Connecting Indigenous and Mestizx Pilipinx *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies:

Reclaiming and Centering the "Self and the Other"

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Introduction

This paper explores the theoretical and lived connections between Indigenous and Mestizx Pilipinx *Kapwa* decolonizing philosophy and Critical Disability Studies. Although *Kapwa* honors the decolonizing practice of "respect and consideration for the other" (De Guia, 2005, p. 9), I argue *Kapwa* is not taking place in schools and society as Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color are often viewed and treated to be inferior "others." Drawing from *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies, I illustrate the ways in which Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color share connected, yet different, experiences of being "othered" which include being: misread and misjudged; encouraged to pass for survival; silenced; treated as incapable and deviant; blamed and excluded; medicalized and cured; rehabilitated and assimilated; controlled and disciplined; criminalized; and/or murdered.

This paper portrays how Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color continue to be "othered" by systems of oppression because those in power seek to perpetuate "self and other" divides due to fear and for the purposes of exploitation. As *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies highlight, the "self and other" divide is socially constructed with lived material realities and consequences. I call for educators and activists to move beyond individual and "self" narratives and towards the recognition of historical, systemic, and interconnected oppressions. Realizing the interconnectivity of racism, hetero-sexism, classism, ableism, colonization, and imperialism will enable educators and activists to reclaim and honor the multiple identities, issues, and movements of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color in education and society.

Reading and Judging Others

According to De Guia (2005), Indigenous and Mestizx Pilipinx peoples "associate their ancestral heritage with primitive customs, with illiterate and underprivileged minorities or worse,

with museums and artifacts" (p.18). Indigenous and Mestizx Peoples all around the world

continue to be read either as barbaric savages or non-existent. I argue these readings and

stereotypical judgements of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples extends to disabled communities of

color who are often read as disabled or able-bodied. These "either/or" readings are rooted in

stereotypical judgements of what an Indigenous person and/or disabled person should look like.

Disabled stereotypes and assumptions include the notion that all disabilities are visible. Thus,

wheelchairs, companion dogs, and sign language become markers for people with disabilities. As

Indigenous and Mestizx peoples challenge stereotypes of Indigenous and Mestiza peoples to be

savage or non-existent, stereotypical conceptions of disabled people are challenged as well.

     Critical Disability Studies scholar, Gere (2009), highlights the ways students read and

scan their teachers for identity markers on the first day of school:

"At the same time, students are busy reading the instructor. Their eyes focus on the body. How
old is this person? Is this an athlete or a sloth? Is there a ring on the left hand? Are the clothes
stylish? They watch gestures. Does s/he seem receptive or impatient? The eyes: Is there kindness
or cruelty there? The mouth: Is there evidence of a sense of humor? This first reading of the
instructor's body often determines whether individual students drop or add a class, for those who
stay, this body reading will shape interactions throughout the semester (p. 53).

Gere (2009) emphasizes the ways "students frequently engage in reciprocal gazing, even though

theirs comes from a perspective of unequal power" (p. 54) and how "the gaze, as Foucault (1975)

terms it, dominates the classroom" (p. 53). I extend Gere's (2009) argument of gazing in the

classroom to the ways in which Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of

color are often gazed upon when pre-judged by others. As Critical Disability Studies argue, the

gaze may turn into a stare which involves objectification, disgust, and/or fetishization of

"othered" bodies. Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color themselves

begin to internalize gazing and identity stereotypes through intra-community constructions of

who is more/less Indigenous, disabled, and/or of color thus erasing those who do not fit neat

either/or categories of what is assumed to be Indigenous, disabled, and/or of color.

Others as Passing

"Everything within a settler colonial society strains to destroy or assimilate the Native in order to disappear them from the land-this is how a society can have multiple simultaneous and conflicting messages about Indigenous peoples, such as all Indians are dead, located in faraway reservations, that contemporary Indigenous people are less Indigenous than prior generations, and that all Americans are a "little bit Indian." These desires to erase, to let time do its thing and wait for the older form of living to die out, or to even help speed things along (euthanize) because the death of pre-modern ways is thought to be inevitable, these are all desires for another kind of resolve to the colonial situation, resolved through the absolute and total destruction or assimilation of original inhabitants" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 9).

