

Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Educational Inclusivity

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Abstract

This purpose of this paper is to provide a theoretical foundation for inclusion in Canadian schools for this Special Issue on Inclusive Education. In response to the need for an interdisciplinary framework, this paper uses an interpretive literature review methodology to construct a framework for educational inclusivity based on four disciplinary perspectives: (a) special education and disability studies, (b) multiculturalism and anti-racist education, (c) gender and women's education, and (d) queer studies. The constructed framework elucidates four conceptions of inclusivity—normative, integrative, dialogical, and transgressive—positioned on a continuum with each conception representing a different approach to inclusion. Unlike previous models, this framework is not anchored to any one marginalized group; rather, it is intended to represent multiple forms of inclusivity to edify historical, existing, and idealistic educational practices and structures for all forms of difference.

Keywords: Inclusivity, inclusive education, diversity, difference.

Précis/Résumé

Le but de ce document est de fournir une base théorique pour l'inclusion dans les écoles canadiennes pour ce numéro spécial sur l'éducation inclusive. En réponse à la nécessité d'un cadre interdisciplinaire, ce document utilise une méthodologie d'interprétation littérature examen de construire un cadre pour l'inclusion éducative basée sur quatre points de vue disciplinaires: (a) l'éducation spéciale et l'étude des handicapées, (b) le multiculturalisme et l'éducation antiraciste, (c) le genre et l'éducation des femmes, et (d) les études « queer ». Le cadre construit élucide quatre conceptions de l'inclusion - normatives, d'intégration, dialogiques et transgressives - positionné sur un continuum avec chaque conception qui représente une approche différente à l'inclusion. Contrairement aux modèles précédents, ce cadre n'est pas ancré à aucun groupe marginalisé, mais plutôt, il est destiné à représenter les multiples formes de l'inclusion d'édifier historiques,

actuels et idéaliste des pratiques et des structures éducatives pour toutes les formes de différence.

Mots-clés: Inclusivité, l'éducation inclusive, la diversité, la différence.

Introduction

Over the past 30 years, inclusivity has gained steady prominence as a national and international movement significantly impacting educational policy and practice (Egbo, 2009; Howard & Aleman, 2008). In Canada, inclusivity mandates and initiatives are legislatively supported through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial education acts, with similar legislative backing in countries throughout the world (Hutchinson, 2010). However, despite widespread acceptance of inclusivity as a contemporary teaching principle, ambiguity remains over what inclusivity means and how it should be practiced (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008; Trifonas, 2003). As a result, Gérin-Lajoie (2008) asserted that educators receive contradictory signals about inclusion leading to different responses to diversity and varied levels of educational participation.

One primary factor contributing to the multiple conceptions of inclusivity across teacher discourse is that inclusive research and policy initiatives have stemmed from a range of sub-disciplines including multicultural education, special education, anti-racist education, queer education, and the education of women. Furthermore, Trifonas (2003) recognized that there exists no unifying theory for inclusivity within current scholarship to connect discourses and conceptions of inclusion from across these sub-disciplines. Specifically, Trifonas stated, “to date, there has been no sustained attempt, in educational theory or in its contextual grounding as praxis, to address the bridging of this gap of difference among discourses” (pp. 3-4). More recently, Artiles (2011) identified the need for an interdisciplinary framework that connects different conceptions of inclusivity from across historically marginalized groups. He asserted that such a framework would serve to both propel inclusion research forward through a common conceptual framework and support developments in educational policy and practice.

Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to provide an interdisciplinary framework for inclusion in Canadian schools. Methodologically, I use an interpretive literature review approach (Eisenhart, 1998; Schwandt, 1998) to document, analyze, and critique four disciplinary perspectives related to inclusivity as a basis for constructing my interdisciplinary framework. The interdisciplinary framework elucidates four conceptions of inclusivity positioned on a continuum from a normative (i.e., assimilation) to a transgressive (i.e., social justice) conception. At the onset of my argument, I assert that this framework is intended to represent multiple forms of inclusivity to edify historical, existing, and idealistic educational practices and structures, allowing for the identification and positioning of various responses to diversity. Further, following Harper (1997), I anchor my argument within the Canadian school culture and policy context; however, I acknowledge that the framework may have implications for other systems of education. Accordingly, I conclude my argument with considerations for future development and validation of the framework across educational contexts.

Disciplinary Perspectives on Inclusivity

Several perspectives exist for understanding inclusivity within the contexts of schools and society. As a basis for developing my interdisciplinary framework, I review four dominant disciplinary perspectives on inclusive education. These perspectives relate to (a) special education and disability studies, (b) multiculturalism and anti-racist education, (c) gender and women's education, and (d) queer studies. After describing these perspectives, I critique the commonalities and differences across these perspectives.

Special Education and Disability Studies

The majority of texts related to inclusive education focus specifically on the integration of students with exceptionalities. Hence the special education model of inclusion is central when considering frameworks for inclusivity in education. Inclusive education practices and policies for students with exceptionalities have paralleled legislative developments within Canada and the world with a general shift from segregation to academic integration to inclusion (Hutchinson, 2010). In 1975, the United Nations established the Declaration of Rights of Disabled Persons, which advocated that disabled persons had the same rights as all other human beings. Amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act followed in 1977 and to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 resulting in Canada being the first country to guarantee rights to people with disabilities within its constitution. These legislative advancements also changed schooling options for persons with disabilities and forced a movement from a dual program model, which involved institutional segregation (i.e., special schools or full-time remediation), to a more integrated model of education (Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 1998). This movement marked the difference between a psycho-medical response to educating students with special needs and a sociological response, which maintained implications for mainstream education (Clough, 2000).

