exploring intersectional identity in black deaf women: The complexity of the lived experience in college. *Affilia, 36*(4), 571–592.

Combahee River Collective. (1977). The Combahee River Collective Statement. https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf

Dolmage, J. T. (2017). *Academic ableism: Disability and higher education*. University of Michigan Press.

Dwyer, P., Mineo, E., Mifsud, K., Lindholm, C., Gurba, A., & Waisman, T. C. (2023). Building neurodiversity-inclusive postsecondary campuses: Recommendations for leaders in higher education. *Autism in Adulthood, 5*(1), 1–14.

Easley, O. D. (2022). *A black feminist disability: The lived experiences of black women with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS)* [Doctoral dissertation, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University].

Esposito, J., & Evans-Winters, V. (2021). *Introduction to intersectional qualitative research*. SAGE.

Evans, N. J., Broido, E. M., Brown, K. R., & Wilke, A. K. (2017). *Disability in higher education: a social justice approach*. John Wiley & Sons.

Faulkner, S. L. (2019). *Poetic inquiry: Craft, method, and practice*. Routledge.

Faulkner, S. L. (2017). Poetic inquiry. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Handbook of arts-based research* (pp. 208–230). The Guilford Press.

Fitzpatrick, E., & Fitzpatrick, K. (2020). What poetry does for us in education and research. In E. Fitzpatrick & K. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Poetry, method and education research* (pp. 1–18). Routledge.

Fitzwater, L. (2018). Theory and practice in art & design education and dyslexia: The emancipatory potentials of a neurodiversity framework. *Humana Mente: Journal of Philosophical Studies*, (33), 121–143.

Flink, P. (2019). Person-first & identity-first language: Supporting students with disabilities on campus. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 45*(2), 79–85.

Grech, S. (2015). Decolonising Eurocentric disability studies: Why colonialism matters in the disability and global South debate. *Social Identities, 21*(1), 6–21.

Guiffrida, D. A. (2006). Toward a cultural advancement of Tinto's theory. *The review of higher education, 29*(4), 451–472.

Guiffrida, D. A., Kiyama, J. M., Waterman, S. J., & Museus, S. D. (2012). Moving from cultures of individualism to cultures of collectivism in support of students of color. In S. Museus & U. Jayakumar (Eds.), *Creating campus cultures: Fostering success among racially diverse student populations* (pp. 68–87). Routledge.

Haynes, C., Stewart, S., & Allen, E. (2016). Three paths, one struggle: Black women and girls battling invisibility in US classrooms. *Journal of Negro Education, 85*(3), 380–391.

Hinton, A. (2021). On fits, starts, and entry points: the rise of Black Disability Studies. *CLA Journal, 64*(1), 11–29.

Hochman, A. (2019). Racialization: A defense of the concept. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 42*(8), 1245–1262.

Hogan, A. J. (2019). Social and medical models of disability and mental health: Evolution and renewal. *CMAJ, 191*(1), E16–E18.

Howard, A., Patterson, A., Kinloch, V., Burkhard, T., & Randall, R. (2016). The Black women's gathering place: Reconceptualising a curriculum of place/space. *Gender and education, 28*(6), 756–768.

Hutcheon, E., & Wolbring, G. (2013). "Cripping" resilience: Contributions from disability studies to resilience theory. *M/C Journal, 16*(5).

Kapp, S. K., Gillespie-Lynch, K., Sherman, L. E., & Hutman, T. (2013). Deficit, difference, or both? Autism and neurodiversity. *Developmental psychology, 49*(1), 59.

Kidwell, K. E., Clancy, R. L., & Fisher, G. G. (2023). The devil you know versus the devil you don't: Disclosure versus masking in the workplace. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 16*(1), 55–60.

Kinloch, V., Penn, C., & Burkhard, T. (2020). Black lives matter: Storying, identities, and counter-narratives. *Journal of Literacy Research, 52*(4), 382–405.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2005). Reflections on portraiture: A dialogue between art and science. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(1), 3–15.

Leavy, P. (Ed.). (2017). *Handbook of Arts-based Research*. Guilford Publications.

Linder, C., Quaye, S. J., Lange, A. C., Roberts, R. E., Lacy, M. C., & Okello, W. K. (2019). "A student should have the privilege of just being a student": Student activism as labor. *The Review of Higher Education, 42*(5), 37–62

Lovelace, T. S., Comis, M. P., Tabb, J. M., & Oshokoya, O. E. (2021). Missing from the narrative: A seven-decade scoping review of the inclusion of Black autistic women and girls in autism research. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 1–13.

Luedke, C. (2023). Relationships as embodied counterspaces in the academy. *Journal of Postsecondary Student Success, 2*(2), 81–106.

Macfarlane, B. (2021). The neoliberal academic: Illustrating shifting academic norms in an age of hyper-performativity. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 53*(5), 459–468.

McKittrick, K. (2011). On plantations, prisons, and a black sense of place. *Social & Cultural Geography, 12*(8), 947–963

McKittrick, K. (2006). *Demonic grounds: Black women and the cartographies of struggle.* University of Minnesota Press.

Milem, J. F. (2003). The educational benefits of diversity: Evidence from multiple sectors. In M. Chang, D. Witt, J. Jones, & K. Hakuta (Eds.), *Compelling interest: Examining the evidence on racial dynamics in higher education* (pp. 126–169). Stanford Education.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd Ed.). Sage.

Miller, R.A. (2018). Toward intersectional identity perspectives on disability and LGBTQ identities in higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 59*(3), 327–346.

Miller, R. A. (2017). "My voice is definitely strongest in online communities": Students using social media for queer and disability identity-making. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(4), 509–525.

Moriña, A., Sandoval, M., & Carnerero, F. (2020). Higher education inclusivity: When the disability enriches the university. *Higher Education Research & Development, 39*(6), 1202–1216.

Ohito, E. O. (2021). Some of us die: A Black feminist researcher's survival method for creatively refusing death and decay in the neoliberal academy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 34*(6), 515–533.

Okello, W. K. (2020). " Loving Flesh": Self-Love, Student Development Theory, and the Coloniality of Being. *Journal of College Student Development, 61*(6), 717-732.

Okello, W. K. (2021). Organized anxiety: respectability politics, John Henryism, and the paradox of Black achievement. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 24*(4), 523-541.

Okello, W. K., & Morton, C. S. (2024). Speaking our imaginings into existence: Poetry as a contestation of Black erasure in academia. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 17*(2), 256.

Pearson, A., & Rose, K. (2021). A conceptual analysis of autistic masking: Understanding the narrative of stigma and the illusion of choice. *Autism in Adulthood, 3*(1), 52–60.

Peña, E., Stapleton, L., Brown, K. R., Broido, E., Stygles, K., & Rankin, S. (2018). A universal research design for student affairs scholars and practitioners. *College Student Affairs Journal, 36*(2), 1–14.

Peña, E. V., Stapleton, L. D., & Schaffer, L. M. (2016). Critical perspectives on disability identity. *New Directions for Student Services, 2016*(154), 85–96.

Pickens, T. A. (2019). *Black madness: Mad blackness*. Duke University Press.

Porter, C. J., Sulé, V. T., & Croom, N. N. (Eds.). (2022). *Black feminist epistemology, research, and praxis: Narratives in and through the academy*. Taylor & Francis.

Price, M. (2024). *Crip spacetime: Access, failure, and accountability in academic life*. Duke University Press.

Quashie, K. E. (2004). *Black women, identity, and cultural theory:(Un) becoming the subject*. Rutgers University Press.

Radulski, E. M. (2022). Conceptualising autistic masking, camouflaging, and neurotypical privilege: Towards a minority group model of neurodiversity. *Human Development, 66*(2), 113–127.

Schalk, S. (2022). *Black disability politics* (p. 219). Duke University Press.

Scheef, A., Caniglia, C., & Barrio, B. L. (2020). Disability as diversity: Perspectives of institutions of higher education in the US. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33*(1), 49–61.

Showunmi, V. (2023). Visible, invisible: Black women in higher education. *Frontiers in Sociology, 8*, 974617.

Stapleton, L., & Croom, N. (2017). Narratives of Black d/Deaf college alum: Reflecting on intersecting microaggressions in college. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 54*(1), 15–27.

Stapleton, L., & James, L. (2020). Not another all White study: Challenging color-evasiveness ideology in disability scholarship (Practice Brief). *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33*(3), 215–222.

Stephens, K. (2022). *The gendered, racialized, & dis/abled experiences of neurodivergent Black women graduate students across higher education* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst]. doi.org/10.7275/30783865 and scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/2664

Stephens, Kat. J. (2020). Just a unicorn. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education (JCSCORE), 6*(1), 212–216.

Thompson, V. (2016) #DisabilityTooWhite, Twitter. https://x.com/VilissaThompson/status/1526926208360923137

Tsatsou, P. (2020). Digital inclusion of people with disabilities: a qualitative study of intra-disability diversity in the digital realm. *Behaviour & Information Technology, 39*(9), 995–1010.

Tyler, D. (2022). *Disabilities of the color line: Redressing antiblackness from slavery to the present* (Vol. 5) New York University Press.

Walkington, L. (2017). How far have we really come? Black women faculty and graduate students' experiences in higher education. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 39*, 51–65.

About the Author

Kat Stephens-Peace received her BA degree in Literature and Education from Sarah Lawrence College and Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her student affairs experiences include working in undergraduate and graduate admissions, academic advising, and residential life. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Educational Leadership, at Ball State University. Her research interests include disability studies, critical & intersectional ADHD studies, and graduate student education at the nexus of race and gender. She can be reached by email at: kat.stephenspeace@bsu.edu.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank each brave and brilliant graduate student for participating in this research study and sharing their valued and important disabled experiences.