As Tuck and Yang (2012) illustrate, institutional policies and incentives were historically

created and are currently being implemented to erase the identities, cultures, languages,

existence, and sovereignty of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples. For example, Native Americans

were forced to abandon their cultures at boarding schools and continue to live in segregated and

low income reservations. Indigenous and Mestizx peoples that assimilate into western and

neoliberal cultures are forced to do so with some assimilating in order to "pass" as American

and/or as non-Indigenous for the purposes of survival. In a connected, yet different manner,

Linton (1998) discusses how many disabled people "pass" as able-bodied in order to avoid

discrimination (p. 19) and how the families of some disabled people encourage them to hide their

disability (p. 20). Gere (2009) reveals how her daughter with an invisible disability is "faced

with the choice of whether to reveal or conceal her impairment" every day at school with

teachers, students, and friends (p. 56).

As Gere (2009) states "invisibility demonstrates the limitations of the gaze of the teacher,

showing how easy it is to misinterpret in the act of reading another's body" (p. 58), I extend

Gere's (2009) argument when emphasizing how Indigenous, Mestizx, disabled, and people of

color identities are not often seen and read due to stereotypical constructions and assumptions of identities. Teachers, students, and community members constantly misidentify each other since many may "pass" as non-Indigenous and/or non-disabled intentionally or unintentionally.

Silencing Others

Smith (2012) describes colonization as the erasure and fragmentation of Indigenous peoples and land: "We can talk about the fragmentation of lands and cultures. We know what it is like to have our identities regulated by laws and our languages and customs removed from our lives. Fragmentation is not an Indigenous project; it is something we are recovering from" (p. 100). As the identities, languages, and cultures of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples continue to be institutionally silenced, erased, and fragmented, the identities and issues of disabled people continue to be silenced and erased. Price (2011), as cited in Erevelles (2015), describes how educational institutions silence and erase identities and issues of mental health:

"Instead, university administrators have encouraged their constituents to be increasingly vigilant in identifying faculty/students/staff they suspect have a mental disability, in referring them to "appropriate" professionals; in expelling them from campus; and in ensuring, if necessary, the administration of involuntary medication and/or involuntary commitment to a mental institution of those individuals deemed to be potentially dangerous to the campus" (159).

Educational institutions continue to "other" and "demonize" those with mental health identities and issues during a time in which more students are reporting mental health concerns. "More than one in three undergraduate students reported feeling so depressed that they found it difficult to function, and nearly one in ten reported seriously considering attempting suicide (Watkins et. al., 2011, p. 320)" (Erevelles, 2015, p. 320). The silencing and erasure of "othered" identities continues as Indigenous and Mestizx peoples, disabled people, and communities of color are marginalized within school spaces and curriculums.

Furthermore, Erevelles (2011) illustrates how those disabled through war are systemically silenced and forgotten. Few are aware of the alarming numbers of people of color who are disabled or murdered due to war. "War is one of the largest producers of disability in a world still inhospitable to disabled people and their predominantly female caregivers (Russell, 1998; Charlton, 1998; Nakano-Glenn, 1992; Parker, 1993; Chang, 2001)" (Erevelles, 2011, p. 117). As many are unaware of the colonial histories and current colonial realities, many are unaware of the ways in which many populations of people, especially Indigenous, Mestizx, and disabled communities of color, become disabled or are left to die due to legacies of colonization and current projects of war and imperialism.

Others as Incapable

Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color are "othered" by institutions such as schools and governments when subjugated and viewed as incapable. Root (1997) acknowledges how Indigenous and Mestizx Pilipinx peoples are deliberately misrepresented in order to be subjugated by colonizers and imperialists: "the misrepresentation of their history has been used to subjugate them and keep them subjugated. It denies the enduring damage done to their culture" (p. 59). Indigenous and Mestizx Pilipinx peoples are represented as powerless, impoverished, and uneducated in order to justify colonizer and imperialist domination. Buenavista (1998) uncovers how Indigenous and Mestizx Pilipinx peoples were forced to speak Spanish and convert to Catholicism (p. 33). The languages, religions, and cultures of colonizers and imperialists such as Spanish, English, Catholicism, and Christianity continue to be imposed as superior to Indigenous and Mestizx Pilipinx languages, spiritualities, and cultures.

