



INTRODUCTION



There is no disability, no disabled, outside precise social and cultural constructions; there is no attitude toward disability outside a series of societal references and constructs.

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Inclusion, as it has come into *practice* in K12 educational settings, has been misleadingly simplified, if not disguised as an implementation strategy to support school restructuring, and as such it is assumed unencumbered by ideological and political influences. Inclusion dots the educational landscape as an adjective that serves in discussion of the “inclusion” child, the “inclusion” teacher, the “inclusion” classroom, the “inclusion” school, and “inclusion” policy. Its use as a synonym for *mainstreaming*, *integration* or *special education* further obscures the meaning of this multivalent educational term now common in many international contexts. As a consequence, it is easy to overlook the significance of the ideological distinctions among these terms and to minimize the political terrain unique to each era that shaped special education over time. *Ideology and the Politics of In/EXclusion* explores and exposes educational “inclusion” by unpacking the ideologies and politics that have come to shape this movement over time and across continents. Because underlying ideologies and politics are deeply embedded in special education their influence on inclusion remains unexamined; thus, this book provides a perspective that is long overdue in both general and special education. It is a timely offering as

the United States Congress prepares for the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and in an international context as increasingly neoliberal policy agendas target all youth, and not just those in special education. The contributors to this book describe various geographic locales, recount multiple historical contexts, rely upon differing sources of evidence, and as a consequence, relate a more complex and varied notion of “inclusion” than that which is traditionally considered in education. Our efforts recognize and honor the evolving texts of “inclusion” and we take the issue seriously enough to examine closely its components, to see what it’s made of, and to understand better what inclusion asks of educators.

Recovering Our History

Umberto Eco (2002) argues that history is always written from a contemporary lens reflective of the historian’s obsessions and interests—he likens the process to looking at events from a balcony—the *point of view* depends *always* upon the balcony one occupies. The history of special education, like all histories, is better told across multiple registers that consider both origins and effects. Obviously, the place where one locates the origins of special education is significant, and for the purposes of this book, it is of greater importance to consider how we *continue* to write the story of special education. In the contemporary context, one well-known account is the continuous progress narrative of special education authored by scholars who minimize the field’s discontinuities and the influence of ideological and political debates. Brantlinger (2003) faults this special education as “*peaceable kingdom*” narrative as deceptive and detrimental to understanding special education as anything but consensus and collaboration. In contrast, *Ideology and the Politics of InEXclusion* draws upon ideologies of cure, care, benevolence, charity, control, and professionalism in ways that are far more complex and nuanced. These ideologies and others, some of which date back several centuries and across various locales, have historic and continuing influence on educational and social inclusion.

The story so far offers the origin of special education as that which began with the creation of special schools for blind and deaf students abroad in the late 18th century, and soon thereafter in the United States. Safford and Safford (1996) retell this story and further suggest that it was even earlier that Enlightenment thinkers in pre-Revolutionary Paris first influenced special educational instructional pedagogy, approaches to assessment, and behaviorism. In a departure from the medico-pedagogic approach, Armstrong (2002) links special education to the late 18th-century workhouses in France and England, while Richardson (1999) recounts the influence of compulsory schooling in the late 19th century as he reconstructs the institutional shape of special education in America. Borrowing from Foucault’s discussion of the institutionalization of disciplinary power, Richardson (1999) argues that the “expanded surveillance “ of children sanctioned by special education and school psychology in the 20th century, coupled with the late 19th century

mandate for compulsory schooling have calibrated “educability” criteria as natural and inevitable features of today’s educational landscape. Others consider the link between institutions and special schools to explore contemporary special education (Trent, 1994; Ware, in press). In the account offered by Trent, parents, who made demands for “special” educational rights, are faulted for inadvertently reinforcing a vision of special education that went “back to the beginning of history” (243). Ware sieves through similar primary source documents, not to fault parents, but to instead fault the medico-pedagogic approach authorized by institutions centuries ago and still firmly entrenched in special education today. Among the various authors, most would agree that the ideological constraints on practice today are not unlike those that date back 100 years. It is more than ironic that, as Barton & Tomlinson (1981) point out, special education in the modern era is often cast as little more than a “historical accident”—an amalgamation of events *seemingly* divested of relationship to regular education. Rather than dismiss these competing perspectives as troublesome and contradictory, they merit debate and critical consideration within a more broadly defined discursive community because ultimately these multiple stories inform how we continue to conceptualize disability, special education, and inclusion.

