

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

TRANSCRIPTION

Center Announcer: Welcome to the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center Equity Spotlight Podcast. This podcast series will feature the Center's Equity Fellows, national scholars from North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio who are working to advance equitable practices within school systems. Each episode will focus on a topic relevant to ensuring equitable access and participation, and quality education for historically marginalized students, specifically in the areas of race, sex, national origin, and religion, and at the intersection of socioeconomic status.

Shehreen: Hello and welcome everyone. I'm Shehreen Iqtadar. I'm an adjunct faculty in the Department of Special Education at University of Northern Iowa. I'm also a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and my research is focused on the educational experiences of immigrants and refugee students who also received disability labels in the education system.

Shehreen: Joining me today are two of my professors, Dr. Scott Ellison, and Dr. David Hernández-Saca. And we will talk about a paper that we all co-authored which is about the educational experiences of students of Color with disabilities. Dr. Ellison is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education and Psychology Foundations and Leadership Studies, and his areas of expertise include social and cultural foundations of education. Dr. Ellison's background is in Cultural Studies and Sociology of Education. Dr. David Hernández-Saca is an Associate Assistant Professor of Disability Studies in Education in the Department of Special Education, and his scholarship is focused on the emotional impact of learning disability labeling on the conceptions of self for historically multiply-marginalized youth labeled with special education labels. Thank you both for joining me today.

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

Shehreen: The name of today's podcast is *Educational Experiences of Students with Multiply-Marginalized Identities: A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research*. This qualitative research synthesis paper, in which we synthesized studies from 2006 to 2018 about students' experiences, is really about how students made sense of disability labels within the education system, and how they negotiate and potentially challenge these labels within school settings. I'm excited to talk to you both about our work together. Having said, I'll begin with my first question, which is for Dr. Scott Ellison.

So Dr. Ellison, you were the one who suggested that I do a qualitative research synthesis. Can you explain what qualitative research synthesis, or QRS, is and why is it really important?

Scott: All right. Well, thank you for letting me participate. QRS, it's an analytic tool to synthesize qualitative studies. So this isn't really the same thing as a systematic review, which some of the listeners may have heard of. A systematic review works to summarize the findings of a set of studies.

The idea behind QRS is to create new knowledge from qualitative data sets. Because one of the big problems with educational research is the "What Works?" mantra. This kind of research involves the introduction of some kind of intervention into classroom practice that is designed to solve a specific problem. And the success or failure of the intervention is measured by assessment data. Now, this kind of technocratic mindset has been firmly entrenched in educational policy and practice since the administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

Qualitative studies kind of complicate this these instrumental logics. They focus on the lived experiences of situated actors such as students and teachers. The problem, however, is that qualitative studies in education, they're often quite small. And this is where QRS can come in very handy.

Scott: Qualitative research synthesis is a tool to synthesize small studies into new transferable knowledge. And what this allows us to do is to develop nuanced, kind of ground level, perspectives on various education policies, and how they're actualized in real classrooms—and more importantly how various situated actors make sense of, negotiate, and sometimes challenge those policies. So, that is why I thought you know QRS was study was important here. I felt like we needed to put the pieces together, so to speak, and see what we can learn about this really important topic.

So I guess I'll pass it over to David here. I got a question for you. Can you talk a little bit about power and identity, and about the emotional experiences of students in our literature?

David: Yes, thank you, Scott for that question. I have a couple of thoughts for this question. First, I think we should really contextualize, “what is power?” “What is identity?” And “what is emotionality?” And how I, as an educational researcher, approach these constructs.

So, power can be thought about in terms of its productive nature, but also its oppressive nature. And as you mentioned, Scott, sort of the importance of QRS to think about how our students of Color, or historically marginalized youth, are

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

experiencing dominant institutions such as special education or general education. What we found was that it's not either just oppressive, or not just oppressive. It's also an empowering thing as well. Where, however, this also informs their identity development, or it can constrain their identity development; as an academic student or any other identities that are important to them from their home life, outside of school, or inside of school.