As Indigenous and Mestizx peoples are viewed and treated as incapable and less, Feminist Disability Studies scholar, Garland-Thomson (2011) emphasizes how the bodies of disabled people and women are often viewed and treated to be incapable (p. 20). Those who are perceived to be women and disabled are treated as if they are weak and passive (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 28). I argue *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies challenges these pre-conceptions of the "other" that deviates from white, heterosexual, cisgender, able-body, neoliberal, and western norms as inferior. Linton (1998) calls for educators to critique the ways disabled students are "hidden, sheltered, and confined" such as in segregated special education spaces (p. 3). Linton (1998) exposes the ways in which the academy keeps disabled people as "subordinate, isolated, and oppressed" and encourages educators to "move away from patronizing discourses" (p. 4). Smith (2015) highlights how colonizers constructed Native American men to be passive, weak, and incapable in order to justify the conquest of Native land and women to become the property of white male colonizers. The bodies and minds of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color continue to be viewed and treated as incapable.

Repulsed by Deviant Others

Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color continue to be treated as deviant "others." Systemic institutions such as schools and governments construct "others" to be sources of fear and repulsion. For example, during the late 1800s and early 1900s in the U.S., "World Fairs" showcased the bodies of Indigenous peoples from around the world and labeled these Indigenous peoples to be disabled "freaks" (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Disabled people, Indigenous peoples, and communities of color, became, as Garland-Thomson (1997) terms, "freakish spectacles" to stare at (p. 10). Garland-Thomson (1997) connects how women became

objects of the male gaze to disabled people becoming objects of the stare (p. 24). Both women

and disabled bodies are constructed to be deviant (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 20) I extend

Garland-Thomson's (1997) analysis when I argue Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled

communities of color continue to be treated as deviant objects of the white male colonizer and

imperialist gaze and stare. Smith (2015) illustrates how Indigenous women are often infantilized

and sexualized in order to justify the colonizer's acts of conquest and sexual violence. While

Indigenous women are objectified, colonizers disable Indigenous men when viewing them to be

repulsive, backwards, and incapable (Smith, 2015).

Annamma, Connor, and Ferri (2016) coined DisCrit, Disability and Critical Race Studies

in Education, which emphasizes the "social constructions of race and ability and yet recognizes

the material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or disabled, which sets one

outside western cultural norms" (p. 19). I argue Indigenous and Mestizx peoples continue to be

simultaneously constructed as raced and disabled in order for colonizers and imperialists to

justify the theft and control of lands, bodies, and minds. Western and white cultures continue to

be labeled as supreme while Indigenous, Mestizx, and communities of color are labeled to be

repulsive and backwards. Through school and government institutions, disabled communities of

color are treated to be intellectually less and physically deviant. The construction of Indigenous

and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color to be inferior and deviant is rooted in

histories and current legacies of racism, hetero-sexism, ableism, and classism that aim to control

and/or extinguish those deviating from western norms.

Blaming and Excluding Others

Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color continue to be

blamed and scapegoated for causing their own marginalization. Instead of holding racist, hetero-

sexist, classist, and ableist institutions accountable, individuals are often blamed for being intellectually and physically backwards. For example, De Guia (2005) illustrates how Indigenous peoples are assumed to be uneducated and backwards. Disabled people are blamed when often viewed as "narcissistic, selfish, and self-centered" (Siebers, 2008, p. 38). Bodies that do not conform become excluded (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 7) as disabled people become isolated and stigmatized scapegoats (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 15). Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities are individually blamed for their "own problems" and are constructed to be "the problem" instead of examining oppressive systems and structures.

Annamma, Connor, and Ferri (2016) highlight how "DisCrit considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens" (p. 19). *Kapwa*, rooted in Indigenous and Mestizx Pilipinx decolonizing philosophies and practices, recognizes the ways in which colonization and oppression are interwoven with systems and structures which include legal and historical constructions that continue to "other" Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color. Histories and current legacies of colonization continue to take place to deny the humanity of citizens and non-citizens of the U.S. and communities historically and legally labeled to be undeserving around the world. History and the law are intertwined to grant certain communities systemic privileges while "othering" and treating those who deviate from western norms as less and unworthy. Garland-Thomson (2011) demonstrates how disabled bodies and disabled bodies of color, are historically and systemically constructed as "expendable" through "abortion, eugenics, and hate" (p. 21).