Early inclusion efforts focused largely on time-placement for students with disabilities in regular school settings. Several placement options existed including placement in full-time mainstream classrooms, partial mainstream placement, and placement within a special education classroom (Bennett, Dworet, & Weber, 2008). Currently in most provinces, students with special needs are now guaranteed access to education, with the first choice of placement being the mainstream classroom or least-

restrictive environment (Hutchinson, 2010). Underpinning this policy is the premise that students with disabilities should have access and work toward the same educational standards as students without disabilities given appropriate accommodations.

Thomas et al. (1998) further distinguished responses to inclusion by contrasting *integration* and *inclusion*. Key features of each response are outlined in Table 1. The integration response focuses on compensating for student deficits in cognitive, physical, or behavioural abilities often by providing additional and specialized accommodations and modifications by expert staff. While students are integrated into a common learning space as general education students, educational programming and delivery may be different and may result in limited social interactions and participation in mainstream activities. In contrast, the inclusion response seeks to address the interactional gap and cultivate a culture of social acceptance amongst all students and teachers in the learning environment (Hutchinson, Freeman, & Berg, 2004; McPhail & Freeman, 2005; Thomas et al., 1998). This shift toward social inclusion acknowledges that inclusion can benefit all learners and that accommodations enable equitable access to educational opportunities whether they are academic or social (Clough, 2000). It also supports a movement from a medically based model of exceptionalities to a socially based model. The social model of special education is predicated on human rights discourses and recognizes that inclusion is a social phenomenon and a basic human right.

Table 1

Inclusion and integration responses to special education placement

Integration	Inclusion
– Needs of ‘special’ students	– Rights of all students
– Changing/remediating the subject	– Changing the school
– Benefits to the student with special needs	– Benefits to all students
– Professionals, specialist expertise	– Informal support and the expertise of mainstream teachers
– Technical interventions (special teaching, therapy, accommodations)	– Good teaching for all

Source: Thomas et al. (1998)

Much of the recent research and developments in special education have focused on defining the boundaries of special education, advocacy and awareness initiatives, and establishing provisions and pedagogies for including students into mainstream settings (Bennett et al, 2008; Rumrill, Cook, & Wiley, 2011). Specifically, the scope of exceptionalities classifications and special education services have expanded in response to educational psychology research on the cognitive, biological, and psychosocial aspects of disabilities (Rumrill et al., 2011). This research has also led to a reframing of the concept of *disability*, from a deficiency or discrepancy model to an appreciative model (Hutchinson, 2010). Instead of regarding students with exceptionalities as having a deficiency, researchers have advocated for an appreciative model that recognizes students’ abilities to learn when provided with accommodations or modifications. Specifically, Siegel (1999) and Stanovich (2005) have argued that all students maintain

some form of disability at a particular point in their learning when struggling to learn a concept.

With intentions to draw on an appreciative model, the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) approach aggressively puts the onus on teachers and educational systems to respond to early warning signs that a student is struggling to understand a concept, regardless of formal classification (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). The RTI approach emphasizes data tracking on learner progress (i.e., indexing) through tiered interventions related to the learning environment (i.e., teaching, adaptations and accommodations, teaching time intensity). However, despite its intention and success in supporting learning (Barnes & Wade-Woolley, 2007; Batsche et al., 2007), some researchers have argued that RTI maintains a simplistic notion of disability by negating the complex, cultural factors that shape learning (Artiles, 2011) or by solely accounting for poor teaching instead of redressing a deficiency model of disability when students do not respond to intensive intervention (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

These critiques of RTI fall alongside other assertions that despite the work of “decolonizing discourses” (McPhail & Freeman, 2005, p. 259), students with disabilities are still addressed with an “analyze and fix them” response, rather than an “understand and include them” response (Thomas & Glenny, 2002, p. 363). In relation to the ascribed classification of ‘abnormal,’ ‘exceptional,’ and ‘at-risk,’ McPhail and Freeman state that “this nomenclature is predominant in classrooms in spite of the combined work of postmodern philosophers, educational theoreticians, and cultural psychologists who have challenged researchers to rethink and reexamine the foundational assumptions based on dualistic conceptualizations underpinning the ‘normalizing’ theoretical framework of child development” (p. 259). Thus while the special education perspective effectively

presents three forms of inclusion (i.e., segregation, integration, and inclusion) and provides a basis for understanding inclusion for students with exceptionalities, it is limited in its redress of dualistic conceptualizations of ability and disability.

Multicultural and Anti-racist Education

In addition to addressing the needs of students with exceptionalities, educational systems throughout Canada have been increasingly responsive to diverse cultural groups from indigenous groups (e.g., Aboriginals and Francophone) to immigrant and English language learner populations. At 18%, Canada is only second to Australia in its percentage of foreign-born population (Statistics Canada, 2003) and maintains the highest per capita immigration rate in the world (Becklumb, 2008). In response to a sharp rise in cultural diversity during the 1970s and 1980s, the Canadian government reaffirmed its commitment to equality and respect for diverse cultural groups through the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008). In the spirit of this legislation, provincial and local governments as well as education systems developed multicultural policies and programs to address the growing ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity present within their communities. As a result, multiculturalism emerged as a “philosophical position and movement that assumes that the gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of a pluralistic society should be reflected in all of the institutionalized structures of educational institutions” (Banks & McGee Banks, 2007, p. 474).

Like the integration of special education students, early multicultural programs had an objective of inviting and welcoming students from diverse cultures into schools and classrooms (Harper, 1997). Such an approach often involved a highly visible campaign that encouraged students from diverse ethnic groups to participate in

dominantly White educational programs. At a basic level, multicultural education attempted to represent student diversity throughout school curriculum to showcase specific diversities so that students from minority cultures could begin to “identify and connect with the school’s social environment, culture, and organizational life” (Dei et al., 2000, p. 13). Diversity became celebrated through multicultural festivals, heritage programs, studies of marginalized groups, and assemblies that promoted awareness of anti-discriminatory behaviours (Banks & McGee Banks, 2007). Activities that addressed multicultural stereotypes provided additional critical opportunities to shift prejudicial beliefs and assumptions (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). Multicultural programs became commonplace in Canadian schools in the mid-70s and continue to present-day. Many schools incorporate cultural celebrations beyond those of the majority group and have reformed school curriculum to educate all students about their own and other cultures.