Disagreements and ideological differences are not uncommon among special educators and inclusion has proven to be one of the more rancorous debates in the field (Brantlinger; 1997; Winzer & Mazurek, 2002). This book is not intended to fuel existing arguments. Instead, our dialogue seeks to engage an audience willing to recognize the broader context of social issues relative to educational inclusion. Obviously, inclusion does not exist in a vacuum—it is more significant than mere implementation strategies in pursuit of the romanticized realm of benign cultural space. Inclusion impacts and is informed by both general and special education and thus this book aims to engage a broad audience of readers, including teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, and educational researchers and scholars who recognize the inextricable link between educational and social inclusion. *Ideology and the Politics of I+EXclusion* challenges the medical dominance and professional discourses of special education as a way into a more compelling conversation on educational inclusion in both national and international contexts.

Ideology and the Politics of Inclusion: The Conference

The chapters included here were among several papers presented at a research conference sponsored by the Spencer Foundation in the summer of 1999 at the University of Rochester. The conference, *Ideology and the Politics of Inclusion*, explored the rhetoric and ideology of inclusion in both the United States and abroad, to explicitly trouble the complexity of this international reform movement and to reveal the multiple ways in which ideology impacts educational opportunity for disabled students. The conference was motivated by a critical essay that appeared in the *Review of Educational Research*, “Using Ideology: Cases of Non-recognition of

the Politics of Research and Practice in Special Education” by Ellen Brantlinger (1997). Her critique cited the historic reluctance among scholars in the field of special education to recognize and claim their use of ideology in research and practice. Brantlinger dissected the division in the field between the *traditionalists* and the *inclusionists* in a close reading of the research of many well-known special education scholars. Her essay exposed the enhanced legitimizing forces that *traditionalists* utilize to obfuscate the discontinuities inherent in special education’s progress narrative, most pointedly the disavowal of nonpositivist research. Specific to inclusion, Brantlinger summarized the chief concerns of the *traditionalists* as: a deep suspicion of inclusion’s aims and outcomes; the desire to retain traditional placements; disengagement from broader school restructuring needs; a preoccupation with rational technical solutions and incremental reform; and the long-held disavowal of moral grounding for professional practice (430). In sum, *traditionalists* challenge the research knowledge base that informs the inclusion movement because they claim it lacks rigor and scientific objectivity and fails to conform to the linear model of positivist research privileged in their own scholarship. Their conceptual approach to understanding assumes objectivity through measured observation, calibrated interventions, and pursuit of singular truth that rests on an appeal to facts.

Brantlinger contrasted this stance with that of the *inclusionists*, who rely on multiple inquiry methods derived from postpositivist research paradigms that fully recognize ideology is “at work in everything we experience” (Zizek, 1994). Their conceptual approach privileges subjective, multiple truths and complex rather than simple analyses that tend to ignite the *traditionalists* to criticize their research and scholarship as “too ideological.” These divisions, according to Brantlinger, predate the current conversation on inclusion and have long served to underwrite the contrived dichotomy between ideology and empiricism manifest in the interventions, procedures, policy, and beliefs that underwrite practice. Brantlinger’s essay provoked both outrage and accolades in a field that remains divided on the issue of inclusion, divided on research methods, divided on the merit of insider accounts of living with disability, and divided on the uses of ideology. Brantlinger urged new conversations among educators to revisit the moral and ethical dimensions of special education policy and practice and to acknowledge the multiple forms of ideology that influence special education frameworks and practices.

The conference “Call for Papers” invited participants to read the Brantlinger essay and to contribute “cases of recognition” across international contexts. Researchers and participants from Australia, England, New Zealand, Scotland, Canada, and the United States engaged in a cross-cultural dialogue on educational reform and inclusion that addressed three primary goals:

1. To explore how a very narrow framework for understanding disability has led to the inequitable educational policy and practice;
2. To examine the historic relationship between disability, special educational needs/schooling, and general education;

3. To encourage understanding of the moral consequences of espoused ideology versus lived ideology among academic researchers.