David: And so identities are the things that we identify with, and these can be through our narratives, the stories we tell ourselves about who we are, or the stories that our peers tell us, or that our family members tell us. So, we're all sort of enveloped in identity, or what we found in our literature, for example, around identity work. And historically, power and identity has been studied together. However, what I really care about is the emotional dimensions of how not only historically marginalized youth are experiencing school, such as students with learning disabilities, for example, but also how they are experiencing these identities, or these power relationships between the narratives that others tell them who they are, versus how they self-actualize, for example. And I think what's undertheorized is the role of emotion, feelings, and affects, and how we're affected by those stories or by communication broadly defined, in terms of the ways in which other local actors like you mentioned, Scott, are interacting with our historically marginalized youth within school settings.

David: I personally come from a...personally and professionally come from a Disability Studies in Education approach to students of Color with labels of special education. What does that mean? Historically, traditional special education has understood identities or labels or classifications from what we, within our scholarly

Educational Experiences of Students with Multiply-Marginalized Identities: A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research *Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

community, call the medical-psychological model of disability. It really understands identities or labels as being *within* the child, or the way in which the child is experiencing the educational context is something that their disability experience is theirs, it's in their mind, it's in their neurology, it's in their body. So that would be situating ability and disability within the child or the student.

David: Disability Studies in Education scholars have historically helped us expand that view to what's called the social model of disability. The social model of disability reframes, re-centers what is impacting historically marginalized youth, for example, within educational settings, as experiencing social barriers to their well-being, or their identity development or who they are. And however, within the literature we...there is another model called the psycho-emotional disablism model of disability, that really bridges the medical-psychological model and the social model of disability, to account for the personal experiences of students, or people with impairments, not only in their body, neurology or mind—but those social barriers, like I mentioned, that the social model has given us. And that's, again, is called the psycho-emotional disablism model of disability.

David: However, we've talked a lot about disability because those are the students that traditionally the field of Disability Studies has serviced, has identified, has provided those interventions to. However, the field of Disability Studies in Education has historically argued for intersectional ways to think about the experiences of people with impairments, and students with disabilities. And by intersections I mean, for example, if a student is Latino or Latinx, and was labeled or classified with a learning disability or a special education label. That student would be experiencing and having, or be susceptible to, discrimination on two vectors. On because of,

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

let's say, the historical stereotypes about being Latinx or Latino, and the stereotypes about his or her or their ability and disability. So, I wanted to contextualize the ways in which I've understood and studied how youth have understood their identities at these intersectional dimensions.

David: Emotions, feelings, and affects have historically through the field of Disability Studies in...excuse me...through the field of traditional special education, again, have been couched in students' neurology, students' minds. However, the way in which I study students' experiences or narratives about their lived experiences in educational settings really understands emotions, feelings and affects as social and cultural in nature, not necessarily just being within their minds.

David: And this is important because the well-being and mental health of historically marginalized youth, such as African American or Black or Latinx students with disabilities, historically in schools, special education has been the place of where we deal with emotions or feelings. And there's been a large problem called disproportionality within special education since the 1960s civil rights movements. Where desegregation efforts have begun to service all American children. However, through disproportionality, we have seen a resegregation of along race, and because disability has been conflated with race. Um, and so how...I'm really passionate about re-thinking, re-feeling how what we know, regarding students' experiences in schools at these intersections, that really help us reframe as if these constructs of, or labels in special education, are benign or neutral. But as we've learned through our QRS, it's more complex than that. And so I hope that this sort of understanding of the intersections between emotions, identities and

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

power really has helped us understand how systems of power, such as whiteness or ableism, are also experienced by our students within educational contexts.

So, I have a question for Shehreen. So Shehreen, what do we know from our findings? What experiences and stories students of Color themselves have and/or are sharing, that we can all learn from?

Shehreen: Thank you for the question, Dr. David, and thank you so much for giving that background that would situate our findings really well in this conversation. The way I'll share our major findings from our QRS paper is I'll name the findings, and then I'll share students' experiences through those themes or those findings.

