

Strategies for Unity: Racism and Ableism

Karen Sue Linstrum, Ph.D., LPC-S, CRC

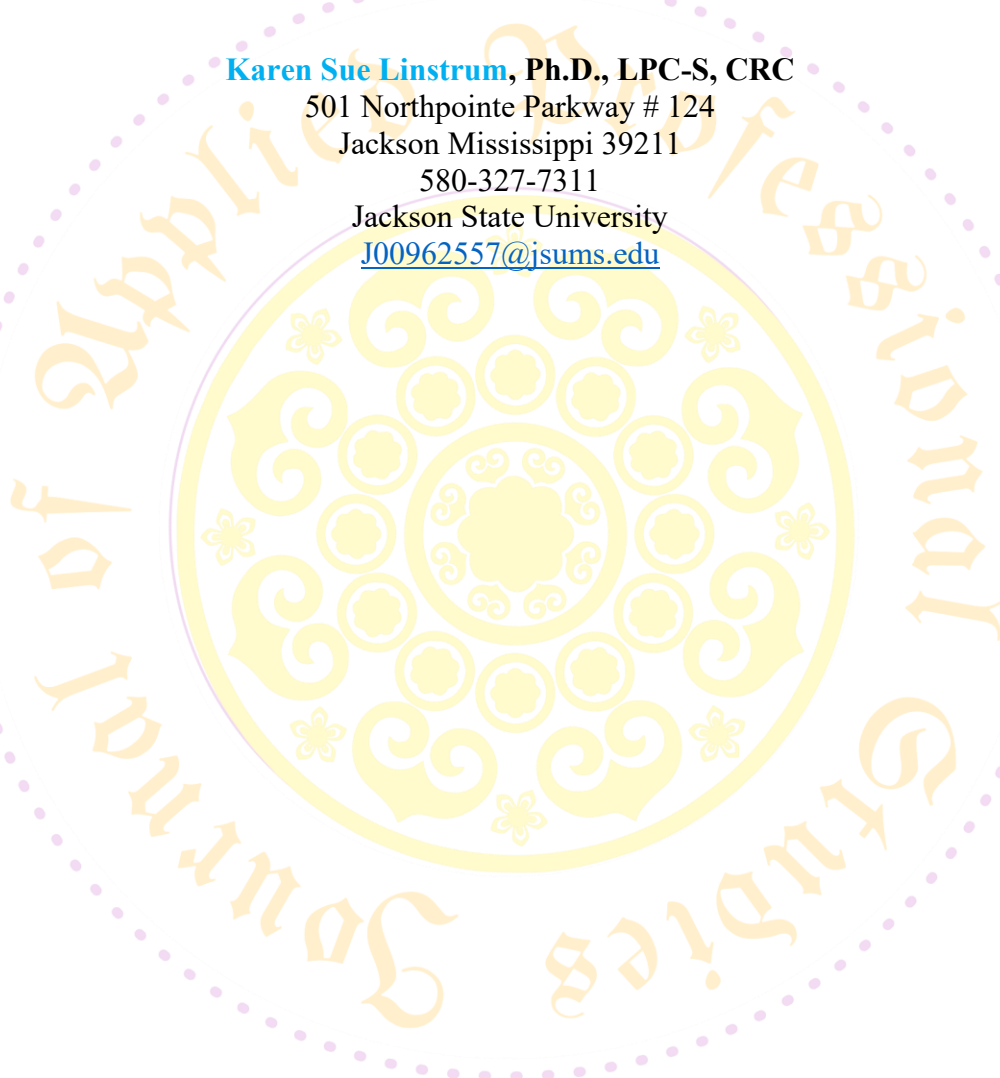
501 Northpointe Parkway # 124

Jackson Mississippi 39211

580-327-7311

Jackson State University

J00962557@jsums.edu



Strategies for Unity: Racism and Ableism

Karen Sue Linstrum

Abstract

This narrative review of strategies for unity and healing discussed the major areas where people congregate and engage schools and colleges, the community, and within a therapeutic relationship with a counselor. Both racism and ableism were addressed by highlighting the various theories and ideas brought forth by scholars. With some theories, one may not agree, but with other theories, one may feel cohesive. As the population of the United States and the world fluctuates, it is hoped that citizens take time to reflect on themselves and others.

