

**R.E.A.L.E.T.:** *The Culturally  
Sustaining Teaching and  
Evaluation* **Learner-Centered  
Model**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**ILLINOIS**  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

What is . . . ?

R.E.A.L.E.T.

Restorative Education via Authentic Learning Experiences & Transition/Technology

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Culturally ***Sustaining*** Teaching and Evaluation is a ***learner***-centered model that focuses on the cultural identity shaping process of each stakeholder in the K-12 public school setting when providing and receiving academic and socio-emotional instruction and supports. In CRTE, educators teach through a self-critical reflection lens to provide appropriate and effective learning strategies and resources for all children, especially those in marginalized communities. This model emphasizes the need for school professionals to scaffold learning while taking into consideration the intersectionality of cultures of each student and themselves.



# *REALET* Check: In, You, Me, Out

- **In** – why are we here? why are you here? what's the point?
- **Me** – do I agree with him? has he gone too far? what is he saying? should I say something?
- **You** – how do I feel? how do I navigate the space? who am I?
- **Out** – what did I learn? what do I still need to learn? how will I learn it?

**I**



# Ground Rules

Rule	Reason
REAL Talk	Trust, Rapport, Respect, Love
Comfortably Uncomfortable	Navigating the uncomfortable spaces and feelings
Ask me WHY??	<i>Open space, Open communication</i>
<u>QUESTIONS</u> answers	Leaving with more questions than answers is the truest forms of learning
SELF-ie	Reflexivity and Positionality

**I**





# Activity #1

Define  
Edwin Monárrez



# Edwin Camerino Monárrez

## Meet the facilitator:

**'Hood:** Cicero, IL

**Parents:** From Mexico

**Career:** Special Education Teacher, Coach, Mentor, Tutor, Professional Development Facilitator, Student

**Future:** Dis/ability Law Degree, Professor, Educational Consultant, UNICEF

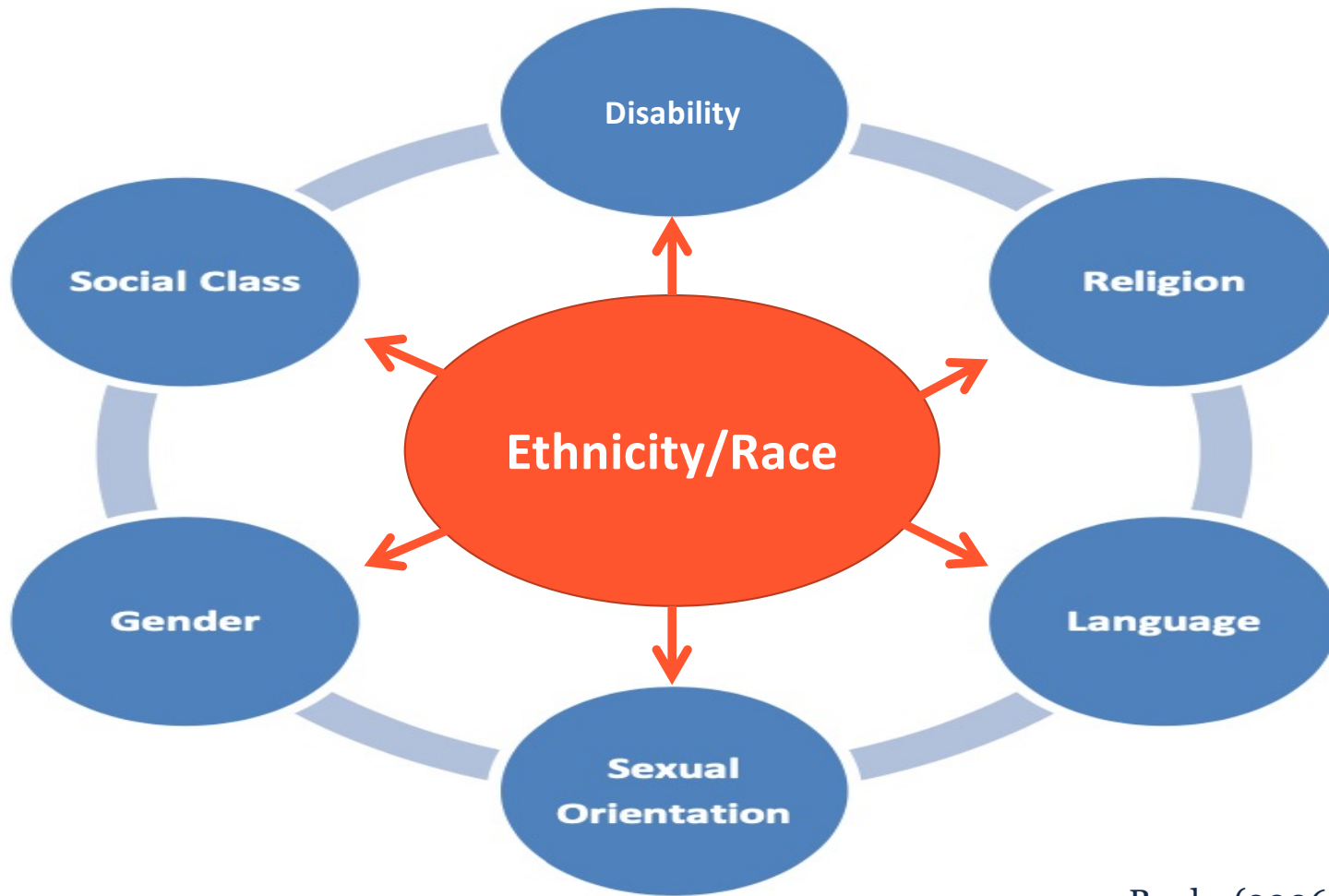
**First-generation Student & First in the family to achieve a:**

- ✓ *Bachelors:* Concordia University Chicago (CUC) 2013
- ✓ *Masters:* University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) 2016
- ✓ *Doctoral student:* U of I Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) (present – 2025)



