Reframing the Master Narratives of Dis/ability at my Intersections:

An Outline of an Educational Equity Research Agenda

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Abstract

This article outlines a call for a renewed research agenda on the social and emotional dimensions of Learning Disabilities (LD). This research agenda reframes LD by interrogating the academic, social and emotional master narratives of LD through the talk of Latina/o students with LD using an interdisciplinary and socio-cultural historical developmental perspective. In particular, this reframing entails exploring the social and emotional construction of LD at the intersections of the Latina/o student population. Interweaving my own history with LD, I describe the overwhelming feelings of discomfort and anxiety from wrestling with the label. I came to see the label as an imposed identity from the educational system in response to my unique constellation of differences. Examining LD through the lens of emotion and from the perspectives of those living under the label helps us better recognize that it cannot be detached from the other socio-cultural identities that are part of being and becoming a whole person.

Keywords

Learning disabilities; intersectionality; Disability Studies in Education; emotionality; race

Redéfinir les principaux récits sur le handicap à mes intersections: Un aperçu d'un programme de recherche sur l'équité en éducation

Résumé

Cet article présente un appel pour un programme de recherche renouvelé sur les dimensions sociales et émotionnelles des troubles d'apprentissage (TA).   Ce programme de recherche redéfinit le TA en interrogeant le monde académiques, sociaux et émotionnels de TA à travers une discussion d'étudiant (e) latino avec TA en utilisant une perspective de développement socioculturel historique et interdisciplinaire. En particulier, ce recadrage implique l'exploration de la construction sociale et émotionnelle des TA aux intersections de la population étudiante latino. Entremêlant ma propre histoire avec TA, je décris les sentiments accablants d'inconfort et d'anxiété de la lutte contre l'étiquette. Je suis venu à voir l'étiquette comme une identité imposée du système éducatif en réponse à ma constellation unique de différences. En examinant le TA à travers une lentille d'émotion et du point de vue de ceux qui vivent sous l'étiquette nous aide à mieux reconnaître qu'il ne peut être détaché des autres identités socioculturelles qui font partie de l'être et qui aident à devenir une personne entière.

Mots clefs

Troubles d'apprentissage; intersectionnalité; études sur le handicap dans l'éducation; émotivité; race

From Personal History to Collective Intersectional Identities

This article discusses the need to reframe the special educational construct of Learning Disability (LD) through a socio-cultural historical developmental, interdisciplinary, intersectional and affective lens (Cole, 1996; Fleer & Hedegaard, 2008; Rogoff, 2003). I advocate for and demonstrate this approach by interrogating the academic, social, and emotional master narratives of LD through the emotion-laden talk of Latina/o students with LD within a larger dissertation study (Hernández-Saca, 2016). I wove the first chapter of that dissertation with my personal story, which has evolved into this article as an outline of my research agenda. My unique experiences with LD, including the social and emotional impact of being labelled with an LD and my own intersectional

identities—such as being gay, a recent naturalized citizen to the U.S., working-class,

from El Salvadorean and Palestinian descent, and having experienced convulsions

throughout my childhood, which introduced me to the world of disability, among other

identities that I will explore below—influenced my research questions, conceptual

framework, and methods for that dissertation study.

Importantly, not all students labelled with LD have social and emotional "deficits"

(Hallahan, Lloyd, Kauffman, Weiss, & Martinez, 2005). Yet, some LD learners have

lower self-concepts (Manning, 2007). For example, I experienced overwhelming feelings

of discomfort and anxiety because of not understanding what it meant to be labelled LD.

I do not recall when I first became aware of my negative self-perceptions about being

labelled. Today, I regard my labelling as an imposed identity that the education system

gave me to deal with and respond to according to my unique constellation of

differences. I still suffer from having received the LD label, which was assigned due to

my difficulties in learning to read and write at an early age. However, what is less

obvious was this: that someone who is labelled with LD is not only LD. In other words,

being LD does not exist in a vacuum, nor is it detached from other socio-cultural

identities that shape who someone is as well as their unique life-history and practices.

