

# Intersectionality, diversity, community and inclusion

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# Intersectionality, diversity, community and inclusion: untangling the knots

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# Intersectionality, diversity, community and inclusion: untangling the knots

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## Abstract

An analysis was conducted of contemporary notions of inclusion and their provenance in developing thought about difference in education, with a particular focus on the role of community in promoting and enabling inclusion. Being informed by i) an international group of advisers, and ii) a national group of informants and commentators, a review was conducted of the theoretical and practical analysis of the issue. Conclusions were drawn about consequences deriving from intersectional thought about inclusion, which suggest that more attention should be paid, especially in a world of increasing diversity and 'superdiversity', to the kinds of groupings encouraged and facilitated by schools. A framing device is advanced for explicating kinds of community in schools, which draws on a range of theorists and particularly on the distinction between bonding and bridging made by Robert Putnam. An analysis of bridging proffers a range of means for brokering and cultivating groupings in schools and between schools and the communities in their localities.

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## Context

This article emerges as the result of research conducted as part of a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) programme examining the changing nature of community.<sup>1</sup> The project reported on here focused on the notion of community insofar as community relates to inclusion as it has been conceived over time and in contemporary discourse. It is based on seminars and consultations amongst academics and community groups which informed a critical review of literature on the topic. Our aim was to examine in detail notions of inclusion and community from an intersectional perspective, disentangling some of the issues that emerge from such a perspective and exploring the role of community in enabling inclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> This research project was funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of its *Connected Communities* programme.

During the project we paid special attention to the nature of connectedness inside and between communities for a better understanding of the role of community in inclusion and the ways in which community, or the lack of it, may foster (or inhibit) inclusion within and outwith schools. As part of this, we set the scene by contextualising inclusion historically and attempting to set the place of community theoretically within current thinking on inclusive education. We examined some of the possibilities and problematics of the notion of inclusion and diversity in what has been called a ‘superdiverse’ world, and some of the tensions engendered by the ‘inclusion and diversity’ signifier in today’s communities.

## Method

The research was informed by

- i) an expert advisory group comprising academics and members of local community groups from the West Midlands in the UK<sup>2</sup>, meeting in two workshop/seminars in the spirit of co-construction of knowledge – these took place at the outset and at the midpoint of the research. The aim in these discussions was to focus on kinds of inclusion and exclusion in schools and in wider society and the role of community in enabling inclusion. These workshops took place in the context of local manifestations of tension around civic disturbance and have been updated following concern in the same region over same-sex relationship education in schools. Participants in these groups developed themes arising from the literature and offered practical insights on those themes.
- ii) a continuing online discussion involving international partners in inclusion and education,<sup>3</sup> focusing on international dimensions of inclusion and diversity in the context of differing conceptions of community in heterogeneous cultures. Our participants here suggested ideas and literature to pursue and helped in the development of themes.

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<sup>2</sup> These included: a representative from a South Asian Arts Organisation, an elected councillor, two representatives from faith groups, a probation officer, two representatives from Birmingham youth groups, and three academics including the authors.

<sup>3</sup> We are grateful to Professor Gyöngyvér Pataki, University of Debrecen; Professor Maria P. Figueiredo, Polytechnic Institute of Viseu; Professor Bagele Chilisa, University of Botswana; Professor Francesca Gobbo, Università degli Studi di Torino; Professor Joe Tobin, University of Georgia, and Professor Linda Ware, State University of New York at Geneseo for their contributions to this research project.

- iii) In the light of i) and ii), a narrative search of theory-related and policy-related literature on community and connectedness which sought to review, critique and synthesise historical and contemporary thinking on community and inclusion, especially where this gave insights for the role of community in enabling or impeding inclusion.

Methodologically, the aim throughout was to integrate the various sources of data into an interconnected narrative, having allowed discussion to develop as participants themselves directed it. In line with this, and in line with critiques of formalistic qualitative analysis procedures (see Layder, 1993; Haig 1995; Miller and Fredericks, 1999; Robrecht, 1995; Thomas and James, 2006; Thomas, 2016), a narrative synthesis was adopted, respecting Robrecht's injunction 'to *look for data* rather than *look at data*' (1995, p. 171, original emphases).

In the context of this advice, Robrecht endorsed Schatzman's (1991) analytic approach, which seeks to extend the analytic process of everyday thinking by examining different concepts that might be used to condense ideas, integrating data from different sources and synthesising these. New ideas, themes and insights are incorporated as they arise. The flexibility central to this approach seemed to us best to give meaning to the principles and purpose of the research and to enable a truly synthetic account which a) integrated commentary and review, b) respected and incorporated the contributions of participants, and c) enabled a reflective element to be included in the light of subsequent events and analysis.

