Introduction

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This volume is situated within the contours of four related fields concerned with human variation. *Disability Studies* (DS) and its companion (and in some conceptions, its successor), *Critical Disability Studies* (CDS), are concerned with contesting the society-wide, debilitating assumptions about people who do not conform to conventional notions of able-bodiedness. *Disability Studies in Education* (DSE) and *Critical Special Education* (CSE) focus this compassionate view of human difference within educational institutions, both in classrooms and in the physical and institutional structure of the environment. Our work resides within what we believe to be a useful niche, that of teachers and teacher educators from diverse content areas who acknowledge the potentially disabling effects of bodily and mental diversity, without taking the pathologizing perspective of human difference prevalent in society and often in schools.

DS and CDS emerged from the humanities and have a discursive emphasis; that is, they tend to view textuality as central, and seek to shift the rhetoric of representation from deficit to asset. Many claiming a DSE or CSE perspective emerged from within the field of mainstream special education (MSE), yet reject its medical model of sickness and cure. Like DS and CDS, they embrace a positive, empathic view of students with special needs as people with potential requiring knowledgeable and deliberate cultivation. We enter this discussion from disparate research programs that have led to concerns for how people of bodily, cognitive, and neurological difference become viewed as lesser in human value.

We next review how we arrived from outside these established fields to find ourselves working within their general outlines. We provide this narrative to establish our own

qualifications for contributing to a body of work with which we are not normally associated, yet which has proven compatible for the goals we have developed for making society and schools more humane and attentive to human diversity.

Our Pathways to the Field

Our pathways have been long and perhaps indirect. We began to develop our individual lines of inquiry before we ever knew one another or began to meet to discuss the overlap across our work.

Kyunghwa Lee and Joseph Tobin became colleagues in The University of Georgia's Department of Educational Theory and Practice in 2011, when Joe accepted a position as The Elizabeth Garrard Hall Professor of Early Childhood Education and relocated from Arizona State University. Through different channels, Peter Smagorinsky of the UGA Department of Language and Literacy Education became friends with each and learned that they had developed shared interests that might overlap with his. Our various conversations led us to begin to meet to discuss what we might have in common and how we could work together to advance our individual and collective understandings. We thus began inductively, talking about relationships across our work and that of our colleagues, rather than beginning by reading DS, CDS, DSE, and CSE and forming an affiliation deductively. Although we were aware of these fields in part, we had no intention initially of aligning our work with them. We thus began as outsiders who found common ground with extant work, even as we felt that our precise niche might require some adjustment and refinement.

Kyunghwa, a South Korean native, had been studying attention-deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and had become interested in how behavior classified as ADHD could be defined differently in diverse cultural and historical contexts. She was particularly interested in

examining how ADHD might reflect the middle-class, European American value on the individual, as is typical of mainstream special education's general Piagetian approach (Lee, 2004, 2005; Lee & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2008; Lee & Walsh, 2001). She found cultural psychology (Cole, 1996) to be a useful framework for adopting a perspective grounded in understanding cognition by first attending to the social surroundings of individuals, which led her to read Vygotsky and related sociocultural research. Paying attention to culture in general and today's U.S. early schooling in particular, she embraced the notion of social constructivism, which enabled her to articulate how the designation of one as disabled can go from a social construction to a cultural fact.

As a visitor to Joe Tobin's doctoral seminar on poststructuralism, she began to see ways of applying ideas of French sociologists and philosophers (e.g., Marcel Mauss, Michel Foucault) to investigate how ADHD reflects techniques of the body, a perspective known as *biopolitics*. She thus shares much with DS/CDS and DSE/CSE and their poststructural orientation. Her interest in social science applications through the sociocultural tradition and its materialist foundation, and her work as a teacher educator rather than a special education specialist, led her to broaden her interest in classification to classrooms in general, rather than classrooms designated as either special education or enrolling special education students along with unclassified students.

Peter's pathway to our collaborative was less direct. He began as a high school English/Language Arts teacher. His graduate studies were focused on researching ways of teaching writing, informed at the time by cognitive psychology. After graduating in 1989 and beginning his own university career, he gravitated quickly to the cultural-historical psychology developed by Vygotsky (1987) as a way to explain cultural variation in students' differential

performances in school. This work sustained him for two decades of research in literacy and teacher education, until a personal and family crisis led to an understanding of his own, along with his daughter's, location on the Asperger's syndrome spectrum, with chronic anxiety, obsessive compulsiveness, and mild Tourette's syndrome also part of their makeup.