As a young child, I experienced a high fever that lead to recurrent and

unpredictable convulsions inside and outside of school contexts. From the perspective

of a medical or social model of disability, my experiences would have been viewed as a

"disability;" however, in my father's eyes, the term "disability" never entered the

constellation of who I was. Further complicating matters was my father and family's

sociocultural and transnational locations as they navigated and made sense of my

experiences within a new country, the United States (See Dossa (2009) and Erevelles (2011) for disability models that account for the transnational experiences of people with disabilities.) My father once told me that I tended to not remember having the convulsions and that afterwards, I would just go back to who I was. He told me that I would freeze up, my eyes would roll up toward the top of my skull, and I would shake uncontrollably. I remember having a strong convulsion while I was walking down the stairs of my elementary school. I held onto the railing as my body was enveloped with an uncontrollable convulsion of energy. However, I was still David throughout and after such experiences.

To alleviate these painful and what I characterized and experienced as life-paralyzing experiences that took over my body and mind as a young child, my parents, family, teachers, and other school administrators and professionals did their best to respond to my disability. First, my mother and father tried Western medicine to help me. However, after trying medication, my mother decided to take me off it because it left me, in her words: "endrogado y sin vida" ["drugged and lifeless"]. Then, my parents tried Eastern medicine such as acupuncture. I remember having weekly acupuncture done on my head and having to drink Eastern herbal medicine daily in the form of teas. I can still remember the smell of not only the Chinese/Eastern medicine store, but also of the herbal medicine that I had to drink. Prayer and my relationship to the spirit world helped alleviate the suffering and pain I experienced as a young child. Eventually, and through what my mother described as a miracle, my convulsions just went away. I have felt blessed for this my entire life.

In retrospect, these and other early childhood experiences with dis/ability have

informed my dispositions, beliefs, perspectives, and eventual professional choice to

enter the fields of LD, special education, Disability Studies (DS) and Disability Studies in

Education (DSE). As a result of my experience, I choose to use the term dis/ability,

rather than disability, recognizing that "disability" and "ability" are social constructions as

opposed to innate medical-psychological phenomena and that what counts as ability

and disability are historically, emotionally, politically, and socio-culturally situated.[1] In

addition, dis/ability is intersectional in nature as opposed to people with disabilities

experiencing it from a singular dimensional identity process (Artiles, Dorn, & Bal, 2016;

Hernández-Saca, Kahn, & Cannon, under review).

Understanding my Dis/ability at my Intersections

I have felt and continue to feel the pain that being considered "LD" and "Special

Ed" has had on my sense of self. I still experience the emotional impact of being

labelled with a LD and having been in special education. More specifically, when I was

in elementary and middle school, I was in a self-contained special education classroom.

I also received speech therapy due to being designated an English Language Learner

(ELL) or more accurately, an Emergent Bilingual—the latter term disrupts our deficit

thinking about ELLs and the hegemony of English that is built within the system of

schooling and society (Klingner, Hoover, & Baca, 2008; Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari,

2015; Valencia, 2010, 2012). Our current U.S. schools and society are dominated by

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[1] Throughout this manuscript, I use the terms "disability" and "dis/ability" to denote two different things. First, by "disability" I mean disabilities such as they are understood from a non-academic perspective (e.g., not socially constructed), but as impairing phenomena and how they are used by others to denote "disability" in the world. The second way is a more academic, and specifically a post-structural approach that takes into account the social construction of dis/ability or ability and disability. The latter understands "dis/ability" as socially, culturally, emotionally, historically, economically and politically constructed.

values that are based on white-male, able-bodied, English-speaking, heteronormative,

and middle-class norms. Furthermore, the term and nomenclature of "English Language

Learner" presumes no funds of knowledge or sense of hope for the learner to actually

learn English, hence, it depicts a learner that is static as opposed to one who is dynamic

and shifting from one location (e.g., English Learner) to another. The term Emergent

Bilingual breathes life to historically marginalized youth with disabilities such as

Emergent Bilinguals with a disability (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006). Our automatic

assumptions about those labelled as "ELL" would have us consider them as less than

versed than those who are monolingual speakers of English, when, in reality, being on a

spectrum and knowing and navigating multiple worlds is common all over the world

where multiple cultures live alongside one another (Orellana, 2009). The latter is true in

the United States, as well. Hence, our terms, such as "ELL", are a species of hegemony

and deficit-thinking because they are a form of (mis)presentation about the human

potential and personhood of students at the intersection of language, dis/ability, and

ethnicity (See Artiles, Waitoller, & Neal (2011) and Tefera, Gonzalez, & Artiles (2017)

for an overview of this intersection of identities for such student groups.)