Methods: From May 2025 to November 2025, an overview of the literature was conducted. The findings from ERIC, CINAHL, Alt health watch, PsyArticles, SocIndex, PsycInfo, Psychological and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Vocational and Career Collection, and Academic Search Premier were synthesized to form the document. The narrative review followed the guidelines from Green et al. (2006) and White and McBurney (2013). A narrative review highlights the writer's experience and one hears from the writer as a participant.

Discussion: The narrative review explored subject and areas where people interact and seek purpose. The current 2025 Trump administration was changing the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for college campuses and the community, impacting individuals and their groups. It is hoped that a consensus can be reached for all parties involved.

Keywords- Counseling, Critical Race Theory, Community strategies, Higher Education, people of color (BIPOC), and people with disabilities (DisCrit).

Purpose

The purpose of this narrative review is to investigate the current theories and strategies used to support the inclusion of all citizens in public life as well as to enhance individual functioning. The narrative review explored strategies found in mental health counseling, on college campuses, in public spaces such as community gardening, and public high schools. The writer's experience is included within this narrative review, discovering the connections among the various models and theories concerning racism and ableism.

Methods

The various databases that were explored were ERIC, CINAHL, Alt health watch, PsyArticles, SocIndex, PsycInfo, Psychological and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Vocational and Career Collection, and Academic Search Premier. The keywords used for exploration included DisCrit, CRT, people with disabilities (PWD), people of color, BIPOC, crip theory and crip time, community strategies, strategies for unity. From May 2025 to November 2025 the databases were investigated. The guidelines for a narrative review were focused on for a personal examination of the literature (Green et al. 2006).

Literature Review

Foundations- Theories & Models

As this article was drafted in spring 2025, the Trump administration began dismantling the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs across America. Some institutions stopped celebrating long held holidays associated with diversity, while others dropped DEI programs without pause. So, I was determined to find strategies for unity for people who were still engaged.

George (2021) remembered that in 2020, during his first term, Trump wrote an executive order excluding from federal funds programs of DEI, specifically Critical Race Theory (CRT). So what is CRT exactly? George (2021) noted that CRT recognizes that race is really socially constructed and rooted into our society naturally. Racism is veiled into our social structures and policies. George (2021) credited Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and Gloria Ladson-Billings among others as the originators of CRT, and that CRT grew from Critical Legal Studies. CRT challenges white privilege. Thus, the Trump administration desires to dismantle CRT.

Catrone et al. (2023) listed the 8 tenets of the Critical Race Theory (p. 166):

1. Racism is normal – Entrenched and ordinary in society.
2. Interest Convergence – The interests of people of color will be advanced only when it
3. benefits white people.
4. Social Construction of race- Race is not inherent or fixed. Race is a social
5. construction.
6. Differential racism- Society imposes racialized marginalization across racial groups.
7. Intersectionality- Overlapping identities that help to conceptualize a person's lived experiences.
8. Unique diverse voices- Acknowledge the voices of people of color.
9. Permanence of racism- Racism is permanent in society.
10. Whiteness as property- Whiteness continues to function as a form of property.

Regarding education, George (2021) highlighted the concept of Interest-Convergence Dilemma, which is the recognition that the interests of Black people concerning racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of white people. Further in education, George (2021) noted the “whitewashing” of the curriculum in history, assessments that are biased, and school funding disparities. As a professional teaching in a Rehabilitation Counseling program, I was drawn to finding strategies for unity that included people with disabilities. It is this writer's experience that ableism is also embedded and disguised within our society. Catrone et al. (2023) noted that one billion or 15% of the world's population have a disability. When focusing on race and ethnicity, Black/African American communities are most likely to have a disability. Regarding his profession as a Behavioral Analyst, Catrone et al. reported that Autism Spectrum Disorder and intellectual disabilities are the primary areas of professional concern.

Annamma et al. (2013) united the elements of CRT with Disability Studies (DS) to develop Dis/ability Critical Race Studies or DisCrit. DisCrit explores ways in which both race and ability

are socially constructed and are enmeshed in our society. Racism corroborates and reinforces ableism, and ableism corroborates and reinforces racism. DisCrit asks the question of who decided what normalcy is and what does normalcy look like, sound like, act like. Where is the difference noticed between ability and disability? Annamma et al. listed seven tenets of DisCrit (p.11):

1. DisCrit concentrates on the interdependency of racism and ableism and the undetectable means ideas of normalcy are upheld.
2. DisCrit honors a person's multidimensional identities – intersectionality is recognized.
3. DisCrit focuses on the social constructions of ability and race; the psychological impacts of being labeled as such which sets a person separate from the western cultural norms.
4. DisCrit desires to hear the voices of those marginalized people usually left outside of research.
5. DisCrit deliberates both legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race, how the aspects work together and how they have worked to deny people their rights.
6. DisCrit identifies the impact and results of the concept of interest convergence in gains made by white disabled people associated with the middle class.
7. DisCrit demands activism and supports all forms of resistance.