"It looked like a jail cell:" Policing of Racialized and Disabled Students' Bodyminds in Higher Education

Danielle Mireles[1]
Claudia Chiang-Lopez[1]

Abstract

This article examines how carceral logics manifest for undergraduate racialized and disabled students who identify as or have a lived experience of disability. Using Disability Critical Race Theory, a crip-of-color critique, and carceral ableism and sanism as lenses, we challenge color-evasive ideology and explore how services that purport to "help" or "support" students—like mental health resources or disability support services—track, surveil, and police racialized and disabled students' bodyminds on college and university campuses. This qualitative study employs critical race methodology and critical disability methodology to center the counternarratives of ten undergraduate students. These findings expand the current K-12 literature in considering how racialized and disabled students continue to be subject to carceral logics as they enter institutions of higher education. Our themes examine how Disability Resource Centers enacted administrative violence, how racialized and disabled students were marked for removal and positioned as expendable and disposable on their campuses, and the ways in which students' reimagined alternative futurities rooted in care. This paper contains discussions about racism, ableism, suicide, police and medical violence.

Keywords: race, disability, racism, ableism, higher education, carceral logics

Introduction

Activists, scholars, and organizations engaged in abolitionist work have long examined how carceral logics are perpetuated outside of prisons and jails through a prison-industrial complex (PIC; Critical Resistance, 2023, Davis, 2011; Gilmore, 2007; Kaba, 2013; Kaba & Ritchie, 2022; Rodríguez, 2016). Critical Resistance (2023) defines the PIC as "the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems" (para. 1). This system includes social services, drug and addiction facilities programs, hospitals, psychiatric institutions, crisis care, schools, and other spaces that work with or "do the work of prisons" (Shalaby, 2021, p. 105, emphasis added; see also Ben-Moshe, 2020). But, colleges and universities also sustain the PIC, albeit in other, less overt ways that include and extend beyond the presence of campus police. For instance, in 2019, it was revealed that $3 million of Harvard's Endowment was invested in companies connected to the PIC, like the private prison operators GEO Group and Bail USA (Harvard Prison Divestment Campaign, 2019). Colleges and universities also uphold carceral logics that "frame marginalized communities as threats to the social order rather than adopting a systemic analysis of the structural barriers experienced by such communities" (Bergen & Abji, 2019, p. 35). Said differently, carceral logics allow us to name the ways the logic of prisons gets enacted every day in non-carceral settings and "sustain and maintain the kinds of ideas that prison requires in order to exist" (Bergen & Abji, 2019, p. 107).

We build on the work of critical scholars such as Subini Annamma, Nirmala Erevelles, Carla Shalaby, Margaret R. Beneke, and others who have revealed how carceral logics operate in PK-12 education contexts through classroom management "strategies" and the hyper-surveillance of Black and Brown students to examine how these same logics continue to impact them in higher education (Annamma, 2016; Beneke et al., 2022; Erevelles, 2014; Shalaby, 2020). Research has shown how carceral logics can also be embedded

[1] *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

into service provisions that purport to be rooted in care because "the workers inside these institutions, even when coming from a helping profession philosophy, become state agents focused on producing docile, obedient bodies" (Annamma, 2016 p. 1211). For example, many disability resource centers (DRCs) have medical documentation policies that require students to submit "proof" of a disability as a prerequisite to accessing their services (Dorrance et al., 2023; Evans et al., 2017). While presented as "fair and objective," these practices do not consider the experiences of racialized people and communities within the medical-industrial complex (MIC; Mingus, 2015). These experiences include both the "fight or right to receive care, but also the right to refuse care" (Mingus, 2015, para 1). Mingus (2015) defines the MIC as a system that reaches "beyond simply doctors, nurses, clinics, and hospitals" and "it is… about profit, first and foremost, rather than 'health,' wellbeing and care" (para. 2). Not only are there long histories of racialized and disabled people being forced to have, or denied access to, care, as well as being criminalized while receiving that care, they are also framed as passive recipients of that care (Piepzna-Samarsinha, 2018). This type of racialization and criminalization is replicated in higher education where DRC offices become the arbiters of what constitutes an institutionally recognized disability and what "care" (e.g., accommodations) students are eligible to receive and to what extent (Dolmage, 2017; Dorrance et al., 2023). DRC accommodations also require that students "receive rights and inclusion only in exchange for conformity, self-support, silencing dissent, and erasing differences" (Chapman et al., 2014, p. 13).

Services such as counseling and psychological services (CAPS), as well as faculty and staff not affiliated with these services, also participate in the coercion and surveillance of racialized and disabled students' bodyminds through "the removal of non-normative bodies from public spaces through a host of discourses and practices" (Annamma, 2016, p. 1211) such as calling campus police to respond to actual or perceived mental health crises as part of mandated reporting policies and ableist and sanist leave of absence policies (Anderson, 2019; Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, 2020; Nishar, 2020). In this article, we use bodyminds to name "the inextricable nature of body and mind, insisting that one impacts the other and that they cannot be understood or theorized as separate" (Schalk, 2023, p. 15). We also challenge the color-evasiveness that has permeated the study of disabled lived experiences in higher education by examining how carceral logics are perpetuated and sustained by practices and policies under the guise of "support" for disabled students and/or students who are or perceived to be in crisis (Ben-Moshe, 2020; Nishar, 2020). Building on the work of Annamma et al. (2017), Stapleton and James (2020) define color-evasiveness "as a racist ideology rooted in white supremacy to avoid accountability, acknowledgement, and identifying historical and continuous race-based discrimination while instantaneously allowing race neutral justification, laws, policies, and beliefs to persist as normal" (p. 216). We argue that not only are disability-related policies and practices *not race neutral*, they perpetuate and sustain carceral logics through the policing, surveillance, and dehumanization of racialized and disabled students' bodyminds on campuses.

We center the counternarratives of ten racialized students who identify as disabled or have a lived experience of disability. We use "who identify" or "lived experience," as opposed to students with disabilities, to accurately represent how students identified and that, as Mingus (2011) explains, "for many complicated reasons around race, ability, gender, access, etc." might make it dangerous for someone to identify as disabled, and because of this, we must "stop making assumptions about each other's identities and make distinctions between *how someone identifies versus what someone's lived experience is*" (emphasis ours, para 16-17). By being intentional in our language, and recognizing that students in our study, whether they used disabled to self-identify or not, had a lived experience of disability, we push back against the ways in which medical diagnoses and/or medical professionals have been positioned as authorities on disability in higher education, rather than students as experts of their lived experiences and bodyminds.

While we discuss interaction with campus police as one way in which carceral logics manifest for racialized students who identify as disabled or have the lived experience of disability in higher education, we also examine how DRCs, CAPs, and staff and faculty outside of these services can and do uphold these logics and normalize the pathologization, surveillance, policing, and criminalization of racialized-disabled bodyminds. The counternarratives of students in this study reveal how policies and practices on campuses operate as forms of social control, via legal compliance, rather than being rooted in care. Using Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit), a crip-of-color critique, and carceral ableism and sanism as frameworks, we consider (a) how carceral logics manifest for racialized and disabled students in higher education and (b) in what ways these carceral logics impact students' ability to access accommodations and other supports on their campuses.

Race, Disability, and Carceral Logics in Education

Much scholarly work on race, disability, and carceral logics centers on the intersections between the school-to-prison pipeline and the school-carceral nexus (Annamma, 2017; Kim et al., 2010; Meiners & Winn, 2010). Research has focused on different aspects of these intersections, from the imposition of literacy benchmarks that stigmatize multiply-marginalized students (Beneke et al., 2022), classroom management strategies that seek to control these students' behavior (Shalaby, 2021), and linguistic confinement that segregates students based on language (Cabral, 2023; Stevens, 2009). Disciplinary practices like zero-tolerance policies (Hines-Datiri & Carter Andrews, 2020) and the use of school resource officers, surveillance cameras, and metal detectors (Krueger, 2010) are additional examples of these intersections. Losen et al. (2021) found that Black students were more likely to be referred to law enforcement, have higher suspension rates, and more likely to be educated in a carceral facility over "discipline" issues than all other students, especially white students. Students who are racialized and disabled are more likely to be funneled out of schools and into sites of incarceration (Losen et al., 2015; Losen et al., 2021). While all students might experience a degree of policing, multiply-marginalized students experience this excessively (Annamma, 2016; Smith et al., 2007; Ward, 2021).

Higher Education and Carceral Logics

Annamma (2016) argues that higher education reproduces the "carceral logic of social control" (p. 1211). As Rodríguez (2010) explains, the tools higher education uses to police, surveil, criminalize, and immobilize students "are *as much schooling practices as they are imprisonment practices*" (emphasis ours, p. 10). Practices such as disclosure of criminalized history in the college application process (Castro & Magana, 2020), sharing of discipline records between K-12 and higher education (Annamma, 2016), and the racial profiling and hyper-surveillance of Black students and faculty (Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Smith et al., 2007; Ward, 2021) highlight how carceral logics operate on college and university campuses.

Carceral logics also expand outside of instructional contexts to involve other institutional actors and spaces on campus. In 2020, a student at Brown University was followed, confronted, and restrained by emergency medical technicians (EMTs) in a bathroom because of a report that she had hit her head during an event on campus (Nishar, 2020). She was forced to receive care and later suspended by the university and charged with a felony (Nishar, 2020). In 2023, Luís Jiménez, a student at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), recounted in an op-ed how after they had disclosed that they were *in recovery* to the disability services office on campus while meeting about accommodations, they were asked if they were "still using" by the staff and informed they would not be eligible to receive services if they were (Jiménez, 2023). Two years prior, another student at UCLA, Cassandra Gatica, in another op-ed, detailed their experience with counseling and psychological services on campus. After meeting with a counselor during which they disclosed that they had previously struggled with their mental health and suicidal ideation, the counselor called the University of California Police Department; officers came to their dorm, handcuffed them, and took them to Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center where they were forcibly hospitalized (Gatica, 2021). We highlight these narratives not because they are exceptional, but to emphasize how racialized and disabled students navigate these carceral logics every day. Disability, as Puar (2017) explains, "coheres a long-standing avenue for policing, surveilling, and securitizing deviant bodies from slavery through the prison-industrial complex. These differing yet contiguous forms of enclosure are processes of debilitation in the most literal and stark terms" (p. 81). As the stories above illustrate, disability, especially for racialized and disabled students, is utilized as a justification to pathologize, hyper-surveil, and criminalize bodyminds that are socially constructed as non-normative (Annamma, 2017; Kim, 2017).

