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Chapter Two

ASSIMILATION VS. INCLUSION

An anti-oppressive perspective on the experiences of participants in integration educations

Tobias Pötzsch

Abstract

This chapter explores how an anti-oppressive practice (AOP) perspective can inform contested understandings of social inclusion within the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) integration program at NorQuest College in Edmonton, Canada. Based on research findings obtained during case study fieldwork, it examines how inclusion is negotiated by program participants and juxtaposes this with anti-oppressive practice principles. In so doing, it offers valuable perspectives for critical and anti-racist discourses in adult education.

The data for this studies includes in-depth individual interviews with LINC teachers, administrators and counsellors, group interviews with students and 1.5 months of participant observation. Interview transcripts and observation logs were analysed using inductive content analysis. The empirical findings illustrate the need for educational providers seeking to implement policies of inclusion to transcend their institutional boundaries by adopting structural, cross-sectorial and distinctly political responses. These include creating more egalitarian educational partnerships with all stakeholders comprising teachers, students and community organisations involved in LINC. Responses further entail re-examining institutional procedures, curricular mandates, as well as promoting public education programs and collective political mobilisation to address the structural factors circumscribing the lives of migrant students. A complementary finding in furthering inclusion suggests that components of social criticism and critical

citizenship focusing on students' own experiences should become more entrenched within NorQuest's integration educations.

Introduction

> *"But sometimes I get the feeling here with multiculturalism that it has gone overboard where we have no right to say that this is a norm here. I am talking about where something is actually "good" and it seems that the attitude is always relative, very relative where our way is not better. But how can you say that for everything? How can everything be absolutely relative?"*

The above quote of a senior instructor at NorQuest College[1] reflects the ambivalence and insecurities experienced by many teachers and administrators in struggling with questions of integrating official doctrines on multiculturalism into an integration program aimed at educating migrants in Canadian language and culture. It seeks clarification of program aims in a society founded on official policies of multiculturalism and challenges conceptions of inclusion. As such, the statement throws into sharp relief the tension between assimilationist approaches based on essentialist understandings of culture versus inclusion-based, fluid or co-constructed ideas of culture where norms are negotiated in dialogues emphasising diversity among egalitarian social actors. What forms does or should inclusion take? If it holds true, as Zygmunt Baumann (2000, p. 86) posits that "whatever road to integration is chosen it starts from diversity, leads through diversity and is unlikely to reach beyond it…," can anti-oppressive practice perspectives offer new ways of conceptualising inclusion?

Background

The source material which provides the framework for the chapter, was obtained during fieldwork conducted between June - November of 2015 at NorQuest College in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. It explores how Canada's National Integration Program, LINC, is practically

[1] The author would sincerely like to thank the staff and students of NorQuest College for opening their doors and hearts in participating in this study. Without their openness, commitment and honesty this research would not have been possible.

realised and how those who work and participate in the program experience it.[2] The study occupies a unique position as there is limited previous research examining the nature and implementation of integration programs from an anti-oppressive perspective. The Canadian case was deliberately chosen as an example of national discourses on inclusion being founded upon multiculturalist ideals, distinguishing it from traditions in most Nordic welfare states. Indeed, research evidence suggests that compared with nearly all Western democracies, Canadian migrants[3] and visible or religious minorities demonstrate higher levels of social, political and economic integration and that official policies of multiculturalism are instrumental to this outcome (Bloemraad, 2006; Adams, 2007; Kymlicka, 2010).

LINC Education and Previous Research

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is a federally-funded program introduced by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CIC) in 1992 (Cervatiuc & Ricento, 2012). According to its mission statement, it is designed to facilitate the integration of migrants into Canadian culture by providing language and settlement training and by offering students a platform to develop academic, social and employment competences. In Alberta, prerequisites for student eligibility include permanent residence status and the provision of a Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) assessment from a Language Assessment Referral and Counselling Centre (LARCC), completed within the previous 6 months. CLB levels are assigned by looking at how learners accrue skills and develop competences in completing assigned learning tasks although they focus primarily on linguistic competence. (Derwing & Waugh, 2012; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015).

LINC as implemented at NorQuest College is structured around three educational streams: foundational/literacy, building academic skills, and basic studies. This structure aims for students of the same educational background to be grouped together so that literacy or

[2] As such, the research constitutes a part of my PhD thesis whose main objective it is to carry out a comparative study between the re-conceptualized Swedish integration educations in Helsingfors, Finland and Mariehamn, The Åland Islands, and the LINC program at NorQuest College. The comparative foundation of the programs lies in their inclusion of language as well as cultural learning and work life practice components within their curricular mandates.