**(he/él)**





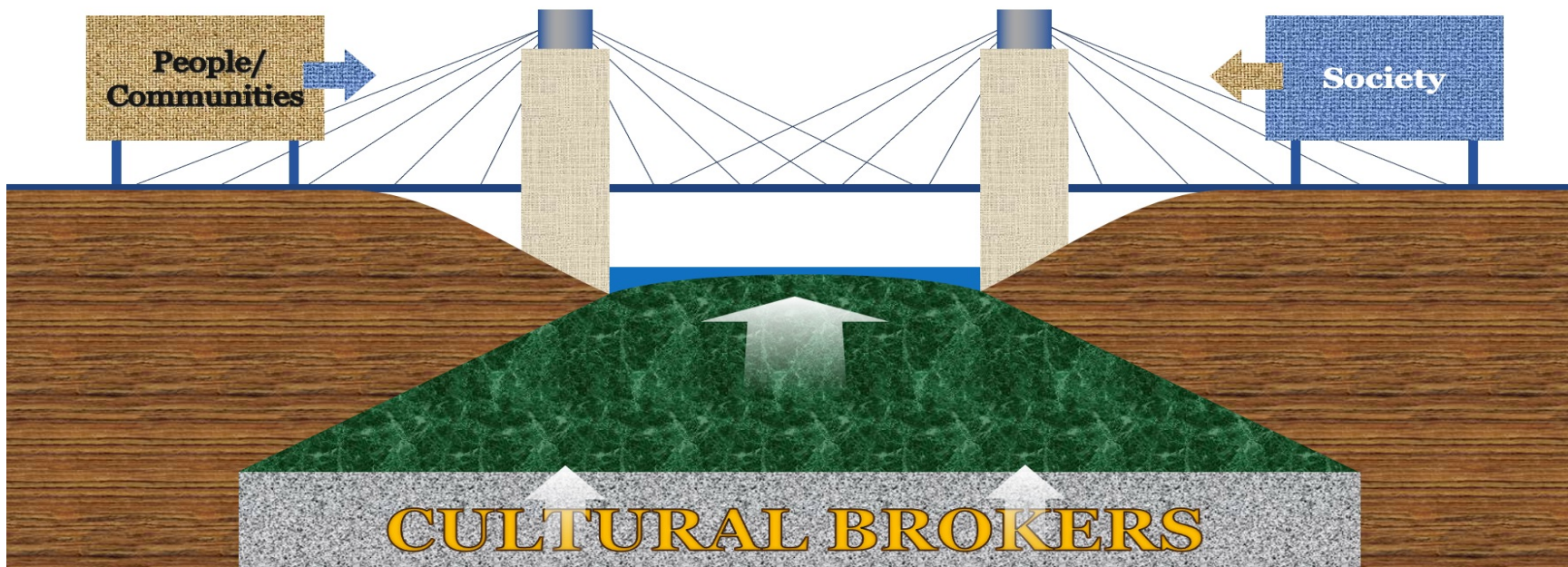
Banks (2006)