Beginning with an autoethnographic exploration of his family life (Smagorinsky, 2011), he read Vygotsky's (1993) volume on *defectology*, a much-neglected work within Vygotsky's oeuvre. This unfortunately-named field was founded to address the cognitively and physically impaired population in Eastern Europe following nearly two decades of revolution and warfare that produced the Soviet Union in 1922 (see Smagorinsky, 2012, this volume; and Smagorinsky, Cole, & Braga, 2017, for more specific attention to the role of human diversity in cultural-historical psychology derived from Vygotsky). These investigations led him to think about neurodiversity (Fenton & Krahn, 2007), an emerging field that seeks to eradicate the shame and stigma associated with having what are known as mental illnesses (Cook & Smagorinsky, 2014; Smagorinsky, 2016). His background thus shared Kyunghwa's attention to cultural psychology, yet from a different perspective and in relation to different sorts of educational and societal challenges. Rather than emerging from any "disability" field, he located himself within Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach, with extrapolations from Vygotsky's defectological writing—concerned primarily with blind, deaf, maimed, and cognitively impaired children injured between World War I and the establishment of the Soviet Union—to neurodiversity as presented via autism-spectrum personalities.

Joe came to our collaboration through his long-time immersion in studies of preschools across international contexts (Japan, China, France, the U.S.), grounding his work in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and child development (Hayashi & Tobin, 2014; Tobin & Hayashi,

2015; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989). This approach of doing comparative studies in culturally varied national contexts of a single aspect of schooling—preschool socialization and education—led to an appreciation for the ways in which national cultures socialize children and prepare them differentially to participate in both school and society. His work in these settings brought him into contact with a number of deaf children and adults, leading to an interest in how deafness and other types of difference are constructed and addressed in educational settings (Hayashi & Tobin, 2014; Tobin & Hayashi, 2015). With a background in poststructuralism, anthropology, and psychoanalysis, and with experience doing research in varying cultures and national contexts, he approaches people who identify themselves, or are labeled by others, as different with the intention of understanding life from their perspective.

He further locates his understanding of the educational needs of Deaf and other people exhibiting difference within the affordances and constraints of the larger society in which they live. Joe values both the discursive emphasis of DS/CDS and its poststructural foundation, and the educational mission of DSE/CSE, particularly as it expands beyond its differences with MSE proponents and becomes engaged with the broader challenges of preparing teachers to work with a full range of children across the curriculum (see Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014; Gabel & Connor, 2014). He is especially interested in work on constructions of ability/disability conducted outside the North American/Anglophone cultural/political context, a broadening of focus encouraged by many scholars in DS/CDS and DSE/CSE. He thus saw our work group as a way to conceive of an alternative that incorporated MSE's attention to addressing the needs of learners classified as disabled, without compromising their social status by treating them according to a "pathology paradigm" (Walker, 2012) that assumes their deficiency.

Our conversations led us to set up a seminar series in the 2013-2014 academic year in which we met weekly to discuss shared readings among ourselves and with a group of graduate students, including some who were deaf or had deaf parents. Further, with both Kyunghwa and Peter acknowledging their own experiences with chronic anxiety, and Peter additionally having begun to write about Asperger's syndrome and obsessive-compulsiveness in his family and personal makeup, our meetings were especially attentive to discussing what are considered disabilities in nonpathologizing terms. This value took on an imperative as the group included deaf participants and sign-language interpreters, demanding attention to the diverse needs of those attending the sessions. This book embodies and extends those discussions.

Our approach thus springs from a seminar series, but is rooted in the various interests and experiences that brought our work together. We enter from different research programs and thus see our work as interdisciplinary yet well-integrated. Where we have arrived is consistent with the values of DS/CDS and DSE/CSE, yet informed by research programs not often associated with the established scholarship driving these areas of inquiry. Like these scholars, we challenge assumptions that view people classified as disabled or disordered to be "abnormal," that isolate attention to their difference solely in the individual, that treat areas of difference as matters of deficiency, and that separate people considered disabled or disordered from the mainstream and treat their points of difference pathologically. Each of us brought long disciplinary histories to these meetings that needed to be discussed and negotiated over time. Rather, then, than viewing our seminar series as a distinctive beginning, we see it as the convergence of ideas that were under development long before we entered the conversation, and that we hope to develop through this volume and beyond.

Epistemological and Theoretical Foundations

Within our purview we include attention to differences that are cognitive (e.g., "learning disabilities"), neurodivergent (e.g., Asperger's syndrome and ADHD), and physical (e.g., deafness). Our approach, rather than constructing people in terms of deficits, characterizes people with such classifications in terms of strengths rather than disabilities, and considers the social environments in which they live and learn as potentially either unresponsive and constraining or as supportive and enabling. In some cases, this environment is local, as in the immediate social surroundings of classrooms; in others the environment is more expansive and includes the policy context of overclassification of disability based on such factors as race and ethnicity. In other words, our approach reverses the customary frame of reference and shifts attention from the "disabled" and "disordered" individual to the disabling environment.

Sociocultural Orientation

We view ourselves as working within the sociocultural field that has contributed to the "social turn" that has directed and shaped much scholarship in the last few decades. Rather than promoting the tribalism that institutes a dominant culture's ways and means as ideal, this work seeks to understand how different cultural practices serve to promote different societal ends. From this perspective, societal norms are contested, and the whole spectrum of humanity is viewed as having potential for producing satisfying participation in a culture's practices. We use the term "spectrum" not to denote a linear order, but more as a non-hierarchical swirl of possibilities (see Burgess, 2016). Rather than going from left-to-right from severely affected to normal or ideal, the notion of a spectrum considers how one's makeup follows a complex, multi-faceted organization.