In contrast, I grew up with both Spanish and English at home; as my parents are

both monolingual Spanish speakers. During high school, I was eventually mainstreamed

into the general education classroom—as opposed to being primarily in a self-contained

resource room and special education classroom—where I achieved good grades and

enjoyed my high school experience. On the one hand, I am an anomaly to the master

narratives that outline the characteristics and consequences of being diagnosed with an

LD and the meaning of these for the life-chances of the LD student population. On the

other hand, the internal impact of being labelled with an LD and being in special

education was both a curse and a gift.

I am not only my past. I am not only someone who was labelled with an LD—

which now I reconcile and realize is an artifact of the education system and educators'

ways of attempting to meet my academic needs. This realization helped me affirm the

fact that I am not only someone with an identity of dis/ability. I am Latino of mixed

ethnicity—El Salvadorian and Palestinian—bilingual, a recent naturalized U.S. citizen, a

brother, a lifelong learner, gay, a partner, son, and so much more than labels can say

about my evolving essence as a human being on this planet. Prior to being a

naturalized U.S. citizen, my family immigrated to the United States after the civil war in

El Salvador, due to economic issues we were facing. We were given refugee status and

I held a work permit once I turned 16. Given the lengthy wait time and my family's work

in navigating the U.S. immigration system, I was given permanent residency after 5

years, and was eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship.

Combined with my dis/ability history, these larger historical, socio-cultural,

economic, political, and emotional contexts have not only affected my educational

opportunities to learn and my family's overall well-being, but also my multi-dimensional

and intersectional identities. As a young child, I did not have the language to be aware

of these larger societal forces in my family's decision making; but in retrospect, I am

deeply grateful for how my family members made important decisions that have

positively influenced my opportunities to learn and continue my education. I am aware

that these socio-political and external decisions have influenced who I am today and

have impacted my self-determination as I have transitioned throughout my personal,

educational, and now my professional life.

My Positionality as an Educational Researcher

Writing a dissertation on the emotional and social dimensions of LD as someone who has a diagnosis of an auditory processing LD is complex to say the least (Hernández-Saca, 2016). I am passionate about the study of LD, in part because of this past diagnosis. At the same time, having the opportunity to learn and problematize the notion of LD and its social and emotional dimensions in higher education has been a privilege, challenge, and a redemptive process. While studying and researching the social and emotional dimensions of LD, the fear and stigma of being labelled with an LD and being in special education crept back into my consciousness. This was and is indeed a negative outcome, because it is evidence for how institutional knowledge about LD can be detrimental to the healthy self-understanding of those labelled as such, especially for those who experience the world through intersectional experiences. However, these experiences allowed me to have a qualitatively different stance about the study of LD and its social and emotional dimensions. By "qualitatively different" I mean that few LD researchers are also labelled with LD or have that history to draw on for the purposes of developing theory, research, policy, practice, and praxis—the coupling of critical reflectivity and action on the ground.

Connor (2013) states, "coming to know the thoughts, needs, and rights of people with dis/abilities—from their own perspective—is essential if equality is to be achieved" (p. 506). Echoing the Disability Rights Movement slogan, *Nothing About Us, Without Us* (Charlton, 1998), Connor underscores that theory, research, policy, and practices within

the academy and educational institutions should take into account the voices of people

with dis/abilities. The tenet or ideal, which is central to DS and Disability Studies in

Education (DSE), is oppositional to how the current knowledge base regarding students

with LD is institutionalized within special education (Connor, 2013). Historically, DS is a

broader field of scholarship that deals with studying disability in the social sciences and

humanities in general, whereas DSE's foci is within educational contexts (Barton &

Oliver, 1997; Danforth & Gabel, 2006). Furthermore, with the exception of the literature

on self-determination, which usually relates to the traditional transition years for

students with dis/abilities (starting at age 14 nationally) from high school to the world of

work, there is more to do as it relates to foregrounding student-led Individualized

Education Programs and Transition Individualized Education Programs for all students

with LD, especially those who come from historically marginalized communities and

have intersecting identities (Cartledge, Gardner, & Ford, 2008; Trainor, 2005).