Using Schatzman's approach, a number of themes arose for review, and these shaped further discussion and provided structure and direction for the literature review. The themes were as follows:

- o Diversity and inclusion in the context of intersectionality and community
- o The centrality of community and belonging for inclusion
- o Diversity, superdiversity and inclusion
- o The politics of community in a diverse world
- o Communities and their place in complex systems (economic, infrastructural etc)

Under the theme headings that follow, discussion is integrated with review findings. Anonymity was pledged to all participants and direct quotations have been avoided, with discussion and individual commentary précised for inclusion in the narrative review. A small sub-group of participants member-checked the themes drawn up and offered advice on revising the conclusions being drawn about the discourse and the review.

## **Diversity and inclusion in the context of intersectionality and community**

Our project, focusing on community and its necessary role in inclusion, began from the assumption that there are new understandings of inclusion and diversity which extend beyond mere renaming. In other words, there is more to the notion of inclusion and diversity than changing the ways in which we think about ‘children with special needs’, or even about disability. An intersectional understanding laid the substrate for our thinking about the significance of community and it was important to explicate it. That understanding sees a range of overlapping factors in the dynamics of difficulty or exclusion, challenging the idea that there are homogeneous or stereotypical groups of one kind or another, and stressing the ways that different influences interrelate to marginalise, exclude or oppress (Crenshaw, 1991).

There is an historical trajectory to these changing understandings about inclusion and it was important at the outset of our project to engage with significant political and social moments relevant to these changing understandings. As Baglieri et al (2011) have noted, traditional understandings of inclusion grew from roots in special education, its own field of scholarship resting in psychological and medical frameworks, and this intellectual provenance has restrained the development of theory, restricted types of research and narrowed pedagogical practice, as policy-makers and education practitioners continually revisit and revive contracted understandings of inclusion based in ‘special needs’. To return to unidimensional conceptions of inclusion in this way seems to us to abrogate newer understandings of inclusion based in intersectionality. We thus strove to remind ourselves continually of the

multi-layered provenance of the difficulties that some children and young people experience at school.

We sought at the outset to consider some of the shifts in thinking that have brought about broadened conceptions of inclusion and their origins in a wider hinterland than 'special needs', and sourced more in community, understood in its widest sense. Paramount in changes in thinking were the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s. These (and others more recently such as the LGBTQ movement and the women's movement) encouraged commentators and academics to see adaptation to school having varied and multiple foundations and enabled emerging discourse about inclusion to incorporate ideas about diversity and social justice.

This put thinking about inclusion in the context of universal education – not a new idea, but, extending the historical gaze, one that has been resisted at every moment of its discussion, ever since Comenius in his 17<sup>th</sup> century *Didactica magna*, proposed the idea, against much opposition and hostility, that education should be universal. We see a reprise to that opposition today in the resistance offered in some quarters to the comprehensive ideal and to the desegregated education of children facing conspicuous challenges. As Hehir et al (2016) put it: 'Long-standing misconceptions regarding the capacities of children with intellectual, physical, sensory, and learning disabilities lead some educators to continue to segregate disabled and non-disabled students.' (p 2)

Some (for example, Booth, 1999) have challenged such notions by equating inclusion with comprehensive education and participation, and we advanced that argument in our enquiries, arguing that the real trial for inclusion is in enabling universality through the development and cultivation of community in schools. Such a standpoint, putting universal education and community first, is, we feel, in tune with contemporary ways of seeing inclusion – ways which rely on an intersectional stance on the difficulties children and young people face at school (Thomas and Loxley, 2007). However, such an intersectional stance presents challenges, some of which we shall discuss in this article, these challenges having emerged recently in local, national and international contexts.

The idea of universality has always been disputed, and the contest has usually taken operational shape in the form of some kind of selection or segregation. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Terman (1924: 336) had asserted that ‘The first task of the school would be to establish the native quality of every pupil; second, to supply the kind of instruction suited to each grade of ability’, and the instinct to sort and select persisted through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until today, with the reflex to select, sort and/or separate often still seemingly at the core of special education’s purpose.

Even while Terman was developing his IQ measures, though, the voices were not unidirectional. Around the same time, Dewey called for education to promote ‘a mode of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience’ (1916: 101). A school should be a place where the good society is fostered and epitomised: young people should be part of a community irrespective of background or ability. This is essential for the democratic society, Dewey argued – a theme developed by Lipsky and Gartner (1996), who argued that inclusion be seen as a way of both restructuring education and remaking society. Dewey’s thought here provided one of the foundation stones for the dismantling of mass selective systems such as the one introduced by the UK 1944 Education Act, but it also lays a cornerstone for alternative ways of thinking about inclusion (see Danforth, 2019).