[3] I will forthwith use the term ”migrant” to refer to newcomers to Canada due to its less pejorative and stigmatizing connotations within a European context, recognizing that ”immigrant” is widely used in both Canadian public discourse and academic literature without similarly negative associations.

foundational classes include students having 0-10 years of education while regular integration stream classes comprise those with more than 10 years of formal schooling. The program offers courses intended to help students improve their English proficiency, as well as develop intercultural, employment, teamwork and IT skills. These include full and part time studies as well as specialised classes organised in flexible time schedules for full-time employed students. All courses employ various components of synchronous, asynchronous and online learning strategies. Student support services including career counsellors, settlement workers, and student advisors complement the program.

Although the largest group of NorQuest LINC's 1500 students are university educated, their numbers have clearly been declining while the numbers of students with 0 to 9 years of education are increasing. The main countries of student origin are China, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea. Many are unemployed but seeking work and there is a clear upward trend in terms of students' part-time employment. The majority of those working, commonly within the cleaning and retail sectors, have career aspirations in Health Care and other related fields. The LINC Program follows NorQuest College's task and outcomes-based educational approach to learning, which emphasises applied knowledge and skills rather than stressing content, the focal point of a traditional content-based approach (Lefebvre, 2014). One outcome of this emphasis on applied, "real-life" skills has been the adoption of Portfolio-Based Learning Assessments (PBLA) as the foundation for curricular development. Ideally, PBLAs have been conceived of as tools for empowering students to take ownership of their learning progress and ways for teachers to re-conceptualise "learning" relationships in line with more horizontal power arrangements. They emphasise a collaborative approach where teachers in cooperation with students are to set language-learning goals, collect evidence of language proficiency and other competencies in individual portfolios, and reflect on learning progress over time. Curricular theme choices such as Canadian Politics & Law, Health Care and Employment, among others, are to be negotiated and decided upon in student groups. Themes are constructed around the four skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing and are aimed at integrating students into their adopted communities and spheres of employment (Pettis, 2014). It must be added, however, that although LINC federal curricular documents present suggested topics as well as teaching aides, they are not prescriptive. Topic selection, structure and implementation leave a great deal of room for interpretation and experimentation. Moreover, given the various provincial manifestations of LINC; integration educations and curricula can vary widely from province to province or even school to school.

Studies examining the LINC program have been prolific and wide-ranging since its inception. They have shone a critical spotlight on issues of program and teacher ideology, curriculum content, accessibility, and teaching practice, among others. However, while the personal motivations of teachers and interactions with students as well as the nature and applicability of curricular contents have been researched, a structural, anti-racist or anti-oppressive analysis of the societal and institutional norms which "colour" what is taught and how is largely absent. Similarly, under-researched are the effects created by structural forces such as, for example, legislation concerning the recognition of foreign qualifications or social assistance regulations and how these circumscribe the lives of LINC students and thereby their educational participation. I am referring here to forces from beyond the walls of the institution and how these affect program participants and delivery.

LINC studies can roughly be divided into those examining teaching practices and ideologies and those focusing on curricular issues. With reference to the former, studies have pointed to a need for more self-reflection and critical thinking skills among teachers (Sauvé, 1996) as well as a re-examination of teacher roles in line with more empowering educator-learner partnerships (Khalideen, 1998; James, 2000; Ilieva, 2001). They have further raised the issue of teacher disenfranchisement from decisions affecting LINC program mandates and curriculum development (Richardson in Pinet, 2006). Cervatuic and Ricento (2012) in examining the "hidden curriculum" of unstated norms, values and beliefs guiding teachers and teaching found that it was reflected in either an indifference to migrant problems or the idyllic belief that they face no challenges borne of an overly positive view of Canadian society. As a consequence, critical thinking on social issues related to migrant's lives was not promoted, learners had little input on discussion topics and were encouraged to adapt to Canadian society. Cleghorn (in Pinet 2007) in drawing upon interview material with LINC administrators, teachers and students in a Toronto community education centre found that a focus on unilateral cultural transmission and on "what learners can do" essentially precluded meaningful dialogues of migrant experiences thus reinforcing a "vertical mosaic" of cultural belonging and citizenship.

