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Inclusive research in education: Dialogue, relations and methods

Introduction

The Jewish theologian and philosopher, Martin Buber (1878–1965), sketches the following, striking portrait of two persons as they confront, but refuse to welcome, each other:

Let us imagine two men, whose life is dominated by appearance, sitting and talking together. Call them Peter and Paul. Let us list the different configurations which are involved. First, there is Peter as he wishes to appear to Paul, and Paul as he wishes to appear to Peter. Then there is Peter as he really appears to Paul, that is, Paul's image of Peter, which in general does not in the least coincide with what Peter wishes Paul to see; and similarly there is the reverse situation. Further, there is Peter as he appears to himself, and Paul as he appears to himself. Lastly, there are the bodily Peter and the bodily Paul. Two living beings and six ghostly appearances, which mingle in many ways in the conversation between the two. Where is there room for any genuine interhuman life? (Buber 1965, 77)

This account might in turn help us to imagine a situation in which two persons are drawn together, not to encounter each other, but rather so they might give and receive information in accordance with pre-established research methods and procedures. We will follow Buber's lead and name them researcher Peter and researched Paul. Researcher Peter wishes to appear to the researched Paul as a serious, legitimate researcher, and as such he endeavours to convey a cool stance, to embody what he imagines to be scientific rigorousness and seriousness. Researched Paul is also concerned to appear aloof, impenetrable and, at the same time, efficient and knowledgeable. What of Paul's perception of researcher Peter? To Paul, Peter appears shifty, peculiar, a man on the make. While to Peter, researched Paul seems slippery and evasive, unnecessarily noncompliant, and very possibly a man with something to hide.

Immediately, this situation alerts us to the ways in which research practices can become mere performances that succeed only in divesting persons of their distinctiveness. In his famous encapsulation of his philosophy of dialogue, Buber pronounces: 'All real living is meeting' (Buber 2004, 17). Such meetings occur *between* us, where persons, each fully present in their own distinct actualities are readied to receive and welcome other persons, the world and God (Buber, 2004). As we meet each other so speech streams forth from what Buber (2004, 11) calls 'the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou*', which 'is a different *I* from that of the primary word *I-It*'. Certainly, it is in what Buber (2004, 12) names the 'realm of *It*' that we can locate our researcher Peter and other researchers like him. Researchers, that is, who, in their preoccupation with themselves and their research projects, speak out of an *I* that is poised to use and consume whatever it confronts.

What, then, would it mean to think about inclusive research in education in terms of meeting and non-meeting? What would research look like if researchers and the researched were to address each other as *Thou*, as distinct and unique persons? Nind (2014a, 535) has usefully observed:

‘Knowledge generated through inclusive research is plural and complicated and requires theoretical work’. It is the central contention of this article that this theoretical work is required before as well as after inclusive research produces knowledge and that Buber’s thought has a significant contribution to make to this work.

As we attempt to illuminate this contribution, we consider two perspectives on inclusive research. The first connects inclusive research to a series of practices that can be played out in accordance with an established method or a model. The second insists that inclusive research in education advances from an emancipatory commitment to the excluded, the oppressed and the marginalised. In relation to the first view, we argue that total reliance upon method and procedure can reduce research practices to a series of specialist activities. This can, in turn, result in the exclusion of both researchers and the persons they research in two distinct ways. First, we examine the centrality of responsibility in Buber’s philosophy of dialogue to argue that this, specialist, approach to research can lead researchers to evade responsiveness and attentive listening to the persons they research. Second, we argue that specialist researchers can find themselves alienated from their capability address to the people they research, to respond to and to learn from them. In advancing these arguments, we do not attempt to deny the importance of methods; rather, we take a stance against their elevation as ends in themselves, over and above relation. In response to the second perspective on inclusive research in education, we draw on Buber’s (2006) distinctive concept of ‘inclusion’ as we advance the argument that inclusive research in education privileges neither the researcher nor the researched, since it privileges the dialogue that brings *both* the researchers and the researched together in an *educative* relation.

Researchers committed to inclusion in and through education will find in this discussion no straightforward solutions to the problem of exclusion in research practices and no code of practice to follow. Instead, we caution against the belief that research might become inclusive merely by virtue of being conducted *for* marginalised others or through its adherence to an ‘inclusive research methodology’. Indeed, we contend that such research may prove to be neither inclusive nor educative. Taking our inspiration from Buber’s insights, we argue for a distinct way of thinking about and conducting inclusive research, one that generates opportunities for researchers and researched to be realised as unique persons and to be educated about how the world is now and how it might be changed for the better.