Perhaps it is the resolutely special-education-history of discourses around inclusive education that has encouraged us to look so doggedly at forms of pedagogy as ways of dealing with difference. It is only recently, as the focus has shifted to the intersections of a range of personal, social and cultural characteristics – disability, ethnicity, gender, class, income level, care status, and others – that we have begun to appreciate a broader context to the travails that might be encountered by children and young people at school and for the need for community to be cultivated (see Nguyen, 2019).

Understandings based on such intersections transcend the limits of disability studies, medical and sociocultural studies of disability. The problem, to paraphrase Crenshaw (1991), is not that inclusion and diversity discourses fail to grasp the true nature of difference, but rather the obverse – it is that they too often conflate or ignore intersectional dynamics, flattening out the subtleties and interstices of difference. The elision of differences around ethnicity,



gender, sexuality, class and other concerns makes for too-easy repackaging of these differences as 'SEND' – the acronym for 'Special Educational Needs and Disability' used by the UK Department for Education (GOV.UK, 2019) – or 'learning disability'.

Indeed, issues generated by any or all of these factors are labelled and packaged as 'SEND' in the popular headlines. As the BBC (2018) put it: 'Almost half of all exclusions - either permanent or for a fixed period of time – are of pupils with identified special educational needs.' The headline betrays the belief that there are discrete groups of children – a) naughty/deviant children, and b) children with SEND – and the journalist writing the piece seems to be perplexed and regretful that such a high proportion of children with SEND are being excluded along with the naughty/deviant children. Such sentiments occur not because of crass journalism, but because journalists borrow the constructs professionals continue to use to assess and categorise the difficulties that young people face. The corollary to this is that SEND ceases to be a useful signifier if we purport to be thinking in an intersectional frame and if we purport to understand school failure not as a consequence of personal deficit but as multifactorial and situational.

Attribution theory offers an interesting insight here. One of attribution theory's central themes is 'fundamental attribution error', which posits that most individuals overemphasise personal characteristics (in making 'dispositional attributions') in accounting for other people's behaviour instead of stressing the situation in which those others find themselves as its cause (situational attribution). One can almost see a mass attribution error – the individual attribution error repeated on a corpus scale – in the attributions society and professionals make about individuals' school failure. Fisher (2009), for example, picking up ideas from James (2008) and Smail (1993), advances the idea of the 'privatisation of stress' in both the popular and scholarly discussion of the epidemic of depression among young people, wherein professional and popular discourses each see young people's unhappiness, expressed in self-harm, drug-taking and suicide, as personal issues instead of looking at the institutions and the society with which youngsters have to contend. Fisher sees 'capitalist realism' at the root of this attribution error, wherein it becomes literally impossible to conceive that things could be organised other than in their current form.

When Crenshaw states that '[Intersectionality] engages dominant assumptions that race and gender are essentially separate categories' (p 1244), the parallel for inclusion is that intersectionality engages dominant assumptions that inclusion is essentially an issue about learning difficulties, 'special needs' and disability. Tomlinson (1981) problematised such an assumption some time ago in analysing the disproportionality of certain ethnic groups in special education, and Artiles (2013) reveals how nothing very much has changed in more than 30 years, highlighting how the elision of racial and disability grouping is 'linked to assumptions of deficit often used to justify inequities' (p 329). The historical endurance of the elision is testament to the accuracy of Artiles's observation.

Crenshaw proceeds to discuss *political* intersectionality, wherein certain forms of politics have paradoxically helped to marginalise certain issues by labelling them as minority ones. Here, one can see the parallel problems for inclusion if it continues to be discussed principally in the context of disability, wherein it is ultimately explicable by resort to supposed personal deficit of one kind or another. Rather than being problematised, children's difficulties at school are conflated, simplified or even caricatured.

An intersectional perspective eschews the theoretical explanations offered by traditional accounts and the deficit-orientated history of exceptionality, seeing the experiences of exceptionality as discontinuous but with both shared and distinctive features. Foucault (1981) talked of a 'polyhedron of intelligibility' and this is a nice metaphor for seeing the complex pattern of influences – including gender, income, race and class – influencing achievement at school. Such a view enables a move away from the one-time focus of special education on ability and disability, and toward the construction of an understanding based in the social complexities of community and belonging.

### **The centrality of community and belonging for inclusion**

The centrality of community and belonging was flagged by Chief Justice Warren in the landmark case of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Supreme Court of the U.S., 1954). There, he noted that separation and exclusion '... generates a feeling of inferiority as to [students'] *status in the community* that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be

undone’ [italics added]. It is interesting that even in 1954 Warren was stressing the importance of *community* in the making of inclusion. This focus on community, while made over half a century ago, ought now to be an increasingly important theme in the discussion of inclusion and how it can be enhanced, putting the emphasis less on putative within-person attributes supposed to hold individuals back, and more on relationships in a social system which might be serving to exclude those individuals and inhibit their progress (Thomas, 2013). These relationships are now taken to lie at the centre of inclusion.