**I**



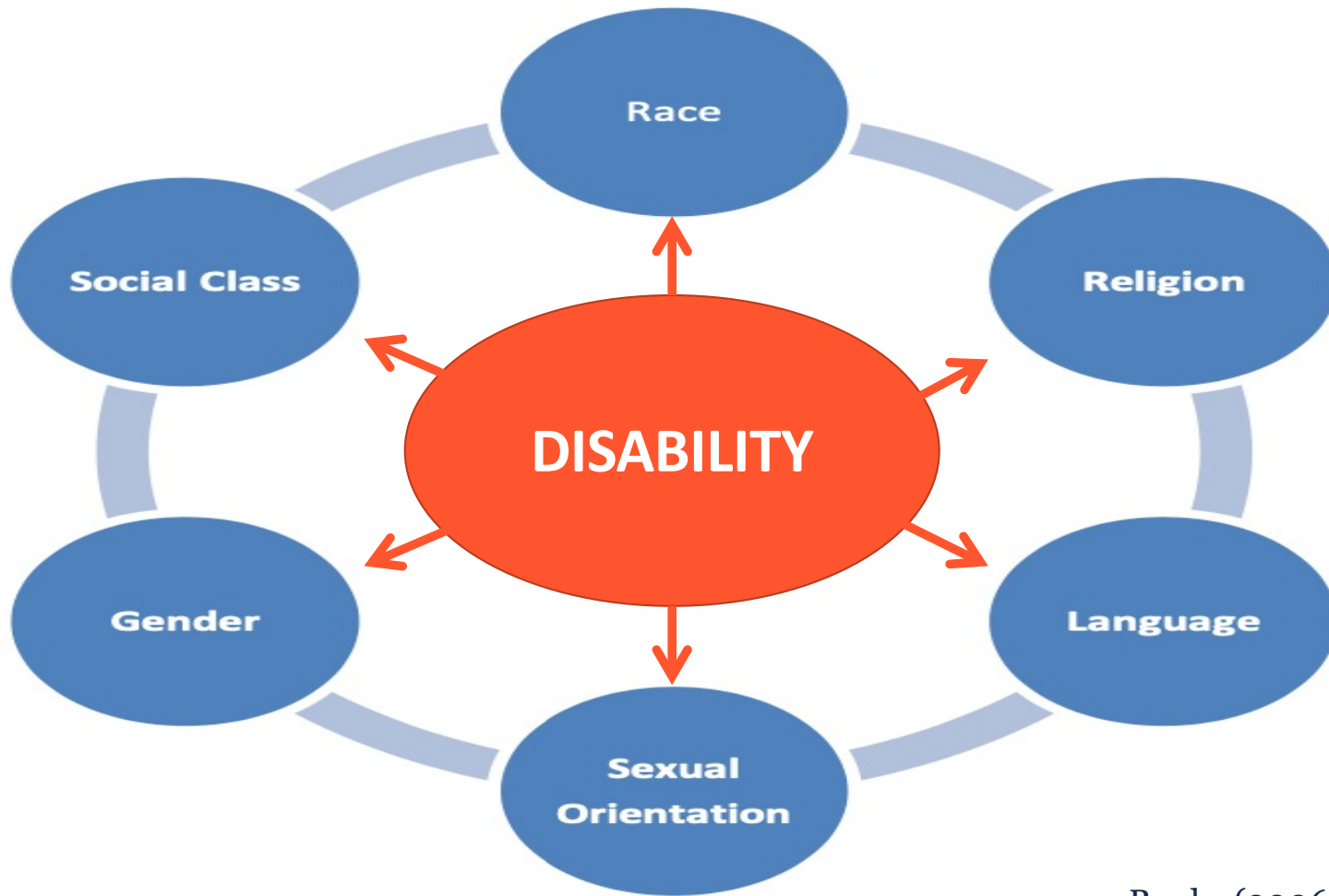


# Bridging the disconnection between People/Communities and Society



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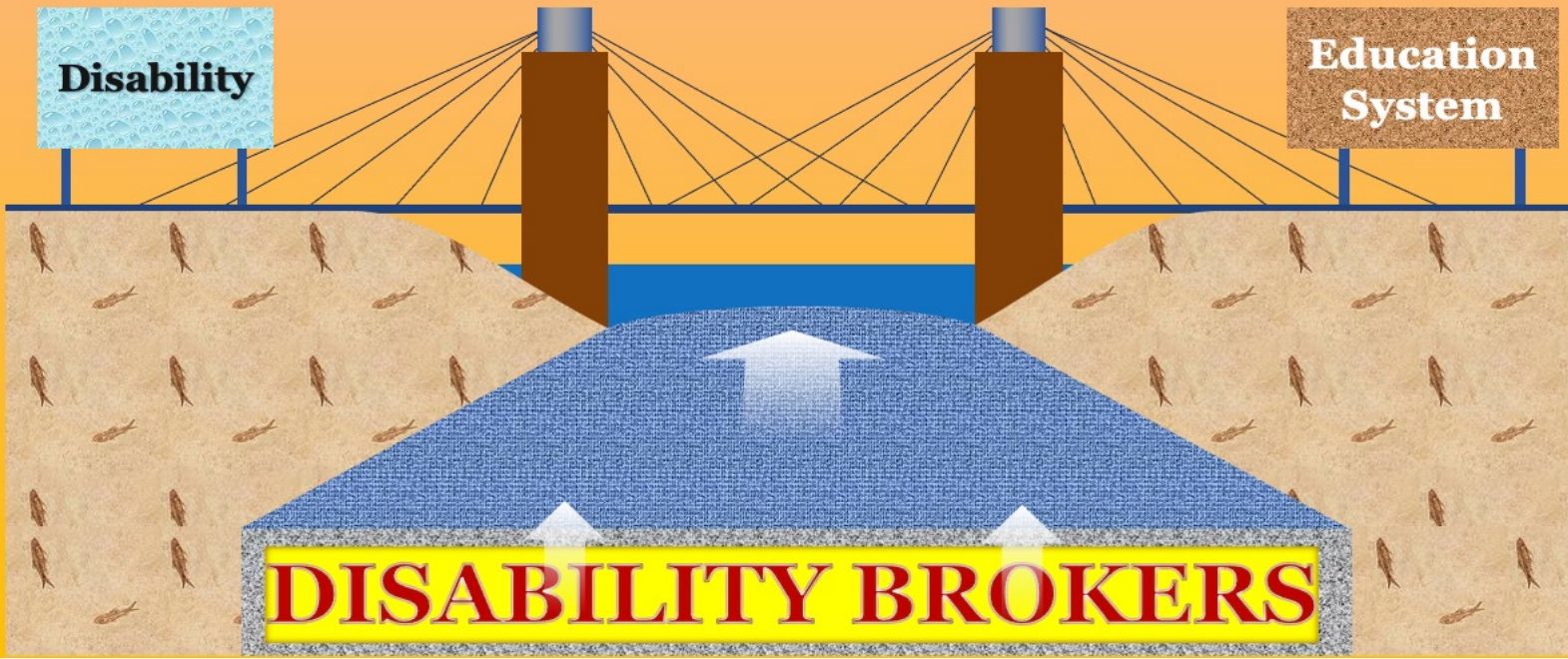
Banks (2006)

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# Bridging the disconnection gap between Dis/ability and the Education System



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# Crossroads between *Social Truth* and *Self-Truth*

## Liberation Education

education that inspires you to think critically, education that frees the mind instead of numbing it

## Cultural Hegemony

domination or rule maintained through ideological or cultural means



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# *Latin\**

“*Latin\** could be used to refer to the way computer search functions allow one to search for any words attached to the prefix . . . *Latin\** can consider ***Latinx***, ***Latiné***, ***Latinu***, ***Latino***, ***Latina***, ***Latina/o***, ***Latin@***, ***Latin***, or ***Latin American***. Introducing the \* (asterisk) in *Latin\** is intended to serve as a deliberate intervention—a pause for readers to consider the various ways in which people from Latin American origin and diaspora in the United States may identify. In addition, *Latin\** presents future opportunities for people of Latin American origin to communicate and to name their raced-gendered ethnic identities and experiences”

**I** (Salinas, 2020)





# “Colonized Intellectual”

“People that are *victimized by oppressive conditions* can end up perpetuating those conditions **because they have not been able to conceptualize a different model**. To counter this, teaching exposes students to different models of social possibility that exist beyond the classroom, school, and local community. Many teachers do this by scheduling a field trip to a university or by promoting college as the ultimate option for individual liberation. The problem with this as the model for social change is that ***it can lead students to believe that success lies exclusively outside of their neighborhood***”

**I** (Fanon, 2004; Tan, 2008 )



# Theoretical Frameworks

- Intersectionality Theory
- Critical Consciousness Theory
- Critical Theory
- Disability Critical Race Theory
- Critical Disability Theory
- Black Feminist Theory
- Emancipatory Educational Theory
- Transformation Potential Theory
- Third Space Theory
- Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
- Latin\* Disability Critical Race Theory
- Latin\* Critical Theory

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# Terminology and Concepts

- Student = Learner
- Teacher = Facilitator

## **Culture, n.**

The customs and beliefs, art, way of life, and social organization of a particular country or group. (*Oxford Dictionary*)

## **Disability, n.**

The state of not being able to use a part of your body completely or easily; the state of not being able to learn easily. (*Oxford Dictionary*)

## **Intersectionality, n.**

*The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise. (Oxford Dictionary)*

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## Activity #2

# Define Yourself



## Reflection #1

Why did you define yourself that way?