Medicalizing and Curing Others

Along with "others" being blamed and excluded by school and societal system for their "own problems" and being "the problem," "others" are also sought to be medicalized and cured. For example, Garland-Thomson (1997) illustrates the "ideology of the cure" (p. 27) which pathologizes disabled individuals as sick, deficient, deviant, and in need of medication and/or curing. Linton (1998) discusses how disabled people experience "discourses of shame and medicalization" (p. 4) which become internalized as "demands to overcome" disabilities instead of challenging systems of oppression that marginalized disabled populations (p. 18). As Garland-Thomson (1997) connects the struggles of disabled people being told and taught to medicalize and cure themselves to the struggle of women be told and taught to "perfect themselves" with hair, makeup, and surgery (p. 27), I connect these medicalizing and cure narratives to Indigenous and Mestizx peoples who are often told and taught their bodies and minds are inferior through the boarding school experience and through systemic oppressions such as education and class barriers. Drawing from Adams (1995), I highlight how education became a "cure" for colonizers erasing the medicalized deviancy and presumed backward cultures of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples. "The white threat to Indians came in many forms: smallpox, missionaries, Conestoga wagons, barbed wire, and smoking locomotives. And in the end, it came in the form of schools" (Adams, 1995, p. 5). *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies emphasizes the ways in which oppressive systems seek to medicalize and cure "othered" bodies and minds.

Rehabilitating and Assimilating Others

In addition to medicalization and cure narratives, Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color experience systemic policies and incentives for them to rehabilitate and assimilate. Adams (1995) states: "Through the boarding school experience, Native American children were taught to become economically sufficient individual laborers in a

capitalist society" (p. 23). Since western and neoliberal cultures seek to exploit "othered" bodies and take advantage of them for their cheap and replaceable labor, systems such as schools and governments seek to manufacture productive Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color to be exploited in the political economy. Schools and governments do not seek to recognize differences as valuable since schools and governments seek to erase these differences in order for "othered" populations to remain committed to upholding western and neoliberal institutions and to remain useful as exploited and expendable labor.

Elman (2014) illustrates the ways in which disabled youth are viewed as *proto-citizens* who "…may not turn out straight or gender-normative, may not be white, may not be nondisabled, may not be a productive worker who adheres to the economic and cultural values of U.S. capitalism" (p. 2). Due to this fear of disabled youth not meeting neoliberal norms, education and societal systems seek to rehabilitate, correct, and assimilate disabled students. Elman (2014) defines rehabilitation as "an endless project of self-surveillance; of flexibility to circumstances that shift under your wheels, feet, and crutches; and of endless adaption to increasingly hidden forms of structural inequality in an age of inclusion" (p. 20). As disabled youth are rehabilitated by their schools, families, friends, and networks, Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color continue to experience the rehabilitation, disciplining, and controlling of their identities to be shaped and molded to meet western and neoliberal norms. Instead of blaming systems of oppression for creating inequities, marginalized communities are instead blamed for their own oppression and told to fix and adjust themselves to meet western and neoliberal norms.

Elman (2014) emphasizes the ways in which society encourages "self-help" and "privatization and personal responsibility" values of neoliberalism (p. 17). Instead of critically

examining and dismantling systems of oppression, educational systems expect Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color to overcome marginalization. Further, Elman (2014) describes the ways in which "policing the sexuality, emotional expressiveness, embodiment, and behavior of teenagers…has been central to enforcing the normative social order and its ideal of democratic citizenship" (p. 9). Those who deviate from constructed norms continue to be disciplined and controlled. *Kapwa* is deeply intertwined with Critical Disability Studies as both theories and practices seek to eradicate the further "othering," blaming, rehabilitating, and assimilating of those who deviate from norms.

Although schools and governments seek to silence and eradicate differences, schools and governments may allow the valuing of "others" and their differences. According to Annamma, Connor, and Ferri (2016), "DisCrit recognizes whiteness and ability as property and that gains for people of color labeled with disabilities have largely been made as the result of interest convergence…" (p. 19). *Kapwa* is connected to Critical Disability Studies when *Kapwa* recognizes the "self in the other" and the ways in which this Indigenous and Mestiza peoples and disabled communities of color continue to be co-opted by neoliberal multicultural movements which seek to either erase or overly exotify fetishize differences for the purpose of capitalist, military, and imperialist gains. Both *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies acknowledge the multiple ways in which "victories" for Indigenous and Mestiza peoples and disabled communities of color can be a facade and/or made for the wrong reasons such as advancing the continued oppression of these marginalized communities. *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies are critical of these superficial advancements when looking out for the interests of those marginalized in education and society.