Theoretical Frameworks

We braid together DisCrit, a crip-of-color critique, and carceral ableism and sanism to make sense of how carceral logics permeate the lives of racialized students who identify as disabled or have lived experience of disability on college and university campuses. DisCrit is a theoretical framework that weaves Critical Race Theory and Disability Studies to expose how racism and ableism are interconnected and have been used to dehumanize and oppress racialized communities within and outside of educational institutions (Annamma et al., 2013). In our study, we focus on Tenets Three, Five, Six, and Seven. The third tenet of DisCrit "emphasizes the social constructions of race and ability and yet recognizes the material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or dis/abled, which sets one outside of the western cultural norms" (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 11); this tenet reveals how disability-related policies function as a form of social control to pathologize, criminalize, and

remove non-normative students from classrooms, and, ultimately, society. Disability, particularly mental illness, is often used as justification to remove racialized students under the guise of safety, control, and liability (Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, 2020; Nishar, 2020). The fifth tenet "considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens" (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 11) and the sixth tenet "recognizes whiteness and Ability as 'property,' conferring economic benefits to those who can claim whiteness and/or normalcy" (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 16). We discuss how colleges' and universities' narrow definitions of disability "foreclose access to legibility and resources" (Puar, 2017, p. xv) to students who are unable to obtain documentation or whose access needs are deemed too complex to accommodate as was the case of Alex and Rodrigo discussed later (Kulkarni et al., 2021). We also engage Tenet Seven, which focuses on resistance, to uplift how students' resisted majoritarian narratives of expendability and disposability (Annamma et al., 2013).

A crip-of-color critique (Kim, 2017) and carceral ableism and sanism (Ben-Moshe, 2020) urge "us to consider the ways in which the state, rather than protecting disabled people, in fact operates as an apparatus of racialized disablement, whether through criminalization and police brutality, or compromised public educational systems and welfare reform" (Kim, 2017, para. 5). A crip-of-color critique recognizes the role of the state in concomitantly enacting violence while positioning itself as protecting disabled and racialized communities (Kim, 2017). Similarly, we recognize the ways in which the institution, and specific offices such as the DRC and CAPS (a) position themselves as protecting students despite enacting policies and practices that harm racialized and disabled students and (b) work with police on and off campus (Nishar, 2020).

Ben-Moshe (2020) introduced the terms carceral ableism and carceral sanism to highlight the relationship between the carceral state and disability. Carceral ableism refers to "the praxis and belief that people with disabilities need special or extra protections, in ways that often expand and legitimate their further marginalization and incarceration" (Ben-Moshe, 2020, p. 17). For example, the removal of disabled students from general education classrooms in PK-12 contexts is framed as in the best interest of the student, but Erevelles (2014) argues that this segregation operates "along the axis of race and class under the questionable guise of 'special education' and rehabilitation" (p. 93). These practices "target particular identities for removal through racial criminalization" (Annamma, 2016, p. 1212). Carceral sanism refers to "forms of carcerality that contribute to the oppression of mad or 'mentally ill' populations under the guise of treatment" (Ben-Moshe, 2020, p. 58). These forms include nursing homes, residential facilities for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, and psychiatric hospitals that disenfranchise multiply-marginalized people, as well as practices such as medical coercion and forced treatment, chemical incarceration, and institutionalization (Ben-Moshe, 2020). In the present study, we consider how perceived or actual mental health crises were used as a justification to involuntarily confine students.

As discussed earlier, the MIC extends far beyond hospitals, and we recognize DRCs and CAPS as extensions of this same system. Rodríguez (2012) explains that "the fundamental problem is not that some are excluded from the hegemonic centers of the academy but that the university (as a specific institutional site) and academy (as a shifting material network) themselves cannot be disentangled from the long historical apparatuses of genocidal and protogenocidal social organization" (p. 812). As we consider carceral logics in the context of the academy, we recognize that the university and academy itself not only (re)produce, but are deeply intertwined with systems of racism, ableism, anti-blackness, colonialism, and white supremacy. This means that even services that purport to "serve" marginalized students cannot disentangle themselves from this history. Policies and practices that require students submit to increased surveillance and scrutiny such as medical documentation practices, test-taking accommodations, and mandated reporting are not only upholding and (re) producing carceral logics, but carceral logics also structure how racialized-disabled students are marked as non-normative and disposable within and beyond their institutions.

Together, these theories allow us to consider how carceral logics are embedded in higher education in ways that mirror *and* diverge from PK-12 contexts. We engage DisCrit alongside a crip-of-critique and carceral ableism and sanism to identify how institutions, like colleges and universities, as well as the services within them that profess to "support" disabled students, can act in ways that uphold and exacerbate the pathologization, surveillance, and criminalization of racialized and disabled students (Annamma, 2016; Rabaka, 2010).

Positionality

We come into this work as scholar educators who have navigated higher education as students of Color and disabled. Our experiences inform our writing and our commitment to DisCrit scholarship as we have navigated racism, ableism, and other intersecting systems of oppression in higher education as students and educators. Danielle is a disabled and queer Chicanx scholar educator born in the United States. They were identified with a disability during middle school but discouraged by their family to seek accommodations for fear of the stigma that often comes with mental health diagnoses. During college, they opted to not register for support and knew that they would not be able to obtain an updated diagnosis to receive accommodations because they did not want to re-engage with the MIC. They later worked as a direct support professional with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in community colleges before and during graduate school where they often encountered the carceral logics explored in this paper routinely normalized. Claudia is a multidis/abled first-generation PhD student and Chinese-Mexican Queer scholar. Claudia was diagnosed with a learning disability and subsequently registered with their DRC office for the first time during graduate school, only to find themselves frustrated by unmet needs and constrained by harmful rules.

I (Danielle) asked Claudia to collaborate on this paper as we had many conversations about navigating similar dynamics as a former and current graduate student. When I began this work, I did not yet hold a degree, and I now revisit these interviews as faculty at a R1 institution, which locates me very differently from the undergraduate students in the study despite sharing some similarities across identities. While we discuss the ways in which support services, faculty, staff, and police engage in violence on campus, we recognize that some people will read this as a call for restructuring; however, as Sandy Grande (2018) reminds us, "the settler state has an array of strategies—recognition being one of them—to placate dispossessed people while evading any effort to change the underlying power structure" (p. 56). As we go into our methods and findings, we want to name our commitment to centering abolition of carceral systems discussed in and beyond this paper at the heart of our work.

Methods

We engaged critical disability methodology (Kim, 2017; Minich, 2016) and critical race methodology (Lee & Lee, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to "epistemologically...privilege the experiential knowledge of People of Color as critical ways of knowing and naming racism and other forms of oppression" (Fernández, 2002, p. 48), and to "unapologetically center oppressive structures such as racism, sexism, and classism in research analysis" (Huber, 2008, p. 160). Discussing Minich's (2016) framework, Schalk (2017) recounts how they "emphasiz[e] that a critical disability studies methodology must engage issues of race and (dis)ability, including in areas not explicitly marked by disability" (p. 2). We recognize the inverse as important as well— we must engage areas not explicitly marked by race as racialized spaces.

We position students' stories as *counternarratives* that "function… as explanatory tools in naming, explaining, and showing racial inequities" (Lee & Lee, 2021, p. 85). We seek to upend discourse framing carceral policies and practices such as mandated documentation and reporting as "normal" or "neutral," and how "programs that attest to be race- and gender-neutral and merely administrative" and people who operationalize these programs (re)produce racialized harm and violence (Spade, 2015, p. 5). Counternarratives also allowed us to "dwell in the messiness of lived experience" (Stapleton & James, 2020, p. 216) and naming and interrupting whiteness in our research helps expand disability scholarship and practice in "ways that might have been missed if" white disability continues to be normalized as *the* disabled experience (Stapleton & James, 2020, p. 219). The data at focus in this study were collected as part of a larger qualitative study which examined the experiences of racialized students who identified as disabled or had a lived experience of disability at four-year colleges and universities in California.

Participants and Data Collection

I (Danielle) reached out to undergraduate students using emails, flyers, and in-class presentations. To be eligible for the study, students had to identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of Color and as having a disability and attending a four-year college or university in the state of California. Students were first asked to fill out a survey about how they self-identified and about their experiences on campus. The last question on the survey asked if students were interested in participating in the interview stage. Twenty-three students responded to the survey and 14 indicated they would be interested in being inter-

Table 1

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Disability	University/ College	Registered with DRC?
Tiffany	27	Black or African American	Traumatic Brain Injury	Public	Yes
Baudelaire	21	Mexican American	half deaf or deaf	Public	Yes
Susana	23	Filipina	Major Depressive Disorder, General Anxiety Disorder	Public	Yes
Bea	21	Latina; Mexican-Guatemalan	Type 1 Diabetic	Public	No
Alex	21	Asian; Asian American; Korean	Depression, anxiety	Private	No
Micah	20	Indian	Chronic allergies/ illness, Tourette's Syndrome	Private	Yes
Rodrigo	34	Korean	Head trauma; PTSD; tinnitus; hearing impaired	Public	Yes
Marisol	34	Afro-Latina (Black-Mexican)	Physical and mental	Public	Yes
Kennedy	19	African American	Cognitive processing disorder	Private, Christian	No
Andrea	29	Biracial - Guatemalan/ Black or African American	General Anxiety; Depression; Adjustment Disorder	Public	No

viewed. Of those 14, 11 responded to a follow up for an interview. One student was not able to meet due to ongoing scheduling conflicts. While discussing participants' backgrounds, we use how they self-identified through the survey and during interviews. When discussing students' collectively, we use racialized and disabled students.

In total, 10 undergraduates participated in informal, semi-structured interviews; the majority of participants met with me (Danielle) in-person, and one participant met with me over Zoom. Interviews ranged in time from one to three hours each, though most were around 90 minutes. The first interview focused on participants' experiences prior to college, while the second interview focused on their experiences in higher education. This process was adapted from and guided by Seidman's (2006) approach to qualitative interviewing which calls for contextualizing people's experiences and understanding the meaning that they make of their experiences. Examples of questions included, "How comfortable do you feel sharing the nature of your dis/ability(/ies) with new people? Friends? Teachers?"; "Did you register with the Student Disability Resource Center? Tell me about that. If you have not registered with them, what has prevented or discouraged you from doing so?"; and "Where have you found support in college?"