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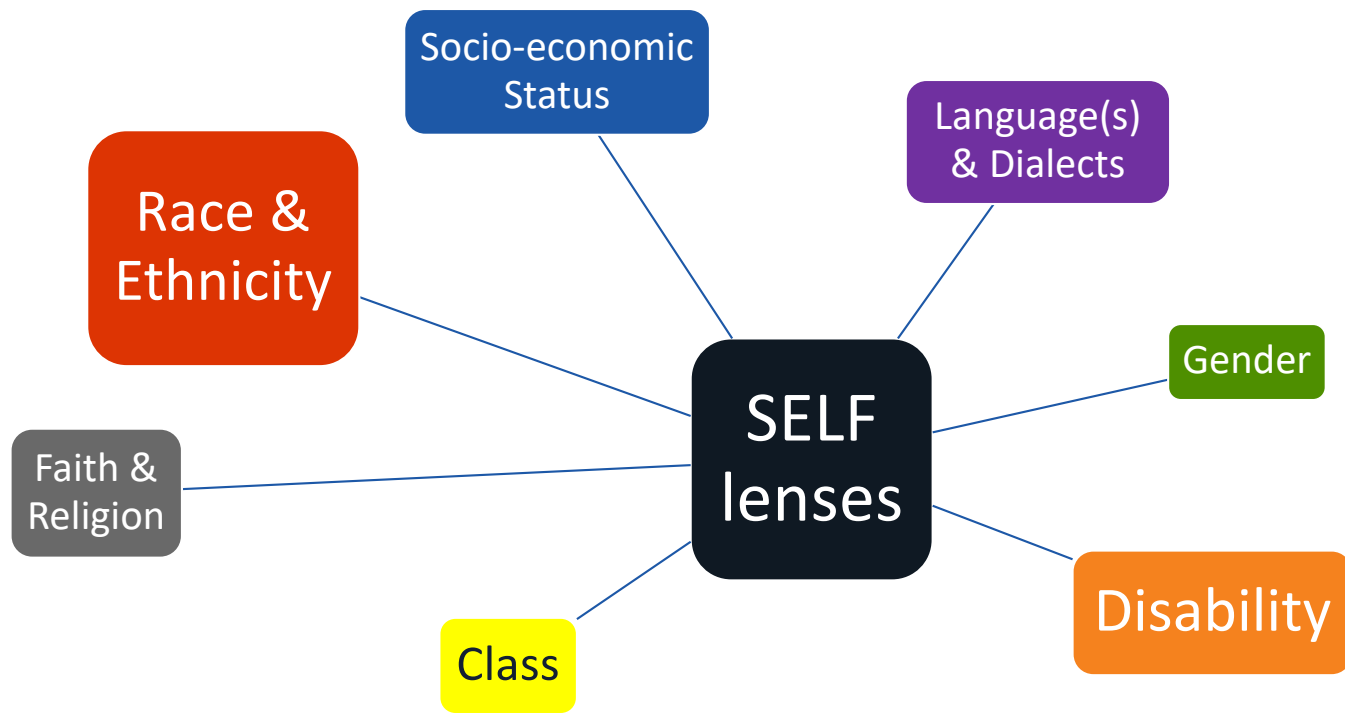
# Theory of Intersectionality

Concept	Example	Context
Heritage vs. Nationality	Mexican vs. American	Everywhere
Geography vs. Linguistics	Latina/e/o/x/* vs. Hispanic	Everywhere
B.I.C.S. vs. C.A.L.P.	Social vs. Academic	Everywhere
Privilege vs. Positionality	Latinx vs. Latine vs. Latin*	Everywhere
Social Identity vs. Self Identity	Hispanic/Latino vs. Xicane-Brown	Everywhere
Person vs. System	Disability Studies vs. Special Education	Everywhere
Social Construct vs. Medical Model	Intellectual Disability vs. Mental Retardation	Everywhere
Person First vs. Identity First Language	Person with Autism vs. Autistic Person	Everywhere