Our approach has roots in a Marxist perspective that is oriented to understanding the social environment of human development, one that is mediated by tools and signs. As school-

based researchers and teacher educators, we are concerned with the material conditions of classrooms and other school spaces and seek to construct them to promote more inclusive possibilities than are typically available. This interest is realized in architectural modifications such as those available through Universal Design and its antecedents (e.g., Goldsmith, 1963, 1997), which have produced large and expensive affordances such as accessibility ramps, and small adaptations such as large, flat light switches replacing small toggle switches. Such features allow the greatest number of people to navigate the physical environment. This concept has extended into the Design for All and Barrier-Free movements that push manufactures to create adaptive and assistive technology such as computer options, wireless control devices, Velcro adhesion, electric toothbrushes, and any other products that bring greater agency and autonomy to those for whom conventional environments present challenges. The concept of Universal Design has applications beyond architectural considerations, in the way social spaces including classrooms can be organized to facilitate accessibility and inclusivity.

The goal of constructing material settings that enable greater social value and participation fits well with our approach. Our hope is that the potential of those classified as disabled and disordered may be more fully realized in spite of the problem that conventional schooling has been designed to accommodate the *normate* (Garland-Thomson, 1997)—the idealized able-bodied/minded person—and not those who depart from its features. We thus share a rejection of the medical model of disability common in the diagnostic world. In that spirit, we avoid to the greatest extent possible terminology that pathologizes children and youth with disorders, disabilities, abnormalities, and other such terms. These terms are problematic and construct an ideological representation of deficit that positions people as socially inferior.

A Situated, Relational Approach

Our perspective emerges from conceptions of personhood that are relational, situated, and subject to development. Studies questioning the stereotype of the "silent Indian" student, for instance, found students perceived in this fashion to be reticent in classrooms, yet anything but silent on the playground. This research refutes essentialized notions of personality that emerge from a lack of attention to context, and from limited observations of conduct in specialized settings (see Philips, 1983). It instead calls for studies of how people participate in a variety of social situations that may elicit different forms of interaction.

This understanding of personhood applies as well to conditions considered to be handicaps, impairments, disabilities, and disorders. In a pitch-black room, for instance, a blind person has the advantage over the sighted, a point illustrated dramatically by H. G. Wells in his short story "The Country of the Blind" (1904). The conditions associated with Asperger's Syndrome—also known as Asperger's Disorder—might be debilitating in some settings, but may serve as an "Asperger's Advantage" in academia, where meticulous attention to detail, the ability to recognize patterns, and the disposition to engage in sustained focus on seemingly obscure topics are assets (Smagorinsky, 2014). We thus share a concern that classifications such as "disability" and "disorder" are applied too broadly, and in essentializing and static ways. We foreground instead the whole of a person's value, when other relational and situational factors may draw attention to the same factors as strengths on which potential may be cultivated.

Disciplinary Location

We see teacher education as a field that ought to be more concerned with serving the whole student population (cf. Blanton, Pugach, & Florian, 2011). We thus are interested in how teacher education as a field can take cognitive, neurological, and physical differences into account when preparing teachers for diverse classrooms. Although we find MSE's attention to

individual needs to be honorable and important, we are just as focused on the whole of the setting such that adaptations are required of all in the environment, rather than being the burden principally of those who are classified as deficiently different (Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2016; Vygotsky, 1993). We are teacher educators who are concerned with what mainstreamed and inclusive classrooms might look like, not only for those considered disabled but for those who surround them who share the responsibility for establishing a setting of respectful inclusion. We thus are focused on how to address the beliefs and actions of those who surround the children and youth diagnosed as disabled or disordered, so that they become accepted as productive members of social groups and classrooms as they work toward cultural goals.

We take a social and cultural perspective that views the surrounding social environment as at least as problematic as any point of difference in any individual. Our approach therefore is *contextual* (looking first to social mediation and second at individual makeup) rather than *individual* (looking first to the individual, with environmental factors of lesser importance). The scholars contributing to this volume feel that if the field of education is to address issues of inclusion among populations considered to be different from the mainstream, then studies of difference should be undertaken from multiple perspectives. Schools are typically organized to accommodate a very narrow range of human differences (Smagorinsky, 2017), and therefore unnecessarily produce conditions that position young people who do not fit the mold for failure more than success.