Data Analysis

Guided by our theoretical and methodological frameworks, we identified patterns and themes in the data that addressed our research questions. We read

and reread the transcripts and took notes, and then identified preliminary codes from our first readings and new codes that we generated from our rereadings. We met regularly throughout the data analysis process to identify and discuss patterns in the data. Examples of early deductive codes included "categorizing/sorting," "surveillance," and "safety/order." We also identified inductive codes such as "going through hoops" and "resistance" from our rereadings. For example, "resistance" included instances when students named the ways in which their college or university failed them and how services on campus could do better not only for them, but future students who had similar experiences to their own.

From our coding, we identified three overarching themes: (a) DRCs and administrative violence, (b) expendability and disposability, and (c) futurities rooted in care. In the first theme, we focus on instances of administrative violence enacted by DRCs. We discuss how documentation and accommodation policies and practices function as a form of gatekeeping and social control of racialized and disabled students' bodyminds. The second theme considers how carceral logics structure racialized and disabled students' experiences more broadly on campus including in interactions with faculty and staff. We discuss how students were positioned as expendable and marked as disposable on their campuses. The last theme centers students dreaming of a different kind of care—not as "a mechanism of control and oppression" (Nishida, 2022, p. 17) but care that was non-carceral, authentic, and humanizing.

Findings

Higher education has focused on a legal compliance model to accommodate students through designated DRCs. It is important that we problematize the ways in which accommodation, even as a term, is not *neutral*. As Dorrance et al., (2023) explain, "the concept of accommodations first referred to a process of gradual integration and compromise, a strategy referring to the white supremacist logics of accommodation of the minority by the majority" and "this concept of accommodation holds the racial capitalist valences of productivity—normatively construed—as a central value that refigures the disabled body toward maximum efficiency and output" (p. 51). "Special or extra protections" offered by institutions require not only that disabled students conform to racist and ableist institutional ideologies of normativity and productivity to access accommodations, but that they submit to institutional "track[ing], observ[ation], surveill[ance], and polic[ing]" (Dorrance et al., 2023, p. 52) of their disability in exchange for often the most minimal forms of access that do not fundamentally challenge the able-bodied white supremacist culture of higher education. Before we begin this section, we want to remind our readers that our findings discuss racism, ableism, suicide, police and medical violence.

DRCs and Administrative Violence

Students' counternarratives reveal how social control is enacted by disability services offices in subtle and covert ways that make accessing care difficult. Spade (2015) refers to these processes as administrative violence. For racialized and disabled students, this violence occurs through disability "classification systems" on campus that seek to manage and regulate disabled students, and also subject them to forms of categorization and surveillance from the institution that are not experienced by students who do not register for support (Spade, 2015, p. 77). Registration and documentation processes are structured in a way where students must first *prove* their disability to the institution. We argue that these policies and practices within DRCs functioned as a form of "procedural hassle" (Kohler-Hausmann, 2019), in which students had to comply with various DRC policies and practices in order to receive their *mandated* accommodations or risk not receiving them at all. This process included students having to submit initial records (i.e., proof of disability), go through various hoops each time they needed an accommodation for a class (especially for note-takers and test-taking), and comply with regulations in test-taking rooms around when they could enter and what they could bring inside. As Marisol discusses later, these practices that socially construct students as "criminals" or at the very least, "suspects" (of faking a disability, having a disability but using accommodations to cheat, and so on), and monitor them based on these deeply embedded and normative assumptions of worthiness. These processes are not only administratively violent, as well as carceral, but also require that students interface with the MIC, which has historically been and continues to enact violence on oppressed communities (Mingus, 2015).

Rodrigo, a Korean student who became disabled from the military, explained how even though he had documentation of disability from Veterans Affairs (VA), he was required to return to the VA hospital to get letters from doctors.

> They wanted doctors' letters, so, I mean, I don't know if you have any veterans in your family but, if you do, you're gonna know that the VA hospital is not a very friendly place. It's not. It's a very time-consuming place. You're not gonna get any

> work done there. You're not gonna get an appointment. You're not gonna get anything done. So, trying to get a letter from the doctor was not going to work and then, so, it was a week-long battle of me talking to the director like, "Look, man, you don't know what the VA is like just accept this damn letter as proof that I have headaches—that I have sleep problems." And then finally, you know, she was like, "Ok I'll accept it."

As Dorrance et al. (2023) explain, "registration is a logistically complicated and laborious process, and offices are often understaffed, sometimes taking months to process a request" (p. 52). It is also important to note that "*no legislation or regulations require that documentation be requested or obtained* in order to demonstrate entitlement to legal protections because of a disability and seek reasonable accommodations" (AHEAD, 2023, para. 3, emphasis added). Despite this, many college and university campuses require students to submit documentation from a medical or other professional as a prerequisite to receiving accommodations (Evans et al., 2017). These productions of disability "classification standards" through DRCs and then doctors and other medical "experts" perpetuate and sustain racialized harm and violence that many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color navigate when interacting with the MIC (Spade, 2015, p. 77). Building on the work of Spade (2015), Harris (1993), and Annamma et al. (2013), we recognize disability classification systems as one of the mechanisms in which whiteness and ability become forms of property. These systems also reinforce the notion of disability as individualized without recognizing how racialized disablement impacts entire communities through environmental racism, criminalization, ongoing colonial violence, and "resource deprivation" (Kim, 2017, para. 5). Resource deprivation is also a guiding logic of many DRCs which approach accommodations and services as a finite resource to be meted out to students.

Bea, a Latina student with diabetes, recounted a situation where her blood sugar suddenly dropped on campus. While Bea was not registered for support, she went to the DRC for help because she was unable to purchase juice on her own:

> I remember once I went in there cause my sugar had dropped and I have, no, I remember, I was really broke and I had like no juice on me, no glucose tablets. And I was like, "Oh, like, I'm diabetic…I was hoping you had like a juice or a candy" and the front desk lady was just like, "Who are you? Why are you here?" Like, "I've never seen you here…why should I believe you're a diabetic?" Like, she gave me an orange and I was like, "This is going to take too long for me to help… I'm supposed to drink juice."

Bea was not the only student in the study to recount hostility while trying to access support on campus. Tiffany, a Black student with a TBI, discussed an interaction she had with a DRC staff member while she was in a test-taking room on her campus:

> I was trying to take my test and now that I'm looking at it—it's like super petty—but one of the, the persons who works in there, um, he was in charge of the scheduling and I came—I believe it was like ten minutes early or whatever and I as like trying to get situated to take my test, like, you know? And words were exchanged and it was basically like, "No, you can't come in here yet. No! Bye! No!" It was rude and like I was emotional already because, you know, the level of test I was taking on, you know, so like I was already emotional from my course load. So, when I went in the office, I was just, you know, ready to just take my test but he was being, like, confrontational, you know, so it was like real bad, real bad. I didn't even take my test. I left out crying—like and I'm a pretty strong person—but I was crying, yeah.

Bea and Tiffany's interactions with disability services office staff reveal how these interactions were not rooted in care for disabled students but social control and surveillance. For Bea, she was met with suspicion, and unable to access support during an emergency because she wasn't institutionally classified as having a disability. Tiffany, who was registered, was met with hostility by DRC staff for wanting to come into the exam room to get situated (something she would be able to do in most classes had she not been using the test-taking room).

Students also shared their frustrations with how services were organized in ways that made it difficult for them to use their "mandated" accommodations. For example, students talked about having to request test-taking accommodations weeks in advance. Tiffany explained how this process did not consider the control her professors had over this process and also puts the onus of scheduling for services and support on students.

> As far as like, making tests, we have to you know, go through a…portal—and you have to do it this many days before and then just say, for example, just now like it was real—the semester—the start

> of the semester happened fast, so I was having quizzes and tests at the beginning of the [semester] even though we are still at the beginning of the [term], but like the following week of the [term], I had a quiz and it was hard for me to get accommodations from [the disability resource center] because it was the beginning of the [semester]. The teachers had not really established their schedule because at the bottom of every schedule it says tentative…meaning that if they choose to change the date, they can, you know? So, I had to interact with my, you know, teachers, and I tried to explain that to [the disability resource center] and they would give me—I want to say drama, but I know there's more professional terms—they would give me problems about the fact that I was so late scheduling and scheduling my tests and that happened like consecutively.

Tiffany's experience shows how these processes not only put additional stress on students but are not backed up with institutional accountability. Students' counternarratives highlight how carceral logics circulate in subtle and covert ways that can go unrecognized and are even normalized under the guise of necessary administrative procedures (i.e., procedural hassle). Students' experiences with "rude" and "hostile" faculty and staff highlight how these administrative procedures, such as documentation requirements and testing accommodation requests, often take priority over students' receiving actual support, and even discourage students from using accommodations or going back to the DRCs after having such experiences. Rather than "helping" students, DRCs often prioritize social control, via compliance, rather than meeting students' access needs, especially the needs of racialized and disabled students.

Students in this study also navigated more overt forms of social control and surveillance from their institutions than their white and/or able-bodied peers. In higher education, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are often met with punitive measures that "replace the student-teacher relationship with the criminal-police relationship" in which students become academic "criminals" who warrant institutional retribution (Howard, 2002, p. 47). Marisol, an Afro-Latina student with physical and mental disabilities talked about how discourses around cheating shaped the physical space of testing centers:

> Um, even when I went to go, you know, I went to go see like their testing room she kind of gave me a tour of their area. It looked like a jail cell, honestly, because there's like—there's like a monitor. I mean again, I don't know how it is— not that I do it for the intended purpose of like cheating of any sort— but I just felt like I was in a federal penitentiary taking an exam. I'm like, okay, well, I mean, I have more anxiety you guys watching me on, not only on one camera, but there is a camera on every angle from me and you have a monitor upfront? To me, I thought it was just, like, too much.

For racialized and disabled students who already experience hyper-surveillance, the use of surveillance technologies such as cameras can cause increased anxiety and create a hostile environment. Susana, a Filiipina student with depression and anxiety was also subject to similar forms of surveillance. She recounted an experience where she tried to bring her stress ball into a test-taking room:

> I remember going in…for one of my midterms, I asked just the faculty there in the testing office, "Hey, could I have my stress ball?" And they're like, "Well, unless it says on your accommodations you won't be allowed to have it." And I thought it was weird because in the lecture hall, I could just bring it out during an exam and have it…They wanted to make sure that, you know, it wasn't...Any part of it had answers in it or anything like that. Because sometimes, I think, the director told me that some people need to wear hats because of surgery or something. And they wanted to make sure that their hat didn't have any notes or anything like that, right.