Seen in this way, inclusion is about the willingness not merely to accept and assimilate others but actively to involve them. It entails this group of people treating those others as part of itself. And the assumption is that the benefits are reciprocal: they are both to the included and the including, with the community as a whole gaining. The nature of the community thus comes into view as a dynamic structure which may include or exclude others, and its dynamics are drawn into focus as the other part of the precept in the ‘inclusion and diversity’ signifier – namely, diversity – enters more conspicuously into consideration.

‘Diversity’ is at the heart of an intersectional perspective. The word has been attached to ‘inclusion’ in recent discourse, and this is a wholly welcome development, in line with intersectional thinking. However, scant consideration has been given to the changed semantics and practicalities ensuing from the new nomenclature. ‘Diversity’ introduces fundamentally changed lineaments to the connotations of inclusion based in its traditional provenance. These changes have particular impact for the new groupings and gatherings in which students find themselves – the new communities – and we proceed in our analysis to examine some of the intersecting dimensions and contours of diversity insofar as these relate to inclusion.

### **Diversity, superdiversity and inclusion**

The potential confusion arising from the addition of ‘diversity’ to the vocabulary of inclusion is seen in the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016) statement on the right to inclusive education. Throughout the document, inclusion is framed around disability, and while there is a nod to diversity in statements such as ...

All members of the learning community are welcomed equally, with respect for diversity according to, inter alia, disability, race, colour, sex, language, linguistic culture, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin, property, birth, age or other status. (p 5)

... this acquiescence in the new language appears as something as an appendage, a bolt-on, to the thrust of the document, which resolutely talks about inclusion as an undifferentiated construct concerned with disability. The ideas 'inclusion' and 'diversity' are merely juxtaposed. For inclusion to be meaningful it should surely disavow unidimensional constructions of the term which maintain the idea that failure to thrive at school rests in some personal deficit.

To move beyond this, though – to move, in other words, to incorporate the heterogeneity encapsulated in 'diversity' presents challenges, and those challenges are even more acute in a world not only of diversity, but of what Vertovec (2007) calls 'superdiversity'. Vertovec argues that superdiversity concerns 'an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified' individuals and communities emerging globally. If this is the case, what kinds of community, what kinds of belonging can emerge in such settings, and to what extent are they replicated in schools?

Makoni (2012) has answered that our notions of diversity and inclusion are often romanticised, and create an illusion of equality in a highly asymmetrical world, particularly in contexts characterized by the hunger for homogenization recognisable in populist politics. He talks of the hypocrisy of a celebration of diversity in societies marked by violent xenophobia, such as South Africa, and one can see a replication of forms of xenophobia more recently across the globe as sequelae of migrations and diaspora. Putnam (2007) concurs, noting that in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods residents of all races tend to 'hunker down'. Trust is lower, altruism and community cooperation rarer, friends fewer (see also Slee, 2019, for a fascinating discussion). Wenger (2000) made a similar point – while communities have a sense of a joint enterprise and 'mutuality', he notes, we shouldn't romanticise: witch hunts were also community enterprises.

These warnings of a romanticisation in notions of diversity are only too apposite in education. Here, the optimistic rhetoric of inclusion is revealed in Minow's (2010) major review of the way that the Brown judgement of 1954 has been working. In it, she reveals the false hopes in the assumption that removal of formal segregation will allow inclusion magically to emerge in the education system, revealing also the reality of the connection between racial and 'special' segregation: '... schools too often are already settings for renewed racial segregation through academic tracking, special education assignments, and students' own divisions in lunch tables and cliques.' (p 153). Chapman and Bhopal (2019) document similar forms of discrimination stemming from stereotypes of African American and black Caribbean students in predominantly white spaces.

Particularly in education we talk glibly of inclusion and diversity – this in national and local environments revealing increased nationalism, and, seemingly, reduced feelings of mutual obligation and 'being in this together' as Derbyshire (2019: 8) puts it. Yet, as Lepore (2019) argues, the forces that create exclusion, philosophically rooted in illiberal, ethnically based and exclusionary thinking, can be defeated as long as another tradition – liberal, civic, grounded in assertions about equal rights – are strenuously promoted. This can happen in schools not only in humanities and citizenship pedagogy but more importantly in the deliberate fostering of community. Wenger (2000) points out that connectivity in a community can be promoted by a number of means: people who will broker relationships; signals and symbols of membership, and by well-chosen learning projects, books and online materials. Later in this article, we outline how activities such as Circle Time, 'jigsaw groups', family involvement, and the development of support can all work to promote community.