We lack the experience with MSE that most DSE/CSE scholars have, and also lack their first-hand frustrations with ideologies and practices that often accompany it. In a common rhetorical device among writers from DSE/CSE, their experiences in special education

classrooms are reviewed to establish their authority in condemning common practices that are not visible to the uninitiated. Danforth (2005), for instance, relates the following:

> For anyone who has not been a student or teacher in an E/BD [Emotional Behavior Disorder] program—specifically, a school or residential center for students labeled E/BD—the feel and texture of such a social environment is difficult to imagine. I worked as a teacher for seven years in two residential schools and two "day" schools for students considered E/BD. I have visited and consulted with countless others over the past two decades. Although there is some degree of variability across setting, they tend to be strikingly similar. (p. 87)

We cannot begin to approach such extensive exposure to MSE classrooms or specialized programs for students designated for specialized instruction in academics or social conduct. We have, however, been part of other educational settings in which modifications for students with special needs would be advisable, not only in terms of wheel-chair accessibility and other high-visibility provisions, but in light of less apparent needs of those whose divergence requires an accommodating social setting. Many contributors to this volume work with future and practicing teachers, all of whom will need to construct their students as having potential rather than deficits to be overcome. University students who are preparing for careers as teachers are typically required to take a course in special education to inform their work in classrooms. This course might dedicate as much attention to "gifted and talented" youth as to those to whom disabilities are ascribed, and is rarely in dialogue with the core of a discipline's teacher education coursework and fieldwork. Rather, it is taught in a separate discipline as a one-off exposure to those considered disabled or disordered, who are often characterized in terms of their deficits in relation to a perceived developmental norm.

Preservice teachers and inservice teachers in graduate programs thus develop understandings about cognitive, neurological, and bodily difference in a discrete course with which disciplinary faculty are not in conversation, even as the celebration of diversity is woven into mission statements of virtually every college of education. Knowledge about educating students of anomalous makeups is thus outsourced to faculty in special education, often in a department out of dialogue with content-area pedagogues. This division of intellectual labor creates a problem for teacher educators who believe that their preservice and inservice teachers need to integrate the perspectives they are introduced to in their coursework.

Conundrums and Uncertainties

The issues addressed in this volume come in the midst of often-antagonistic disagreements over how to address difference in school and society. Often the issues are presented as a war of words, ideologies, and practices in a winner-take-all fight to the finish. We approach this work with acknowledge uncertainty, however. We next outline ways in which we approach the question of human diversity, and how to address it educationally, with as open a mind as we can, given the perils of absolutist thinking.

Dousing rhetorical flames. Much of the discussion we find in scholarship from MSE, DS/CDS, and DSE/CSE is framed in confrontational, absolutist terms and inflammatory rhetoric. For example, according to the contributors to Gabel (2005), MSE imposes a hegemony of oppressive practices. In contrast, to MSE stalwart Kauffman (2005), the DS/CDS and DSE/CSE cause is harmful to children and society as a whole:

As a profession, we seem unaware that we are in grave danger of being torched by public sentiment and that some members of our profession are fueling the fire. Our vulnerability is being worsened by postmodern rejection of scientific evidence. Maybe we are attracted

to any kind of claptrap if it seems to be capturing the popular imagination, as postmodernism and deconstructionism are now doing. . . . The detonation of [Postmodern/Deconstructivist philosophy] in our profession leaves us with profoundly weak defenses against the glossy assertions of charlatans that they have discovered something miraculous. We become easy marks for those peddling junk science and other frauds. . . . [Postmodern/Deconstructivist philosophy] helps make us sitting ducks for the quack. (pp. 17, 20)

Kaufmann's rhetoric requires the reader to take his side or be considered a fraud and con artist. We have similarly found dismissive, exclusionary discourse in scholarship with which we generally agree. Our hope is that we can promote a sociocultural view without torching the integrity of those who believe something else.

Inclusion and exclusion. We are more conflicted and less sure than are many of our colleagues in MSE, DS/CDS, and DSE/CSE about many issues, at least as articulated in their publications. We are vexed, for instance, over the question of whether inclusion or separate programs provide the most supportive setting for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) written in response to their physical, cognitive, or neurological makeups. Each has advantages and disadvantages, similar to the conundrum of tracking in schools. Viewing either inclusion or exclusion (or tracking vs. untracking) only in terms of its deleterious effects both romanticizes the alternative and obscures the potential of the targeted approach. We can see possibilities of success and failure in each, leaving us only with the unsatisfying conclusion that providing education for the full range of students in public schools is such a great challenge that it will inevitably fall short of idealistic goals and claims.

Theoretically, exclusion is highly problematic. In the teeming world of public schools, however, there will always be some students who require more attention than is possible in ordinary classroom settings. Moreover, as Valente and Boldt (2014) argue, programs created to serve neuro-atypical children sometimes can be more hospitable than mainstreaming. The ethical and educational dilemmas follow from the question of who decides which is best in which circumstance, and whose interests are served by these decisions. When schools are designed to suit the socialization patterns and bodily makeup of a mainstream population to the exclusion of others, however, the assignment of students to segregated environments as a way to preserve the integrity of a particular set of norms in regular academic classrooms becomes both likely and problematic from an equity perspective.