Inclusive research in education and methods

It is possible to distinguish three distinct responses to the question of how we might begin to distinguish inclusive from exclusionary research in education. The first connects inclusive research to practices that include persons who might otherwise be excluded from research. The second response contends that inclusive researchers are distinguished by more than their concern with the question of *who* is included or excluded in research; they are preoccupied, also, by the question of *how* the researched might be included within research practices. What matters here is the establishment of research practices that are themselves inclusive. The third response takes seriously the questions of *who* is included and *how* to conduct research inclusively, but demands that these questions are underscored by an understanding of *why* it matters that research practices are inclusive and not exclusionary. Each of these responses, with their accompanying concerns with who is included, how they are included and why they are included, have in their differing ways promoted the establishment or implementation of methods for or a model of inclusive research in education.

Addressing the question of *how* inclusive researchers might include otherwise excluded groups of people, Cluley (2017, 41) advises: ‘When conducting inclusive research, an appropriate method that can be tailored to the abilities of all involved must be prioritised’. The insistence that inclusive research constitutes a distinct model or method or even set of methods implies that particular forms of knowledge underpin inclusiveness in research. According to this way of thinking, inclusion is achieved in research when researchers draw on the most accurate, that is, scientific, knowledge of the needs and abilities of differing groups of excluded persons and then match this knowledge to effective methods. Equally, exclusion occurs when researchers fail in the implementation of an effective research model for, or when methods are not correctly applied to, particular groups of excluded people. Thus, Chown *et al.* (2017) argue that the trend of increasing involvement in research of people classified as having intellectual impairments has not extended to those with autism.

Addressing the question of *why* inclusive research matters, some researchers have claimed that there are emancipatory possibilities waiting to be secured in and through this research, if only researchers can develop the right kinds of methods or the most effective research model. Fullana *et al.*, for example, write: ‘The inclusive research model, developed from the 1990s onwards, argues that people with relevant personal experience on an issue being investigated should participate actively in the research process’ (2017, 684). Note that they describe here not *a* model, but *the* model. Johnson *et al.* (2014, 77) also connect emancipatory research to method when they argue that inclusive “research represents a movement from a research model in which people were ‘subject’ to research to one in which they are accorded respect, are seen as experts in their own lives and can be agents for change.”

What emerges out of these concerns with methods for and a model of inclusive research is the idea of a *specialist* researcher, that is, of a suitably effective and knowledgeable practitioner in the research field. In this way it becomes difficult to discern a tangible difference between research that purports to be inclusive and ‘special education research’ which is, Slee (1998, 444) insists, ‘driven by specialists in particular areas of dysfunctionality applying their expertise and testing hypotheses on the subjects of their research’. Such specialist researchers are deemed to be capable both of establishing fixed ways of including - and potentially liberating - excluded people and of generating formulas and rules that other researchers might follow in their attempt to match people’s needs to research methods. Inclusive research is thus understood as a technical matter: the question of who is and who is not included in research practices, it turns out, rests on who is and who is not methodologically *includable*. The question of how to include is here reduced to the practical problem of matching methods or a model not to needs and interests of unique persons but to groups of individuals classified as belonging to the same group. Having ‘moved their practices to other sites and adjusted their language’, these specialist researchers are able to speak of their inclusive research in education while not once daring to ‘shake the epistemological tree of this special education research tradition’ (Slee 1998, 444).

No wonder, then, that Willmann and Seeliger (2017, 155) hold that we have witnessed ‘a dangerous rise of behaviouristic monoculture in education research’. Similarly, in their account of the development of Disability Studies in Education, Connor *et al.* (2008, 445) observe that its scholars have been unified by ‘a shared dissatisfaction with the field of special education’s restrictive, insular stance toward scholarly diversity’, a stance, they insist, that has engendered “egregious limitations in the forms of ‘acceptable’ research methodologies” along with ‘deficit-driven, medicalized conceptualizations of disability’. Such arguments convey a sense of the privileging of method as being fundamental to the discipline of special education research. Set

against this recognition of reductionism in research is Fielding's more encouraging call for researchers to take the distinct insights and ideas of young people seriously, one that stipulates in particular: 'We need new opportunities for dialogic encounter' (2004, 309). But just how might we transcend research that is, in the final analysis, a monologue and generate such opportunities for dialogical educational research? We argue that Buber's philosophy of dialogue offers the basis for a critique of the specialist conception inclusive research and, more positively, for an alternative conception of inclusive research as educative practice. In particular, we address the primary significance of responsibility and what Buber names 'the turn' in this philosophy.