**I** (Crenshaw, 1989)



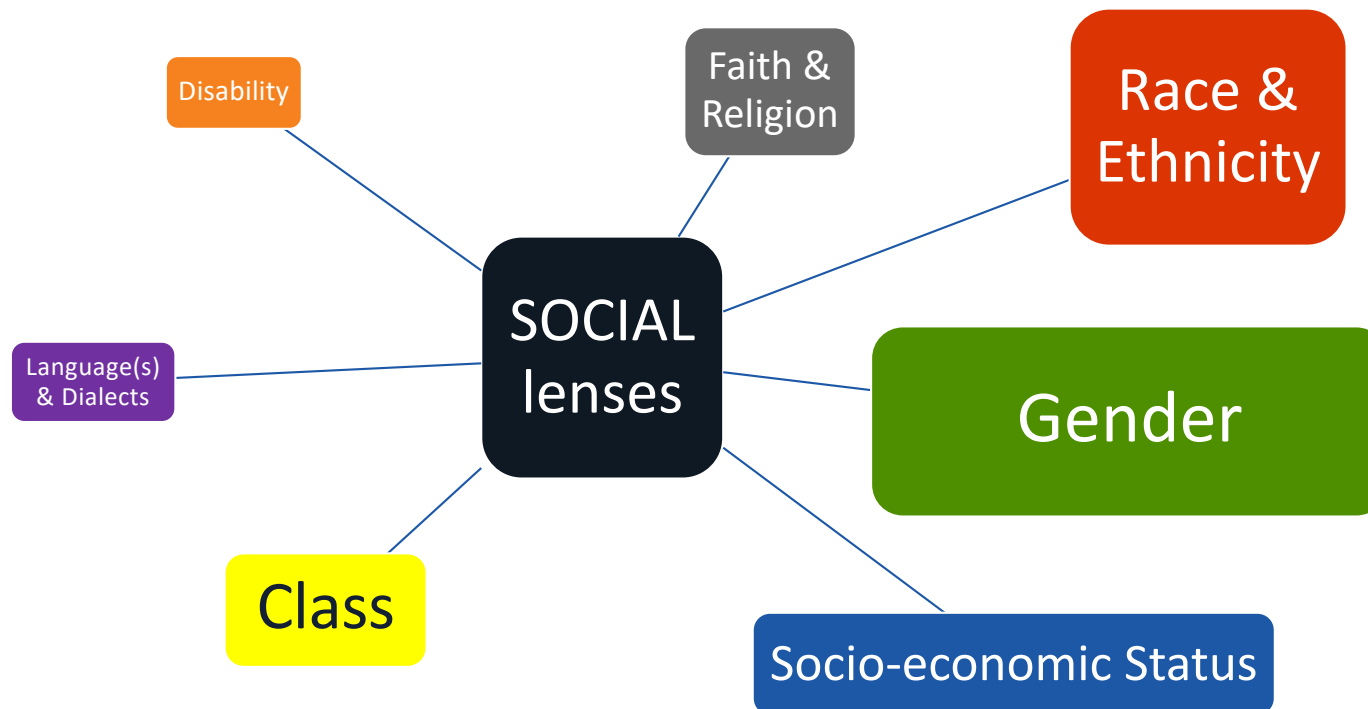
# Intrapersonal Intersectionality



**I** (Crenshaw, 1989)



# Interpersonal Intersectionality



**I** (Crenshaw, 1989)



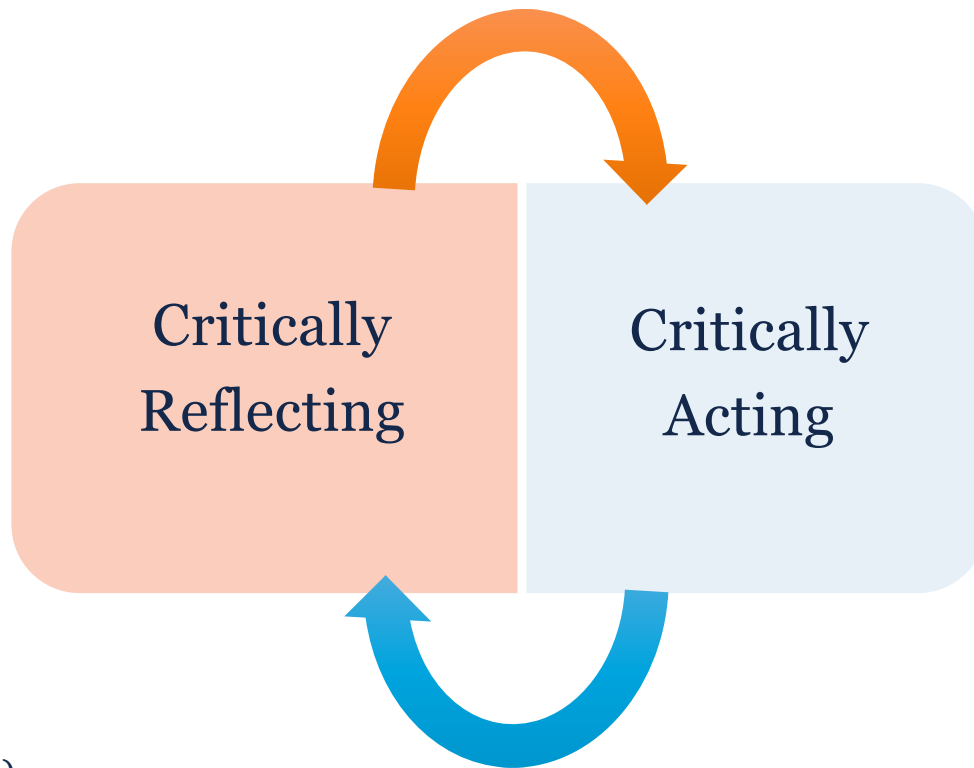
## Reflection #2

By what lens(es) do you  
define Yourself?

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# Emancipatory Education Theory within the confines of *PRAXIS*



**I** (Tan, 2008)





# Popular Education

“Education as social practice is focused specifically on production, circulation and transmission of specified knowledge, norms and behavior. *As a social practice it is not neutral*; it is rooted within the perspectives of a given model of social organization. **Popular education** is defined as a social practice that clearly is **at the service of popular groups and their interests**. Historically, popular education has been characterized by dealing with this knowledge, those norms and behaviors within projects that are more or less explicit in social transformation”

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(Haddad, 2003)



# The Spiral Model Theory of Popular Education



**I** (Glass, 2014)



# The 5 E's of Emancipatory Pedagogy

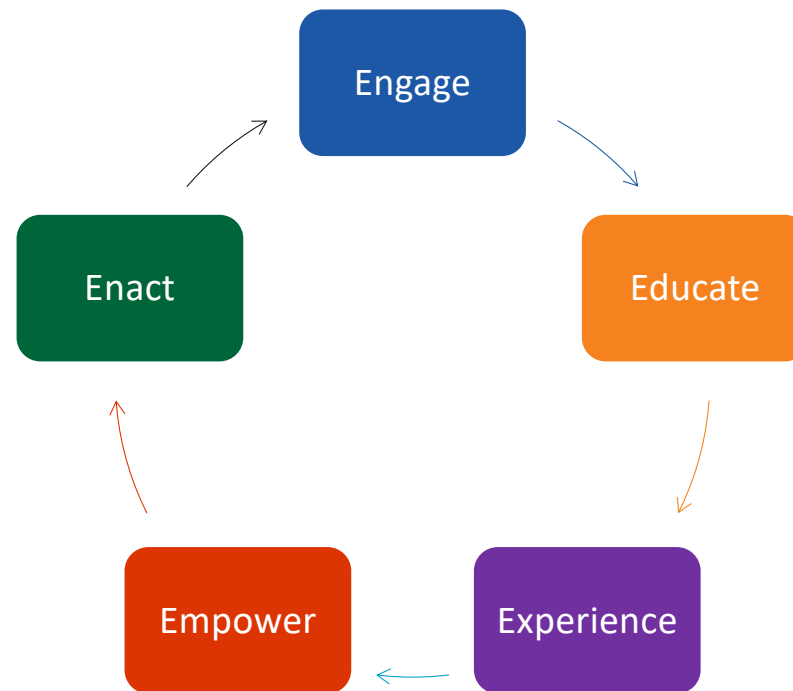
**Engage** - *Building Trust, Respect, and Buy-In with Students, Families, and Communities*