While explicit multicultural events and campaigns may be useful to introduce diversity within school contexts, contemporary practices seek to integrate culture more fully across various aspects of school life. Derman-Sparks (1991, p. 58) asserted that schools needed to strategize beyond a “tourist curricula” and move toward an expanded understanding and philosophy of diversity education. Banks (2007) delineated five dimensions of contemporary multicultural education. The five dimensions aimed to promote an integrated transformation and reconstruction of the learning culture where power relationships and institutional norms are challenged and reframed. Bank’s five dimensions included, (a) content integration, (b) knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) an equity pedagogy, and (e) empowering a school culture and social structure.

A commitment to an anti-racist pedagogy underlies contemporary multicultural education, which uses critical theories to deconstruct systemic racial barriers to facilitate a social justice orientation to education (Adams et al., 1997). In defining multicultural education, Nieto (1996) stated that “it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change” (p. 307). With the aim of creating more equal social relations along ethnic and racial lines, an anti-racist pedagogy examines the hegemonic structures that privilege and oppress certain racial groups, images, and identities (Nieto, 2007). This perspective also involves a critical interrogation of school, teacher, and student expectations, language norms and preferences, sorting, selection, and grouping procedures as well as classroom organization, pedagogy, and curriculum. While multicultural education has moved to a more critical position through an anti-racist orientation, its emphasis still remains heavily on issues of race, ethnicity, and language.

Integrative Framework of Inclusive Education.

I focus specifically on Dei et al.’s (2000) integrative framework of inclusive education within anti-racist education because it is rooted in a multicultural pedagogy; however, Dei et al., argue that every social group (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability) represents a culture. Dei et al.’s reframing of multiculturalism to include all marginalized groups, not just those related to race, ethnicity, and language, facilitates a more integrated understanding of inclusivity that recognizes inclusion as the production, validation, and dissemination of multiple knowledge forms. Their framework represents a critical shift that moves the discourse of inclusivity away from advocacy for individual groups toward a discourse of plurality and multiplicity. Hence Dei et al.

suggest a multicentric understanding of inclusion rather than the historical unicentric (i.e., dualistic) conception of inclusion. Multicentric education accepts indigenous and cultural knowledge alongside the dominant culture with the aim of creating spaces for the sharing and exchange of different ways of knowing. Drawing on a critical theory perspective, Dei et al. underscore that in order for such an education to occur, hegemonic structures must be recognized as conditions that shape the production and expression of cultural forms. Multicentric practices work to recognize individual marginalized cultures within a larger framework of social human rights and within the pursuit of hegemonic deconstruction.

Gender and Women's Education

Historically, men have outperformed women on standardized assessments, occupied more seats in post-secondary institutions, and have dominated fields of science, mathematics, and technology (Assie-Lumuba & Sutton, 2004; Buchmann, DiPrete, & McDaniel, 2008; Lupart, Cannon, & Tefler, 2004). Since gender-tracking research emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), there has been an aggressive response to better understanding gender inequities with the aim of promoting the status of women in education. Coinciding with the feminist movement, women's roles and position within educational structures were interrogated leading to campaigns for equal treatment and access to education, inequity awareness, and women's empowerment and agency (Freeman, 2009). Hooks (1984) noted "feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore, it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination" (p. 24).

By the end of the century, the result of the feminist movement was a scholarship on gender in education that "often treat[ed] all aspects of education as disadvantaging

women” (Jacobs, 1996, p. 156). However, Buchmann et al. (2008) recognized that since the turn of the century, research has begun to examine the systemic advantaging and disadvantaging of women in a more nuanced way by documenting specific disciplinary areas, social interactions, and institutional factors that contribute to advantages and disadvantages for women. Underpinning this scholarship are two fundamental and interrelated assumptions on the role and status of women in education. First, gender identities are complex and dependent upon other social identities such as race, religion, and sexuality (Villaverde, 2008), with gender identity thought to be fluid and shaped by institutional and social structures (Butler, 1990). In drawing on critical feminist notions and in building upon the foundation provided by the feminist movement, women are now understood to be systemically privileged or oppressed differentially depending upon their particular complex gender identity (Adams et al., 1997; Butler, 1990; Villaverde, 2008).

Second, current scholarship on women in education is predicated on the rightful assumption that women have equal capacity to men for education and for contributing to society (Lupart & Wilgosh, 1998). Inspired through empowerment of women campaigns, which reinscribed women with personal and group agency, this second assumption holds implications for the purpose of educating women. Pushed further, this assumption moves beyond achieving equality to assert the unique contributions that women offer within traditionally male-dominated sectors and disciplines (Villaverde, 2008). However, while these two assumptions have currency in gender scholarship, their enactment in school cultures continue to be a plight for women. Specifically, research continues to emphasize the need to change teacher and student perceptions and prejudices on the capacity of women in schools (e.g., Frawley, 2005; Gray & Leith, 2004).

Queer Studies

Queer studies in education have emerged as a pressing discipline for inclusive education since the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the 1980s and early 90s, and the alarming recent victimization—bullying and suicide—of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) students throughout North America. Based on a synthesis of recent studies on LGBT youth, approximately 30-40% of these youth have attempted suicide, a significantly higher proportion than non-LGBT students (Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2008). Moreover, in alignment with data from the UK, US, and Australia, Statistics Canada reported that LGBT youth were at higher risk for school-based bullying leading to increased sexual and physical assaults, robbery, and emotional abuse (Beauchamp, 2008). In response to these trends, educational research and practice has supported efforts toward increased awareness, prejudice and stereotype reduction, and inquires into systemic structures that give rise to the marginalization and inclusion of LGBT students and teachers (Grace & Wells, 2009; Mayo, 2007; Walton, 2004).