Disciplining and Controlling Others

Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color are both disciplined and controlled in connected, yet separate, ways. For example, Spade (2015) describes education as a disciplinary institution which determines who is privileged and who is not privileged: "Institutional locations such as…education-where standards of healthfulness, proper behavior, and socialization are established and taught-are key technologies of disciplinary power" (p. 53). At a young age, Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color are taught to be out of place and how their identities and cultures are wrong, inferior, or should be silenced. Schweik (2009) highlights how *ugly laws* in the early 1900s prohibited disabled populations from soliciting and exposing themselves in public spaces which served as a form of state controlling, policing, and suppression of disabled identities, communities, issues, and movements: "harsh policing, anti-begging, systematic suspicion set up to winnow the deserving from undeserving; suppression of acts of solidarity by and for marginalized urban social groups; and structural and institutional repulsion of disabled people, whether by design or by default" (p. 209). I connect the *ugly laws* regulating the bodies of disabled populations to the ways in which the bodies of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples continue to be controlled and regulated in reservations. I argue *ugly laws* continue today as many cities throughout the U.S. do not allow homeless populations to occupy public spaces. Many of those who are homeless are Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color.

As Garland-Thomson (1997) illustrates how women experience compulsory expectations and demands for motherhood while disabled women are often discouraged from motherhood (p. 26), I highlight how Indigenous and Mestizx women were historically discouraged from and/or denied motherhood due to forced sterilizations and conditions of poverty and forced relocation to reservations and/or boarding schools. Indigenous and Mestizx women, along with women of

color, are also stereotyped to be problems and are discouraged from motherhood. As Indigenous

Feminists and Feminist of Color scholars argue, reproductive justice is a central issue for

Indigenous and Mestizx women and women of color whose bodies continue to be controlled,

disciplined, and regulated by school and societal institutions (Smith, 2015).

Criminalizing Others

   Kapwa and Critical Disability Studies scholars highlight the ways in which Indigenous

and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color are not only disciplined and controlled in

school systems, but are also criminalized as well. Those who do not rehabilitate and assimilate

into western and neoliberal norms face the systemic consequences of criminalization. Annamma

(2015) emphasizes how disabled students of color are "co-constructed as criminal via the

everyday practices of schools" (p. 86). The attitudes and behaviors of disabled students are often

thought to be inferior and problematic. Annamma (2015) illustrates how disabled students of

color are disproportionately labeled to mentally ill: "those who were labeled mentally ill were

racialized (i.e. Black), gendered (i.e. female), sexualized (i.e. homosexual or promiscuous), or

simply poor" (p. 83). Mahon-Reynolds & Parker (2016) found students of color continue to

remain overrepresented in special education and school-to-prison pipeline settings (p. 149) since

"teachers' beliefs, attitudes, or biases and their practices influenced their perceptions of the

academic ability of students" (p. 149). *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies uncover the ways in

which Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color are hyper-disciplined,

controlled, and criminalized due to education systems which perpetuate discriminatory thinking

and the further "othering" of students who do not meet western and neoliberal norms.

   Oparah (2015) describes a continuum of policing disabled and communities of color

encounter: "Instead, state penal practices exist on a continuum from the prison, the juvenile hall,

and the detention center to the urban 'hood, the reservation, the school, and the welfare office where surveillance, policing, and punishment extend far beyond the prison walls" (p. 338). Schools, neighborhoods, and reservations discipline and control students and communities who deviate from norms. Reservations and low income neighborhoods confine communities in small spaces that often lack resources and are hyper-policed. *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies acknowledge historical and current colonization, racism, hetero-sexism, classism, and ableism to be responsible for the systemic "othering" and criminalizing of specific students and populations who do not meet white neoliberal norms.

Disabled students of color continue to be criminalized in education systems. Meiners (2007), as cited in Annamma, Connor, and Ferri (2016), found "African American students are "67% more likely than white students with emotional and behavioral to be arrested in school" (p. 15). Along with the overrepresentation of students of color in special education and criminal processes, Annamma (2015) emphasizes the over-representation of women of color and queer women of color in school disciplinary and special education processes:

 "Young women as a whole are underrepresented in disciplinary actions and special education, but young women of color are overrepresented in both (Oswald, Coutinho, & Best, 2002; Stearns & Glennie, 2006). Additionally, young women who identify as queer are at higher risk of punishment than their heterosexual counterparts and are therefore more susceptible to public school actions that steer them into the pipeline (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011; Meiners, 2011)" (p. 84).