Anti-expertise pitfalls. We are also not anti-expert, as DS/CDS authors often are in declaiming the authority of those in positions to make judgments about those considered disabled, a perspective aligned with a broader rejection of knowledge and expertise in society (Nichols, 2017). We share the view that many "experts" can be insensitive and many lay people can have important insights, but do not see that likelihood as justifying the exclusion of the perspectives of people with formal knowledge and placing all authority in the hands of those who embody the conditions themselves. Rather, we see the need for broad-based collaboration in the work of providing education and other social spaces for the widest range of students and citizens possible. Eliminating points of view based on where they originate from seems to work against, rather than for, informed decision-making.

Who has the right to write? Relatedly, we further find ourselves caught in the "right to write" conundrum, which is often invoked in writing about racial matters. Does a White author have the right to comment on, or embody in fictional characters, the Black population? In the

world of people classified as disabled, this problem is articulated in Charleton's (1998) assertion, *Nothing about us without us*. As outsiders to special education, do we have the right to form opinions of, and then write about, its province in schools? Do we have the right to write about a field that might be considered the domain of others? We do not consider ourselves "experts" opining on the lives of objects of our research, yet might be constructed as claiming such a status by those about whom we write. Whether or not we have this right is surely a contested matter.

       Ideals and material realities. We are concerned that some writings in the fields of DS/CDS and DSE/CSE tend to theorize away persistent problems that have material consequences for people classified as disabled and disordered and to be attracted to utopian solutions. We consider ourselves to be pragmatic, an orientation that requires us to set aside ideals and sentimentality to address the real consequences of different discursive and material environments on the process of mediating human development toward positive outcomes.

       We are aware of the fact that in the actual conduct of schooling, difficult tradeoffs and choices must be made, especially during an era of continual defunding of public education at all levels (Underwood & Mead, 2012). Ideals are important for creating a vision for what might be possible, but cannot be met in practice in a material world of limited resources. We believe that better funding would benefit just about every aspect of education: teacher salaries, up-to-date technology, art and music programs, extracurricular activities, state-of-the-art science labs, well-stocked book rooms, safe and solid infrastructures, healthy and sanitary facilities, and much else. Doing so when taxpayers consistently vote against educational investment is not possible. This denial of funds and resources has an impact on what is possible in the realms of special education, faculty inservicing for inclusive pedagogies, physical accommodations for students requiring better means of navigation, and other areas of expenditure. We cannot ignore these

realities and be taken seriously in the highly practical setting of schools and their administrators

and faculty by speaking primarily in terms of ideals.

Related to this issue is the phrasing of "celebrating difference," which is much easier said

than done, and ignores the fact that difference is the norm. Widely ranging difference is actually

quite challenging to manage in most social groups, which can be tribal and antagonistic toward

"the other" and outsiders in general. It's much easier to use celebratory slogans on posters

featuring a group of kittens with various coloration and markings than to get a diverse group of

people to work toward group ends. Herding cats, at least on posters, might actually be easier than

herding people. We find this romantic conception both deceptive and counterproductive to the

difficult work of integrating diverse people into a single social organization.

Labeling. Another area of ambivalence concerns the matter of labeling students. On the

one hand, carrying a label of disorder or disablement can be stigmatizing and demoralizing, and

can lead others to view one as a lesser being deserving either scorn or charity. On the other hand,

it can be helpful, as we can personally attest, to be given a name and a greater understanding of

conditions that distinguish one from the majority of the population. Knowing that one is anxious,

and what anxiety involves, can be useful in understanding one's response to the environment and

in becoming strategic about managing it. But this knowledge can lead others to treat people

according to the most negatively stereotypical of these characteristics. We simply do not have a

firm sense of which approach leads to a more humane environment, a degree of uncertainty that

we often find lacking in the rhetoric of the various "disability" fields.

Special education teachers are not villains. Our final point concerns the view of special

education teachers. The rhetoric of critics of MSE often has a take-no-prisoners tone that

includes practicing teachers among the hegemonic villains whose corrupt practices harm more

than help children. In contrast, we have known and worked with many committed SE teachers who have followed the medical model of pathology, while also caring deeply about the children under their care. They often are far more flexible than the automatons we find characterized in critical scholarship, driven by a dedication to improving the life prospects of their students. Undoubtedly there are bad SE teachers; the news occasionally reports their abusive treatment of students (see, e. g., Eltman, 2016). Just as all teachers in the regular curriculum are not bad because some are incompetent, all special education teachers should not be condemned because of the actions of a few. Nor should they all be caricatured as oppressive because of the model in which they work, and may be required to work. We see those who work in classrooms—both self-contained and inclusive—as the best hope for creating humane environments, and seek to support them rather than assume the worst of them.