**Educate** (enable) - *Develop Academic and Critical Competencies*

**Experience** - *From Exposure to Lived Experience*

**Empower** - *Knowing That There Is Hope*

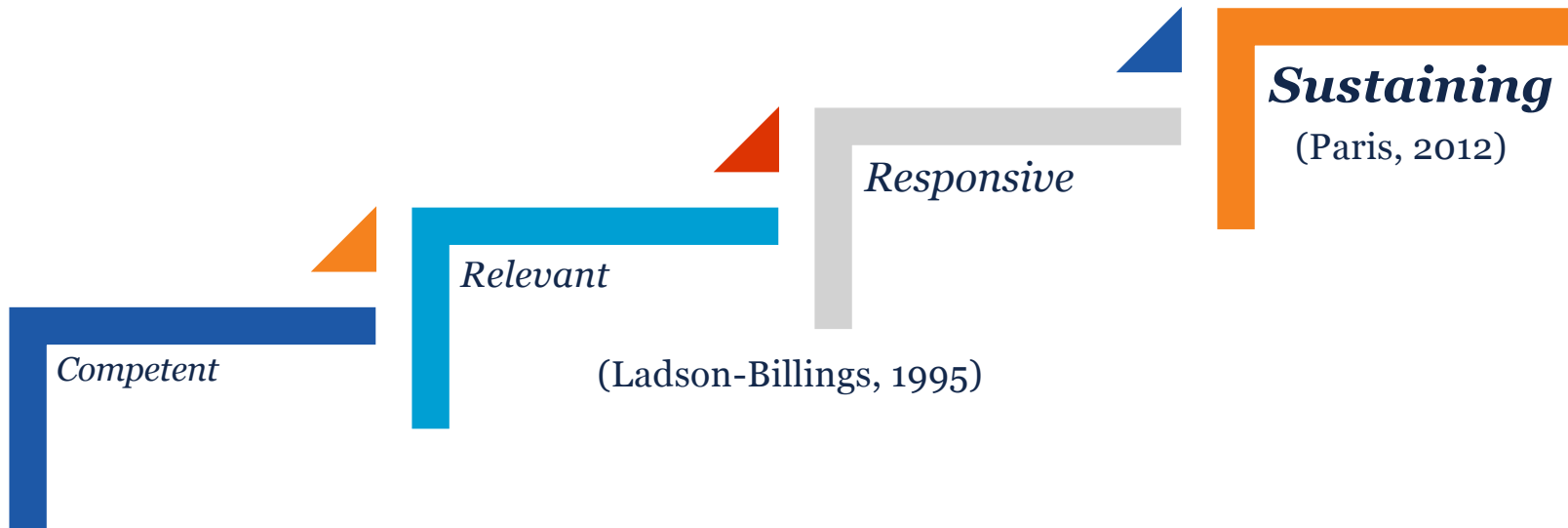
**Enact** - *What Are You Going to Do About It?*



**I** (Tan, 2008)



# Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy



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# Culturally Sustainability

The term *culturally sustaining* requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence.

**I** (Paris, 2012)





# Critical Consciousness Theory



(Freire, 1973; Jemal, 2017)

## Conscientization or Consciousness-Raising

**I**



# Transformative Potential

“A person with a high level of *transformative potential* critically reflects on the conditions that shape his or her life and actively works with self and/or others to change problematic conditions”

(Campbell and MacPhail 2002; Jemal 2016)

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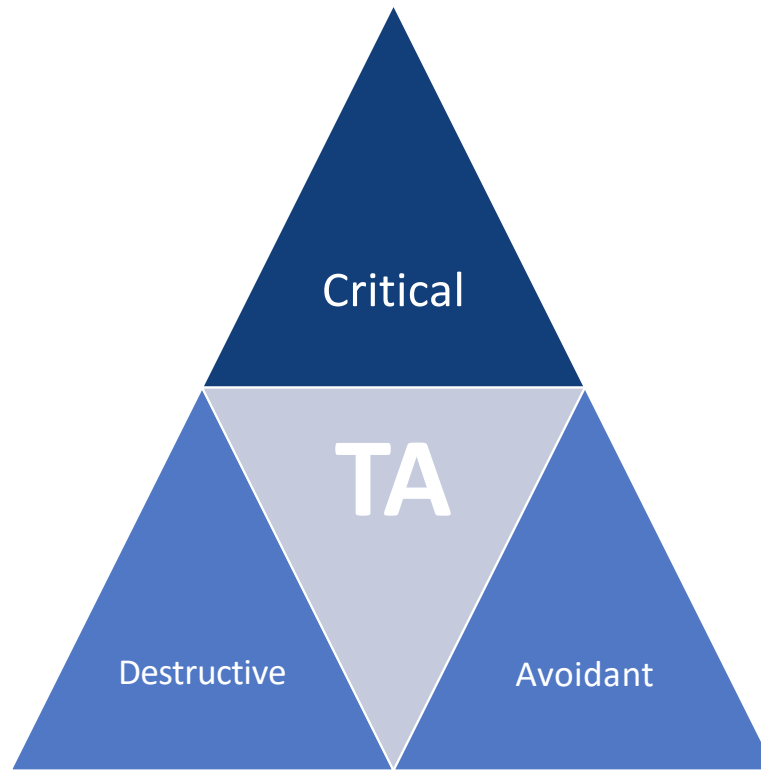
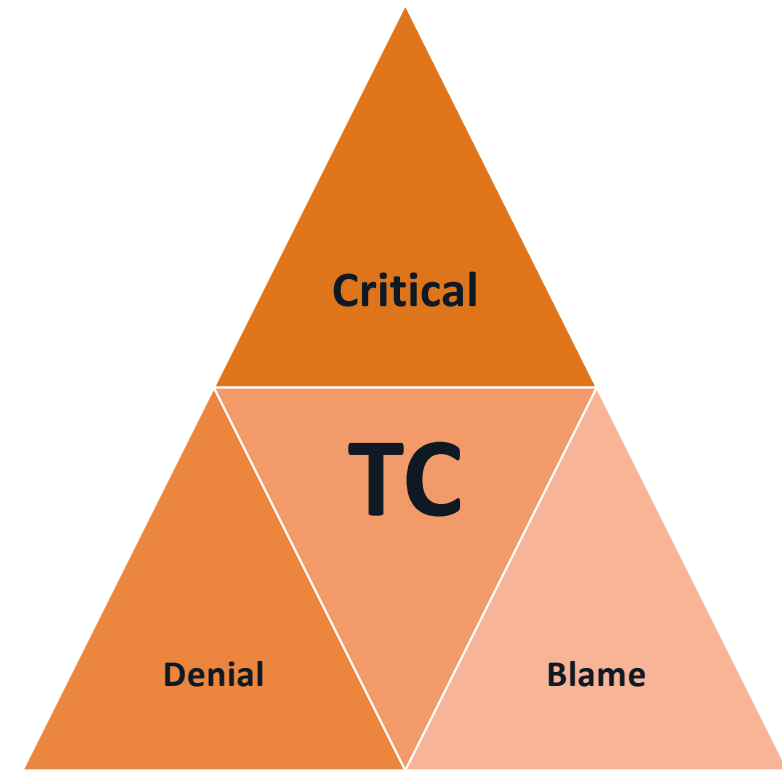