        To illustrate this point, consider the work of Teo (2010) on epistemological

violence in the empirical social sciences, which suggests that epistemological violence

is not only about structural violence, but also about personal violence as it includes "a

subject, an object and an action, even if the violence is the researcher" (Teo, 2010, p.

295). Teo (2010) further points out that epistemological violence is the result of social

scientists producing knowledge about a certain population. Accordingly, the students

labelled LD are the object and the action is the production and interpretation of data that

researchers within the field of LD present as knowledge. This knowledge process can

be thought of as constructing master narratives of LD (Hernández-Saca, 2016).

        From my own perspective, being labelled with an LD has been a form of

epistemological violence; very few researchers on LD can make this claim unless they

have been labelled LD and have phenomenologically experienced both the diagnosis

and the assignment to special education structures (e.g., Husserl, 1970). From an

intersectional point of view, there are intended and unintended consequences of being

labelled and being a student of Colour within special education (i.e., Artiles, 2013;

Huber, Artiles, & Hernández-Saca, 2012). For example, it is too often the case that

having a special education disability category and placement comes with the

unintended consequence of stigma and low expectations (U.S. Commission on Civil

Rights, 2009). This low expectation and the intersection of race and ability difference

has been critiqued by critical scholars of special education as it relates to under- and

over-representation of cultural and linguistic minority students within special education

programs. In particular, this is so in gifted and talented programs (under-representation)

and high-incidence and subjective categories (over-representation) of special education

disability such as Learning Disabilities (LD), Emotional Behavioral Disorder, Intellectual

Disabilities, and Speech and Language Impairment (Collins, Connor, Ferri, Gallagher, &

Samson, 2016; Gold & Richards, 2012; Skiba, Artiles, Kozleski, Losen, & Harry, 2016).

Considering that the literature on the social and emotional dimensions of LD

gives little attention to culture and equity (Arzubiaga, Artiles, King, & Harris-Murri, 2008),

I seek to examine the intersectional lives of Latina/o students with LD, their emotion-

laden talk about being labelled with LD, and their understanding of the idea of LD within

my broader research agenda (See Hernández-Saca (2016) for my dissertation study on

this topic). I now understand that the ableism that was able to live within me was the

result of larger societal master narratives that circulate about what counts as normalcy

and the social category of dis/ability within society, as well as the epistemological violence that occurs when imposed identities about an individual and their human characteristics are constructed in a particular way that does not reflect who that individual is and is becoming (Teo, 2010).

Students across the United States have multi-dimensional and intersectional identities that they bring to school. These are important socio-cultural contexts, which the field of special education and LD should seriously take into account (Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009; Garcia & Ortiz, 2013). Failure to consider a student's multi-dimensional and intersectional identities and to respond culturally and emotionally to the needs and cultures of marginalized youth can lead to deleterious effects such as misidentification with a dis/ability, being pushed out of school, not feeling welcomed at school, and thinking that they are at fault for their mis-education, among many other effects (Artiles, 2011, 2013; Du Bois, 1935; Noguera, 2006; Woodson, 1977). Given the increasing diversity in the United States and racial and ethnic disproportionalities in special education, interrogating the master narratives of the educational label LD is needed to contribute to a praxis on the ground that is helpful for *all* students labelled LD at their intersections and within educational contexts.

Learning Disabilities Master Narratives in a Time of Growing Differences

People from all over the world are coming to the United States for different reasons. This diversity is not only represented along national lines, but also racial and cultural ones. Across their life course people also vary according to sexual orientation, class, religions, gender, dis/ability, language proficiencies, and other social categories

of difference. Banks (2000) called this increase in diversity the "demographic

imperative" noting that "it is projected that students of [C]olor will make up about 48% of

school-age youth by 2020" (p. 97). Further, since its creation, we have seen the special

educational label of LD become the largest special education category. The racial and

ethnic disproportionality in special education, including within the LD category, has been

a problem in the public educational system for over 50 years (Artiles, 1998; Dunn, 1968;

Donovan & Cross, 2001). Consider the under-representation of students of Colour

within gifted and talented programs when compared to their White and Asian peers.