While DRCs are separate from student conduct offices, they often are positioned as the first line of defense to proactively prevent disabled students from using their services to cheat. Preventing cheating, while not a stated core function of disability services offices, often provides a rationale to hyper-surveil disabled students like Tiffany, Susana, and Marisol through the monitoring of when they can enter, what they can or cannot bring into the room, and cameras. As Susana observes, if she had taken the exam in her classroom, she would have been able to bring the stress ball in, but because she was taking the exam in the test-taking room she was unable to do so. As discussed earlier, these policies and practices were forms of procedural hassle and are administrative violence. Returning to our theoretical frameworks, carceral ableism highlights that positioning disabled people in "need" of "special extra protections" functions to "expand and legitimate" their marginalization (Ben-Moshe, 2020). For racialized and disabled students, this meant additional scrutiny and surveillance in exchange for the

possibility[2] of access to accommodations and services that institutions are mandated to provide.

Expendability and Removal

This surveillance and policing can lead to more serious, and even deadly, consequences for racialized and disabled students including their removal by suspension, expulsion, and forced hospitalization, and even incarceration (Johnson, 2019; Nishar, 2020; Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, 2020). A report from *The Washington Post* found that from 2019-2021 there were at least 178 cases in which police shot and killed people they were called to assist (Gerberg & Li, 2022). In many of these calls, police were called because a person was perceived to be experiencing a mental health crisis, was reported to have made a suicide threat, or to request a wellness check (Gerberg & Li, 2022). On college and university campuses, police also function as first responders, which can lead to students' being forcibly detained, hospitalized, and criminalized rather than receiving care (Johnson, 2019; Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, 2020; Nishar, 2020).

Two students in this study, Rodrigo and Alex, had encounters with campus police while experiencing mental health crises. Rodrigo attended a two-year college after being in the Marines and talked about struggling in his adjustment to "civilian life." He had campus police called on him three times—twice by faculty and once by another student. In each instance, Rodrigo explained he was experiencing distress, ranging from military trauma to losing a friend. Rather than care, he was placed in what his campus called "the holding cell." He recounted in one instance how his professor called campus police on him during class after throwing a chair during a "debat[e] on whether or not the war [in Iraq] is justified or not" in his English class:

> And so, she pulled me to the side and she said um, "I'm gonna need you to step out of the class, I'm all for veterans, I support everything, but what you just did is against school policy. And as much as I'm for supporting you, I, I, have to stand up for this or I'm going to lose my job. I am going to have to call campus police." And I was just like "Okay whatever." And so, they called campus police, campus police came over and they took me into their little, their little hut. It was a small kiosk and they called it their "holding cell" and I went in there and they just sat me there.

While both the professor and the officer recognized that Rodrigo was experiencing trauma from being in the military, he was not offered support; instead, he was detained and held involuntarily until he "cool[ed] off." It's also important to note that the professor felt that she would be punished (i.e., losing her job) if she did not call campus police and report Rodrigo, highlighting how faculty can also become complicit in these logics through coercion.

Alex, a Korean student with anxiety and depression, also experienced involuntary detainment, first by campus police and then through forced hospitalization. He recounted how he had sent a text message to friends about wanting to harm himself. Alex lived on campus, so his friends went to his dorm room to check in on him. When they realized he was not there, they contacted campus police and told them that Alex was missing and suicidal. He explained:

> And then like, as I'm making my way to the dining hall though, I get, like, a call from like [campus police], like a [campus] officer and, and they're just like, "Hi, like, can you, like, stay where you are? Like, we want to, like, talk to you." And I was just, like, "Fine, like, I guess." I mean, it's like [campus police], like, what am I going to do? Like I can't run away from them, you know? So then, like a [campus police], like car, like pulls up to me and then they're just like talking to me about like, you know, my mental health symptoms and everything. And then I guess, I guess like there were also like the crisis intervention center people were also like, on the phone with [campus police] while they're having like this conversation with me because I think they needed, like, some pointers about how to like, assess like my mental health state and whatever.

Alex highlights how campus police were not prepared to respond to a student in a mental health crisis and so they were on the phone with a crisis center while interacting with him. The response to Alex being in crisis was to place him in the back of the campus police vehicle and involuntarily escort him to a hospital where they took all his belongings and he was held involuntarily for three days.

Higher education, with its racist and ableist definitions of the "ideal" student, declares that racialized and disabled students are "essentially excludable," as they are "those who 'we' can't, won't, or don't imagine as potential participants…in everyday life"

[2] We use possibility because students did not always receive the accommodations they were registered for as Marisol discusses with note-taking.

(Titchkosky, 2011, p. 39). Higher education then uses carceral methods to control and ostracize those who do not—and/or cannot—conform to its ideals, ultimately revealing to racialized and disabled students that their nonconformity makes them expendable to the university. This is how disability functions as a verb, or the "state-sanctioned disablement of racialized and impoverished communities" as opposed to "a minority identity to be claimed" (Kim, 2017, para. 5). Rather than "protecting" students like Alex and Rodrigo, the university acts "as an apparatus of racialized disablement" by pushing out and removing students who are marked as expendable (or liabilities) (Kim, 2017, para. 5). A crip-of-color critique exposes how colleges and universities are not "a haven of protection" for racialized and disabled students but are sites of violence (Kim, 2017, para. 5).

Realizing their institutionally-constructed "throw away" status can cause these students anxiety and depression, and lead to their pushout (Waitoller et al., 2019). Rodrigo talked about isolating himself as a result of his experiences with campus police. After the third time campus police was called on him, he was suspended and no longer allowed to attend school full time, and this was documented in his academic record. He was not offered access to counseling or support for his mental health during any of these encounters. Rodrigo felt like an outsider, and he decided to no longer engage with the campus community:

> Um, I-I was just like, "You know what? I'm just gonna go to school and I'm just gonna finish it." And I was kind of, I kind of change everything to the point where I decided I'm no longer gonna socialize with anybody. I'm no longer gonna, you know, actively join clubs or anything, I'm not gonna do. All I'm gonna do is go to school and leave school. Go to school, leave school. That's it, I'm not gonna do anything else. and 'til this day that I still do it, I still do just that. I have no friends on campus. I don't know any of the professors. I don't care. I'm just going to school. And I just want to pass. Get my degree and leave and so, that method has proven to work 'cause I haven't had any incidents or anything. Uh, for now.

Rodrigo recognized how the institution had relegated him expendable and had divested from him as a student. In response, the only way he saw forward was to refrain from forming relationships with faculty and other students, and only come to campus for his classes.

After returning to campus, Alex had a very different response from campus. He explained, "They were constantly, like, calling me, and [CAPS] was just like, please come." He recounted how he experienced additional harm when he attended counseling sessions:

> Yeah, so I mean, like the counselor that I saw, she was Hispanic and so she, like, I just felt like she was not aware or like whenever I would talk to her about, like, you know, my family dynamics or, you know, or…my family background in terms of, like, my mental health issues…I just felt like she didn't really understand that like, as an Asian American, like I always felt like, "Oh, I shouldn't, you know, bother my mom, or I shouldn't like bother, like, my family with my issue is because," you know, I was like, "Oh, you know, my mom like, works like 10 hours a day, you know, she's a single mom now, like, and she, you know, just because like, in the, like," you know, I felt like I tried to explain to her like, you know, "mental health and like, the Asian community isn't a thing." Like, a lot of families just don't get that. I felt like she didn't really try to address— like I didn't really think she encouraged me to like go deeper into that. I feel like she just kind of glossed over it, which I didn't really appreciate.

Landry (2023) argues that universities offer resources at this juncture with students only because of concerns about "risk and liability on the part of the institution," and then, even in these instances, the resources provided function to pressure students "to strive towards productivity and emulate normalcy" (p. 768), rather than to provide real support. For Alex, these sessions caused him additional distress. He explained, "I… just felt like I had to re-explain myself over and over again, and she wasn't providing me like these tangible-like strategies to help or like she just wasn't being very empathetic to that situation."

Students' experiences with disability services offices and campus police highlight how carceral ableism and sanism shaped their experiences on campus. Rather than facilitating access, DRCs often "expand[ed] and 'legitmat[ized]" the hyper-surveillance and scrutinization of racialized-disabled bodyminds (Ben-Moshe, 2020, p. 17). Mandated accommodations, or protections offered through law and facilitated (i.e., gatekept) by disability services offices, often function to restrict students' autonomy and legitimatize their further marginalization on campus. For students who experience mental health crises or distress like Rodrigo and Alex, this approach is used as justification for removal under the guise of their own or other's perceived safety. Students' counternarratives illustrate how racialized and disabled students encounter particular forms of policing and surveillance

on campus through the pathologization and criminalization of difference as well as how faculty, and even students, are socialized into carceral logics.

Futurities Rooted in Care

Our final theme discussed futurities dreamed by racialized and disabled students. Nishida (2022) explains that "as much as care is deployed as a mechanism of control and oppression, it has also been a tool for people to resist in oppression and engage in alternative and collective ways of living" that "not only makes one's life more sustainable, but also gives them the power to distract the flow of the status quo and enable another kind of world making" (p. 17). We center students' care dreaming to uplift how they reimagined access and support on their college campuses and recognize this dreaming of alternative care futurities as a form of resistance by racialized and disabled students. Using a crip-of-color critique, we recognize the importance of "the speculative project of world-making" and the necessity to "intervene into narratives of expendability" (Kim, 2017, para. 5). Students' counternarratives resisted majoritarian narratives that they were disposable and reaffirmed that they, and future students like them, were worthy of non-carceral and humanizing care on their campuses.

Some students focused on reimagining how they were perceived by institutional actors and peers, while others discussed how the campus and services could proactively and meaningfully support students seeking support or navigating crises. Tiffany dreamed about a future where racism and ableism were no longer obstacles:

> I wish they knew that I try very hard like I wish they knew that I'm like uhh very strong-minded when it comes to getting something or understanding something um just that uh I wish that they could see my strength, you know, and yeah— not be blinded or yeah blinded by the fact that I have a speech impediment or that my name is [Tiffany]— Black girl— I don't know— yeah.