Schools continue to hyper-police and criminalize disabled students of color. The U.S. Department of Education, as cited in Mahon-Reynolds and Parker (2016), reported "1/4 boys of color and 1/5 girls of color with disabilities suspended" (p. 152). Erevelles (2015) highlights the ways in which mental illness is feared and viewed to be dangerous: "Therefore, in a context where mental illness has become synonymous with danger, the very presence of students/faculty/staff with psychiatric disabilities places them in extreme jeopardy on

college/university campuses" (p. 159). Students, especially Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and

disabled communities of color, continue to be criminalized when labeled as deviant and

dangerous.

Decolonizing scholar-activists, Tuck and Yang (2012) claim: "Strategies of internal

colonialism, such as segregation, surveillance, and criminalization are both structural and

interpersonal" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). Not only do institutions such as schools and

governments criminalize Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color,

intra-community policing, disciplining, punishing, and criminalizing takes place as well. It is

critical for those who are "othered" and marginalized by western and neoliberal constructions of

normalcy to avoid replicating and reproducing systemic oppressions they experience with other

community members who are marginalized.

Murdering Others

 "The recognition that racism operates as a knowledge claim that is then wielded with the
authority to exclude (or punish or kill) is an important understanding for ableism as well. This,
then, is how racial profiling and ability profiling work synergistically: assignment of a deviant,
dangerous, or deficient social identity in response to preclude physical, interactional, or cognitive
characteristics that are then used to justify exclusion, incarceration, violence, and/or death"
(Collins, 2016, p. 201).

DisCrit highlights the systemic racial and ability profiling communities of color with

disabilities experience inside and outside of schools. *Kapwa* is connected to DisCrit theory and

Critical Disability Studies since *Kapwa* brings to attention the detrimental impacts of "othering"

which may lead to the increased punishing and murdering of "others" who deviate from western

and neoliberal norms. Those are "othered" are viewed to be the enemy and the threat. *Kapwa* and

DisCrit interrogate these systemic injustices that target specific people and populations as

deviant. DisCrit scholars illustrate the ways in which race, gender, sexuality, disability, and class

profiling may tragically and systemically lead to the murdering of those who are "othered."

"DisCrit theory makes apparent that these forms of violence are part of the same continuum of exclusion; one that begets the other as Black, Brown, and dis/abled bodies are marked out of place in school and community" (Collins, 2016, p. 185). *Kapwa*, DisCrit, and Critical Disability Studies expose the multiple ways in which bodies and populations that do not conform to white neoliberal norms are disciplined, excluded, and murdered.

Fear of Blurred "Self and Other" Boundaries

Linking *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies portrays the ways in which education and governments seek to control, discipline, and murder Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color because these systems seek to exploit or extinguish these populations that do not meet white and ableist neoliberal norms. I propose these systems fear Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color because these populations blur boundaries of race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, class, place, and time. For example, Indigenous and Mestizx peoples live in places with constructed boundaries. Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Queer identities existed and were honored before colonization (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011). Disabled communities of color blur racial lines and the lines between abled and non-abled bodies. Linton (1998) questions "normal/abnormal, insider/outsider, and citizen/enemy" binaries (p. 2). *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies demonstrate how these "self and other" divides continue to be socially constructed in order for colonizers and imperialists to exploit or extinguish those who are "othered."

Garland-Thomson (1997) highlights how disabled people are socially constructed to be "spectacles of otherness" with disabled populations challenging these "self/other" and "normate/deviant" dichotomies (p. 8). As Siebers (2009) emphasizes Intersectionality theorists move away from the "additive model" (p. 28), I argue *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies

move away from "additive" and "binary" models when recognizing the "self in the other" as connected, yet separate, entities. Indigenous and Mestizx peoples are connected to all peoples, animals, and nature all around the world, but are distinct peoples with specific cultures, languages, practices, histories, issues, and movements. Disabled communities of color are connected and experience unique issues specific to disabled communities of color such as simultaneous race and dis/ability profiling. Since colonizers and imperialists fear the blurring of "self and other" divides, colonizers and imperialists aim to build walls, institutions, and policies that continue to divide the "self" from the "other."

I argue colonizers and imperialist continue to perpetuate "self and other" divides because they refuse to view Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color as interconnected communities of multiple, fluid, and complex identities. Garland-Thomson (1997) uncovers the ways in which many fear and are repulsed by disabled people when threatened by the fluidity of disability and the concept of being temporarily able-bodied (p. 14). Garland-Thomson (1997) highlights how disabled people are complex people who are more than their single attribute of identifying as disabled (p. 12). Like the socially constructed categories of sex and gender, Garland-Thomson (1997) argues boundaries between disabled and nondisabled do not exist (p. 26). Although identity categories are socially constructed, I argue these "self and other" divides were created and continue to be circulated in order to subjugate, exploit, or extinguish those who deviate from white neoliberal norms.