Generally, Black and Brown students are placed in more restrictive settings than their

White and Asian counterparts with the same disability label (e.g., all day special day

classes or resource rooms away from their non-labeled peers) (Artiles, 2011; Russo &

Ford, 2015).

Students' intersectional identities are reflected in the racial inequities inherent in

special education, given that students from families with low socio-economic status are

disproportionately represented in high-incidence disabilities, and the fact that the vast

majority of them are males: "boys represent about 80% of E/BD population, 70% of LD

students, and 60% of students with ID" (Artiles, 2011, p. 432). Students who have been

labeled LD and the educational construct or label of LD must then be understood as

intersectional, with multiple forms of difference. Special education placement for racial

minority students have critical consequences for their life-chances and opportunities to

learn. These consequences include limited access to related services and placement in

more segregated programs than their White peers with the same disability diagnosis,

among other consequences (Artiles, 2011). The consequences of special education

placements for students belonging to a racial minority group illuminate the

intersectionality of race and dis/ability differences. This situation is problematic since

minority students are already "at risk" due to the social forces and permanence of race

and racism that stratify U.S. society, education, and special education (Bell, 1992;

Blanchett, 2006; Carbado & Gulati, 2013; Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2017;

Leonardo, 2004, 2009; Patton, 1998; Powell, 2012; Skiba, et al., 2016).

The notion of "master narratives" assist us in making sense of the LD field's

neglect of historical and socio-cultural contexts and forces. Every field has master

narratives. Bamberg (2004) defines master narratives as the "pre-existent sociocultural

forms of interpretation. They are meant to delineate and confine the local interpretation

strategies and agency constellations in individual subjects as well as in social

institutions" (p. 287). Jean-Francois Lyotard (1979) coined the term "postmodern" and

later critiqued it "as incredulity towards metanarratives" (p. xxiv). Lyotard goes on to

argue that the source for replacing metanarratives or master narratives that characterize

the modern era is local or small narratives or counter-narratives. Lyotard (1979) posits:

> Science has always been in conflict with narratives. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them prove to be fables. But to the extent that science does not restrict itself to stating useful regularities and seeks the truth, it is obliged to legitimate the rules of its own game. It then produces a discourse of legitimation with respect to its own status, a discourse called philosophy. I will use the term modern to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative . . . if a metanarrative implying a philosophy of history is used to legitimate knowledge, questions are raised concerning the validity of the institutions governing the social bond: these must be legitimated as well. Thus . . . justice is consigned to the grand narrative in the same way as truth . . . postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy. (p. xxiii-xxv).

According to Lyotard, the presumption that science, along with its expert's homology, have historically dominated the production of knowledge through "grand narratives" has come to an end with the postmodern world and moved instead towards "the inventor's paralogy" (Lyotard, 1979, p. xxiii-xxv). This is not to suggest that social science does not continue to produce "master narratives" and socially constructed imagery, or as Scott (1997) has argued, "damaged-imagery," about communities of Colour. It is this damaged-imagery of the grand narratives about communities of Colour that has contributed to their misrepresentation and suffering. Nevertheless, those outside of science and lacking the "power" associated with it have their own voice about their lived experiences and about their dis/abilities at their intersections (Hernández-Saca, Khan, & Cannon, in press). This voice represents resistance to, as well as deconstruction and replacement of hegemonic ways of reasoning and totalizing metanarratives that come from science and other dominant institutions and philosophies.

The philosophy of LD and dominant ways of reasoning LD (i.e., grand narratives) position this student population within a deficit-thinking perspective that proposes that (Valencia, 2010; 2012):

- the problem lies within their neurology,
- they lack basic skills,
- LD is a symbolic complex (Danforth, 2009),
- these learners have lower self-concepts than their non-labelled peers,
- their emotionality is theorized as negative and problematic, and
- their life-chances are in jeopardy due to their condition.