Conclusion to the Theoretical Framework

Addressing the diversity of the human condition is a task of such complexity that it should not be the province of any single group with an exclusive perspective. Rather, it is a highly collaborative challenge that benefits from the distributed expertise of its many and varied stakeholders. Ultimately, if we are anti-anything, it is anti-orthodoxy and certainty. We offer our perspective tentatively and as a long conversational turn that invites response. We hope that we offer our vision with respect and sincerity rather than dismissal. The task we set for the contributors to this collection is to respond to the conundrums we present in this introduction so that we collectively provide readers with an appreciation for the challenges we face and a reasonably coherent, if not necessarily consistent given the complexity of our undertaking, set of principles and pathways. We next turn to how the authors respond to this invitation in the work that follows.

Introduction to the Collection

We have organized this collection into three sections: Theoretical & Historical Perspectives, Emic & Autoethnographic Perspectives, and Challenges of Inclusion & Practice. The first section lays out the ways in which theoretical and historical perspectives guide our understanding of and attention to human difference in educational settings, including teacher education and classrooms across the school curriculum. We next present three autoethnographic accounts provided by scholars writing in relation to their experiences with blindness, multiple sclerosis, and Rett Syndrome; the first two are about personal experiences with these conditions, the last is from a mother/scholar who is parenting a child with Rett. We then move to a section on how inclusive schools and classrooms, as alternatives to segregated settings such as those found in many special education programs, are challenging to implement. This section thus provides an understanding of how our conception eschews romanticized discourse of life's possibilities and attends more carefully to the difficult material lives that follow from even thoughtful and well-intended efforts to change the settings of human development and schools attempting to accommodate diversity.

Theoretical & Historical Perspectives

Curt Dudley-Marling opens the volume with an interrogation of learning disabilities (LD) as an institutional construct. The definition of specific learning disabilities (SLD) authored by the Learning Disabilities Roundtable (2002) asserts that "the central concept of SLD involves disorders of learning and cognition that are intrinsic to the individual." Locating learning disabilities in the heads of individuals leads to interventions focused on fixing students with learning disabilities, usually through the remediation of various cognitive deficiencies. An alternative, social constructivist narrative contends that LDs are constructed outside the minds

and bodies of students in the complex web of human relations. The performance of a learning disability requires the specific actions of a group of people performing just the right moves at the right time and place, accompanied by institutional frameworks that assign particular meanings to students' behaviors that, in other cultural contexts, do not carry the same significance. That is, the extent to which one is learning disabled is not a function of hard-wiring, but is fundamentally relational and situational. Constructs like learning disabilities function to obscure the ways schools operate as agents of failure, and shift shortcomings of the system and the exclusionary pressures within it to students with little institutional agency. This problem extends to other population types whose potential is not realized in school settings, giving this chapter broad implications for diversity education in general.

Peter Smagorinsky then provides an account of the Soviet field of "defectology" and its antecedent conceptions in Russian special education. Defectology came into being following over a decade of steady, devastating warfare in and around Russia from World War I through the triumph of the Bolsheviks. This period produced a generation of deaf, blind, maimed, and cognitively impaired children whom the new regime hoped to rehabilitate in schools. Their "defects"—an atrocious term that remains both in use and indefensible—rather than being viewed as disablements, were viewed as aspects of their makeup requiring a special form of education, one that employed alternative means of mediating their acculturation to Soviet society. Inclusion and productive cultural participation serve as the goals for their development. The emphasis of this movement was largely social rather than being oriented to individual pathology, with attitudinal change toward human difference, and the elimination of deficit thinking, fundamental to its values. The field of defectology, founded in the 1920s, predates the Frankfurt School's pioneering role in the establishment of what has evolved into Disability

Studies, Critical Disability Studies, Disability Studies in Education, and Critical Special Education, and provides an alternative pathway into understanding and acting on issues of human bodily difference. The chapter provides a review of this field's historical contributions and helps both to broaden the international composition of the various "disability" fields and add the dimension afforded by Vygotsky's contributions to the education of people considered disabled in school and society.

Emic & Autoethnographic Perspectives

Gina Marie Applebee opens this section by providing an autoethnographic inquiry into her life as a blind woman, relating how she has lived her life in and out of school. Her goal with this chapter is to challenge common conceptions of "disability," to help shift artificial barriers to integrating diverse abilities, to position blindness among other intersections that complicate any condition, and to bridge some of the rifts between perspectives on human difference. Within the context of her own emerging experience, she describes how apparent limitations can be leveraged to drive growth, resilience, and dynamic coherence both individually and socially, illustrating an emphasis on assets and potential rather than disability and disorder. As incredibly complex, self-organizing creatures, she argues, people carry an enormous capacity for adaptation and growth in response to challenges of any form in their systems and environments. She thus views adaptation from a personal standpoint, revealing through her experiences the sorts of transformations that she found possible while living in a world that she cannot see. Adversities have directly challenged her into developing different ways of perceiving, engaging with, and expressing herself in the world while also forcing her to become adaptable and resilient. Through this meditation, Applebee challenges notions of disablement and contextualizes them in

educational settings, in the process enumerating the social and physical challenges presented by blindness that might be mitigated by a more understanding and responsive social environment.