Responsibility and inclusive research in education

Central to the fostering of dialogical relations in educational and educative research is a responsibility to *listen* to the other person. Fielding (2001, 103-4) argues that if 'teachers are listening, not just to understand, but to learn', then they might come to 'learn more about their students; learn more about their teaching; learn more about the nature of learning'. Likewise, Messiou and Hope (2015, 11) address the transformative possibilities of inclusive research in schools when they note that 'students' views, if listened to carefully, can allow schools to rethink their own roles in developing more inclusive environments'. Such acts of listening elude the reduction of the other person to passivity. Indeed, inclusive, listening *dialogues* between researchers and practitioners have the potential to open up spaces for thinking anew about educational practices (Korsgaard, Larsen and Wiberg 2018). Fielding (2004, 308) locates the 'transformative potential' of listening to students' voices 'in its reciprocity', since it is through this reciprocity that 'trust and creativity are most likely to grow'. Messiou (2012, 1319) concurs that, when researching the views and judgements of students, 'through the process of dialogue, the levels of trust among the members of the classroom context can increase and ultimately have a change in the cultures of a given context'. Fullana, Pallisera and Vilà (original emphasis, 2014, 724) go so far as to equate 'promoting inclusive research relates to the possibility that people are *free to express their point of view with their own voice*', before insisting that this can happen only where researchers are 'striving to recognize, listen, and understand' (725). It is for this reason that Baglieri *et al.* (original emphasis, 2011, 273) observe how scholars, contributing to Disability Studies in Education, take 'great care' to ensure that they 'do not use research as a means of excluding the voices of people with disabilities' and, more positively, to 'use research as a vehicle *for* their voices so that they can tell their own stories and share their own goals, aspirations, and needs'.

Together, these insights suggest that to listen to the persons we research from the silent depths of our attention means stilling the will to speak immediately after they have spoken. It is a question of learning to let 'the word grow out of the thought in responsible silence' (Buber 1997, 234). In this way we might receive, and not merely process, what students and others have told us. And yet, how rare it is to turn to another person and ask what they are going through and then wait for them to speak of their experience. How difficult it is to approach another person with empty hands, with neither expectations to affirm nor fears to dispel. Yet this is the responsibility of an inclusive researcher; such a researcher, knowing that 'every living situation has, like a newborn child, a new face, that has never been before and will never come again', knows also that each moment 'demands presence, responsibility' (Buber 2006, 135).

Responsibility for another person is not and cannot be encapsulated within a set of rules or delimited within a code of practice. 'Responsibility to Buber means responding', Friedman (1957, 112) observes, 'but no responding is possible unless one relates to what one meets as present, as unique, as Thou'. This is precisely why Cohen (1979, 99) notes: 'It is impossible to base an

educational model on Buber's philosophy, since the encounter between teacher and pupil is newly enacted each time it takes place'. What is true of the relation between educators and educated is true, also, of the relation between researchers and researched in education. To respond to the persons one wishes to include within research activities, it is necessary that one has trust, not simply in one's capability to perfect methods and procedures, but more concretely in the dialogue in and through which one meets these persons ever anew. In and through dialogue, Buber (2004) tells us, we address each other not as mere *individuals*, who establish their distinctiveness by way of directing and controlling others, but rather as *persons*. In so much as I directly and merely experience an *individual* so they become just one more of the multitude of the threads that weave together to form the tapestry of my sensory life, but I welcome another *person* and I allow myself to be welcomed by them. It is not possible to 'depict or denote or describe' this person (Buber 2006, 12), but it is possible to respond to them and thus to include them, and in turn to allow them to include me, in dialogue.