As with feminist discourse, queer discourses have emerged to emancipate those who are LGBT and queer indentifying (D’Emilio, 2009). Queer theory explicitly recognizes that hegemonic relationships between sexual identity and culturally bound heteronormatives limit the acceptance and expression of sexual orientations (Pinar, 1998; Tierney & Dilley, 1998). Sumara and Davis (1999, p. 202) stated, “heteronormativity creates a language that is ‘straight’. Living within heteronormative culture means learning to ‘see’ straight, to ‘read’ straight, to ‘think’ straight.” Therefore, an initial aim of queer theory was to identify and interpret heteronormative culture and expand the concept of sexual normativity to include and value alternative identities. Like special education discourse, early queer theory was predicated on dichotomized language that

demarked differences between *normal* (i.e., straight) and *deviant* or *abnormal* (i.e., queer) behaviour.

The evolution of queer theory has since led to the proliferation of a discourse that blurs and complexifies sexual identities, recognizing their fluidity and the agentic stance that facilitates their expression within and in relation to dominant heteronormative cultures. Ruffolo (2007) noted “queer theory’s theoretical shift from *identities* to *identifications* highlights the negotiations of differences, rather than similarities, among subjects” (p. 255). This shift further supports a contemporary discourse that values difference with an emphasis on asserting an agentic position within an “implicated subjectivity of circulating norms” (Ruffolo, 2007, p. 255). Hence with a backdrop of social injustice and a very public protest for equal rights, queer discourse recognizes the circling relationships between sexual identities with the assertion that all identifications should be equally valued. Further, contemporary queer theory supports a multiplicity of sexual orientation identifications that are understood to be fluid and non-static.

The promotion of queer discourse within school settings has been met with both challenge and success throughout Canada. Notable cases (e.g., Matt Hall) have led to policy changes throughout educational systems and to the generation of gay-straight alliances and other school-based support structures (Walton, 2004). In some instances, specific programs have been established (e.g., Triangle Program in the Toronto District School Board) to provide a safe space for students to explore and negotiate their sexual identities (Campey, McCaskell, Miller, & Russell, 1994). Underpinning these initiatives is a broader campaign for social inclusion and safe schools based on anti-bullying and anti-homophobic mandates. However, despite these efforts in awareness and support mechanisms, narrative accounts of teachers and students who identify as LGBT still

report feelings of exclusion within school contexts through the reproduction of dominant heteronormative structures and stances (Duke & McCarthy, 2009).

Critique

Each disciplinary perspective offers a unique evolutionary trajectory representing multiple responses to inclusivity. In this section, I examine the commonalities and differences amongst these perspectives through four fundamental tenets as the basis for developing my interdisciplinary framework for inclusivity. Specifically, these tenets relate to: (a) multiplicity of responses, (b) focal populations, (c) conceptualizations of diversity, and (d) hegemonic discourse.

Multiplicity of Responses

The four disciplinary perspectives present developments that demarked different responses to diversity over time. Harper (1997) further emphasizes this point noting that “historically, schools have had a variety of reactions...to the question of difference among students...making visible these reactions is crucial in rethinking issues of difference and diversity in new and more productive ways” (p. 192). I argue that while some of these reactions have become non-existent, others (including some early reactions) continue to shape the way inclusivity is practiced. For example, drawing from the special education perspective, there are still instances of segregated classes for specific groups of students and there is still a need to facilitate an integrated form of inclusivity to address students’ academic needs (Bennett et al., 2008). Similar arguments can be made across disciplinary perspectives including implicit forms of social normalization such as related to queer and gender behaviours (Ruffolo, 2007). Likewise,

less normative responses are evident across perspectives as is the case with contemporary critical race theories and initiatives (Adams et al., 1997; Dei et al., 2000).

Focal Populations

Each disciplinary perspective serves to promote inclusivity for a different focal population (e.g., disability, race, gender, sexual orientation) and from different theoretical positions (e.g., feminist, anti-racist, queer). As a result, none of these four perspectives presents a comprehensive framework that maintains widespread appeal across students and teachers from diverse groups (Trifonas, 2003). The absence of a comprehensive framework is limiting to conceptualizations that forge connections between groups of difference and that serve to reify the very definition of inclusivity (Artiles, 2011). While Dei et al.'s (2000) integrated model argues for a comprehensive approach, they continue to link their model to a critical anti-racist framework, which may not hold appeal to non-racial groups of difference because of its historical affiliation with race and ethnicity. As such, there remains a need to construct an interdisciplinary framework for inclusivity that bridges discourse from across perspectives (Artiles, 2011). Such a framework is timely given current dialogues on the social and increasingly cosmopolitan landscape of education (Leander, Phillips, Taylor, 2010; Pinar, 2009) and the changing diversity mobility patterns across the world (Egbo, 2009).