In reading these tenets, I was fascinated by the idea of normalcy and the western, Eurocentric cultural norms. Who decides what is normal? My interests lead me to the ugly laws. Schweik (2009) discussed that the ugly laws began in 1867 San Francisco to restrain certain persons from appearing in streets and public places. People with physical and mental health disabilities were targeted. The ugly laws era ran generally from 1880's to 1918. As other cities developed such laws, a person's distinct smells, sounds as well as other appearances was included. Yes, the ugly laws were focused on those who drank too much alcohol no matter what race, but also on those who had epilepsy. An aesthetic was being upheld.

Edvardsen & Gjaerum (2021) noted that the term aesthetic derived from the Greek language meaning sensation, or feeling, and sensory. Edvardsen & Gjaerum (2021) cited Baumgarten 1750 and the ideas that aesthetic knowledge is where the emotions and senses are primary; that it serves as a complement to scientific or logical cognitions.

According to Harris (2021), Aesthetics theories offer a view to understand both race and ableism. The aesthetics lens show how deeply rooted biases defame people of color with and without disabilities as deviant, incompetent, and unequal. Aesthetics help explain why norms of race and disability together are resistant to change. Aesthetics theories disclose a dominate socio legal prescription for inequality in training and education. Disability and race are more similar than dissimilar especially when viewed in accord. Harris (2021) discussed Aesthetics theories as a possible intuitive judgement rooted within humans. Humans view what is considered normal, healthy, beautiful, and able. Harris (2021) continued by stating that the legal laws do not account for the markers that may trigger one's sense of normalcy. Markers such as a wheelchair or the use of sign language, or a person of color may trigger an aesthetic and emotional process that makes it difficult for a non-disabled, Eurocentric person to overcome within their perception and judgement.

Harris (2021) continued by emphasizing that the ugly laws also fostered the segregation of people who were different from the norm. Non-normative bodies were to be invisible and regulated away from public spaces. Harris (2021) focused on understanding what she called the Aesthetic-Affective process. With perceptions of whiteness and ableism as the universal norm, then when viewing something different, one may stare or gaze at anomalies. Emotional feelings of fear, disgust, and anger, may occur for the abled bodied white person. Racial and disability justice are present in today's issues of police violence, access to health care, employment, and basic living wages. Harris (2021) argued that Aesthetic theories can be a diagnostic assessment to understand how the world has constructed disability and racial markers, and has used them against each other. Edvardsen (2021) presented an aesthetic model of disability. A person perceives an action or human expression and categorizes it as a social, physical, or cognitive deviations with negative connotations or vice versa. So again, this writer asks what is considered normal.

Braveman and Gottlieb (2014) noted that the World Health Organization's Social Determinates of Health (SDH) focused on the conditions in which a person was born, grew, lived, worked and aged. Easy access to healthy foods and recreation were specific conditions highlighted. However, socioeconomic factors such as income, employment, and education level were also seen as SDH.

Ho et al. (2019) noted that the intersections of race and disability and their impact on health and access to health care is an important goal to decrease the disparities in health. Braveman and Gottlieb (2014) emphasized that though ranked near the top in spending on medical care, the United States continues to rank near the bottom among affluent countries on health measures such as life expectancy and infant mortality. Using the biopsychosocial view, SDH also include living near pollution and allergens, exposure to violence, alcohol, tobacco, and experiencing sleep disturbance. Adjusting the view of SDH, the view now includes factors such as family conflicts, depression, anxiety, and exposure to discrimination. Braveman and Gottlieb (2014) highlighted that a person's allostatic load is primary for health. The allostatic load is a multicomponent construct that reflects physiologic changes across different biological systems in response to chronic stress- social and environmental.

Prosocial factors such as social support, self-esteem, resilience, and self-efficacy may help prevent some stress factors. Various SDH pair well with Hardy (2013), as various ways of healing from racial trauma are discussed. Hardy (2013) noted that race-related trauma wounds may appear as secondary symptoms in a person's life. As a mental health professional, asking "what has happened to you?" is more appropriate than asking what is wrong with you. Various trauma wounds of race can also be considered as wounds felt by those with disabilities.