Dottie Bossman shares her autoethnography of her experience as a teacher who developed multiple sclerosis. She uses this narrative to connect her life to those of students of anomalous makeups who are labeled, sorted, and treated as different from their peers in school. This hierarchical categorization often produces an internalized sense of deficit, constructed by others as disabled and disordered. The narrative describes the author's initial diagnosis and subsequent interactions with healthcare facilities and providers, events that highlight the distancing function of the traditional medical response to sickness. Experiencing this distancing function as a mature adult suggests to her the extraordinary challenge of being confronted in this manner by a child or youth. Although she resists her relegation from agentive individual to numbered case, she recognizes that her status offers her new insight into the experiences of students who have difficulty fitting in to conventional social settings. She views this problem as one affecting the whole school, rather than being confined to the special education wing. Contrary to the dominant perception that a chronic illness is a tragic development that must be reversed at all costs, this piece suggests that Bossman gained pedagogical wisdom as a result of her changing health. This wisdom can be of benefit to teacher educators who prepare teacher candidates across the school curriculum who either have made adjustments to their own health, or who teach classes in which students undergoing change or already dealing with change are enrolled. Understanding their emotional needs as well as their physical and cognitive needs contributes to the sort of supportive environment advocated across the chapters of this volume.

Challenges of Inclusion & Practice

Usree Bhattacharya next details her experiences with Rett Syndrome, following her daughter's diagnosis in infancy. Her chapter explores her own family's confrontation with her daughter's diagnosis and her effort to understand how it would influence both their baby's life and the family's. These investigations led her to this review of the discouraging scholarship on Rett, which she found entirely focused on pathology. As a bilingual education scholar of Indian descent, she discovered a void in research on bilingualism or multilingualism on Rett-diagnosed girls, even though a significant population of these children grow up and experience the world in multilingual ways. Bhattacharya finds that virtually all Rett-diagnosed girls are denied a meaningful education because they are assumed to lack a worthwhile future. Her chapter both reviews the issues of this poorly-understood syndrome and raises questions about possible directions for both research and practice designed to provide more supportive environments for the development of children diagnosed with Rett Syndrome.

Christopher Bass writes from the perspective of a U.S. High School English teacher, the discipline encompassing literature (and other texts), writing (and other forms of composition), and language study (generally of "proper" English language expression). Bass assumes that educators would benefit from shifting attention from the individual to the setting of the classroom as a way to understand social dynamics as they relate to neurodiversity. In his public school teaching, he has focused on the setting of the classroom by including neurodivergent voices into the narratives of the classroom so that the course material reflects the general diversity of his students. He situates his work as a school practitioner in a field that straddles the humanities and social sciences in the pragmatic setting of the public school, while also extending his theoretical conception through his doctoral studies. His teaching has included poems, essays, blogs, novels, short stories by authors who identify as neurodiverse and neuroqueer. This

curricular expansion is designed to explore how neurodiversity can enable pedagogy that calls

for inclusive attention to both students with I.E.P.s themselves, and the environments, including

their classmates, that define their capabilities and potential. Speaking to both teachers and

teacher educators, he considers how classroom settings can be adapted to accommodate a greater

variety of student makeups. Including neurodiversity in methods courses, he argues, can

potentially disrupt assumptions about classroom settings and environments, often in contrast with

the norms created in special education classes that are not aligned with Critical Special

Education or Disabilities Studies in Education. His arguments thus simultaneously have

implications for theory and practice in teacher education and in secondary school classrooms.

Kyunghwa Lee, Jaehee Kwon, and Jooeun Oh investigate young children's resistance to

special education assignments in school, with a focus on ADHD-diagnosed students. Behaviors

such as having difficulty with transitions and being noncompliant tend to be interpreted as

incidences of ADHD, with all of its pathological associations. Lee, Kwon, and Oh consider an

alternative explanation: that noncompliant students are manifesting their unhappiness and

discomfort with the requirement that they must shift to a special education classroom every day.

Drawing on the work of critical theorists, they accept children's resistance as acts that defy

teacher-and-school-defined boundaries of acceptable, sanctioned behavior, pitting themselves

against powerful adults and their institutions. They argue that children's resistance, rather than

indicating a behavioral disorder, contests adults' ability to organize sociopolitical environments

that are potentially oppressive, a form of action that gives them agency and empowers them in

determining what is best for them. Rather, then, than lacking self-control, these students are

exercising agentic control in regulating both their emotions and their environments. The authors

thus challenge conventional interpretations of childhood behavior that results in pathologizing

assumptions and the school assignments that follow from them, asking: What are the aspects of the daily routines in his pre-K and SPED classrooms experienced by focal student Shantie that might have contributed to his resistance to transitioning to the SPED class? They provide a brief review of the literature on SPED placement from the perspective of children identified with disabilities, then report on their study of Shantie in ways that allow for their consideration of implications for the education of children with diverse needs and abilities.