Conceptualizations of Diversity

In service to specific groups of difference, each disciplinary perspective initially operated from a dualistic conceptualization of diversity in order to bring forward awareness and understanding about a particular group. For example, in the early special

education model of inclusion, several campaigns emerged in relation to specific exceptionalities to promote education and acceptance of particular groups. However, while useful in raising awareness and arguing for the rights of specific populations, dualistic conceptualizations portray an individual's cultural identity as static, simplistic, and stable. Hoffman (1997) asserted that, in dualistic models, diversities have firm boundaries where "individuals are so conditioned by their cultures that they are locked into fixed ways of perceiving and being, and cultural identities become privileged commodities that are owned like property and invested with notions of individual right and privilege" (p. 380). This view of diversity does not reflect the reality that individuals largely identify with multiple cultures to various degrees, in fluid and different ways (Hoffman, 1997). In response to dualistic conceptualizations of diversity, many of the disciplinary perspectives have begun recognize the complexity of cultural identification as non-static and multiple (i.e., non-singular). For instance, recent gender-based research has begun to explore the linkages between women's schooling experiences and their evolving gender identities (e.g., Cole, 2009; Latta & Olafson, 2006; Miller, 2005; O'Brien, 2010) as well as the changing relationship between gender and other social-identity constructs (e.g., Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Hamdan, 2006; Zine, 2006). Considering individuals as culturally complex has emerged through contemporary feminist, queer, and cultural theories, representing a necessary tenet of current models of inclusivity (Kumashiro, 1999).

Hegemonic Discourse

The relationship between marginalized groups and the dominant cultural group is described as hegemonic at various points across disciplinary perspectives, with multiple

discourses used to edify this relationship (e.g., disabled vs. abled, deviant vs. normal, subordinate vs. dominant, minority vs. majority). Critical theories, which underpin contemporary anti-racist, feminist, and queer perspectives, further emphasize the hegemonic structures that perpetuate oppression, exclusion, and privilege through systemic social structures and everyday social norms, physical barriers, discourse, and language. In contrast to hierarchical and dualist notions of hegemony, Dei et al.'s (2000) multicentric approach acknowledges that educational inclusivity involves practices “premised on the idea that the process of teaching, learning, and sharing of knowledge is fundamentally a power relation. Thus, to deal with inclusiveness is to address the issues and inequities related to the distribution of power” (p. 243). While much discourse on power relationships has assumed a dualistic and hierarchical view that pits the oppressed against the oppressor (i.e., unicentric approach), I assert that this view simplifies hegemony within the cultural complexity of contemporary social interactions (Hoffman, 1997). I argue that a framework of inclusivity must make provisions, in at least some conceptions of inclusivity, for a more “circulating” (Ruffolo, 2007, p. 255) understanding of hegemony, one that accepts intermediate and indeterminate relationships of power between cultures and culturally complex individuals. To this end, I follow feminist and critical cultural theorists (Adams et al., 1997; Butler, 1990; Villaverde, 2008) in reasserting Gramsci's (1971) original notion of hegemony, which described power asymmetries between individuals and groups of people as either explicitly coercive or voluntary, as a foundation for contemporary inclusivity models. Gramsci suggests that power is a necessary part of natural social orders and is something that “circulates within a web of relationships in which we all participate, rather than as something imposed from top down” (Adams et al., 1997, p. 11).

Framework for Educational Inclusivity

Based on my review and critique of four disciplinary perspectives, I offer the following framework of inclusivity. I assert that this framework differs from previous models as it applies to all groups of difference and serves to bridge identities related to, but not limited to, gender, social class, race/ethnicity, religion, ability, nationality, sexual orientation, and interest. As elaborated upon below, the framework characterizes four conceptions of inclusivity along a continuum: (a) normalizing, (b) integrative, (c) dialogical, and (d) transgressive. Each conception of inclusivity represents different treatments of diversity that recognize the following four foundational tenets as derived from my critique of disciplinary perspectives (see Figure 2 for a visual representation of the framework).

1. The framework represents multiple responses to inclusion (i.e., from normative to transgressive) in order to identify historical, current, and idealistic treatments of diversity. Based on this continuum of responses, educators and researchers may identify and provoke inclusive practices towards more desired responses. I assert that all represented responses operate within current educational contexts, either implicitly or explicitly, with the transgressive response leaning toward a more idealistic response.
2. The framework is intended as an overarching articulation of inclusion that represents all forms of difference not anchored to any one marginalized group. Accordingly, I draw on Dei et al.'s (2000) notion that an inclusivity framework is needed that appeals to diverse groups of people, but I do not link the framework to an existing theoretical framework associated with any historically marginalized group. In this

way, the theory is intended to hold appeal and value for all groups and for theorizing inclusivity as a transdisciplinary practice.

3. Multiple conceptions of diversity are represented in the framework from a dualistic and simplistic understanding in the normative conception to a complex and interconnected conception within the dialogical and transgressive conceptions. Representing a variety of cultural associations within the framework responds to both historical and existing relationship structures as evident across disciplinary traditions.
4. Multiple hegemonic associations are presented in the framework across the conceptions of inclusivity. Expanding upon Dei et al.'s (2000) notion of uni- and multi-centric hegemonic relationships, I present conceptions of inclusivity along a continuum from unicentric to multicentric to concentric. Unicentric conceptions maintain a dualistic structure of hegemony in which the dominant group maintains power over the subdominant group. I represent a multicentric conception of hegemony as either at a beginning or advanced stage. At a beginning stage, individuals are recognized as diverse in relation to a dominant culture with that diversity is accepted and accommodated. At a more advanced level, diversity is understood as a complex, social construct that impacts all members of society. While a dominant group may still be evident, power relationships represent an asymmetrical and circulating notion as opposed to a direct hierarchical relationship (Gramsci, 1971). Finally, the concentric conception of hegemony all individuals are recognized as culturally complex within a shared power relationship. Again, this latter conception leans more toward an idealistic response.