Hardy (2013) noted that race-related trauma wounds may include internalized devaluation or assaulted sense of self. The person may think that they are unworthy. Voicelessness is another wound that may appear as a secondary symptoms. The person is impaired to voice concerns, is impaired to advocate for one's self. The trauma wound of rage can be a deep seated and is expressed with often with explosive anger, but also depression and sadness. Hardy (2013) offers strategies for healing these hidden wounds including affirmation, acknowledgement and validation. Naming the wound and how the wound has festered is another healing process. Hardy (2013) noted that racial oppression is a nameless condition, it is difficult to describe or quantify.

As a means to be more culturally responsive, Catrone et al. (2023) noted the practice of cultural humility. Cultural humility involves a critical self-reflection of one's own beliefs, biases, and assumptions towards one's own culture. Catrone et al. further noted the difference between person-first and identity first language. Person first is represented in a statement such as "a person with a disability" while an identity first statement would be disabled person or autistic person. Both written responses are noted in the 7th edition of The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).

Catrone et al. (2023) offered that ableism is the view that being more able, less disabled is the standard to achieve for society's standards and norms of the community. Again, what is considered normal can be questioned. Additionally, Catrone et al. suggested that racism is racial prejudices especially within systems of power. Racism may be covert or overt. Catrone et al.

continued by noting structural racism to occur on a broader scale as to reduce access to healthcare and incongruences in support services for culturally and linguistically marginalized groups. Catrone et al. reported that the term intersectionality was created by Kimberle Crenshaw while researching CRT and Black feminism. Intersectionality examines the experiences and difficulties of people within various social domains. An example of intersectionality could be view the experiences of a Black man, with a disability, with a college degree, but living in low income housing. What is this person's experience?

Catrone et al. (2023) described various models of disability and included various examples of each. The moral model is one of the oldest models. The moral model is based upon religious and cultural beliefs, ideas ranging from punishment from a god, inclusion of karma, exorcism, and forced serializations. The medical model dates back to the 1800's. The medical model is obviously still prevalent in society. This model views disability as the result of a physical condition or physiological impairment that decreases a person's quality of life. The goal is to manage the disability or "cure" it so that the person will be seen as "normal." The medical model does not recognize the contexts or distinctions within disability. Again, what is considered normal ably? Catrone et al. (2023) highlighted that the social model of disability holds the greater society responsible for creating a disability. The challenge is to change society-environment and attitude-to mitigate disability.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2013) discussed the tenets further, and claimed that Derrick A. Bell is the "father" of Critical Race Theory. Racism is not an isolated situation. Racism is an everyday experience for most people of color in America. Concerning the concept of interest convergence, Ladson-Billings (2013) cited Bell (1980) who stated that White people will promote racial equity as long as there is a benefit for them. An example of interest convergence described the then governor of Arizona cancelling the state's MLK holiday due to financial restraints. What followed cost the state more in finances. Many organizations cancelled their conventions and meetings, including the NBA's All Star Game. So the reversal of the decision was not aligned with the governor's original decision, but with the loss of monies the state incurred. There is an example of interest convergence is the writer's hometown in Texas. For a long time has the East Side of my hometown been ignored. The East Side of my hometown while growing up was redlined and called "the Black side of town." However, now with booming real estate profits available due to the population increase, the powers that be are cleaning up and restoring the East Side.

Ladson-Billings (2013) explained that intersectionality is viewing a person via different identities that may be functioning concurrently. One's multiple identities could include race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, disability, religion, educational level, income level, married, divorced, single, with children or not, and more. As a Rehabilitation Counselor, concerning disability, I view as visual or a hidden disability, then a host of other possible "identities."

Ladson-Billings (2013) presented the concept of essentialism as the belief that people perceive belonging to one specific group all members think and act in the same manner. Such thinking leads to stereotyping. Concerning voice, Ladson-Billings (2013) introduced storytelling.

Storytelling is an art form, and for centuries, cultures have kept themselves relevant via storytelling- also a form of history taking and making. Unsettling, is that Western science does not consider storytelling as factual, not empirical, does not meet requirements of truth. Also concerning voice, counter-story was explained as a contrasting story that describes the story from an alternative viewpoint. Both are not considered empirical for Western science.