Responsibility in research, from this perspective, thus demands that researchers stand *in* relation with and respond to the researched. How different this is from the situation of the specialist researcher, for whom everything turns not on the ability to respond but rather on the ability to establish - to establish, that is, the needs of deficient individuals and the methods that might correspond to these needs. Consider here the following observation from Greene (1995, 39):

Those who are labelled as deficient, fixed in that category as firmly as flies in amber, have little chance to feel they can be yet otherwise than what they have become. Marginalized, they are left to the experience of powerlessness unless (usually with support) they are enabled to ... reach beyond.

Imagine just one child 'labelled as deficient', classified in terms of their disability or difficulty, defined from the outside by specialists. This child, following an individualised learning programme, knows that each of her learning endeavours are to be measured in accordance with what specialists have designated as being limited or at fault within her. Imagine asking this same child to speak about her school and how it might be changed for the better. How disorientating to be asked a question when, for first time, the correct answer is not waiting to be satisfied. How strange to be asked to speak, not as a child who experiences this or that difficulty, but in her own voice. How unsettling this might be and thus how necessary the support of which Greene speaks. All of this points to nothing less than the need for inclusive research practices that can materialise only once researchers really respond to the people they are researching; only, that is, once researchers are fully present before and attentive to these persons.

Let us return to the work of Greene (1993, 212), and in particular to this crucial insight:

persons marked as unworthy are unlikely to feel good enough to pose the questions in which learning begins, unlikely to experience whatever curriculum is presented as relevant to their being in the world.

Equally, children can hardly begin to engage in research process if they have been made to feel themselves to be 'unworthy'. Until children are supported so that they might speak without fear of affirming the defects they know too many adults perceived within them, there can be no research that includes them. As Messiou (2017, 148) contends, 'research in the field of inclusive education should focus on contextual barriers, rather than on deficit views that place the blame for educational failure on individual learners'. Indeed, until children are assured that what matters

is what they want to say - and not what they think they ought to say to impress, or to affirm the beliefs of, some adult - there can be no research that includes them. Inclusive research with children involves teaching them that all that matters is more than all that can be measured; it means teaching them that who they are becoming and what they want to say really matters.

Inclusive research in education and the turn to the other person

A central and significant theme emerging in the literature about inclusive research is the ethical imperative to avoid the reduction of the researched to mere subjects. Connor *et al.* (original emphasis, 2008, 448), for example, locate, as one of the central principles of research Disability Studies Education, an adherence 'to an emancipatory stance' that involves "working *with* people with disabilities as informed participants or co-researchers, not 'subjects'". Similarly, Nind (2017, 280) advances an 'understanding of inclusive research as a series of morally-committed, prudent choices' all of which ensure that participants 'doing inclusive research are not passive providers or consumers of research knowledge but critically engaged in generating it'. More generally, Rojas, Susinos and Calvo (2013, 157) advocate for ways of including research participants that transform them 'from their ordinary condition as a passive subject to an active position' by way of giving them 'the power to choose what is researched'. Likewise, Welikala and Atkin (2014, 401) situate 'inclusive research' in opposition to 'research about student experience [that] is carried out by researchers while students act the passive role of informants'.

By way of conveying something of the significance of this reduction of the researched to submissive, voiceless individuals, we now address Buber's articulation of the teachings of Hasidism. 'Hasidism was the life-blood of Buber's understanding of reality', Blenkinsop (2005, 289) notes, before going on to insist that 'to ignore it is to compromise what Buber has to offer education'. What is true of Buber's insights into education is true, also, of his potential contribution to our understanding of research into education. On the one hand, Hasidism can be characterised as a movement that gained popularity amongst Jews in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe (Friedman 1988; Guilherme and Morgan 2011). On the other hand, it is what Buber (2000, 16) named 'a way of life' and 'not a teaching'. It is, then, a spiritual way of life that refuses any 'essential distinction between sacred and profane actions, between sacred and profane conversations' (Buber 2000, 23). What Buber drew from Hasidism he expressed with the Hebrew word, *teshuvah* (Friedman 1993; Kramer 2003; Blenkinsop 2005), which denotes the turning of a person in their entirety from the monologue of self-obsession so that they might enter into dialogue with other persons, the world and God. But there can be no turn to the researched wherever researchers approach these persons as research subjects and refuse to acknowledge their life beyond the parameters of their research questions and concerns. It is this ability to cast others free from what most immediately concerns us about them, from the sensory impressions we have of them, and from the judgements we have come to form about them, that Buber (1965) holds to be a distinctive capacity of all human beings