These and other cognitive, social, and emotional deficits experienced by students with

LD have been documented (e.g., Wong & Donahue, 2002). However, I challenge the

partial perspectives represented in many of these traditional ahistorical and socio-

cultural framings through a socio-cultural historical developmental (Cole, 1996; Fleer &

Hedegaard, 2008; Rogoff, 2003), interdisciplinary, intersectional, and affective lens.

I address this challenge by shining a light on the social and emotional

dimensions of LD. I do this by focusing on student voices and their emotion-laden talk

(cf. Edwards, 1999; Moir, 2015; Prior, 2016) surrounding their backgrounds, home and

school environments, and other social intersections and experiences. In this way, I

reframe how the social and emotional dimensions of LD can be researched (Gonzalez,

Hernández-Saca, & Artiles, 2016). Furthermore, because using a socio-cultural

historical developmental approach that takes into account the social situation of the

child, this research agenda reframes the study of the social and emotional dimensions

of LD by including the perspectives and voices of other social actors in the lives of

students (Cole, 1996; Fleer & Hedegaard, 2008; Rogoff, 2003). The social and

emotional dimensions of LD are part and parcel of the "pre-existent sociocultural forms

of interpretation… [that] delineate and confine the local interpretation strategies . . .

agency constellations [and hence student's voice] in individual subjects" within the

master historical-material and discursive practices of LD (Bamberg, 2004, p. 287).

However, this reframing views students who have been labelled with LD as agents

within the language games such as, for example, school literacy practices, and within

what Artiles' and Kozleski's (2016) critical review of the inclusive education literature

recently termed the "habitus of education", or what Lyotard would call the social practice

of education that includes its own language game.

Bamberg (2004) situated master narratives alongside counter-narratives, as does Lyotard when he juxtaposed the expert's homology (i.e., grand narratives or metanarratives) with that of the inventor's paralogy (multiple and small narratives or language games). Moreover, how students labelled as LD conceptualize their own LD, and particularly their emotion-laden talk about LD, is of critical and paradigmatic importance to reframe theory, research, and practice for equitable system-wide transformation. For Bamberg (2004), master narratives and counter- narratives imply subjectivity and positionality, since subjects are not static entities as they navigate master narratives or make meaning about the topic or social practice at hand through their paralogy (Lyotard, 1979). In other words, through their performed identities, individuals positioned by master narratives self-reflect, self-criticize, self-revise, self-mark, and hence enact *agency* through their discursive practices, or what Gee (2011) referred to as language use. Agency is a complex process and there are different types of agency (Ahearn, 2013). Ahearn's (2001, 2010, 2013) summative definition of agency as the "socioculturally mediated [human] capacity to act" is but one possible definition (Ahearn, 2010, p. 28).

I define agency as the socio-culturally *and emotionally* mediated human capacity to act and position oneself vis-à-vis master narratives through counter-narration with one's own emotion-laden talk. Agency is mediated by ideational, relational, and material identity resources, as well as emotional and affective resources or what Wetherell (2012) calls "affective practices" (See also Ahearn, 2013; Nasir & Cooks, 2009; Nasir, 2012). Furthermore, as Bamberg (2004) points out, we can never escape master narratives. That is, there is always a dance between complicity and the act of countering

of master narratives through our (counter) narrating and emotion-laden talk.

Goldberg (2015) challenged the Critical Disability Studies "'silo' and other disability fora to draw upon the tradition of intersectional analysis to address our internal "hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity"" (Nash, 2008, p. 2 as cited in Goldberg, 2015, p. 57). Hence, the peppering of stories of my everyday and historical experiences with dis/ability and LD at my intersections throughout this article allows me to step back and critically reflect and come to critical consciousness in the Freirean (1998) sense. It is my hope to do the same with those I interview in the future at the intersections of LD, ethnicity, gender, and language and other markers of difference. However, I am also one that follows Goldberg's (2015) lead by centring dis/ability at its intersection and understanding disability as one of a number of social categories such as race, gender, sexuality, among others as "events, actions, and encounters, between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects" (Puar, 2013, as cited in Goldberg, 2015). This focus on "events, actions, and encounters between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects" is similar to my attention to master narratives of LD at its intersections. I conceptualize these master narratives as embedded within the big D Discourses of both general and special education that are made up of "events, actions, and encounters" at intersections that historically marginalized youth and their families need to navigate both internally and externally. My experiences with LD at my intersections attest to this theory as I describe above and elsewhere (e.g., Hernández-Saca, 2016, under review).