Karlsson and Rydstrom (2023) identified that Crip Theory stems from feminist studies and Queer Theory. The researchers noted that Crip Theory has not had quick success as other theories. However, Crip Theory does provide analytical tools to reshape not only disability studies but also feminist studies and as an intersectional social analysis. As the feminists have shown that society was created by and for men, they have also revealed that society is created by and for the able-bodied. Thus, ableism. Karlsson and Rydstrom (2023) emphasized that Rosemarie Garland Thompson offered the term normate as a valuable contribution to Crip Theory. The concept of normate can be described as a constructed identity by able-bodied people having power over those who are not able-bodied just because of their abled body. Samuels (2017) offered that Crip Time refers to the flexible manner in which a person with a disability has to live. More of a flex to the normative time frames is needed because perhaps the accessible gate at the subway was locked. Crip time flexes the clock or time to meet those with disabilities.

Samuels (2017) noted that she does not see time as linear. Again, who decides what normal looks like, sounds like, smells like, and emotionally feels like. Ableism is a concern for everyone because all bodies age.

Higher Education Strategies

Reviewing the various strategies applied at a college or university, it seems that the focus was on both staff, faculty as well as the students. The programs regarding undergraduate students seemed the most promising. Mrowka et al. (2024) reported on the approach termed restorative justice (RJ). This approach focuses on alleviating the harm done to people, relationships, and communities. RJ is a philosophy of reciprocity, relationality, and community that counters the dominate Western approaches to unity. Within the university environment, RJ is useful with student conduct.

When employed in a liberatory manner, all individuals are humanized. Mrowka et al. (2024) also noted the term restorative practices (RP). Restorative practices focuses on the community, stimulating development, and accountability. The focus is a form of community building and

education among residential teams and communities within higher education colleges and university environments.

RP is a proactive agenda. The agenda includes not only handling student conflict, but also responds to local and world events. RP is implemented for education and training for staff and leadership; presenting a curriculum for living together in a residential community. Mrowka et al. (2024) highlighted the responsive tool of the restorative circle. A welcome circle is used with first year college students or for first time professional staff to help share ideas. Mrowka et al. (2024) discussed that overall restorative practices support self-reflection among participants, as well as introduced staff to a trauma-informed view of people. Again, asking what has happened to you, not what is wrong with you? Williams et al.

(2019) however, conducted a study which noted that although faculty infused their courses with Culturally sensitive information, there was no evidence that an increase in self-awareness lead to any differences in student interactions or behaviors. Does training and educating really work to change a person's viewpoint concerning diversity?

Gawronski et al. (2016) studied the use of Universal Design (UD) principles on a community college campus. The UD principles were first developed by Ronald Mace at North Carolina State University in 1985. (<https://www.udinstitute.org>). Universal Design promotes inclusion of people with disabilities. The elements were first focused on the environment. The elements include:

1. Equitable use for all individuals
2. Flexibility in use
3. Simple and intuitive use
4. Perceptible information
5. Tolerance for error
6. Low physical effort required
7. Size and space for use and approach by all individuals.

Now, Gawronski et al. (2016) noted that several organizations of UD exist: Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) Universal Instruction Design (UID) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). All organizations apply the original UD principles to the learning environment.

Gawronski et al. focused on the impact of UD on faculty attitudes, student attitudes towards the faculty who used the UD principles, and any differences in attitudes towards using UD. The results indicated that faculty between the ages of 35-44 and of European decent were more likely to apply the UD in their classrooms than other faculty. Thus it seems possible that age and ethnicity play a role in infusing UD principles into the community college classroom.

Scheef et al. (2020) studied the mission and diversity statements of 300, four-year institutions of higher education to discover if disability was used in the statements. A mixed methods approach was used to explore such statements. Scheef et al. noted that diversity or mission statements do include race, gender, and ethnicity, but disability or ability is rarely stated. From the research, out of 300 randomly chosen higher education institutions, 153 mentioned diversity in their mission statements and only 14 specifically mentioned disability. Of the 300 institutes that had a diversity

statement, 68 included disability. Scheef et al. noted that the ADA defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The medical model supports people with disabilities to receive services, but at the same time presents the perception of non-normal and normal for that individual. What is normal? The act of recruiting and retaining people of color and those with disabilities needs to be intentional.

Public School Strategies

By the time this writer had graduated from high school, the 1975 Public Law 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act was enacted. DeMatthews (2020) noted that 40 years later a disproportionate number of students in special services are of color. Racism and ableism seems to persist. DeMatthew's (2020) study focused on high school principals and the use of Critical Race Theory, disabilities studies, and DisCrit, that informed and shaped the principals' decision making. A successful principal has 4 goals: a. building vision and setting directions, b. understanding and developing people, c. redesigning the organization, and d. managing the teaching and learning program. Principals may have to address a history of mistrust between communities and schools especially where the context has been viewed as deficit rather than strength-based.