However, this ability to distance other persons from what we can know of them does not in and of itself mean that they these persons will appear to us in all their originality and distinctiveness. 'Man can set a distance', Buber (1965, 64) writes, 'without coming into real relation with what has been set at a distance'. A crucial distinction must be made at this point between an *inclusive distance* and a *capturing distance*. An inclusive distance is inclusive precisely because it generates a space into which another person can step forth as they are, while the capturing distance is maintained by the researcher as they gaze over the researched readied to seize upon the reality of their lives. This corresponds, also, to the difference between 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' relations. As Katz (1978, 58) notes,

the ‘*I-It* relation is primarily a utilitarian relation’, and its ‘prominent feature ... is the detachment which governs the intercourse between the active knowing consciousness and the object to which this consciousness is directed’.

This distinction might also illuminate the difference between researchers who keep their distance from the researched so they might better capture reality – exemplified by the specialist researchers – and those researchers who retain a distance from the people they research so that these people might step forth to speak of the reality of their own lives. It is not enough, then, to distance another person from one’s experiences of and one’s judgement’s about them, since such distancing simply creates an *opportunity* for inclusion, one which can be realised only once the other person has, in Buber’s (1965) language, been ‘confirmed’.

To turn to, to meet and to *confirm* another person is, in Buber’s terms, to encounter that which exceeds the stretch of one’s knowledge no matter how extensive it might be. It is to encounter that which eludes one’s capacity to categorise no matter how practiced one might be in reducing persons to conditions or negative social categories. But what would it mean for a researcher to turn to the person they are researching, to respond to this other person in their indelible uniqueness, to confirm the ‘elemental otherness of the other’ (Buber 1965, 69)? Certainly it would amount to more than simply permitting the other person to step forth as a participant in the research process. When a researcher turns to the person they are researching, when they confirm them, they acknowledge that beyond the small part this person has taken in their lives, and beyond their partial comprehension of this life, there is an otherness beyond all their words to name.

In concrete terms, turning to the researched, not as subjects from whom information can be extracted but as unique persons, can teach researchers to look beyond what is generally taken for granted, to question established social categories, and to bring into the light of speculation any dominant and diminishing discourse about groups of persons positioned within homogeneous groups. In other words, as researchers turn to the persons they research, these persons may be received and confirmed as they are and as may yet become. The persons being researched might be received, that is, beyond the parameters of the researcher’s sensory experience, memories and reflections and beyond the researcher’s own obsession with research methods and aims. In this way the researchers themselves may be affirmed as becoming persons within an equally becoming world. Thus researchers may come to understand that the world they know now is not the world that can or should be known.

Reflecting on her own experience researching ‘indigenous children and youth’, Sinha (2017, 283) concludes that what was required of her was an ‘active resistance of colonial paradigms and representation’, a resistance she could engaging in only ‘by actively involving’ these young people ‘at all stages and all phases of research’. This, in turn, meant creating spaces where the young people could ‘communicate and be listened to, ethically and authentically’ (Sinha 2017, 277), where research ‘ethics [could] be realised authentically, not merely as an administrative obligation but as an educative moment’ (283). This call for inclusive research in education to become itself educative should not, however, be mistaken for the idea that educative research can provide researchers with either easy or definitive answers to questions relating to who their research should include, how they might be included and why their inclusion matters. Indeed, the educative turn in research does not add to the sum total of the researcher’s knowledge. Confirmation of the other person does not result in new data, facts or information, but it can awaken us to what our knowledge cannot capture: to the otherness of the *Thou*, to the

irreducibility of this *Thou* to an *It*. Confirming the otherness of the persons we research teaches us, for example, that persons labelled as having ‘special’ or ‘additional’ needs are something more than these needs and that, consequently, their inclusion or exclusion in research cannot be reduced to the technical matter of matching or failing to match these needs to methods. The German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, offered the following guidance to a younger contemporary: ‘Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer’ (1986, 34-5). This is good advice, too, for researchers in education who wish to include and not exclude the persons they research.