So the first one is that students overwhelmingly across these studies identified that disability is an assigned identity. As you were mentioning about the issue of disproportionality within the education system, special education specifically, many of the students were aware. Many of these students of Color were aware about how their racial and their gendered identities are often made sense of through the middle “white middle class” system, and how the disability labels are assigned to them. And one of the things I want to mention here, is in the literature, it is mentioned that African American students, or Black students, are overrepresented in the category of “emotional behavior disorder.” And Latino students are overrepresented in the category of “learning disability.” So there is disproportionate overrepresentation of students of Color within special education, and these students, in K to 16, were aware of this systemic placement for them in the special education system.

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

Shehreen: Then you also talked about the psychological and emotional well-being. Again, across studies students shared how they often felt hurt, being made fun of, or felt heavy or embarrassed—and I'm using their direct words that were present across the data set. They also felt nervous due to these disability labels. They also felt sometimes being punished. And sometimes disability labels, for students, they also internalized...you mentioned the medical model of disability, they often internalize the medical view of disability about themselves.

Shehreen: Then our second theme talks about how students shared that their multiple identities—which you mentioned (their racial identity, their gender identity, their social economic status)—how these multiple identities were informing their disability labels, or do inform their disability labels. Students shared systemic inequality through their multiple identities that they experienced. So, for example, I'm going to quote one of the dissertation studies which was by Washington in 2011, and one of the students shared that:

*There were not that many African Americans that went to my high school.
However, it was almost like most of them were in special education.*

Students also experienced the power relations; you shared about the power relations within the education system. They experienced power relations with within their relationship with educators, with their peers, with administrators. And they made sense that how their ways of living are not considered the “right way to do things,” or to be in the society. For example, one student in Whitener’s study 2014 shared that once, and I'm going to quote, provide the full quote:

Educational Experiences of Students with Multiply-Marginalized Identities: A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research *Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

Once Miss Susie came in there and try to take my hoodie away from me. And I wrapped it around my hand and kept a tight fist, where she couldn't take my hoodie and it's either I give her my hoodie, or I keep that thing. Or if I keep that thing they're trying to take away from me, then they will call the police.

So it again goes back to the question, or the issue of school-to-prison-pipeline, where students again, in the literature it's mentioned that students of Color, specifically African American boys, are over-represented within the school-to-prison-pipeline because their ways of being and doing in the society are looked through a white hegemonic lens in the society.

Shehreen: Then our next theme is about identity work, and Dr. David explained identity-work, how students make sense of it and how they...how they strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity. Students sometimes use different strategies that would...sometimes use strategies that would give them a pass. For example, acting white, code switching, swapping labels, hiding the label, and sometimes, within the higher education context, visiting the disability service office so that they can get a label, and get the services that they need to be in their classrooms.

Shehreen: But also, sometimes they resisted in implicit and explicit ways. For example, if they didn't agree with the teacher, or if they had a fight with another student, you know, kicking the door, throwing school furniture. But that actually had an implication, where they were not...they were misunderstood or not understood, and were placed under an observation or were looked through a lens that probably they are

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

the problem in the system, and it's not the vice versa. Or here is some kind of issue that is personal to them. But sometimes, there were implicit ways that they resisted as well. For example, doing well in their classroom to prove to the teacher, hiding the label from their peers and loved ones, ideologically denying disability labels, as well as showing through their facial expressions that they do not agree if there's some kind of deficit views that are attached with their multiple identities, for example, the race, gender, their social class or the disability label.

Shehreen: Having said, and connecting it back to what you asked in the question about what we, as educators or parents and administrators, can learn from our QRS paper, or can learn from the students' narratives or experiences that they are sharing: I think as educators, we want to make sure, as Dr. Ellison and Dr. Hernández-Saca both identified, that we want to make sure that we include individual voices, student voice, parents voice. And at the same time, I personally feel there are deficit language that we often use in a way that we are not probably aware of that language. But...and the deficit views...through...are represented sometimes through the language that we are using in terms of disability labels. The sometimes disability labels...not sometimes, actually disability labels carry deficit-oriented meanings or assumptions for students' multiple ways of being and doing in the society.