Kapwa and Critical Disability Studies question the normalcy and perpetuation of "self and other" divides when honoring multiple, complex, and fluid identities, issues, and movements of Indigenous, Mestizx, and disabled communities of color. "DisCrit values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race or disability or class or gender or

sexuality, and so on" (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2016, p. 19). *Kapwa* is connected to Critical

Disability Studies and DisCrit as *Kapwa* emphasizes connecting ourselves with the other which

includes breaking down walls and barriers between peoples and communities, while

simultaneously respecting differences, when realizing our identities, issues, and movements are

interconnected. The issues Indigenous and Mestizx peoples face are connected to the issues of

racism, hetero-sexism, classism, and ableism disabled communities of color encounter.

Colonization created and continues to construct the barbaric "other" who is treated to be less

deserving and more likely to be exploited.

Beyond the Individual and Towards Critiquing and Transforming Institutions

In addition to recognizing and honoring interconnected and fluid identities, issues, and

movements of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color, *Kapwa* and

Critical Disability Studies challenge conversations and activism in education and society to move

beyond "blame the individual" and "self-help" narratives and towards actions which critique and

transform institutions that perpetuate the oppression and marginalization of "othered"

populations. Annamma, Connor and Ferri (2016) reveal how "DisCrit focuses on ways that the

forces of racism and ableism circulate interdependently, often in neutralized and invisible ways,

to uphold notions of normalcy" (p. 19). *Kapwa*, DisCrit, and Critical Disability Studies questions

institutions that manufacture regimes of normalcy and exposes the ways these structures and

systems "naturalize" who is normal and who is not. Education and societal systems construct

who deserves advantages and those who are undeserving. Those who are "othered" and who fall

outside of constructed norms are pushed away, abused, mistreated, and/or extinguished. *Kapwa,*

DisCrit, and Critical Disability Studies calls for educators to see themselves in those who are

"othered" without erasing differences. *Kapwa* is a call for solidarity to deconstruct regimes of

normalcy that inferiorize others, especially Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled

communities of color.

As Critical Disability Studies recognizes oppressions as not individual since they are

"socially embodied" (Siebers, 2008, p. 32), *Kapwa* acknowledges the ways in which the "self

and other" divide created by colonizers and imperialists is a system which seeks to further

subjugate, abuse, and/or extinguish those that deviate from norms. As Garland-Thomson (1997)

calls for educators and activists to move beyond individual medicalizing discourses of disabled

people and towards political discourses (p. 6), I illustrate the criticality of examining and

dismantling systems of oppression that perpetuate racism, hetero-sexism, classism, ableism,

colonization, and neoliberalism. Since many do not focus on environment and economic barriers

and instead critique individual bodies (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 28), I urge educators and

activists to challenge political, social, economic, and cultural barriers that limit opportunities for

Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color to flourish.

As Linton (1998) argues "disability is produced to uphold existing practices" (p. 4), I

illustrate how the "self and other" divide continues to be reinforced by colonizers and

imperialists in order to subjugate, exploit, and/or extinguish those who are "othered." The

subjugation and imagined powerlessness of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples is a construction

and façade for Indigenous and Mestizx peoples to internalize their own inferiority in order to

allow oppressive systems to continue. Disabled communities of color begin to imagine and live

realities of subjugation because those in power in education and society continue to circulate

deficit narratives of disabled people and communities of color. As Garland-Thomson (1997)

emphasizes "disabled bodies as sites of historical inscription instead of physical deviance" (p.

18), I extend this analysis to the bodies of Indigenous and Mestizx peoples who continue to be

constructed as inferior or non-existent. As Siebers (2008) "marks disability as the product of

social injustice and social changes needed" (p. 3), I highlight how the lived realities of

Indigenous and Mestizx peoples which include the colonizer and imperialist theft of land,

identities, cultures, and languages is the product of social injustice. *Kapwa* and Critical Disability

Studies call for educators and activists to move beyond critiquing and challenging individuals

and instead demands for the transforming of systems of oppression that continue to control,

exploit, and/or extinguish Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color.