Master Narratives of the Social and Emotional Dimensions of Learning

Disabilities

In this article and elsewhere, I reframe the social and emotional dimensions of

LD as part of the master narratives of LD. As previously suggested, research on the

social and emotional dimensions of LD outlines a litany of deficits that students *suffer*

from. These include but are not limited to the following negative emotional and social

conditions: depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and difficulty making friends leading

to loneliness (Al-Yagon, 2007; Bryan, Burstein, & Ergul, 2004; Daniel, et al., 2006).

"Deficits" in social and cognitive perception and social competence have also been

documented (Haager & Vaughn, 1997; Petti, Voelker, Shore, & Hayman-Abello, 2002).

"Deficits" in behaviour such as hyperactivity, aggression, teasing and bullying—as both

the target and the predator—have characterized the social and emotional deficits of

students with LD (Forness & Kavale, 1997; Pearl & Bay, 1999).

It is worth emphasizing that the key underlying assumption regarding the social

and emotional dimensions of LD research is that the problem lies within the child.

Emotional and social problems belong to the individual as opposed to being

emotionally, socially, culturally, and historically bound and mediated. From this latter

perspective, emotional and social problems are part and parcel of social interaction and

power relations. Taking into account the centrality of race, class, dis/ability, and the

social construction of emotions, it is central to critically interrogate how the research and

practice community has constructed LD students' social and emotional lives.

The self-concept of students with LD has been studied and measured using

quantitative methods (e.g., the Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Scale, and the

Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory) (Coopersmith, 1959; Piers & Harris, 1969).

Although quantitative methods have been productive in documenting correlations

between different factors (e.g., socio-economic status) and students with LD's self-

concepts, the methods for studying and conceptualizing the self-concept and the

multiple identities of students with LD have been limited. These limitations include the

lack of theoretical complexity and sophistication about the social construction of LD and

its emotionality: *LD labelling oppression* (Blomgren, 1993; Burton & Kagan, 2009;

Runswick-Cole & Goodley, 2013). From a cultural-historical, intersectional, and

interdisciplinary perspective, traditional ways of studying the self-concept of students fail

to expand the unit of analysis to students with LD to include their socio-cultural contexts.

They also fail to include the role of emotionality beyond the medical-psychological

model of disability (See Hernández-Saca & Cannon, 2016).

Voices of Students with Learning Disabilities: A Critical Perspective

Conventional research has also ignored the significance of the voices of students

labelled with LD at their intersections. Gonzalez et al. (2016) conducted a systematic

review of student voice research studies published between 1990 and 2010. They

defined student voice research as a field of study that attempts to capture the ideas or

perspectives of students within K-12 schooling. Following systematic procedures and

criteria, they identified 97 studies for the review. Out of the 97 studies included in the

review, there was a paucity of student voice research studies that specifically focused

on the voices of Latina/o students with LD: Nine (9%) of the studies took into account

disability; four (4%) included students with LD; and 30 (30%) included Latina/o students.

Consequently, this review demonstrated a need for exploring the voices of Latina/o

students with LD and other historically marginalized youth along with their families

within the larger landscape of educational theory, research, policy, and practice for

praxis. Yet narratives of students who are Black and Latina/o with LD are hard to find.

However, Connor's (2008) critical ethnographic study of eight 18 to 24-year old young-

adults is a case in point. Other studies about students with LD tend to be from a White,

male, middle-class perspective. Hence, the field of LD and the study of social and

emotional dimensions of LD would benefit from taking into account identity in critically

examining the labelling of students with LD at their intersections and the idea of "LD"

from their perspectives within educational contexts. This article, hence, outlines the

need for such a research agenda and program that foregrounds the emic, as opposed

to the etic, empirical knowledge base from those living with the educational label LD.

This research agenda contributes to the need for pluralistic theorizing regarding LD and

culture by centering the emotion-laden talk of historically marginalized youth with LD at

their intersections (Artiles, 2015; Ferri, Gallagher, & Connor, 2011).

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