Inclusive uses of methods in educational research

We have thus far attempted to sound a warning about the reduction of inclusive research to a method or model, but at no point have we implied that there exists a necessary incompatibility between relation and method in research in education. Instead, it is our contention that the task of an inclusive researcher in education is not to dismiss the potential of methods to guide interactions at a distance from subjective intentions, but rather to bring the utilisation of these methods into harmony with the educative potential of relationships. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, 91) express something of the difficulty in balancing relation and distance in research when they write:

there will be occasions, many occasions, when one will need to engage in social interaction for primarily social and pragmatic reasons, rather than in accordance with research interests and strategies... [However,] one should never surrender oneself entirely to the setting or to the moment. In principle, one should be constantly on the alert, with more than half an eye on the research possibilities that can be seen or engineered from any and every social situation.

The practice promoted here, however, still amounts to a form of research that is *on* the researched, one that reduces the researched to subjects. Note how Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, 91) call for researchers to resist the temptation to be fully present before, and responsive to, the persons they research; consider their use of the words ‘constantly on the alert’. Buber (2004, 21) tells us that the ‘*It* is the external chrysalis’, but the ‘*Thou* the external butterfly’; and a researcher can hardly hope to enter into dialogue with the persons they encounter while they persist in collecting and studying their words and actions like a cold-eyed lepidopterist at work.

Beyond Hammersley and Atkinson’s (2007) emphasis on the experience and intentions of the researcher and their detachment from the researched, there is what Buber named ‘the narrow ridge’ that, bypassing all that which I can classify as my own and all that which I can separate out as belonging to the other person, is the place ‘where I and Thou meet’ (Buber 2006, 243). When conducting research along this ‘narrow ridge’ the tension between relation and method might be better expressed as a choice between, on the one hand, a movement *from* methods *to* relation, and, on the other hand, a movement *from* relation *to* methods. Reflecting on the ‘injunction’ between knowing and forgetting the self in the teachings of Hasidism, Buber concludes:

One need only ask one question: ‘What for?’ What am I to choose my particular way for? What am I to unify my being for? The reply is: Not for my own sake... To begin with oneself but not to end with oneself; to start from oneself, but not to aim at oneself; to comprehend oneself, but not to be preoccupied with oneself. (Buber 1994, 25)

In research the point is to start with methods but not to aim at them; it is to understand the role of methods, but not to be so preoccupied with them that they come to obscure the reality and otherness of the persons being researched. Immediately, this suggests that the problem of reductionism within research practices in education is not to be located in the methods researchers make use of but in the belief that the human lives can be comprehended through a strict adherence to method alone.

Here we address a crucial thought from Buber, one he expresses thus: ‘without *It* man cannot live. But he who lives with *It* alone is not a man’ (Buber 2004, 32). Buber’s message for researchers in education is straightforward: do not expect to live out your research lives in elevated dialogue with the person you research, but do not give up on your capacity to meet the researched. There is a need for methods and for measurements but, if we entirely fail to acknowledge that which is beyond the scope of our methods to measure, our practice ceases to exist between persons. Instead, this practice extends from one individual onto another until, like Buber’s rather miserable characters, Peter and Paul, everyone in the research process ends up a kind of ghost or sleepwalker. The point here is not to position *I-Thou* and *I-It* relations in opposition to one another, but to recognise the potential of the *I-Thou* or *I-You* relation to alter our everyday life. Hence Putnam, reflecting on Buber’s understanding of ‘the *transforming* effect of the recurrent “I-You” relation’ (original emphasis, 2008, 64), concludes: ‘There are, so to speak, two sorts of “I-It” relations: *mere* “I-It” relations and *transformed* “I-It” relations’ (original emphasis, 63). In and of itself dialogue in research results in no measurable outcomes and no evidence-based findings, but without the recognition of the researched as *Thou*, research ends up hollowed of meaning; it can produce nothing more than a record of ‘*mere* “I-It” relations’.

In a note of personal reflection, Buber (2006, 13) concedes that he has always been ‘inclined ... to admire genuine acts of research, ... when those who carry them out only know what they are doing and do not lose sight of the limits of the realm in which they are moving’. To conceive of inclusive research in education as a dialogical practice does not, then, mean that a researcher need renounce all their concerns; it does not entail letting go of the questions that fuel curiosity, but it does presuppose that special humility that allows a researcher to welcome the otherness of the persons they research. A researcher might, for example, study oppression, marginalisation or exclusion, and in so doing acknowledge that beyond the scope of their research aims it is real people, and not mere data on a page, who are oppressed, marginalised and excluded. In sum, it is not a question of dismissing research methods and questions, but rather of refraining from clinging to them as a guide and script. Only once a researcher attends and responds to what is immeasurable can they begin to speak of what their research methods have allowed them to measure.