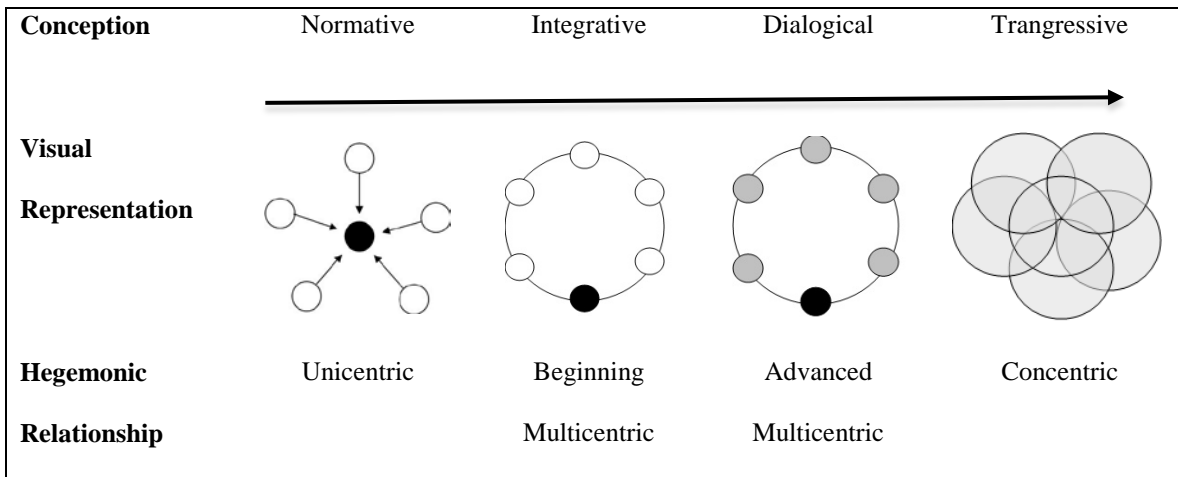


Figure 2

Framework for inclusivity

Key: White circles – group of difference (simple cultural identification)

Gray circles – complex cultural identification

Black circles – dominant group

Normative Conception

A normative conception of inclusivity involves the active assimilation and normalization of minority individuals to a dominant cultural standard. In this conception, non-dominant groups are recognized but not legitimized; minority traditions such as language, dress, religion, and gender roles are dominated and potentially altered. Markus, Steele, and Steele (2000) suggest that this conception of inclusivity offers conditional inclusion for minority groups (i.e., they may be part of this society so long as they assimilate into the dominant standard). However, historically, individuals who have not assimilated have been disadvantaged and socially dismissed through acts of bullying, isolation, and victimization (McPhail & Freeman, 2005).

This conception of inclusivity represents a unicultural orientation with the dominant culture at the center while maintaining a dualistic discourse (i.e., dominant-subordinate/minority). McPhail and Freeman (2005) indicate that such a conception not only magnifies difference by making subordinate groups question their worth and identity, but also commits the dominant culture to reshaping and redressing difference toward a more normal state. Within this conception of inclusivity, education plays a significant role. Harper (1997) states that it is “an education intended to eliminate diversity among students, ensuring conformity to a standard identity, narrowly and rigidly defined” (p. 194). Further, Markus et al. (2000) acknowledge that minority group members enter into a power structure that forces them to assimilate to the culture, standards, and styles of the society as reflected in classroom social dynamics and curriculum; however, the dominant culture is not required to “take any interest in, or value any of the distinguishing characteristics of, the corresponding features of, minority groups” (p. 234).

Although one may be hard-pressed to find any explicit campaigns of assimilation in contemporary education, I contend that this conception of inclusivity is still widely apparent in the social relations that operate within schools today. Take for instance gender identities and their related conventions. Boys have a boy culture and girls have a girl culture. In elementary school, boys tend to play with boys, doing ‘boy’ things—sports, pranks, and action heroes; while girls do ‘girl’ things—dress-up, skipping, and doll play (Eder, Evans, & Parker, 2003; Wood, 2009). These gender identities exist within the dominant heteronormative culture prevalent across many educational contexts. However, in considering the following narrative of one boy’s experience, it is evident

that broader social discourses shape what is acceptable and normal within gendered social interactions.

I remember playing with my friends when I was seven years old, enjoying their company outside on a warm summer day...I liked them, and they liked me. Nothing about it seemed remarkable. Mom didn't like it, though. I could see the expression on her face through the window: a scowl that made Hallowe'en ghouls seem friendly by comparison. She had told me before that I should play with other boys, not with girls. I didn't understand why. I thought I should be able to choose my own friends. Deep down, I knew that it was a sissy thing to do, to play with girls, but they were my friends. Nonetheless, I just wanted to be like the other kids. I didn't want to be different. (Alderson, 2000, p. 17)

This narrative highlights the implicit suppression of behaviours based on gender difference. In an analysis of such stories, Alderson acknowledges the multiple signals and indicators that block awareness and acceptance of gender difference within society. He attests that some of these signals and indicators arise from family expectations, peers relations, teacher treatment, and religious beliefs.

Hooks (2000) in her essay, *Crossing Class Boundaries*, describes a similar process of normalization. Hooks grew up in a segregated black community with neighbours who were either poor or middle class. When Hooks "chose to attend a 'fancy' college rather than a state school close to home," she said that she "was compelled to confront class differences in new and different ways" (p. 143). Hooks acknowledged her need to change; she believed that she had to suppress her class background in order to be included by *the privileged*. In speaking about her parents' reaction, she says, "they were

afraid these fancy ideas like the fancy schools I wanted to attend would ruin me from living in the real world. At the time, I did not understand that they were also afraid of me becoming a different person—someone who did not speak their language, hold on to their beliefs and their ways” (p. 143). Hooks was the only member of her family to attend college and earn a doctorate. She confessed that at college, she “learned different ways to dress, different ways to eat, and new ways to talk and think” (p. 145). Committed to her roots, Hooks continued to negotiate her “allegiance with working people” (p. 145) with her simultaneous normalization to a dominant, upper class, and White cadre.