Drawing from prior research, ongoing research, and theoretical investigations, these chapters serve as cases of recognition/multiperspectival analyses of ideology and the politics of inclusion within historical, educational, cultural, and social contexts. *Ideology and the Politics of ~~++~~EXclusion* allows for a view from more than one balcony. The contributors reveal a terrain of discontinuities and explore the subtle and overt ways that both ideology and politics shape special education and that which has come to be called *inclusion*. Their task was to disrupt the prevailing discourse on educational inclusion as that which occurs in a vacuum, separate from social inclusion; and instead to consider the narrow frameworks, historic influences, and research tensions that underwrite *Ideology and the Politics of ~~++~~EXclusion*.

Overview of the Book

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, “Narrow Frameworks/Endorsed Inequities,” opens with “Ideologies Discerned, Values Determined: Getting Past the Hierarchies of Special Education” by Ellen Brantlinger. This opening chapter provides a brief overview of various definitions of ideology in which Brantlinger contends that ideological critiques are not merely a scholarly “fiddling” but are necessary for understanding social life. She argues that because ideologies operate largely at an unconscious level, they go unnoticed, especially those that are most common. Failure to attend to ideology or denial of its existence, Brantlinger contends, ensures that educators are left with “partial knowledge” of everyday events in schools and communities, and perhaps more dangerous, an “incomplete understanding” of their own work. Her chapter teases out the ideological roots of inclusive practice and explores how ideology critique can be used as a tool for discerning detrimental and beneficial ideologies. In Chapter 2, “The Aesthetics of Disability as a Productive Ideology,” Julie Allan provides further discussion of ideology and its uses to explore what *counts* as ideological critique. She suggests the work of disabled writers to underwrite her example of “productive ideology” derived from versions of cynicism (Sloterdijk, 1987) and are illustrated with the works of Czechoslovakian writers Kundera, Kafka, and Hasek. Allan seeks to portray disabled people as both inside and outside ideology in that which she describes as an aesthetics of *disability* that can powerfully subvert and disrupt disabling barriers in pursuit of praxis as social change. Chapter 3, “Meaning in the Service of Power,” by Roger Slee, follows on the concerns raised by both Brantlinger and Allan as he explores the production and reproduction of meaning relative to disability in the context of education. Slee brings together scenarios from his childhood, his experience in teacher preparation, and his years as a teacher, professor, and dean to support his claims that regardless of the context or era, inclusive education is about little else than the politics of recognition. Thus, the view of inclusion es-

poused by the special needs industry of rational technical outcomes merits critical reexamination. Slee further maintains that *traditional* special education is a dangerous liaison for those who seek to promote educational inclusion.

In Part II, “Historic Influences: Disability and ‘Special’ Schooling,” the chapters explore the uses of ideology that have played out over time to impact disability and schooling. Collectively, the goal for this section is transparency—to reveal how ideology really “works” in social, economic, and educational systems otherwise held to be natural, inevitable, and good. In Chapter 4, “The Politics of Special Education: A Necessary or Irrelevant Approach?” Len Barton suggests that the question of school governance, educational funding, and the purpose of education have been redefined by the globalizing tendency of economic rationality. Barton holds that in this more politicized context schools are held hostage to increased control over the work context and the dehumanizing culture of teaching that follows. These new demands, in turn, prompt major changes to the purpose, content, and outcome of teacher training—all with negative implications for inclusion. The arguments made by Barton inform Chapter 5, “Race and Special Education,” by Sally Tomlinson, who opens with a brief history of the stigmatization of minority and migrant students in the United Kingdom. She seeks to contextualize the question: Why, at the end of the 20th century, are children who are perceived as racially different persistently regarded as prime candidates for removal from mainstream education? Her case study examines the well-entrenched mechanisms in schools that ensure the overrepresentation of minority students in special education and that simultaneously reinscribe the eugenic impulse in everyday practice. Tomlinson contends that this historically disproportional data will be exacerbated by increased competition in the present moment through the marketization of schooling.