As a school leadership configuration, DisCrit can address both racism and ableism. The principal can develop a curriculum that focuses on knowing the histories of the students, and challenges students to develop new skills, a curriculum that challenges the status quo. Encouraging storytelling- the history of the student's life can be empowering. Recognizing skills one already has- strength-based can lead to acquiring new skills.

Beneke et al. (2021) focused on how mothers of color who had young disabled children regarded public school and the education their children were receiving. Beneke et al. noted that ableism and racism are present in public schools. Using DisCrit theory as a foundation, the researchers used 10 focus groups to understand the mother's positions. Thirty-three mothers participated in the focus groups, with 20 of the mothers being of color, two mothers identified as disabled. Three themes were discovered: a. mothering for respect and care, b. learning systems and pushing back, c. rejecting and dreaming beyond the status quo.

Mothers of color described the lack of respect and care their children were receiving from schools. The mothers noted the deficit view that was used within the school. The mothers complained about labels applied to their child and the use of self-contained classrooms. The mothers of color shared how difficult it was to speak up as a mother of color for their disabled child- they pushed back the deficit view of their children. One mother shared that advocating for her child was seen as threatening by the school personnel. Mothers noted that they had to know their own rights as well as their child's rights. Mothers reported that they wanted to find ways their child could fit in- beyond the status quo. Why was conformity so important? Is conformity a synonym for normalcy?

Community Strategies

Dixon (2024) asked what community is. Dixon (2024) expressed community via the terms Sankofa and Ubuntu. These terms originated from an African philosophy and are values within the culture. Sankofa is looking backwards to one's history and descendants in order to move ahead with more

clarity. Ubuntu can be translated as “I am because we are.” Thus bringing in the importance of community as “we” or one moves forward.

Wallis et al. (2023) explored the needs of people with communication disabilities in relation to communities. Wallis et al. noted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) established by the United Nations in 2015. Sustainable goal number 11 focused on cities and communities. SDG 11 stated that by 2030, people should have universal access to safe and inclusive green and public spaces particularly for women and children, older people and people with disabilities.

Green and public spaces are associated with improved health results, providing physical and social interactions, especially for those with communication disabilities. Wallis et al. noted the concept of talkspaces. Talkspaces are consider the sensory aspects of public space as well as the environmental and physical. Further noted was the use of ramps, wide and level pathways, Braille planks are fairly standard in public spaces. Wallis et al. brings to attention the poor use of “plinth style” seating, which is seating without a backrest. Good elements of public and green spaces include meeting spaces with seating arranged in a circle, music and entertainment, and playgrounds as well as sport fields.

Butterfield (2022) explored community gardening. Community gardening has shown to not only improve participant physical health but also mental health. Butterfield (2022) focused on increasing minority involvement gardening and found that accessibility was more important than any other element. Other elements researched included symbolic labeling of foods such as “organic” or “home grown.” Community gardening is more successful for diversity if the goals/framework is accessible and the participants of the neighborhood are represented.

Toolis (2017) utilized social psychology, community psychology, and environmental psychology to explore critical place making as a tool to restore public spaces for benefit. Toolis (2017) suggested that further research is needed to explore identity behavior; that relationships are very dependent upon the environment, one’s culture, and the historical context of the space.

Toolis (2017) also suggested that the public spaces needed to be socially mapped- making sure that benches, public restrooms, and water fountains are all accessible to all participants. Critical place making can be theorized as a way to make space for a multiplicity of voices and histories and create a comprehensive community.

Counseling Strategies

Remembering the affirmation and acknowledging a person’s racial trauma wounds from Hardy (2013), Brown et al. (2024) conducted a qualitative study with 25 Black mental health professionals to seek out their experiences healing racial trauma. Brown et al. reiterated that racial trauma is cumulative and is linked to mental health issues. Kobi Kambon –formerly Joseph A. Baldwin- emphasized that Black psychologist need to develop their own unique techniques, more Afrocentric theories for working with racial trauma.