“There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to *facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system* and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women *deal critically and creatively with reality* and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world”

(Freire, 2000, p. 34)



# Transformative Potential



**I**





# *Funds of Knowledge*

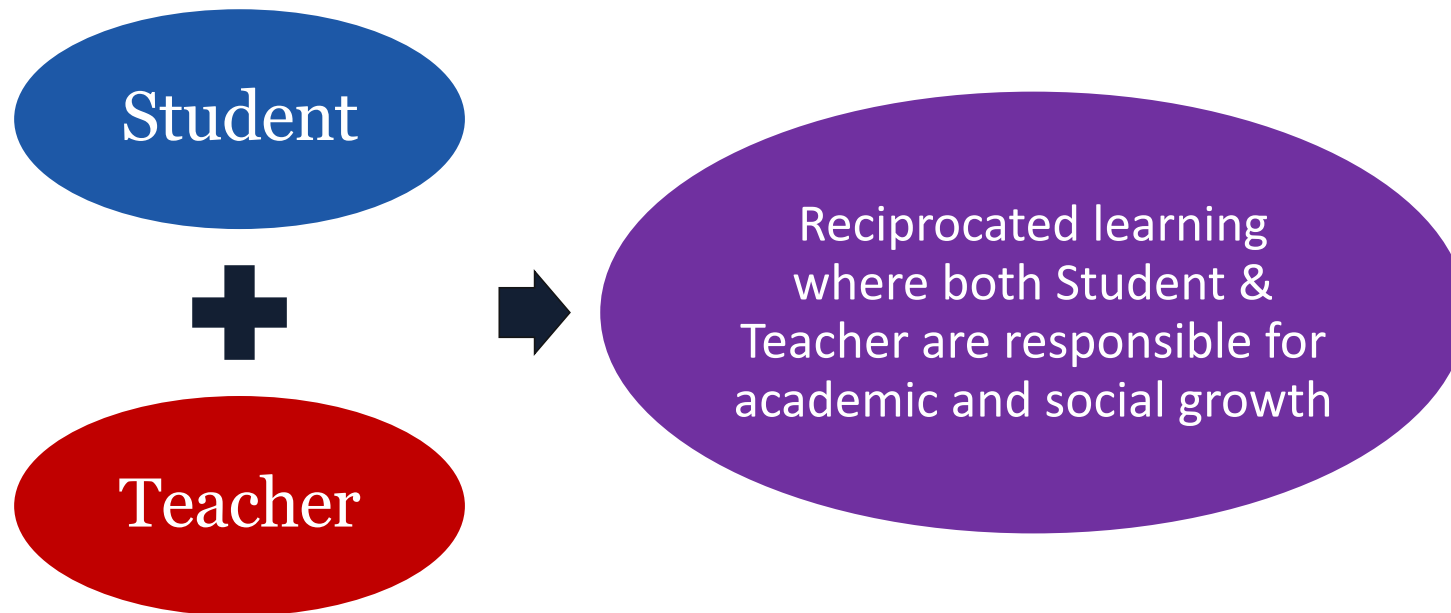
“refers to historically accumulated and *culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills* essential for household or individual functioning and well-being. . . that teachers and students can successfully use such knowledge and skills in formal classroom learning.

(Moll & Gonzalez, 1994)

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# Third Space



**I** (Gutiérrez, 2008)



# Third Space Theory

“curriculum and its pedagogy [that] are *grounded in the historical and current particulars of students’ everyday lives*, while at the same time oriented toward an imagined possible future . . . teaching and learning is not simply about building bridges for students between the often-disparate knowledges of home, community, and school spaces but that **teachers and students must bring together and extend the various activities and practices of these domains in a forward-looking third space**”

**I** (Gutiérrez, 2008)



## Scenario #1

You have the role to introduce someone you have never met. You have not idea how to pronounce their name. What do you do?

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## Scenario #2

What is the best way to introduce a person on the ASD (Autism Spectrum)?  
Person-first or Identity First?

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***Dis/ability-Cultural Brokering:***  
The **Intersectionality** of  
**Dis/ability** and **Culture** (Race,  
Ethnicity, Citizenship, Gender,  
Language, etc.) for **Black** and **Latine**  
communities



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# What is Dis/ability-Cultural Brokering?

“creating a safe space in which to decode and translate the culture of power; enabling members of marginalized communities to rehearse the unfamiliar codes of the culture of power”

-Martinez-Cosio and Iannacone (2007) Reference Lopez and Stack (2001)

“bridging, linking or mediating between groups or persons from different cultures”

-Lindsay et al. (2014) Reference Lo (2010)

“entails the mutual inclusion of different sets of seemingly incommensurate sense-making schemas or orientations so that there is a basis for sharing meanings and narratives”

-Mortier et al. (2021)

“understand mainstream as well as ethnic culture and are therefore able to relate to students and administrators.”