Inclusive research in education and emancipation

Ballard (1997, 250) notes: ‘Researchers are not just embedded in disablist contexts. We have often contributed to the identification and maintenance of disability as sickness and as devalued difference’. Researchers, in other words, are not simply dispassionate observers of social phenomena; they can play an active role in the construction and maintenance of categories and conceptions of the included and the excluded. In a seminal article, published in 1992, Mike Oliver argues for an ‘emancipatory research paradigm’ in disability studies, the ‘importance’ of which rests not on the ‘attempts it might make to study... existing power relations’, but rather on ‘attempts it might make to challenge them’ (110). Twenty-five years on, Mietola, Miettinen and Vehmas (2017) reiterated this view of disability studies as having a ‘political commitment to disclose and eradicate social discrimination faced by disabled people’, a commitment that begins with a recognition of

the various ways research about disability ‘has in its part marginalized disabled people by producing knowledge *on* them and not *for* them’ (original emphasis, 263). Efforts towards inclusive research can be characterised, then, as attempting to: amend for past wrongs (Walmsley 2004; Nind, 2014a); position those who are marginalised or excluded at the centre of research processes (Walmsley 2001; Walmsley and Johnson, 2003; Black-Hawkins and Amrhein 2014; Woelders *et al.* 2015; Nind 2017); and, persistently challenge and negotiate existing power relations between researchers and researched (Nind, 2014b; Nind *et al.* 2017). In a useful encapsulation of this position, Connor *et al.* (2008, 448) contend that what is distinct about ‘Disability Studies Education research’ is the way it ‘[r]ecognizes and privileges the knowledge derived from the lived experience of people with disabilities’. Similarly both Seale, Nind and Parsons (2014) and Walmsley (2001) hold inclusive research to be inseparable from participatory and emancipatory research practices.

However, these very ideas of privileging the perspectives of, and conducting research *for*, the researched, may result in as many significant difficulties as emerge in the privileging of method over relation in research. So that we might begin to justify this claim we turn now to a significant difference between, in Buber’s (2006) language, feeling *empathy* for the researched and *including* them. It is Buber’s (2006, 115) view that ‘empathy’ is something one feels for another person to ‘the exclusion of one’s own concreteness’, while ‘inclusion’ occurs when ‘one person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other’. In other words, in the inclusive relation one bypasses both the desire to consume the other person within one’s own reality and the desire to feel empathy for them, that is, to escape this same reality by way of being absorbed by the other person’s experience of the world.

In Buber’s (2006) characterisation of empathy there is a significant paradox at play. In the moment of empathy I lose myself in another individual, but this is so only because I have chosen to be consumed by this individual when I might have otherwise chosen to turn to them, to welcome and to confirm them in the distinctiveness of their becoming. Immersed in my feeling of empathy, I still speak from the *I* of the *I-It* relation; I continue to gaze upon others as mere objects of *my* experience. It is possible to identify a similar paradox at work in research that seeks to emancipate the researched. If I am to privilege some voices above others in the field that I am researching, then I must first have reached the conclusion that I have the authority to determine which amongst these voices are most worthy of being privileged and thus emancipated, and I must locate within myself the resources for bringing these chosen voices to the world. In other words, when a researcher seeks to liberate a person *they* have deemed to be oppressed and excluded, the relation between them, at its core, extends from one who dispenses privileges to the one who is to be privileged. No meeting can occur between us if you are, from the start, set within a frame of my making, defined by me as being in need of liberation and privileging. Under such circumstances, I have closed down any space into which you might otherwise have stepped forth and proclaimed for yourself what it is you need from, and how it is you experience, the world. In the name of serving you, I have diminished your opportunities for speaking in a voice that is entirely your own.

Of central importance here is the fact that emancipation, as Freire (1996) reminds us, is not about what one person can do for another person but is about what people connected in a joint endeavour can do for each other. An inclusive relationship might occur between two persons when each suspends any assumptions they might hold about each other, including the assumption that the other person is in need of liberation. By refusing to let go of this assumption, the researcher - even in the midst of their effort to emancipate the other person - precludes the very possibility of

turning to and including the researched. This generates the possibility that persons with impairments will, as Bigby *et al.* (2014) caution, find themselves invited to offer instruction on research methods on the basis of researchers' perceptions of their perspectives. Douglas (2010, 114) also identifies that the danger with some research practices is that they bring persons 'into knowledge through heightened surveillance... and thus into view as a population not only to be included, but also potentially improved'. What follows is potentially a reinforcement of a set of 'ableist assumptions' concerning who should and who should not be at the centre of research processes (Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2013, 143).

