

7. Who Are the Subjects of Inclusion? Racialization, Dis/Ability and Graded Belonging Beyond the Category of “Migration Background”

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Moderation: sought

The 40th Annual Conference asks how the subjects of inclusion have understood themselves, understand themselves now, and want to define themselves in the future. The proposed Working Forum takes this question literally and directs it at the categories of inclusion research itself: whom can our concepts actually make visible as subjects of inclusion – and whom not?

The intersection of racialization and dis/ability has so far been addressed in German-language inclusion research predominantly through the categories ‘migration background’, ‘other first language’ or ‘refugee experience’. This research has made important things visible – for example the overrepresentation of students with an ascribed migration background in the allocation of special educational needs status (Subaşı Singh 2021), or the intersectional exclusions of refugee students (Bešić 2020). At the same time, a research perspective is forming that systematically relates racism and ableism to one another, also connecting to DisCrit (Annamma et al. 2013) (among others Akbaba & Buchner 2019; Buchner & Akbaba 2023). The Working Forum aims to build on this emerging perspective and expand it with a question that has so far received little attention: how are students of the second, third and subsequent generations made visible – born and raised in Austria, yet nevertheless perceived as non-Austrian and ‘othered’, and whose belonging remains graded? Migration-related categories fail this group in two ways: they perpetuate migration across generations while failing to name what actually structures the exclusion – processes of racialization (Moffitt et al. 2025).

Current documentation from anti-discrimination work shows that these questions are pressing: civil society organizations continue to record persistently high numbers of cases of racist discrimination in the Austrian education system – often interwoven with ableism and other orders of difference – while also analyzing how institutional regulations co-determine who is considered to belong (ZARA 2026; Dokustelle Österreich 2026; IDB 2023).

The Working Forum invites participants to address this gap across generations – in a double sense: across generations of researchers, practitioners and experts by experience, and with a view to the generational sequence of those affected by inclusion and exclusion. Among the guiding questions are:

- Which subjects has inclusion research produced over its four decades, which has it overlooked – and with what consequences for theory, empirical research and practice?
- How can the interrelation of racialization and dis/ability be conceptually and methodologically grasped without once again fixing people to ascribed categories?
- What does it mean for the self-understanding of Inclusive Pedagogy if its own categories of assessment and support co-produce exclusions?

- What connections do DisCrit, migration pedagogy and racism-critical perspectives offer for an inclusion research operating under intensified societal conditions?

The aim is a joint stocktaking of the state of research, the development of shared conceptual foundations, and the initiation of sustainable working relationships beyond the conference (publication projects, research network). Self-advocates and experts by experience, teachers and professionals, as well as researchers from Inclusive Pedagogy, migration pedagogy and related disciplines, are explicitly invited.

The bibliography is available on request.