Kennedy imagined a future where disabled students' needs and talents were honored, and where educators operated from a place of care rather than control:

> I just wish that it wasn't so quick to label kids, and then be like, "Oh, yeah, you have a learning disability," I just wish that it was kind of like… "So, therefore we're going to help you, although we are going to still challenge you" in the sense so that students of Color are not getting pushed back…So, I just wish that we had more teachers that cared.

Central to students' counternarratives resisting expendability and disposability was the need for authentic care from educators (Valenzuela, 1999).

Alex and Marisol reflected on specific changes the institution and services such as disability programs and the student health center could make. In Miller and Dika's (2018) survey on queer and disabled students, participants talked about their difficulty accessing mental health care through the counseling center and supports from the DRC. These difficulties seemed to reaffirm to students that their problems "were unimportant" (Miller & Dika, 2018, p. 94). Alex discussed being unable to access mental health support until *after* he had been in crisis. He reflected on the need for more preventative rather than reactive supports for students who navigated suicidal ideation.

> I feel like for me, because like, after I had gone through my whole, like 5150 experience[3], they kind of put me on like a priority list because they knew like, "Okay, he has like previous, like suicide attempts." So, they— I felt like they did prioritize me and like receiving those sessions from like the therapist at the health center. But, you know, which I feel like shouldn't be the case. I mean, to be frank, I feel like they, I mean, I feel like they also should be, you know, helping people who, you know, preventing people from getting to that point, really like doing more like preventative, like therapy than like more like reactive, you know, therapy after the fact.

Similarly, Marisol discussed how disability services could do more to scaffolding to reach out to students:

> I mean, I just wish there was a whole other way for some of these programs, I mean especially the disability program to be, you know, at least, I mean, noted in this orientation, like, the mandatory orientation. Some of these programs could be talked about because, I mean, I would say I'm a prime example as to what happened. There is no support system unfortunately. I mean yeah, they have this vision that you get here and you're supposed to learn—already [know] how to walk, which is true to some degree, but that's not for everybody. So, I think my experience would've

[3] Alex is referring to a law in California that can place a person who is in or perceived to be in crisis under an involuntary hold.

> been a little bit different had it not been for this—you know, right now, I'm still not getting notes for some of my classes and I've already asked for notes two times. And I'm already halfway through the [term]. So that right there is like, who do you hold accountable? I've done my part, where is the school doing their part? So, that's all. (Marisol)

Co-founder of Sins Invalid and one of the original dreamers of disability justice, Patty Berne (2020), reminds us that "there has always been resistance to all forms of oppression, as we know in our bones that there have also always been disabled people visioning a world where we flourish, a world that values and celebrates us in all our beauty" (para. 17). Students' counternarratives act both as a way of resisting the ways in which they were positioned as expendable and disposable and also offer visions for a different kind of future.

Conclusion

Collectively, these students' counternarratives reveal the ways carceral logics circulate in the everyday of their higher educational experiences, often in ways that go unnoticed and uninterrogated because these logics emanate from offices that purport to "help" disabled students; instead, students often struggled to meet their access needs. Our study also illuminates the need for non-carceral responses to mental health crises on campuses and the necessity of abolitionist dreaming in reimagining services rooted in care and liberation (Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, 2020). Following Zena Sharman's (2021) abolitionist dreaming of healthcare system transformation for LGBTQ+ communities, we recognize the need for "a precise and controlled burn" in higher education "discerning what to keep, what to change, what to get rid of altogether, and where we want to create something new or entirely outside the system" (p. 139). This calls for "cripping accommodations" (Dorrance et al., 2023) and investing in peer support models that do not "replicat[e] oppressive dynamics… we see play out in the mental health 'care' system— dynamics that exist due to concerns of liability and fear of Disabled, mentally ill/mad, and neurodivergent folks" (Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, 2020, para. 15). This also includes abolitionist movements to policing being led by students on college and university campuses such as the #CareNotCops campaign at the University of Chicago and the Cops off Campus coalition which call for access to mental health resources and defunding of police (UChicago United, n.d.).

Through this work we call for a future in which the perceived inevitability of these carceral logics can be and are furiously challenged. Love (2019) implores educators to center Black mattering and joy as keys to transformative liberation, while concomitantly challenging whiteness, engaging in advocacy, moving with love, and speaking truth to power. Accordingly, we dare to imagine a future that recognizes and values all our students, especially racialized and disabled students, in all their humanity; in so imagining, we believe we can create a space for abolitionist practices to take root and grow. Such practices require, and urgently so, a reimagining of care that is not rooted in pathologization or carcerality— a divestment from spaces that "look like a jail cell" (as well as a larger call to abolishing prisons, jails, and other carceral spaces/places). This study spotlights the myriad ways oppression looks in the academy—in naming this oppression more clearly, we can fight it more fiercely.

References

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). (2023). S*upporting accommodation requests: Guidance on documentation practices.* AHEAD. https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/accommodations/documentation

Anderson, G. (2019, October 8). Fair leave for mental illness: Stanford University will no longer use leaves of absence as a "first resort" for students in crisis. *Inside Higher Ed*. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/10/08/stanford-changes-leave-policies-mental-illness

Annamma, S. (2016). Disrupting the carceral state through education journey mapping. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 29*(9), 1210–1230. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1214297

Annamma, S. A. (2017). *The pedagogy of pathologization: Dis/abled girls of color in the school-prison nexus*. Routledge.

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D., & Ferri, B. (2013). Dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 16*(1), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.730511

Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D., & Morrison, D. (2017). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: Using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 20*(2), 147–162.

Ben-Moshe, L. (2020). *Decarcerating disability: Deinstitutionalization and prison abolition*. University of Minnesota Press.

Beneke, M. R., Machado, E., & Taitingfong, J. (2022). Dismantling carceral logics in the urban early literacy classroom: Towards liberatory literacy pedagogies with/for multiply-marginalized young children. *Urban Education*. doi.org/10.1177/00420859221091235

Bergen, H., & Abji, S. (2019). Facilitating the carceral pipeline: Social work's role in funneling newcomer children from the child protection system to jail and deportation. *Affilia*, *35*(1), 34–48.

Berne, P. (2020, June 16). What is disability justice? *Sins Invalid*. https://www.sinsinvalid.org/news-1/2020/6/16/what-is-disability-justice

Cabral, B. (2023). Linguistic confinement: Rethinking the racialized interplay between educational language learning and carcerality. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 26*(3), 277–297. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2022.2069742

Castro, E. L., & Magana, S. (2020). Enhancing the carceral state: Criminal/ized history questions in college admissions. *Journal of College Student Development, 61*(6), 814–831. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0077

Chapman, C., Carey, A. C., & Ben-Moshe, L. (2014). Reconsidering confinement: Interlocking locations and logics of incarceration. In L. Ben-Moshe, C. Chapman, C. & A. Carey (Eds.), *Disability incarcerated: Imprisonment and disability in the United States and Canada* (pp. 3–24). Palgrave Macmillan U.S.

Critical Resistance (2023). What is the PIC? What is abolition? *Critical Resistance*. criticalresistance.org/mission-vision/not-so-common-language/

Davis, A. Y. (2011). *Are prisons obsolete?* Seven Stories Press.

Dolmage, J. T. (2017). *Academic ableism: Disability and higher education*. University of Michigan Press.

Dorrance, J., Havard, J., Luna, C., & Young, O. K. (2023). Awe of what a body can be: Disability justice, the syllabus, and academic labour. *Performance Matters, 8*(2), 50–71.

Erevelles, N. (2014). Crippin' Jim Crow: Disability, dis-location, and the school-to-prison pipeline. In L. Ben-Moshe, C. Chapman, C. & A. Carey (Eds.), *Disability incarcerated: Imprisonment and disability in the United States and Canada* (pp. 81–99). Palgrave Macmillan U.S.

Evans, N. J., Broido, E. M., Brown, K. R., & Wilke, A. K. (2017). *Disability in higher education: A social justice approach*. John Wiley & Sons.

Fernández, L. (2002). Telling stories about school: Using critical race and Latino critical theories to document Latina/Latino education and resistance. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 45–65. doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800104

Gatica, C. (2021, January 29). Op-ed: UCPD should not be responsible for mental health care responses. *Daily Bruin*. https://dailybruin.com/2021/01/29/op-ed-ucpd-should-not-be-responsible-for-mental-health-care-responses

Gerberg, J., & Li, A. (2022, June 22). When a call to the police for help turns deadly. *Washington Post*. www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2022/police-shootings-mental-health-calls/

Gilmore, R. W. (2007). *Golden gulag: Prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California*. University of California Press.

Grande, S. (2018). Refusing the university. In Tuck, E., & Yang, K.W. (Eds.). *Toward what justice? Describing diverse dreams of justice in education* (1st ed., pp. 47–65). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351240932

Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review*, 1707–1791.

Harvard Prison Divestment Campaign. (2019). The Harvard-to-prison pipeline. *Harvard Prison Divestment*. harvardprisondivest.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/10/191014_HPDBooklet_WEB.pdf

Hines-Datiri, D., & Carter Andrews, D. J. (2020). The effects of zero tolerance policies on Black girls: Using critical race feminism and figured worlds to examine school discipline. *Urban Education, 55*(10), 1419–1440. doi.org/10.1177/0042085917690204

Howard, R. M. (2002). Don't police plagiarism: Just teach! *The Education Digest, 67*(5), 46.

Huber, L. P. (2008). Building critical race methodologies in educational research: A research note on critical race testimonio. *FIU Law Review, 4*(1), 159–173. dx.doi.org/10.25148/lawrev.4.1.15

Iverson, S. V., & Jaggers, D. (2015). Racial profiling as institutional practice: Theorizing the experiences of Black male undergraduates. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 52*(1), 38–49. doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2015.995578

Jiménez, L. (2023, July 23). Op-ed: CAE's punitive response to addiction furthers exclusion of marginalized students. *Daily Bruin*. https://dailybruin.com/2023/07/23/op-ed-caes-punitive-response-to-addiction-furthers-exclusion-of-marginalized-students

Johnson, E. (2019, October 30). Forced removal of student prompts protest. *Inside Higher Ed*. www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/10/31/american-university-students-protest-mistreatment-black-student

Kaba, M. (2013, Dec 20) Fifteen things that we relearned about the Prison Industrial Complex in 2013. *Truthout*. truthout.org/articles/fifteen-things-that-we-re-learned-about-the-prison-industrial-complex-in-2013/

Kaba, M., & Ritchie, A. J. (2022). *No more police: A case for abolition*. The New Press.

Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, S. L. (2020). We don't need cops to become social workers: We need peer support + community response networks. *Medium*. https://medium.com/@stefkaufman/we-don't-need-cops-to-become-social-workers-we-need-peer-support-b8e6c4ffe87a

Kim, C., Losen, D., & Hewitt, D. (2010). *The school-to-prison pipeline: Structuring legal reform*. New York University Press.

Kim, J. B. (2017). Toward a crip-of-color critique: Thinking with Minich's "enabling whom?" *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association, 6*(1). https://csalateral.org/issue/6-1/forum-alt-humanities-critical-disability-studies-crip-of-color-critique-kim/

Kohler-Hausmann, I. (2019). *Misdemeanorland: Criminal courts and social control in an age of broken windows policing*. Princeton University Press.

Krueger, P. (2010). It's not just a method! The epistemic and political work of young people's lifeworlds at the school-prison nexus. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(3), 383–408. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2010.500846

Kulkarni, S., Nusbaum, E., & Boda, P. (2021). DisCrit at the margins of teacher education: Informing curriculum, visibilization, and disciplinary integration. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 24*(5), 654–670.

Landry, D. (2023). Mad student organizing and the growth of Mad Studies in Canada. *Research Papers in Education*, 1–20.

Lee, A. Y., & Lee, A J. (2021). Critical race methodologies. In N. K. Duke & M. H. Mallette (Eds.), *Literacy research methodologies* (3rd ed.). The Guilford Press.

Losen, D., Hodson, C., Ee, J., & Martinez, T. (2015). Disturbing inequities: Exploring the relationship between racial disparities in special education identification and discipline. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk, 5*, 2–20.

Losen, D. J., Martínez, P., & Shin, G. H. R. (2021). Disabling inequity: The urgent need for race-conscious resource remedies. *Civil Rights Project-Proyecto Derechos Civiles*. www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/special-education/disabling-inequity-the-urgent-need-for-race-conscious-resource-remedies/final-Report-03-22-21-v5-corrected.pdf

Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom.* Beacon Press.

Meiners, E. R., & Winn, M. T. (2010). Resisting the school to prison pipeline: The practice to build abolition democracies. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(3), 271–276. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2010.500832

Miller, R.A., & Dika, S.L. (2018). Perceptions of campus climate at the intersections of disability and LGBTQIA+ identities. In K. Soria (Ed.), *Evaluating campus climate at U.S. research universities* (77–101). Palgrave Macmillan.

Mingus, M. (2011, February 12). Changing the framework: Disability justice [Blog]. *Leaving Evidence.* leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/changing-the-frameworkdisability-justice/

Mingus, M. (2015, February 6). Medical industrial complex visual [Blog]. *Leaving Evidence*. https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2015/02/06/medical-industrial-complex-visual/

Minich, J. A. (2016). Enabling whom? Critical disability studies now. *Lateral, 5*(1), http://csalateral.org/wp/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-critical-disability-studies-now-minich/

Nishar, S. (2020, May 5). Behind the Van Wickle gates: Negligence and abuse. *Uprise RI*. https://upriseri.com/2020-05-18-project-letts/

Nishida, A. (2022). *Just care: Messy entanglements of disability, dependency, and desire*. Temple University Press.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2018). *Care work: Dreaming disability justice*. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Puar, J. K. (2017). *The right to maim: Debility, capacity*. Duke University Press.

Rabaka, R. (2010). *Against epistemic apartheid: W.E.B. Du Bois and the disciplinary decadence of sociology*. Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield.

Rodríguez, D. (2010). The disorientation of the teaching act: Abolition as pedagogical position. *Radical Teacher: A Socialist, Feminist and Anti-Racist Journal On the Theory and Practice of Teaching, 1(*88), 7–19.

Rodríguez, D. (2012). Racial/colonial genocide and the "neoliberal academy": In excess of a problematic. *American Quarterly, 64*(4), 809–813.

Rodríguez, D. (2016). The political logic of the non-profit industrial complex. *The Scholar and Feminist Online*. sfonline.barnard.edu/dylan-rodriguez-the-political-logic-of-the-non-profit-industrial-complex/

Schalk, S. (2017). Critical disability studies as methodology. *Lateral, 6*(1). https://doi.org/10.25158/L6.1.13

Schalk, S. (2023). *Black disability politics*. Duke University Press.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Teacher's College Press.

Shalaby, C. (2020). Classroom management as a curriculum of care. *Educational Leadership, 78*(3), 40–45. www.ascd.org/el/articles/classroom-management-as-a-curriculum-of-care

Shalaby, C. (2021). Imagining "classroom management" as an abolitionist project. In Education for Liberation Network & Critical Resistance Editorial Collective (Eds.), *Lessons in liberation: An abolitionist tooklit for educators* (pp. 104–112). AK Press.

Sharman, Z. (2021). *The care we dream of: Liberatory and transformative approaches to LGBTQ+ health*. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 23–44. doi.org/10.1177/10778004020080010

Smith, W. A., Allen, W.R., & Danley, L. L. (2007). "'Assume the position...You fit the description': Psychosocial experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students." *American Behavioral Scientist, 51*(4) 551–578. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207307

Spade, D. (2015). *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law.* Duke University Press.

Stapleton, L., & James, L. (2020). Not another all white study: Challenging color-evasiveness ideology in disability scholarship (Practice Brief). *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33*(3), 215–222. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1281055.pdf

Stevens, L. P. (2009). Maps to interrupt a pathology: Immigrant populations and education. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies, 6*(1–2), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427580802679245

Titchkosky, T. (2011). *The question of access: Disability, space, meaning*. University of Toronto Press.

UChicago United (n.d.). *#CareNotCops* [Website]. https://www.uchicagounited.org/carenotcops

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: US-Mexican youth and the politics of caring.* State University of New York Press.

Waitoller, F. R., Nguyen, N., & Super, G. (2019). The irony of rigor: 'No-excuses' charter schools at the intersections of race and disability. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 32*(3), 282–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2019.1576939

Ward, L. W. (2021). Disrupting carceral logics within U.S. higher education: Black women's lawsuits as resistance to institution-sanctioned violence. *Peabody Journal of Education, 96*(5), 565–581. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2021.1991698

About the Authors

Danielle Mireles, Ph.D., is an interdisciplinary scholar-activist whose work is embedded at the intersections of racial, disability, and health justice. They received their B.A. degree in Deaf Studies from California State University, Northridge and their M.A. and Ph.D. in education from the University of California, Riverside. They are currently an Assistant Professor in Cultural Studies, Multicultural Education, and International Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. They can be reached at danielle.mireles@unlv.edu.

Claudia Chiang-Lopez earned their B.A. in Multidisciplinary Studies and M.A. in Communication Studies, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and is currently a Ph.D. student in Multicultural Education and graduate certificate student in Higher Education also at UNLV. Their research focuses on the relationship between abolition and dis/ability critical race studies in education. In addition to being an AACTE Holmes Scholar, they are a Mellon Foundation "Crossing Latinidades" Fellow. They can be reached at claudia.chiang-lopez@unlv.edu.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the students for participating in this study and sharing their knowledge with us, Archer Rizzo and Anna Acha for the dialogues which helped us envision this piece, Dr. Christine Clark for her editing skills on earlier versions of this manuscript, our amazing editors (Dr. Daniel J. Blake, Julia Rose Karpicz, Gabriel Rodríguez Lemus, and Dr. Kat Stephens-Peace), and the reviewers for their generative feedback and support.

JPED Author Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of the *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* (JPED) is to publish research and contemporary best practices related to disabled college students, college and university disability services offices, disability educators, and disability studies as a field within and lens for the study of higher education institutions. The sponsoring organization for the JPED is the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), the primary source of disability related expertise on accessibility, legislation, rights, and any other disability-related information as it pertains to higher education. Consistent with the overall goals of AHEAD, each JPED article includes practical *implications for disability services educators* in colleges and universities.

Review Process

The JPED is peer-reviewed and uses a masked-in-both-directions review process. Although our reviewers take care to provide developmental feedback, it is essential that prospective authors follow the guidance and formatting instructions in this document carefully. The editorial process is not typically able to address major issues of conceptualization or craft in a way that leads to eventual publication.

Manuscript Topics and Types

Published manuscripts will advance JPED's purpose as detailed above (i.e., research, best practices, implications for disability services educators).

Research Articles

Manuscripts demonstrate scholarly excellence using one of the types of articles described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition, American Psychological Association [APA], 2020) sections 1.1-1.8 These include quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, replication, meta-analyses, literature review, theoretical, and methodological articles. ***Inclusive of all manuscript elements (including title page, references, tables, and appendices) research articles cannot exceed 35 pages and typically are between 25-30 pages.***

Practice Briefs

Manuscripts describe innovative programs, services, or contemporary best practices that support disabled college students or disability services, and are organized using the following first-heading levels (APA 2.27):

- **Summary of Relevant Literature:** provide a succinct summary of the most relevant and contemporary literature that provides context for what is already known about the practice/program.
- **Setting and/or Participants Demographics:** provide enough information about the implementation context for the practice described for the reader to make an informed assessment regarding similarity to their own practice environment-- using a pseudonym or compositing as needed to provide anonymity for participants / institutions involved;
- **Depiction of the Problem:** provide a statement of the problem being addressed.
- **Description of Practice:** briefly describe the intended outcome for the innovative practice/program and how it has been implemented to date. Tables and figures may enhance specific details.
- **Evaluation of Observed Outcomes:** summarize formative and/or summative data used to evaluate the efficacy of your practice/program; support claims with evaluation data.
- **Implications and Transferability:** discuss what has been learned and how this practice/program could be enhanced. Be realistic about any challenges encountered and how others seeking to replicate the practice elsewhere might experience them. Offer suggestions about what could be done differently in the future to achieve better outcomes. Provide a clear description of how and why other disability service educators should consider adapting your practice/program.