Reclaiming and Centering Others

Striving towards the transformation of oppressive systems and structures includes the

reclaiming and centering of "othered" communities who continue to be marginalized. Smith

(2012), calls for the re-centering of Indigenous identities and cultures: "While shifts are

occurring in ways in which we Indigenous peoples put ourselves back together again, the greater

project is about re-centering Indigenous identities on a larger scale" (p. 100). Linton (1998)

demands "naming disability in a world reluctant to discuss it" (p. 5) and how disabled people

should have "control in naming own experience" (p. 9). *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies

aim to reclaim and center marginalized identities, issues, and movements. As Siebers (2008)

values "disability as a form of human variation" (p. 25) and disability as "embodied knowledge"

(p. 24), I argue educators and activists should validate and affirm Indigenous and Mestizx

peoples and disabled communities of color as communities with deep knowledge to be listened

to and respected. Since oppressed groups are "bound by social and political experiences"

(Linton, 1998, p. 12), I encourage educators and activists to listen to and learn from marginalized

communities in order to act in solidarity to transform oppressive systems and structures. As

Garland-Thomson (1997) claims "physical difference should be claimed and not cast as lack" (p.

23), I propose educators and activists can benefit from respecting the knowledges and strengths

of those "othered."

Annamma, Connor, and Ferri (2016) claim "DisCrit requires activism and supports all

forms of resistance" (p. 19). Since *Kapwa* resists white neoliberal norms of individualism when

seeking to cultivate communities of mutual respect, inter-dependency, and support, *Kapwa*

encourages activism of "seeing ourselves in the other." *Kapwa* supports intersectional and

coalitional activism of communities such as Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled

communities of color who are different, yet connected, when issues of racism, hetero-sexism,

classism, and ableism directly impact both communities. Activism and resistance includes

multiple communities working in solidarity together to dismantle oppressive systems and

structures which continue to inferiorize "others"

As "DisCrit privileges voices of marginalized populations, traditionally not

acknowledged within research" (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2016, p. 19), I propose *Kapwa* and

Critical Disability Studies as theoretical frameworks and practices that can center Indigenous and

Mestizx peoples and disabled communities of color in education and society. It is critical for

education and educational research to focus on the voices and perspectives of those who are

often not heard and validated. Centering the lived experiences of Indigenous and Mestizx

peoples and disabled communities of color will enable the transformation of education and

society to occur when honoring those who are often treated as invisible and undeserving.

Decolonizing

Tuck and Yang (2012) emphasize *decolonization is not a metaphor*. According to Tuck

and Yang (2012), "decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot be easily grafted onto

pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if

they are social justice frameworks" (p. 3). Connecting *Kapwa* with Critical Disability Studies is

not adding *Kapwa* decolonizing philosophies and practices to existing frameworks, but instead

centering *Kapwa* and decolonization within existing frameworks and practices. Smith (2012)

describes decolonization as divestment in colonization: "Decolonization…is now recognized as

a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of

colonial power" (p. 101). Tuck and Yang (2012) define decolonization as "the repatriation of

land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been

differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically" (p. 7). I

argue *Kapwa* and Critical Disability Studies applied as simultaneous, yet distinguished,

theoretical frameworks and practices in education and society center Indigenous and Mestizx

peoples, issues, and movements for cultural reclamation and sovereignty striving to abolish

borders, prisons, and exploitative systems.

Conclusion

  Kapwa and Critical Disability Studies connect as Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and

disabled communities of color continue to be "othered" in education and society which include

being: misread and misjudged; encouraged to pass for survival; silenced; treated as incapable and

deviant; blamed and excluded; medicalized and cured; rehabilitated and assimilated; controlled

and disciplined; criminalized; and/or murdered. Systems and structures of oppression continue to

perpetuate socially constructed "self and other" divides when aiming to control, exploit, and/or

extinguish those who are "othered." Moving beyond the critique of individuals and towards the

transformation of oppressive institutions enables Indigenous and Mestizx peoples and disabled

communities of color to reclaim and honor multiple, fluid, and interconnected identities, issues,

and movements in which land and cultural repatriation is central to decolonization. I challenge

educators and activists to cultivate "self in the other" lessons and activities inside and outside of

classrooms in order to challenge systemic structures of oppression.

Note: I acknowledge how I am a Pilipinx scholar-activist of the Diaspora with Indigenous and

Mestizx ancestry and of a family with a rich history of resisting colonial violence. I recognize

how tensions and moments of solidarity exist within and between Indigenous and Mestizx

communities in the Philippines and within Pilipinx Diasporic communities. I bring forward this

paper with the hope to continue conversations and alliances between our Indigenous, Mestizx,

and Critical Disability scholar and activist communities.

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