-Lewis (2004)

“(a) are representative of the families’ cultures, (b) succeeded in the educational system themselves, and (c) can help families interpret and navigate the educational system”

-Howland et al. (2006)

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# Who are Dis/ability-Cultural Brokers?

- **Parents or Community Members** - Martinez-Cosio and Iannacone (2007)
- **Family Liaisons or School Liaisons** - Howland et al. (2006)
- **Paraprofessionals** - Lewis (2004)
- **Social Workers** - Lindsay et al. (2014)
- **Special Education Teachers** - Mortier et al. (2021)

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# What Roles do Dis/ability-Cultural Brokers hold?

Think of every family and child as unique	Empathetic and Active listeners	Trustworthy	Respecting of differences	Making parent comfortable
Establishing bonds	Educate themselves to empower others	Connectors	Team Member	Instructors
Tutors	Providers of direct and indirect services	Bridges	Translators	Interpreters
Give rides	Cheerleaders	Role Models	Cultural Humble	Active and Involved community members



(Howland et al., 2006; Lewis, 2004; Lindsay et al., 2014; Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007; Mortier et al., 2021)



# Why is Dis/ability-Cultural Brokering needed in Special Education?

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“The intersection of culture and disability is complex, whereby **culture and disability are shaped by socially and individually defined values and beliefs.** The meaning of disability, and particularly whether the source is individual or societal, **varies greatly by culture and influences how a family copes with their child’s disability**”

Lindsay et al. (2014) Referencing Ripat and Woodgate (2011)



Language – English Second	Differences in Cultural Views	Gender and Generalization Challenges
Lack of Knowledge of Resources	Trust and Rapport	Hierarchal Relationships
One-way Communication	Technical Language	Poverty
Dominant Cultural Norms, Values, and Beliefs	Class-structured Concept	Immigration Status
	Not knowing about rights	

# The Needs of CLED Families for Dis/ability-Cultural Brokers

(Howland et al., 2006; Lewis, 2004; Lindsay et al., 2014; Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007; Mortier et al., 2021)



# How can Dis/ability-Cultural Brokers maneuver Special Education?

**Liaisons** - They serve as communicators and liaisons between the students/parents and the school professionals/administration

**Cultural Guides** - Can assist in developing educational materials that will help student/parents to learn to navigate the special education system. They also can provide guidance on implementing workforce diversity initiatives

**Mediators** - Can help to ease the historical and inherent distrust that many racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse communities have toward the education system, specifically special education

**Catalysts of Change** - Can initiate the transformation of an educational systems' setting by creating an inclusive and collaborative environment for school professionals /administrators and students/parents alike

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-National Center for Cultural Competence (2004)





# What contexts do Dis/ability-Cultural Brokers navigate in the Literature?

## Healthcare

Engaging with Clinicians

## Education

IEP meetings

Mediation

Classrooms

## Board Meetings

School board

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# Types of Brokers in the Literature

Cultural Brokers

Health Brokers

Language Brokers

Knowledge Brokers

Research Brokers

Boundary Brokers

Higher Ed Brokers

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# Key Search Terms and Databases

*cultural brokering AND (special education or disabilities or special needs or disability) OR cultural broker*

61 articles only 5 qualitative empirical studies with Cultural Brokers as a main component

## Last Run

**Interface** - EBSCOhost Research Databases

**Search Screen** - Advanced Search

**Database** - ERIC;Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson);Social Work Reference Center;SocINDEX with Full Text



**Table 1**  
*In Between Meetings: The Need to Develop Pre-Service School Professionals as Special Education Cultural Brokers in Culturally, Linguistically, Economically, Diverse Communities*

Study	Purpose	Participants	Setting(s)	Method(s)	Findings
Howland et al. (2006)	The Indianapolis Public School System hired two school liaisons to act as Cultural Brokers for the district and the community.	Women (n= 15) Men (n= 4)	Indianapolis Public Schools	Focus Group Interviews	There was a lot of success in bridging the gap between home and school because of the work the CBs did. Parents felt supported by the CB regardless of their ethnicity.
Lewis (2004)	Examine the role instructional aides play in a school system as potential Cultural Brokers	Female (n= 16) Male (n= 1) African American (n= 10) European Amer. (n= 7)	Three Midwest towns near Chicago	Semi-structured Interviews	The instructional aides all varied in the way the engaged parents and the role of CB. Depending on experience and interaction with their assigned teacher, IA reacted differently in the way they perceived parents. Even though IAs were from the same community and ethnicity they still had a negative point of view of certain parents (single mothers)
Lindsay et al. (2014)	To explore Social Worker's experience and challenges providing culturally sensitive care for immigrant families with a child with a physical disability while learning to understand their role as a Cultural Broker	Clinical Staff (n= 45) Social Workers (n= 10) OT (n= 19) SLP (n= 16)	Two pediatric rehabilitation settings	In-depth interviews	Social Workers provided culturally sensitive care and were useful and successful Cultural Brokers because they embodied the necessary skills needed: aware of their own biases and the need to mediate between clinic and patients.
Martinez-Cosio and Iannacone (2007)	The role that parent-liaisons' play in the school system as cultural brokers: advocates for parents and institutional agents (employees of the school system)	Parents (n= 15) <del>Latine</del> Parents (n= 13) African American (n= 12)	UN Elementary parent room Urban community in Southern California	Interviews	Parents liaisons had difficulty navigating the role of a "cultural broker" because of the dual role they had to take on as advocates for the parents and employees of the schools. PLs balanced teaching teachers and administrators about the cultural capital families have and teaching the parents how to navigate the dominant cultural system
Mortier et al. (2021)	A look into the effectiveness of Cultural Brokers in a school system that works with <del>Latine</del> Families with children with extensive supports needs and the various skills and reasons for the worth of CBs.	<del>Latine</del> Families (n= 10) <del>Latine</del> CBs (n= 10)	Urban community in California	Interviews Semi-structured Individual and Focus Groups	Individuals who volunteer to take on the role of a Cultural Broker did so because they felt motivated to help struggling parents navigate the Sped system. They provided the families with information, encouragement, administrative assistance, and emotional support





# Gracias! Thank You!

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