Inclusive of all manuscript elements (including title page, references, tables, and appendices) practice briefs cannot exceed 15 pages and typically are between 8-12 pages.

Media Reviews

Prior to preparing a media review, please contact the JPED's Managing Editor (jped@ahead.org) to discuss the resource (e.g., book, film, online resource) you are considering reviewing. Media reviews provide:

- An overview of the resource, identifying the stated purpose, the author/creator and their viewpoint, and a general summary of the content.
- An evaluation of the resource's strengths, elaborating on the author/creator's objectives and how well those objectives were achieved.
- Recommendations about the audiences that might find the resource useful, why, and how you would suggest the resource be used. Please be sure to address its potential contribution to the field. For any gaps in the resource's content, rather than framing as weaknesses, consider offering suggestions about other works or perspectives that could be used in tandem with this resource. In other words, of what conversations in our field could this resource be an important part?

Inclusive of the text of the review itself, media reviews should typically be between 750-1250 words. Media review submissions should also be accompanied by a complete APA reference for the resource reviewed as well as references for any additional citations in the text of the review.

Manuscript Preparation

All manuscripts must be prepared according to the standards of the APA publication manual (7th edition). Authors submitting manuscripts to the JPED will be well-served to thoroughly understand Section 12 of the APA manual where the publication process is described as preparing for publication, understanding the editorial publication process, manuscript preparation, copyright and permission guidelines, and during and after publication.

When submitting a manuscript to the JPED, follow these specific guidelines:

- Submit *one* complete Word document (.doc or .docx) that contains all manuscript components (i.e., title page, abstract, body, references, tables/figures).
- Provide a separate cover letter (APA 12.11) asking that the manuscript be considered for publication and providing any other information that would be useful to the editors.
- Manuscripts should have one-inch margins in 12-point Times New Roman font. Double space the abstract, body, and references; single space the title page and tables/figures.
- The title (APA 2.4) should not exceed 12 words.
- Place the abstract (maximum 250 words, APA 2.9) on page two (following the title page). Include three to five keywords (APA 2.10) below the abstract (does not apply to book reviews).
- Use APA Section 1, Scholarly Writing and Publishing Principles, related to types of articles and papers; ethical, legal, and professional standards in publishing; ensuring the accuracy of scientific findings; protecting the rights and welfare of research participants and subjects; and protecting intellectual property rights.
- Use APA Section 2, Paper Elements and Format, to align paper elements, format, and organization. Indent paragraphs (APA 2.24), and adhere to heading levels (APA 2.27) to organize the manuscript.
- Content and method are important. Use APA Section 3, Journal Article Reporting Standards, related to overview of reporting standards; common reporting standards across research designs; and reporting standards for quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research. Please refer to Madaus et al. (2020) for research guidelines for higher education and disability where instructions are provided for describing samples and study locations, and appropriately selecting and describing the methodologies employed.
- Writing is important, carefully edit and proofread the manuscript.. Use APA Section 4, Writing Style and Grammar, related to continuity and flow, conciseness and clarity, verbs, pronouns, and sentence construction. Use APA Section 6, Mechanics of Style, related to punctuation, spelling, capitalization, italics, abbreviations, numbers, statistical and mathematical copy, presentation of equations, and lists. Refer to APA 6.32-6.39 to properly report numbers expressed as numerals or in words.
- APA Section 5, Bias-Free Language and Guidelines provides guidance for writing about people, identity, and other topics wherein bias in writing is common. Although generally useful, this section's discussion of disability is reductive. Authors should follow their best judgment in this regard. Additional guidance is provided below.

- Regarding language related to disability, authors must determine the type of wording that is best for their given study - typically person-first or identity-first language. (See the "AHEAD Statement on Language" for details about these options and for additional resources on the topic.) We encourage authors to be explicit about their choices in the manuscript, informing readers about the rationale for their choice of language. When research or program participants are disabled and it is possible to determine their preferences, the preferred language of those individuals should be prioritized ahead of researcher or practitioner decisions. Additionally, aligned with the AHEAD statement in terms of outdated language use, we discourage "the use of outmoded euphemisms such as 'special needs,' 'physically or mentally challenged,' differently- or alternatively-abled, etc." unless there is an explicit reason, such as referring to past practices or terminology to learn something valuable from it for current practice.
- Use APA Section 8, Works Credited in Text, related to general guidelines for citation, works requiring special approaches to citation, in-text citations, and paraphrases and quotations. All citations must be referenced, and all references must be cited; avoid undercitation and overcitation (APA 8.1). Double-space and block quotations of 40 words or more (APA 8.27).
- Provide a complete reference list (APA 2.12) rather than a bibliography following the manuscript. References should be formatted consistently, following APA examples in sections 9-11. Please be sure to carefully edit references as manuscripts will not be sent out for review until they conform to APA guidelines and references represent the most common challenge point for submitted manuscripts.
- Mask any information that could reasonably reveal the identity of the authors to the reviewers. For example, citations that would identify an author should be replaced with "citation omitted" and the corresponding reference removed from the reference list (APA 8.3). This does not mean that all author citations must be removed, only those that are likely to reveal an author identity by being self-referential. Those which are "in press" or "under review" should also be removed as they are typically from an author. Mask institutional identities in manuscripts if they are likely to reveal the institution of an author. Please do not use a title that can be searched in order to find a previous iteration of the work (e.g., a conference presentation, a dissertation). We will ask you to unmask these elements of your manuscript subsequent to acceptance. These examples are not exhaustive, but it is the author's job to minimize any information that can reveal author identity.
- Tables and/or figures, following references, are in black and white only, and must conform to APA standards in APA Section 7. Follow examples related to table lines. Align numbers in tables to the single digit or the decimal. If tables and/or figures are submitted in image format (JPEG, PDF, etc.), an editable format must also be submitted along with a text description of the information depicted in the table/figure. This will be provided as an alternate format in the electronic version of the JPED, making tables/figures accessible for screen readers.
- In submitted manuscripts, all tables and figures should be placed at the end of the manuscript with a corresponding indication in the text, "< Place Table/Figure X approximately here>". During layout editing, tables and/or figures should will be embedded in the text either as noted in the manuscript or after its first mention in text (APA 7.6)
- Do not include footnotes, instead, incorporate footnote narratives into the manuscript.
- Because of the importance of articles including practical implications for disability services educators in colleges and universities, authors will be well-served to include in the discussion a multiple paragraph subsection where practical implications for disability services educators are discussed.
- Before submission, ensure that the manuscript is ready by using strategies, examples, and checklists provided by APA:
  - Sample papers (end of Section 2, pp. 50-67).
  - Strategies to improve your writing (APA 4.25-4.30).
  - Tables checklist (APA 7.20).
  - Figure checklist (APA 7.35).
  - In-text citation styles (Table 8.1).
  - Examples of direct quotations in the text (Table 8.2).
  - Reference examples (section 10 and 11).
  - Manuscript preparation (APA 12.9-12.13).

Manuscript Submission

Before you decide to submit your manuscript, authors are encouraged to read past articles in the JPED to better understand the types of submissions we print. All submissions will be through the Scholastica online system, easily accessed by clicking the "Submit via Scholastica" button on the JPED webpage.

- If this is your first time using our journal management system, Scholastica, you can sign up and create a free account. Directions for creating an account and logging in can be found in the Scholastica Author Guide.
- Enter your manuscript title, then click "save and continue." After this page, if you have to pause and come back to complete this submission sometime in the future, you may do so by going to your "My Manuscripts" page and selecting this submission.
- Next, you can add the "metadata" for your manuscript (title, abstract, keywords), author information, and manuscript files. For all JPED submissions, we ask that you include:
  - o A cover letter (APA 12.11)
  - o A masked version of your manuscript
  - o Any additional tables, graphs, and/or supplementary materials
- Once you've reviewed your completed submission form, you can "confirm and submit" and check "I understand" before submitting. You will not be able to make any changes to your manuscript once you click "submit manuscript."

For more detailed information about submitting manuscripts in Scholastica, please refer to their Submitting a Manuscript guide. If you have any questions, please contact jped@ahead.edu.

Upon Acceptance for Publication

For manuscripts that are accepted for publication, we will request additional information. Once your manuscript has been assigned to a future issue, Valerie Spears (JPED Editorial Assistant) will contact the corresponding author to request: (1) a 40-50 word bibliographic description for each author; (2) and a signed copyright transfer form (Valerie will send templates for both); and (3) approval of galley proofs of the article ready for publication. Galley proofs will include required response to specific copyediting suggestions. Authors may be contacted prior to this step to respond to copyediting, depending on the level and nature of the edits. Although JPED reserves the right to edit all material for space and style, corresponding authors will be notified of changes.

Special Issues

The JPED occasionally publishes special issues which feature a series of articles on a particular topic. The JPED welcomes ideas for special topic issues related to the field of postsecondary education and disability or disability studies. The issue can be formatted as a collection of articles related to a particular topic or as a central position paper followed by a series of commentaries (a modified point/counter point). If the issue has the potential to be valuable to the readership of the JPED, modification to the journal's content or format may be possible. Authors who wish to discuss a special issue should contact the editorial team at jped@ahead.org.

Publication Information

JPED is published four times a year in multiple accessible formats (e.g., printed, DAISY, MP3, Text only, PDF), and each issue is distributed to nearly 4,000 individuals. All back issues are archived and accessible to all on the AHEAD website. These author guidelines are also available online.

JPED's acceptance rate is moderately selective, accepting approximately 20% of all submitted manuscripts during the last calendar year. JPED is indexed in EBSCO, ERIC and Emerging Sources Citation Index. At present, JPED does not have an impact factor but is working with Clarivate Analytics' Social Sciences Citation Index to obtain one.

Editorial and Review Teams

The editorial team is composed of Ryan Wells, Valerie Spears, Richard Allegra, and Cassie Sanchez. The review board is composed of more than 70 international disability scholars and disability services educators with expertise on disabled college students, disability services, disability studies, and research methodologies.

References

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000

Madaus, J. W., Dukes, L. L. III, Lalor, A. R., Aquino, K., Fagella-Luby, M., Newman, L. A., Papay, C., Petcu, S., Scott, S., & Wessel, R. D. (2020). Research guidelines for higher education and disability. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33*(4), 319-338.