Complex racial trauma (CoRT) is a strategy used to explore racial trauma. Individuals may experience destructive self-concept, and adverse social and economic experiences. Individuals

may also experience poor behavior choices and be confused with cognitive distortions. Culturally adaptive cognitive behavioral interventions may include validating the client's experience, psychoeducation on systemic racism and the threat of internalization of racism. Focusing on building skills and re-storying one's experience are culturally focused interventions. White mental health counselors should adopt such interventions as well when working with a person of color with or without a disability.

Brown et al. noted that half of the Black mental health professionals interviewed use cognitive behavioral approaches and the other half used psychodynamic approaches. Results from the study included theme and discoveries such as the intergenerational effects of racial trauma stemming from Jim Crow laws and slavery. It was such a relief for clients to be able pinpoint why they were feeling anxious. Validation again was key to the Black mental health professional's themes as well as having such joy to be able to offer healing interventions to Black clients.

Microaggressions and macroaggressions highlighted by Sue et al. (2019) and the harm of microaggressions and macroaggressions has long been documented. Sue et al. (2019) discussed the role of the bystander and allies and targets. Macroaggressions include systemic racism within policies and institutions.

Microaggressions include verbal and nonverbal statements that offend people, such as asking an American born Asian person where they from, or a tall Black women are did they play basketball in college. Targets are the people of color who are being discriminated against. Bystanders can be anyone who may become aware of or witness the discriminatory action/attitude toward the target. For bystanders, inaction seems to be the usual response to being aware of racism.

White allies are motivated to speak up when observing racism. White allies may be motivated by an inner desire to see a better world. White allies may have discovered more about themselves related to white dominance and want to make a positive difference. The challenge for White allies is to develop a nonracist identity which requires an interpersonal reconciliation with whiteness. A nonracist identity is a step further than the antiracist identity which is taking an external rather than an internal stance against racism.

Plummer (2020) introduced Gestalt principles for radical respect and stated that the future of society will depend upon how people treat those with whom they passionately disagree. Radical respect is to listen actively to others, to tract behavior, to suspend the need to be correct, to suspend judgement of others. It is hard to do; it is hard to be an agent of respect. Plummer (2020) noted that the world is like a kaleidoscope. A Gestalt principle most people know is that all aspects of the self are interrelated; no one aspect takes precedence over the other, and each individual is in an ongoing relationship with the environment. If the environment becomes toxic, then it disturbs one's ability to be authentic. Self-respect happens when a person extends respect to another; goes beyond the ego and the true self unites to become a reciprocal circle. Self-respect grows when one tries to find common elements without blaming or shaming. This Gestalt approach is paramount for counseling strategies to be successful.

Conclusion

This article was written as DEI factors and concepts tied to diversity and ableism were being challenged and changed. It is hoped that the reader will learn and be able to apply the various concepts and solicitations to one's routine and well-being. This article explored the foundations of racism and ableism by examining the concepts of the Ugly Laws and the theories of aesthetics. Strategies for unity were investigated with a community.

The community garden meant different emotions to various people, yet there seemed to be a feeling of unity. Strategies for living together have long been developed and conducted in higher education and public schools. Principals can make a difference in their schools. Developing a relationship with a mental health professional and being able to discuss trauma and exclusion on a personal level was explored. Finding a helpful and knowledgeable mental health professional can be difficult, but perhaps worth the try.

About the Authors

Karen Sue Linstrum, Ph.D., LPC, CRC is serving as an Assistant Professor at Jackson State University, Jackson MS.

Dr. Linstrum previous served in the mental health field as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and a Licensed Professional Counselor. Dr. Linstrum primarily worked with families, children, and adolescents.

References

- Annamma, S.A, Connor, D., Ferri, B. (2013). Dis/ability critical races studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and disability. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 16(1), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.730511>
- Baumgarten, A.G. (1750). Aesthetica. In K. Bale & A. Bo-Rygg (Eds.), *Estetisk teorien antologi* (p. 11-16). Universitetsforlaget.
- Bell, D.A. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(3), 518-533. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1320546>
- Beneke, M.R., Collins, S., & Powell, S. (2021). Who may be competent? Mothering young children of color with disabilities and the politics of care. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 54(3), 328-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2021.1992604>
- Braveman, P. & Gottlieb, L. (2014). The Social Determinates of Health: It's time to consider the causes of causes. *Public Health Reports*, 129(2), 19-31. Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health.
- Brown, E.M., Cabell, A., Gatabazi, R., Gong, J., Moran, D., Sudan, Z., Kyaw, T., Ardini, L., Heo, E., Dapaah-Afriyie, C., Kazemi, S. (2024). We do this till we heal us: Black mental health

professionals' experience working with Black patients suffering from racial trauma. *Psychotherapy* Advance Online Publication. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pst0000554>