Hooks' (2000) and Alderson's (2000) narratives represent the struggles that can accompany the normalizing conception of inclusivity—the blatant disconnect between a dualistic conceptualization of culture and the negotiation required of students attempting to straddle these worlds. While the examples presented by Hooks and Alderson identify potentially negative consequences to a normative conception, there may also be instances in which normalization results in positive consequences and serves desired ends.

Consider anti-bullying campaigns and policies (e.g., Bully Free Alberta campaign, anti-homophobia in school policy in British Columbia and Quebec, the international Tribes Learning Community program) that seek to create safe schools by limiting harmful and discriminatory behaviours. Through these initiatives, students are normalized toward accepting and honouring basic human rights related to safety and respect (Walton, 2004). Therefore, whether resulting in positive or negative consequences, the normative conception of inclusivity still maintains a presence in school policies and cultures throughout Canada.

Integrative Conception

With a beginning multicentric orientation, integrative inclusivity accepts and legitimizes the presence of difference within society and learning environments through formal institutional modifications. However, while individuals are recognized for their differences there is still evidence of a dominant cultural standard. In schools, educators facilitate modified conditions to accommodate learning needs, potentially through alternative contexts (e.g., separate schools) and programs (e.g., streaming). In her historical overview on the treatment of difference in Ontario, Harper (1997) identifies an ‘insisting on difference’ response, which aligns to the integrative conception. Harper notes that this response was characterized by educational structures such as segregated schools for women, specific racial groups, and students with disabilities as well as through alternative program options for specific student learning needs (e.g., vocational education tracks). In this conception then, there remains a recognized duality between the dominant group and the minority group with an understanding that those in the minority should still be provided with educational opportunities that address students’ learning needs.

Special programming for diverse student populations continues to be a feature in contemporary education. For example, throughout the history of public education in Ontario, educational programs and policies have varied for students of diverse social and ability groups (Curtis, Livingstone, & Smaller, 1992). While education policies no longer favour segregation of students based on their ethnicity or gender (although some cases still exist, for example, private schools based on specific religious groups including Catholic schools and Hebrew schools), several alternative programs based on cognitive and physical abilities as well as career interest are still publically supported throughout

the country. There has also been a renewed interest in other forms of segregated schooling. For instance, the Toronto District School Board recently (2009) started a school for Canadians of African Descent and is exploring the option of boys-only schools.

Ability grouping remains a common practice across educational systems “founded upon the idea that students have relatively fixed levels of ability and need to be taught accordingly” (Boaler, Wiliam, & Brown, 2000, p. 631). This practice is achieved through a process of streaming in which students are paired based on their level of cognitive or physical ability or on their career focus. While proponents of this approach acknowledge it as a means to address specific learning needs and interests with an overarching goal of making schools more inclusive, others have argued that it reinforces social inequities and maintains a bifurcated social class structure (Curtis et al., 1992; Ireson & Hallam, 1999; Taylor, 2005). Taylor stated, “streaming has long been a feature of the school system despite periodic concerns about its effects on already disadvantaged students” (p. 327).

King’s (2002) report on the Ontario revised secondary school structure predicted that moving from a five to four-year track and incorporating a revised streaming program would result in increased failure and drop-out rates among students in applied-level courses. In 2005, Ryan and Joong, confirmed this trend toward greater failure and low marks, especially for students in Grades 9 and 10 applied courses. Such a trend marks an increased likelihood of students dropping out and moving onto a path of social exclusion. In a study by Earl, Freeman, Lasky, Sutherland, and Torrance (2002), Ontario teachers commented that “kids are giving up a lot sooner and that those who failed would probably drop out at 16” (p. 21). For those who do remain in school, there still appear negative social ramifications including a negative perception of particular streaming

program options (Earl et al., 2002). Therefore, although an integrative conception of inclusivity begins to recognize and address student diversity, it may also serve to reinforce social structures based on ability and class. I contend that this is because it fundamentally maintains a dualistic and static representation of diversity, rather than moving toward a more complex understanding of cultural identification, as represented in the following conception.

Dialogical Conception

This conception accepts individuals as culturally complex (i.e., non-singular and non-static) and supports equitable education for all mandates (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2008, 2010). With an advanced multicentric orientation, a dominant group is still evident; however, the dominant group honours, welcomes, and celebrates the cultural complexity of individuals. In the dialogical conception, differences are recognized and accepted by institutions with provisions for equitable access to education leading to the same educational standards. In alignment with this view, McPhail and Freeman (2005) characterise inclusive classrooms as “those that create access to and full participation in rich learning for all students without prejudice, and that include the tenets expressed by Thomas and Loxley (2001) as “tolerance, pluralism, and equity” (p. 264).

This response parallels legislative advancements in Canada, in particular, Article 15.1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 1982), which states: “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.” The naming of seven groups of differences in the

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms serve as a basis for advocacy and accommodation of various forms to promote equitable access to education. Thus a dialogical conception requires the acknowledgment of difference followed by an active response that enables access and participation. Formal provisions for accommodations (Hutchinson, 2010) as well as equity-based admission and teaching policies (Gale 2001; Government of Canada, 2002) demark institutional responses that align with a dialogical conception of inclusivity. In addition, this conception also moves toward the social inclusion of culturally-complex individuals by inviting diversity into education to create modern cosmopolitan classrooms, or what Pinar (2009) acknowledges as worldliness in education. A more nuanced understanding of difference is needed for this conception of inclusivity with consideration for diversities beyond that which are already present in local schools, communities, and regions (Trifonas, 2008).