Chapter 6, “Ideology and the Origins of Exclusion,” by Keith Ballard, considers the influence of New Right Ideology in New Zealand as it underwrites the social construction of “unworthy others” in a system of governance that promotes individualism, restricted government, and free market forces to authorize a “culture of contentment” (Galbraith, 1992). Citing current policy documents, Ballard, like Tomlinson, implicates enduring eugenic assumptions that continue to influence economic, education, employment, and welfare policy in New Zealand. Ballard maintains that in fact, “only ideology matters” to support Brantlinger’s (1997) claim that discussions of ideology demand *continuous* examination in pursuit of the twin goals of democracy and inclusion. He reminds us that the task is one that can never be assumed complete or finished.

Chapter 7, “Accounting for Ideology and Politics in the Development of Inclusive Practice in Norway,” by Marit Stromstad, opens with a useful discussion of definitions of ideology and the implication of each in consideration of the history that shaped the ideology of normalization and integration in Norway. Bolstered by the arguments of Ballard and Barton, Stromstad contends that while Norway was once synonymous with an *ideology of solidarity*, increasingly these communal values lack “currency” in the global market where solidarity amounts to little more

than the exclusive domain of the elites. Her history includes ancient Norwegian legends and lore to show the pernicious influence of ideologies past in the configuration of ideologies present.

In Chapter 8, “Quality versus Equality? Inclusion Politics in Norway at Century’s End,” Kari Nes follows on the background provided by Stromstad. This chapter carefully unravels important distinctions at the micro level of practice in a case study that probes the reality rather than the mythology of Norway’s ideology of solidarity. Nes peers into the workings of the “unitary school” in an age of increasing diversity resulting from immigration and troubles the limitations of retrofitting educational policy for language minority pupils that was originally designed for disabled students. The previously celebrated goal of “normalization” is, according to Nes, counterintuitive to inclusive ideology for disabled students, and far off the mark for language minority students.

Although the previous sections include both theoretical and empirical cases, the final section, Part III, “Research Tensions: Espoused versus Lived Ideology,” considers cases of recognition in which personal struggle marks the contributors’ openly ideological research and teaching. By the very design of their research, these contributors welcome multiple and diverse participant opinions and because they recognize the moral consequences of their scholarship, they acknowledge their own biases and viewpoints from the outset. Chapter 9, “Special Education Knowledges: The Inevitable Struggle with the Self,” by Lous Heshusius, is an epistemology story that considers various aspects of participatory consciousness. Drawing on the work of Jean Vanier, the founder of an international network of communities for people with intellectual disabilities, Heshusius explores the meaning of an inclusionary mode of consciousness as the foundation for an *epistemological civil rights movement*. Heshusius’ appeal to revise the traditional behaviorist approach to research in special education through confrontations in self-other constructions plays well against Chapter 10, “Tensions and Conflicts: Experiences in Parent and Professional Worlds,” by Jude MacArthur. MacArthur explores the ideology of expertism to reveal the threat it poses to the creation of inclusive schools. Her chapter also raises questions about ethical concerns when researchers collaborate with parents to author research “about” disability and not as someone “with” a disability. Chapter 11, “The Politics of Ideology: A Pedagogy of Critical Hope,” by Linda Ware, describes how students and teachers in one high school ventured to risk an ideological stand in support of inclusion. For the students, the risk invited the opportunity to transgress inherited identities as Julie Allan discussed in Chapter 2. However, the teachers were more cautious and initially less willing to challenge the limits of the system’s pathological response to disability as fundamentally biological rather than cultural. The case reveals how resistant to change school systems can be at the same time teachers’ discourse, alliances, and tactics can confront ideologies that undermine inclusion.

The book ends not with answers or tidy solutions promising that readers might reconcile the myriad of complexities that educational and social inclusion invite. Rather, our aim is to explore the silences that too often limit the debate on inclusion

as mere procedural compliance. Our aim is to expose the silence and to inspire continuous conversations within a more broadly conceived discursive community. In the words of the poet Stephen Dunn (1989), “I’m just speaking out loud to cancel my silence.”

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