## **The politics of community in a diverse world**

In discussion, our internal and external groups were struck at the outset by the congruence of thought about community from two radically different political thinkers: Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke. Paine in *The Rights of Man* says: 'The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all the parts of civilised community upon each other, create that great chain of connection which holds it together'. This was contrasted with Burke's comments in *Reflections on the French Revolution*: 'To be attached to the subdivision,

to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections.’ Both seem to be talking of the ties which Tönnies later came to label *Gemeinschaft*.

If thinkers as different as Paine and Burke can agree on the contours of fulfilment which emerge from the fabric of community, there must surely be some truth in their commonality. They seem both to be pointing to the belonging that comes from what we might now call co-dependence. ‘Public affection’ and ‘civilisation’ come from knowing that one belongs, that one’s contribution matters and that one can be valued as part of a group, a community.

The difficulties emerge when the lineaments of connection become so extended that Burke’s ‘little platoon’ fails as a realistic metaphor – diversity here ceases to be positively construed. As Goodhart (2004) pointed out, the Burkean view is that affinities ripple out from families and locales to the nation and not very far beyond. They depend on collocations of history and tradition. He suggests that Burke’s view contrasts with the liberal universalist one which sees us equally obligated to all people, whoever they are – an idea associated with the universalist aspects of the Abrahamic faiths, with Kantian universalism and with left-wing internationalism. Tensions arise around the *kind* of community we are talking about.

‘Knowing that one belongs’ seemed to our internal group highly significant in the region local to the research site. Here (in the UK West Midlands) is found the most diverse population in the UK (outside London) with nearly 20% of the population from Asian, Black or mixed heritage backgrounds and 80% White British (GOV.UK, 2018), with spates of riots and lawlessness in the 2010s predominantly involving minority groups. More recently (and subsequent to the group’s meetings) tensions arising in schools because of competing sets of rights prioritised by different faith communities have come to the fore over teaching about same-sex relationships in schools.

In some senses, Putnam resolves some of the tensions inhering in the notion of community in the distinction he draws between *bonding* and *bridging*. Bonding – called the ‘dark side’ of community by Noddings (1996: 258) – is about the solidarity of a group, reinforcing identity, conformity, and exclusion of others. Bridging, by contrast, is about openness and

interconnectivity. In other words, forms of community are fundamentally different in their attitude to including others.

The internal group went on to explore conceptualisations of the kinds of connections which can form, tie and strengthen community – and, importantly, the significance of these for the kinds of communities constructed, within and outside schools. For insights on how notions of connectivity have changed over time we took as a starting point the ideas of a range of social commentators extending back as far as Hanifan (1916, 1920) to more recent observers such as Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1995, 2000).

Bourdieu, for example, sees social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group’ (p. 248). Adding to this, Coleman notes the importance of obligations, expectations, trust, kinds of communication, and norms. And Hanifan, in his classic work as a West Virginia school superintendent, tried to develop community with the use of a community history to bring people together. None of them, however, adequately differentiates types of mutuality in a community, and one might even argue that Hanifan’s work promoted a reinforcement of ‘in-groupness’ in school or Putnam’s ‘bonding’. It is Putnam’s work which is particularly relevant for inclusivity. He discusses social capital as the connectedness among people – the ‘... norms of reciprocity’ within communities (2000: 19). Following Putnam, we explored the kinds of connectivity that lead to social trust in an inclusive community and how it might be promoted.

For Putnam, bridging assets are needed for generating broader identities and reciprocity: ‘Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD40’ (Putnam, 2000: 22-23). Bridging networks are good for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion, says Putnam: it can generate broader identities and reciprocity, while bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves.

Each – bonding and bridging – can be seen in forms of school organization and one can see how bridging and bonding could be encouraged or discouraged by the school. Bridging could

be promoted by Putnam's 'WD40' activities – through activities such as Circle Time (Bliss and Tetley, 2006), where teacher and students take part in activities such as co-operative games, drama, and talking and listening exercises using puppets and masks. Certain topics may form the focus of attention, such as an issue facing the class, or there may be discussions around thoughts and feelings. The general themes are inclusion, respect, and turn-taking.

Or bridging may be encouraged in the use of sharing and cooperative activities, in, for example, the 'jigsaw groups' of Aronson (2002), wherein groups are formed for heterogeneity in terms of gender, ethnicity and ability, and tasks are assigned to group members on the basis that each person's contribution is necessary to the completion of a task. Kim and Schneider (2005), Kao and Rutherford (2007), Benner et al (2016) and Kervick et al (2019) have all showed the existence of, and benefits of, bridging in parents' involvement. Garcia-Reid (2007) demonstrated positive and direct effects of bridging by encouraging 'teacher support, friend support, and parent support on school engagement' (p 164).