It is useful at this point to return to the centrality of the idea of turning in Buber's philosophy of dialogue. When a researcher turns to the persons they research what is met, and what might come to be confirmed and included, is not simply the voice of an individual assumed to be marginalised, disabled or disaffected, but a person, distinct and unique. Turning to persons for whom the world is all too often a cruel place, persons too often ignored or worse silenced, is an opportunity, not first to name, but to respond and only then to give and to confirm. To understand that exclusions occur, that oppression happens and to grasp that segregation exists is not to know why we must know what we know. We learn *why* these facts matter in and through dialogue. In dialogue, we are taught that the excluded, oppressed and segregated are something more than their exclusion, oppression and segregation. It is a question, once again, of staying firm to what Buber (2006) called the 'narrow ridge' where it might be possible to elude the lure both of research that is conducted *on* individuals held at an exclusionary distance and of research that is *for* individuals identified as political allies, so their research might be conducted *with* the researched.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, our concern has been to advance a view of inclusive research in education as principally a matter of relations. This view bypasses the equation of inclusivity to either fixed approaches to research, which utilise prescriptive methods, or to the privileging of the interests of particular groups in research practices. At no point, however, have we attempted to affirm a false division between trust in relation - in our capability to receive and be received, to confirm and be confirmed - and trust in methods and their potential to guide us in discovering knowledge. Nevertheless, we have claimed that in inclusive research in education the primary question is not one of *method*, of how best to experience and measure the world, but rather a question of *relation*, concerning how we are to be with and write of the persons we encounter.

What we have argued for is a view of inclusive research practices in education in which research is conducted neither *on* nor *for* but rather *with* the researched. This, we have maintained, has practical implications. The task confronting a researcher attempting to be inclusive in their practice is neither primarily the perfection of their research instruments and methods for data collection nor is it to learn to passively record and disseminate the voices of the researched. Instead, this understanding informs an approach to research as an essentially educative endeavour, one that involves addressing the people we research with a patience that opens us to that which could not have been anticipated within the confines of any research plan devised with the aim of ensnaring reality.

Buber's distinction between *I-It* and *I-Thou* relations, and the significance ascribed to the *turn*, point to a distinctive response to the question of creating and sustaining inclusive relations in educational research. Buber's insights offer researchers the possibility of planning and reflecting on their work in ways that transcend dilemmas of power, dominance and subservience in which

researchers must choose between their own interests and those of whom they research. Instead, the possibility of a collaborative and *educative* relationship is opened up, one which grounds the notion of inclusivity not in the *privileging* of the other, but in a mutual *confirmation*. This represents this article's contribution to the theoretical work that Nind (2014a) declares to be crucial to inclusive research.

We opened this article with Buber's account of Peter and Paul addressing each other as if they were encountering ghosts, mere individuals with no real life extending beyond what each of them might observe and use. The picture painted by Buber suggested a further encounter between a researcher and the person they are researching as they fail to meet each other. Fortunately, Buber's discussion of these two characters does not end there and he goes on to advance the following scenario:

Again we see Peter and Paul before us surrounded by the ghosts of the semblances. A ghost can be exorcized. Let us imagine that these two find it more and more repellent to be represented by ghosts. In each of them the will is stirred and strengthened to be confirmed in their being as what they really are and nothing else. We see the forces of real life at work as they drive out the ghosts, till the semblance vanishes and the depths of personal life call to one another. (Buber 1965, 78)

Let us suppose, too, that our researcher Peter, frustrated by the ghostly figure he has allowed himself to become and at the ghostly images of Paul he has encountered, breaks from his research 'script' and, instead of asking the next question on his list, looks to Paul and says without premeditated purpose: 'What concerns you?' In this turning of the attention, Peter addresses Paul as a unique person and not as a mere individual, the subject of a research project. Paul may now turn to Peter and respond to him from the unity and distinctiveness of his capability to meet and confirm, to welcome and give. A dialogue can begin.

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