Beyond formal provisions, the dialogical conception requires an acceptance and reconceptualization of diversity from a dualistic stance. Segal and Handler (1995) asserted that society needs to move toward a more global and comprehensive view of diversity that recognizes “radically foreign ways of being human” (p. 394). Dialogic interaction requires that we go beyond the “American multiculturalist discourse,” a discourse that solely acknowledges the predominant identifiable minority groups in North American society and that is only significant “insofar as it is associated with relatively familiar cultural and ethnic groups” (Hoffman, 1997, p. 379). Such a “domesticated diversity” negates the “too diverse” (p. 379). Therefore the dialogical conception challenges educators to engage with the unclassified diversities, the culturally complex. Trifonas (2008) states that educators cannot “cull a universal thinking without a diversity of knowledge and being. The emanation of the cosmopolitical view is a gathering of

multiplicity in knowledge communities (p. 72). Thus dialogical interactions not only accommodate learning needs but bring forward knowledge as rooted in the lived, cultural experiences of diverse students, whether already present in the learning environment or not.

Transgressive Conception

In a transgressive conception of inclusivity, student diversity is used as a vehicle for the generation of new knowledge and learning experiences. All individuals are regarded as culturally complex who contribute to the learning context. I identify this conception with a concentric orientation because there is no dominant cultural group, only overlays of cultures that create shared and emergent learning. Thus learning cannot be standardized in this view because individual differences alter what and how learning takes place. In line with the transgressive view of inclusivity, Dei et al. (2000) state that if teaching and learning includes “the bodies, cultures, spaces, objects, positions, beliefs, sights, sounds, and smells within schools then, an inclusive curriculum, which is positioned through the cultures and experiences of all students, is one that has the broadest range of academic possibilities” (p. 175).

This conception of inclusivity hinges on principles of social justice. Kelly and Brandes (2001) indicate that “within this pluralistic conception, the school is an important arena for the expression of diverse values and the teacher must assume the role of a nonpartisan referee, whose dominant interest is to ensure fair competition in the classroom marketplace of ideas” (p. 438). In addition, education in this form of inclusion recognizes the circling nature of power affecting various inequities (e.g., sexism, racism, heterosexism, homophobia, ablism, poverty) that shape the opportunity to access a

socially just learning context (Brandes & Kelly, 2003; McDermott, 1987). Therefore, social justice pedagogy moves inclusive campaigns from specific identifiable groups toward the treatment of alterable 'isms' by acknowledging forms of discrimination through reframing inclusive discourse as a socially constructed condition. In this way, education can begin to engage discussions not only about specific cases of inclusion but also about the "patterns that connect and mutually reinforce different oppressions in a system that is inclusive and pervasive" (Adams, et al., 1997, p. 5).

In a transgressive conception, stereotypic labeling of difference is limited; rather the continuum moves towards claiming individual, unique positions of knowing. "Needing to choose a particular label for oneself ultimately falsifies the lived experience of ethnicity and the realities of multiple commitments and affiliations that are the essence of cross-cultural experiences" (Hoffman, 1997, p. 383). In this conception, educators are called to draw on the individuality of students to shape knowledge making (Greene, 1993). Noddings (1995) suggests that pedagogies need to be replaced with "a multiplicity of models designed to accommodate the multiple capacities and interests of students. We need to recognize multiple identities" (p. 367). Allowing students to interpret and share their uniqueness as individuals leads to a more authentic representation of student diversity and a more genuine context for inclusion.

Greene (1993) attests that by inviting students to come "together in their pluralities and their differences, they may finally articulate how they are choosing themselves and what the projects are by means of which they can identify themselves. We all need to recognize each other in our striving, our becoming, our inventing of the possible" (p. 219). Thus the transgressive conception empowers difference and leverages it for learning about the self, others, and the world. Such an education opens toward a

state of possibility and a letting go of the predetermined, narrow curriculum. Learning is directed by complicated and personal conversations and is shaped by students' subjective ways of knowing. In leveraging principles of social justice and equal power sharing, the transgressive conception may be difficult to attain in practice, especially in a systemic fashion; however, it may be used as an idealistic benchmark for inclusion and one that educators and research may continue to work toward.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to heed calls for an interdisciplinary framework that connected responses of inclusivity from across marginalized populations (Artiles, 2011; Trifonas, 2003). As a result, I constructed a framework for inclusivity demarking four conceptions—normative, integrative, dialogical, and transgressive—as predicated upon four interrelated foundational tenets. Specifically, the conceptions articulated different approaches to inclusivity representing unicentric, multicentric, and concentric associations between diverse individuals. Rather than purporting one model for inclusivity rooted in a specific cultural group or grounded in a specific theoretical perspective (e.g., anti-racist, feminist, queer), this framework notably intends to edify multiple responses to enable educational researchers and practitioners to articulate, position, and potentially alter existing, historical, and idealistic conceptions of inclusivity. Accordingly, the utility of this framework is two-fold: first, it serves to propel thinking on inclusivity toward an interconnected and interdisciplinary stance (Artiles, 2011); and second, it serves to provoke a multiplicity of practical and conceptual responses to inclusive education leading to more intentional practices, policies, curricula, and pedagogies (Harper, 1997).

While I assert that the presented framework is a promising heuristic for understanding inclusive education across Canada, I contend that further research is required to refine, elaborate, and validate the framework for general use within educational research and practice. In particular, there is value in furnishing the framework with curricular and pedagogical examples that elucidate how inclusivity is practiced across contexts. In my view, this project should not aim to unify conceptions of inclusivity but rather contribute toward a coherent profusion of practices in support of various conceptions. Second, I see value in expanding the theoretical underpinnings of the framework to present a more robust articulation of altering conceptions of diversity, hegemony, and focal populations in light of studies on diverse educational contexts, both those that explicitly support inclusive mandates and those that do not. Casting a wide net in future research (i.e., not solely focusing on one conception or on one context) will generate a more comprehensive framework for inclusivity that supports multiple responses aimed at all forms of difference. Specifically, I believe strides can be made by identifying and examining educational contexts in relation to a complex, yet coherent, interdisciplinary framework for educational inclusivity.

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