In taking a situational attribution approach to the anxiety and depression many young people experience, Gorski and Pothini (2018) directly address the unintended role of school in encouraging bonding through the imposition of discipline regimes which actually promote trauma, encouraging tight in-group formation amongst students. Here, they echo social theorists who have noted that labelling and exclusion by and from majority communities may contribute to powerful 'bonding' and identity-building connections of a potentially destructive (and self-destructive) kind, such as those found in gangs (Deuchar, 2011). Much of this understanding originated in the analyses of Cohen (1955) and Matza (1964), who looked to status, comparison and identity to account for juveniles' 'delinquent' acts, and Willis (1977), in his classic *Learning to Labour*, showed how a form of counter-school community, while providing the security of bonding at school, became ultimately counter-productive, leading working-class students into subordinate, low-wage positions in the working world, contributing to what Willis calls their 'self-damnation'.

This is borne out in more recent research than that of the original 'deviance theorists'. McCarthy and Hagan (1995) suggest that embeddedness in networks of deviant associations



provides access to tutelage that helps the acquisition of criminal skills and attitudes. They call this 'criminal capital' (by contrast with 'social capital'). The fibrils of these connections extend through and beyond the institutional boundaries set by school, as Sampson and Groves (1989) showed in their surveys of around 10,000 residents in UK localities.

In light of this, Gorski and Pothini (2018) recommend fundamental changes in the structure of schools and their approaches to personal relations, advocating the kinds of activities that will encourage peer-to-peer and teacher-to-student support, and discourage, for example, xenophobia. Our participants took this further, noting the need to develop communities of interest, rather than communities of place, belief or faith. They stressed the need for varieties of people to meet. Perhaps the corollary here is for direct encouragement for students to move out of their friendship comfort zones and, via structured activity, to form new groups and build new relationships with unfamiliar partners. The ubiquitous 'find a partner' might be superseded by a more dirigiste approach to partnership and group formation.

Beaudoin (2007) asserted that the promotion of certain activities among students, involving consideration of social and political issues, resulted in increased bridging social capital, which was taken to be the cause of improved well-being. One might go further to suggest that more fundamental within-school norms and beliefs lie behind the connectedness of bridging social capital – beliefs in equal potential, in respect and recognition for all (e.g. Lindfors, et al, 2018). The less desirable 'bonding' would be encouraged through 'house' formation, organized competition, systematized testing, token economies, and so on. As Slee (2019) put it, 'In effect, such practices [banding, streaming, and special education] continue to reflect hierarchies of belonging and exclusion from the educational main-game.'

Importantly, bonding and bridging have been used in analyses of social capital internationally, particularly where there are conspicuous tensions within or between the communities that schools serve. Geys and Murdoch (2008) examined voluntary association membership in Flanders, noting that both forms operate but that the conceptualisation of the forms in the literature stereotypes bridging as good and bonding as bad. They suggest that bonding can also be helpful, by providing a vital source of support to some people, and this may help

more vulnerable students in school also, as strong connections are made between more 'outcast' individuals such as the children of refugees. The positive side of bonding is also seen in self advocacy groups – groups of people with learning difficulties, developmental or other disabilities who speak up and campaign for themselves and work to improve the lives of their members.

The analysis of Geys and Murdoch offers an extension of the bridging concept for schools by drawing a distinction between external bridging (i.e. between networks) and internal bridging (within networks), and this offers a helpful framework for pastoral staff in schools. Looking at community relations in Northern Ireland, Leonard (2004) noted that the political conflict in Northern Ireland had enabled the development of bonding social capital; for bridging social capital to emerge, the conditions that led to the development of bonding social capital needed to be undermined – a point particularly relevant for schools where powerful faith traditions obtain.

Morrow (2001) argues that the use of the bridging/bonding distinction distracts attention from economic and political factors in the origins and experiences of groups. The contention here is that there may be a false simplicity engendered by the separation of bonding and bridging. The point is well developed by Simplican et al (2015), who propose an ecological model of inclusion that includes individual, interpersonal, organizational, and community considerations. Drazenovich et al (2017: 213) assert something similar in their definition of inclusion: '... The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity— in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities'. This engagement, though, surely needs to be managed to direct itself to the bridging-type activities referred to earlier in this section. It also needs to be aware of the potential friction which emerges in the intersection of conflicting sectional interests – in the case of schools with highly diverse populations, of respect for faith-based beliefs on the one side, and the need to teach about understanding for equity in diversity on the other.