Melissa Sherfinski and Sera Mathew follow the journeys of seven families that include autism spectrum children as they navigate societal borderlands that suggest a profound discomfort with atypical cognitive and sensory presentations. The authors interrogate how a culture of expertise promotes the idea that the challenges faced by autism-spectrum children are caused only by their points of difference. This assumption allows environments—particularly the mainstream classrooms in the educational system—to be liberated from accountability in promoting their welfare. In this sense, Sherfinski and Mathew locate their work in the perspective that "disability" is a contextual problem that can be addressed by changes in context, rather than looking solely to the individual as the problem to repair. The authors focus their inquiry on the question, How do contemporary families of children with neuro-atypicalities navigate the culture of expertise in early childhood and elementary schooling? The authors find that intersectionality—the intersection of demographics such as race, class, and gender with neurodivergence—is absent from much research. To help construct inclusive possibilities, they employ poststructuralist tools that enable them to explore subject positioning as a mechanism that shapes educational journeys. They move beyond the notion of the disabled individual in school and address the broader context of family involvement and school flexibility as sources of difficulty in engaging proactively with the world. The authors identify "constellations" of

storylines that help illustrate the need to explore intersectionalities that provide nuance to the

educational needs of neuro-atypical children, with special attention to the ways in which the

expertise of diagnosticians and bureaucrats often is misapplied to children's and families'

particular needs.

Jennifer Hensley, Patrick Graham, and Joseph Tobin report research that enables them to

consider what deaf pedagogy can contribute to non-deaf early childhood education. The

education of most deaf children begins with them being mainstreamed in general preschool

classrooms or in an oral methods program for deaf children designed to transition them into

mainstreamed, hearing-based elementary classrooms. A minority of deaf children attend a

preschool based on Deaf culture principles, including instruction in a national sign language. In

these settings, educators have developed pedagogical approaches and spatial arrangements that

support deaf children's social, cognitive, and academic development. This chapter draws on

research in signing preschool classrooms in France, Japan, and the US to describe Deaf early

childhood educational approaches and to argue that these approaches can inform educational

practice in hearing settings, including special education classrooms that have historically relied

on knowledge-and-skill and reward-and-punishment classroom management systems. The

authors view Deaf signing education as a unique cultural approach to education whose processes

are available through anthropological, ethnographic investigations that question conventional

wisdom. They argue that key pedagogical and spatial features of Deaf early childhood education

can also enrich classrooms serving hearing children, going against the grain of much inclusion

research that tries to fit difference into settings established according to social norms. They assert

that the concept of "inclusion" focused on educational placement in mainstream settings is

challenging for deaf children, whose communicative practices depart from the norms assumed in

classrooms and other social locations. This chapter asserts that attending to the whole of communication practices, which is required for the healthy development of deaf children, ought to inform how mainstream classes are taught.

Xiaoying Zhao concludes the volume with her Bakhtinian analysis of the intersection of discourses of difference, children's school experiences, and disabilities. She presents a case study of Julia, a student who attended two schools in the US under a disability diagnosis of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. The second of these schools, she argues, did not attempt to "cure" her disability, instead seeking to reconcile it through the school's discourse of difference. In this manner, the school served as an asylum for her—not the "lunatic asylum" often associated with difference, but a sanctuary from educational practices that prove disabling when people do not follow anticipated norms. Zhao makes these points through her use of Bakhtinian discourse analysis of Julia's accounts of her experience at the two schools, highlighting discourses of difference at the two schools to better understand the intersection of the discourses of difference, school structures and experiences, and disability. Julia attributed her unhappiness at her first school to the way her OCD and distinctive personality were mismatched with the school's structures and her peers' modes of interaction, producing feelings of inferiority. At the second school, set up as an asylum, Julia thrived when she was allowed to learn at her own pace and her differences were acknowledged but not pathologized. She was not constructed according to what was "wrong" with her, but embraced as who she was and afforded tools to accept and cope with individual variation in her daily school life. Zhao argues that educational asylums should not be reserved for people identified with a particular disability, but instead should be open to all students who struggle to thrive in typical classroom settings.

Conclusion

We hope that this volume can contribute to the work of practitioners, researchers, theorists, and educators dedicated to providing more affirming and fulfilling lives for people across the human spectrum. These lives include not only those with atypical bodily, neurological, cognitive, affective, and other aspects of human makeup, but those who surround them, through the construction of more sensitive and compassionate social settings that foreground assets and potential rather than difference and deficiency. We hope to situate human difference so that attention to context becomes foremost in how anomalous makeups are understood and respected by others, with contexts viewed as malleable and therefore amenable to adaptation so that greater, more valued participation becomes available to the greatest number of people possible. As educators, we are committed to educating the broadest spectrum of people imaginable, including those who surround people historically considered disabled. By expanding attention to human difference to the conduct of those whose presence shapes perception and possibility for others, we hope to provide more humane environments whose benefits afford new possibilities not only for individuals, but for the social relationships and trajectories available to all.

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