- Butterfield, K.L. (2023). Modeling community garden participation: How locations and frames shape participant demographics. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 40, 1067-1085. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-022-10406-2>
- Catrone, R.G., Baires, N.A., Martin, M.R., & Brown-Hollie, J.P. (2023). An intersectional examination of disability and race models of behavior-analytic practice. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 32, 152-181. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42822-022-00116-z>
- DeMatthews, D. (2020). Addressing racism and ableism in schools: A DisCrit Leadership framework for principals. *The Clearing House*, 93(1), 27-34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2019.1690419>
- Dixon, B. (2024). Dear reader. 275 issue. *Exchange Press. Your Early Childhood Community*. <https://hub.exchangepress.com/articles-on-demand/37105>
- Edvardsen, N.K. & Gjaerum, R. G. (2021). The aesthetic model of disability. In P. Janse van Vuuren, B. Rasmussen & A. Khala (Eds.), *Theatre and democracy: Building democracy in post-war and post democratic contexts* (p. 193-215). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.135.chio>
- Gawronski, M., Kuk, L., & Lombard, A.R. (2016). Inclusive instruction: Perceptions of community college faculty and students pertaining to Universal Design. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 29(4), 331-347. ERIC number: EJ1133816.
- George, J. (2021). A lesson on Critical Race Theory. *Human Rights Magazine* 46(2), 2-5. American Bar Association. <https://www.americanbar.org>human-rights>archive>
- Green, B.N., Johnson, C.D., & Adams, A. (2006). Writing narrative literature reviews for peer-reviewed journals: Secrets of the trade. *Journal of Chiropractic Medicine*, 5(3), 101-117.
- Hardy, K.V. (2013). Healing the hidden wounds of racial trauma. *Reclaiming Children & Youth*, 22(1), 24-28. www.reclaimingjournal.com
- Harris, J.E. (June, 2021). Reckoning with race and disability. *The Yale Law Journal Forum*, 130, 916-958. <https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/reckoning-with-race-and-disability>
- Ho, S., Smith, L., Simpson, G., & Mitra, M. (2019). *The intersectionality between disability and race. Health needs assessment in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, Brandeis University. <https://www.lurie.brandeis.edu>

- Karlsson, M.M, & Rydstrom, J. (2023). Crip Theory: A useful tool for social analysis. *NORA-Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 31(4), 395-410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2023.2179108>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2013). Critical Race Theory-what it is not! In Lynn. M. & Dixson, A.D. (Eds.). *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in education*. Taylor & Francis Group. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com?_blank
- Mrowka, K.A., Bhatt, R., Rodriguez, R., Godowski, J. P., Baker-Meno, E., & Perkins, K. (2024). Using restorative practices to build stronger more inclusive communities. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 50(3), 70-83. ERIC Number: EJ1432949.
- Plummer, D.L. (2020). The instrumental self as an agent of respect. *Gestalt Review*, 23(3), 213-226. <https://doi.org/10.5325/gestaltreview.23.3.0213>
- Samuels, E. (2017). Six ways of looking at Crip Time. *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37(3). <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5824>
- Scheel, A, Caniglia, C., & Barrio, B.L. (2020). Disability as diversity: Perspectives of institutions of higher education in the U.S. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 33(1), 49-61. EJ1273652
- Schweik, S. (2009). *The Ugly Laws. Disability in public*. New York University Press. <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/89395>
- Sue, D.W., Alsaidi, S., Awad, M.N., Glaser, E., Calle, C.Z., & Mendez, N. (2019). Disarming racial microaggressions: Microintervention strategies for targets, white allies, and bystanders. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 128-142. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000296>
- Toolis, E.E. (2017). Theorizing critical placemaking as a tool for reclaiming public space. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 59, 184-199. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12118>
- Wallis, A.K., Westerveld, M.F., & Burton, P. (2023). Ensuring communication-friendly green and public spaces for sustainable cities: Sustainable Development Goal 11. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 25, 27-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549507.2022.2138544>
- White, T. L., & McBurney, D. H. (2013). *Research methods*, (9th ed.). Cengage.
- Williams, S.A.S., Hanssen, D.V., Rinke, C.R., & Kinlaw, C.R. (2020). Promoting race pedagogy in higher education: Creating an inclusive community. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 30(3), 369-393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2019.1669451>