In this context, Marmot (2010: 20) points to the significance of education in the early years with closer links between schools, families and the local community with more and better extended services. For there to be more connectedness, more inclusivity, more could be

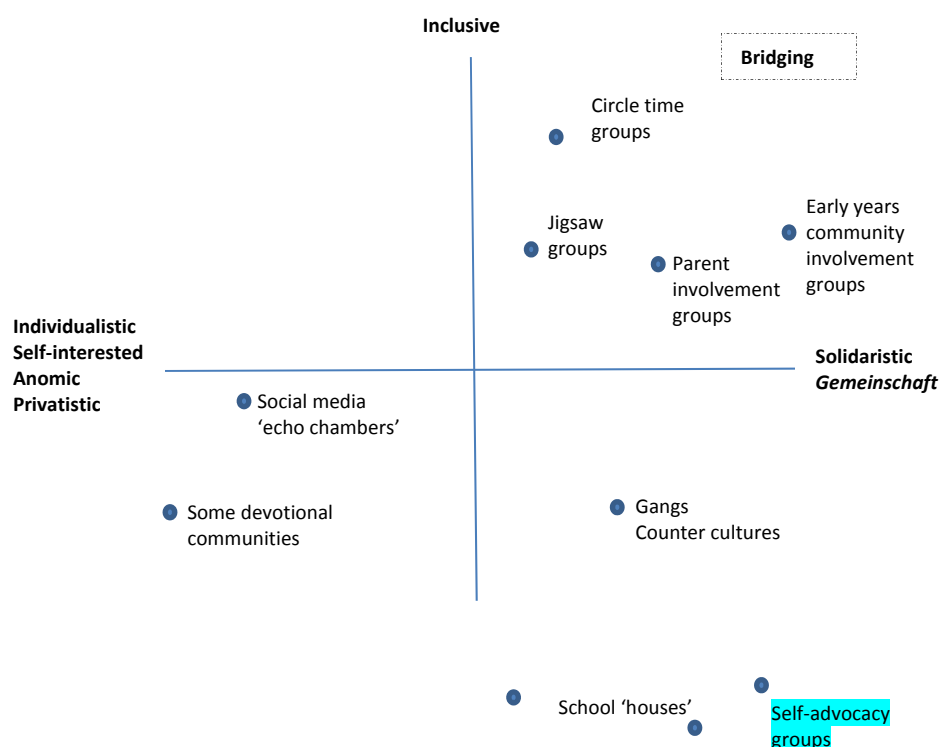
done in training teaching and non-teaching staff to work across home-school boundaries; inclusivity can be promoted both at school and at wider community levels, and efforts to do this will surely operate with reciprocal influence.

Given the complexities of the 'community' signifier in considering issues of inclusion and diversity in education, we offer the following model to synthesise much of the theory and practice thus far reviewed.

### A framing device

Plagens (2011) offers a continuum of community running from the privatistic/anomic and self-interested at one end to the solidaristic at the other – the latter broadly congruent with the *Gemeinschaft* of Tönnies (1935), but adding the at-first-sight oxymoronic 'individualistic' to a notion of community, since some communities, especially in a virtual world, enable forms of communication with little personal connection. To this, we add an orthogonal dimension – inclusive to exclusive – to embrace Putnam's bridging/bonding distinction (see Figure 1). All forms of community in which educators might be interested thus fall on the right-hand side of the diagram, with a distinction drawn between those that may be seen as inclusive and those that are more exclusive. Educators wishing to think about promoting inclusion will look to the top right quadrant.

Figure 1. Inclusivity and community in education – the theory and the practice



Clubs

Bonding

Exclusive

## Communities and their place in complex systems (economic, infrastructural)

It is important not to neglect the crucial role of poverty and inequality in pursuing an intersectionalist understanding of exclusion and inclusion. Marsh (2011) notes that the huge amounts nations spend on education persist in doing little to improve the life chances of those students who possess few of the advantages of life. He returns to a point made by Jencks (1972) in *Inequality* to sum up his point – that a school’s output depends largely on a single input: the characteristics of the children who enter. Marsh concludes, like Jencks, that schools fail to equalise or even alter the distribution of opportunity for their students. And Marsh notes that nothing has changed in nearly fifty years: in fact, inequality and its sequelae have accelerated. After a major review of inequality, Marmot (2010: 19) agrees, concluding: ‘Inequalities in educational outcomes are as persistent as those for health and are subject to a similar social gradient. Despite many decades of policies aimed at equalising educational opportunities, the attainment gap remains.’

Why should this failure persist? There is strong evidence that a steep ‘gradient’ of difference in income exaggerates alienation, exclusion and poorer outcomes – in education and elsewhere, and within and between national communities (see Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Schuelka et al, 2019). Looking at the negative consequences for inclusion to a local community where gradients are steep, Willms (1999: 85) notes that attempts have been made in some areas for the deliberate construction of community that involve initiatives for, for example, parental participation and site-based governance in schools. Feiler (2009) records the success of similar parental involvement projects in the UK. As both Feiler and

Kervick et al (2019) point out, where family-professional partnership and cooperation occur, children are more likely to become included and to succeed.