Shehreen: So we want to be aware of the language we are using. We want to be aware of our biases sometimes, as well as the assumptions, our own assumptions about students' different and multiple identities, such as their race, disability label, gender, social class. Then again, also certain practices that might be...we want to be aware of certain practices that might be stereotyped as upper white middle

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

class. So that we have to be mindful how students of Color and their parents understand and perceive those practices in the school system, and how we as educators might be recommending those practices. We need to be aware and be respectful of cultural differences, and value those differences. Not just accept those differences, but I'd say valuing differences in different ways of being that are considered “norms” within the school spaces, that all differences need to be considered as a norm, if we want to use the term norm.

Shehreen: Then also within the context of QRS, we identified that how students were resisting and going through identity work. The way they were doing it was based on their K to 12 locations, positions they were standing at. And they were present in this big “D” discourse of schooling, such as their racial identity is in the system and how it was made sense of by the system, how their racial identities were identified or made sense of in the educational system, in the educational spaces, and special education. Then also, again, connecting back with individual voice, including their experiences within classroom spaces. So as one of...one of the participants shared that they didn't feel that their cultural experiences were included within the classroom spaces. So we want to make sure that we include their experiences, their cultural and their lived experiences, within the classroom spaces—and making diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences as a “norm,” as I mentioned earlier.

Shehreen: Then also being aware of the language we use. And then also being aware of the fact that disability labels, as Dr. David mentioned, that there could be emotions attached, or it can impact students' emotional and psychological well-being. Not from a medical lens, but as he mentioned, from a psycho-emotional model of

A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research
Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

disability lens, where it can impact students well-being in a way that it can restrict them from becoming or doing what they could have otherwise done, or what they could can do, because we want to understand our students as complete being. Then also how identities are conflated with disabilities. We want to be aware how disability terms work in tandem with other identities that these students carry within the system, like Dr. David mentioned, the issue of disproportionality within the education system. So we want to be aware of that.

Shehreen: I think for parents, I would say ask questions to teachers, and also try to be aware and talk to your children as well, how they are doing. Not just in a sense...not only coming from a culturally diverse background. I think sometimes it could be...it could be an understanding that parents are...not just an understanding, it could be an issue within itself that sometimes parents are more concerned about the academics. But I think at the level of personal relationship, also get to learn and engage with your children and talk with them about their emotional and psychological...not again from a medical model of disability lens, but really get to know them and talk to them how they are doing within their schools. And then for administrators, I would say, engage families in school spaces. Get to know your students, get to know your families, and, if possible, arrange home visits for educators.

Shehreen: Finally, I want to thank Dr. Scott Ellison, and Dr. David Hernandez-Saca both for coming together today, and also for your time and energy. I really appreciate it.

Scott: No, thank you.



Educational Experiences of Students with Multiply-Marginalized Identities:



A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research *Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

David: Thank you. And thank you, Dr. Scott

Scott: Back at you, Dr. David

David: Go team!

Shehreen: Go team!

Center Announcer: This podcast was brought to you by the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center. To find out about other Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center podcasts, and other resources, visit our website at www.greatlakesequity.org. To subscribe to a podcast, click on the podcast link located on the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center website.

The Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center, a project of the Great Lakes Equity Center, at Indiana University, is funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide technical assistance, resources, and professional learning opportunities related to equity, civil rights, and systemic school reform throughout the thirteen state region.

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education S004D11002. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

This podcast and its contents are provided to educators, local and state education agencies, and/or non-commercial entities for the use for educational training purposes only. No part of this

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.





Educational Experiences of Students with Multiply-Marginalized Identities:



A Qualitative Research Synthesis of Disability Research *Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*

Shehreen Iqtadar, Doctoral Candidate – University of Northern Iowa
David Hernández-Saca, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Iowa
Scott Ellison, Associate Professor – University of Northern Iowa

recording may be reproduced, or utilized in any form or in any means, electronic or mechanical, including recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing from the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center.

Finally Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center would like to thank Indiana University School of Education, as well as Executive Director Dr. Kathleen King Thorius, Director of Operations Dr. Seena Skelton, Associate Director of Engagement and Partnerships Dr. Tiffany Kyser, and Instructional Graphic Designer Dr. Cesur Dagli, for their leadership and guidance in the development of all tools and resources to support the region.

[End of Audio]

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