Much of the fabric of contemporary connectivity in schools and elsewhere, however, works to 'harden' and stratify groups of individuals and here there are infrastructural issues at play, such as those coming from new technology. Calhoun (1998) points to the importance of social media in the formation of new communities, noting that technology may do much to foster bonded 'categorical identities' – something to which schools must be alert. Kelemen and Smith (2001) raise a similar issue, pointing to the construction of the 'neo-tribe' formed by the virtual community. Friedland (2001) goes so far as to suggest that the idea of community in a post-industrial society is in fact a misnomer, noting that young people appear now to have more connection through social media and soap operas than they would historically through physical proximity or place of worship. The consequences for schools are manifest, given the opportunity for 'outing' via social media of those who are different in any way. Others, however, (e.g. Kumar, 2009; Lambert and Fisher, 2009) are more sanguine, pointing to the opportunities that exist in using social media in positive ways to facilitate community and inclusion.

Much commentary here appears to confirm the notion of 'liquid modernity', which Bauman (2000) has used to describe the decline of positive connectivity in contemporary society. The evidence appears to be that community can become a misnomer as connections are attenuated in a world of superdiversity and fragmenting order. The consequences for inclusion in schools are serious and deliberate effort is required by school staffs to engage in the kinds of activities noted above and to resist increasing pressures to assess and separate.

## **Conclusions**

Our starting point in our research was that, as Slee (2018: 2) put it, inclusive education is a 'poorly conceptualised and defined area of educational research and practice'. Agreeing with him, we take the position that much popular and academic discourse about inclusion neglects many of the assumptions of intersectionality and persists in conjoining multifaceted contributions to the difficulties students experience at school, articulating them as 'disability'.

In our reviews, we have taken the position that this persisting characterisation encourages attributions about difficulty to dispositional rather than situational factors and we have made the argument that such continuing attributions force a neglect of the broader situational and political factors in the discourse about inclusion, and particularly about diversity, which we judged to be neglected in much 'inclusion and diversity' discourse. Here, we have focused on what we consider to be a central situational factor, namely the nature and dynamics of communities inside and outside schools and how those enable or resist inclusive practice, which we take to be especially significant given the 'superdiversity' characterising many school populations in a world of increasing migration and diaspora.

We have concluded that the ways communities – both inside schools and in wider society – are connected with each other vary significantly. In some groups, strong internal bonds may exclude outsiders, while in others the connections enable a more inclusive approach to the world. Given the confirmation of the broad utility of Putnam's bonding/bridging distinction across a range of work, we suggest that more research needs to be conducted on the activities, work, organisation, etc. that characterise bonding and bridging in practical circumstances. We have offered a framing device to explicate theoretical approaches to community, which we hope will offer guidance on the kinds of connections facilitative of inclusion.

Many school-based initiatives to support community for inclusion have been successful, but further research is needed on the conditions that enable communities in school to develop cross-cutting forms of connectedness rather than strong, internal bonds. Ways for brokering relationships within communities, fostering group membership, and promoting the use of in-school means of encouraging bridging-type activity (and avoiding bonding-type communities) should be sought. Practical implementation in this area needs to be further researched.

While much research has been undertaken at a national level on the significance of income gradients, there has been far less work on their significance at community level. Research to explicate the effects of, for example, adjacency of communities between which there are steep gradients would be useful, given their demonstrated significance at national level.

Our methodology was to have two groups shaping, structuring and informing our review. One group – international and academic – offered theoretical and contextual guidance, and the other, local and community-based, provided guidance and reflection on topics of practical importance. Our assessment is that this methodology married the theoretical and the practical nicely, providing a valuable set of triangulations for the examination of our theme. Empirical work stemming from our analysis might look at features of the different kinds of groups and communities outlined by this research.

One of the central themes to emerge from the research was the need to move away from the assessment- competition- and discipline-orientated concerns of schools if schools stand any chance of becoming truly inclusive. As Tomlinson (2018) pointed out, the word ‘inclusion’ is now in practice used to describe its polar opposite, exclusion, as schools are forced to conjoin the performative demands of governments with the rhetoric of an inclusive society espoused by those same governments. The result: the exclusion room is often called the ‘inclusion room’. Such Orwellian doublethink occurs, of course, because of the conflicting demands of political authority, but also because the models, ideas, vocabulary and instruments used to construe difficulty at school have remained essentially unchanged for over half a century. The message from this research is that genuinely intersectional understandings of difficulty need to focus on structural and social dimensions of schooling – not only on the ways that we see difficulty, but on the ways that we encourage and enable children and young people to live and work together harmoniously and productively.

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