Research on the aims and usage of LINC curricula and how these reflect a particular integration ideology has also yielded interesting conclusions. Cray (1997) found that LINC curricula were under-used by teachers and unsuited to teaching writing as a social practice

(Cray & Currie, 2004). Derwing, Jamieson & Munro (1998) and Thomson & Derwing (2004) point to the lack of a participatory citizenship orientation in LINC, where a predominant focus on language proficiency often precluded opportunities for social inclusion. Their recommendations in promoting participation included, among others, extending CIC's Community Connections program to facilitate migrants' social networking possibilities and sharing information on successful inclusion programs among various levels of government. These findings are echoed by Morgan (2002) who emphasised a curricular shift towards topics of identity politics as well as social and community engagement to challenge inequitable power relations outside of the classroom. This transformative pedagogical approach is also espoused in a study by Robert Pinet (2007) which focused on curricular development and implementation by analysing LINC curricular material and interviews with staff. His findings align with those of James (2000) by exposing the clear imbalance between "Canadiana" vs. other curricular materials reflecting cultural diversity and students' migrant experiences thereby exposing a *discursive discrimination* (Boréus, 2006) in which the lack of references to minority groups reflects the general discourse instead of being a one-off omission in an instructional text.

Theory

Anti-Oppressive Practice

Today's increasingly pluralistic, multicultural societies engage social educators, social workers and other welfare providers in a series of seminal yet also contradictory discourses. Many discussions focus on the necessity of European countries, Finland among them, to more effectively integrate newcomers though it has been argued that current practice methodologies do not sufficiently incorporate principles of cultural awareness and anti-racism. (e.g. Dei, 1999; Gundara, 2000; Baines, 2007; Blomberg-Kroll et.al, 2008; Laird, 2008; Cox & Pawar, 2013; Mullaly, 2010; Jønsson et.al, 2013; Kivisto & Wahlbeck, 2013; De Roo, Braeye & De Moor, 2014). Although many services aimed at the integration of ethnic minorities claim to be based on values of empowerment and cultural equality, these concepts are often interpreted differently and founded on little specific theory or practical methodology (Sue, 2006; Sisneros et.al, 2008). It is not surprising then, that anti-oppressive practice (AOP) developed within the field of social work in the 1980's in the U.K. and Canada with its more radical interpretation

of work with socially-excluded clients as a partial, political enterprise and its aims of challenging oppression and power imbalances has been one conceptualisation seeking to redress these shortcomings. AOP's dissemination has also been facilitated by changing attitudes among minority groups who themselves began to challenge present patterns of power. Relying on the perspectives of oppressed groups to define their own needs and challenges has helped workers to utilise this knowledge to develop alternative models of working (Payne, 1997, p. 263).

In anti-oppressive models," the personal becomes political" (Mullaly, 2010) meaning that social inequalities and personal problems are not placed at the door of individual pathology or family shortcomings, but are rather seen as reflections of structural inequalities in society through which dominant groups socially exclude others from true participatory citizenship. Therefore, the foundation for interaction between social actors and clients within AOP is derived from a detailed analysis and understanding of the views and experiences of disempowered groups while fostering their involvement in the development and self-management of social welfare services. In so doing, one seeks to reverse the debilitating process of silencing the voices of those who are shut out from participating in decisions affecting their own welfare. Wilson & Beresford (2000, p. 554) characterise AOP as an emancipatory approach to work committed to social justice, social change and assisting people who have been subjugated by structural inequalities in reversing their position. Other common elements in definitions of AOP are self-reflexivity, client partnership, social equality, empowerment and structural analyses of power (see Preston-Shoot, 1995; Dalrymple & Burke, 1997; Keating, 2000; Valtonen, 2001; Chand et al, 2002; Dominelli, 1997 & 2002, Russell & White 2002, Mullaly, 2010, 1997; Baines, ed. 2007; Lundy, 2004; Shera, 2003; Hick, 2002, 2009; Brown & Strega, 2005; Sakamoto, 2005).

Conceived from its inception as a practice methodology, AOP has often been visually represented by concentric models which emphasise the need for social workers and social educators to concurrently strive for change on personal, cultural and socio-structural levels (see Dalrymple & Burke, 1997, Thompson 1997). These models employ a circular design to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the person in the social environment and the multidisciplinary, multi-positional strategies necessary for resistance. This explains why AOP frameworks emphasise personal reflexivity and interpersonal interactions informed by critical social analyses as equally important as partnership strategies to confront oppression on

cultural and structural levels. An important aspect when discussing social change as represented in the aforementioned concentric models is that these processes do not occur step by step, nor that they necessarily begin at the personal niveau and culminate in political action. All levels are interconnected and interdependent with activity occurring simultaneously on a number of planes. Sometimes political activity precedes personal empowerment, but most certainly changes on one level permeate all. This demonstrates the models' fluid and reconstructive nature with the crucial element being the obligation to strive for change on all levels.

By emphasising oppression's intersectionality mediated by a myriad of identity markers such as class, gender, age, disability, sexuality etc., an anti-oppressive lens seems to offer advantages over single strand models of oppression inherent in some forms of anti-racism. Singular models tend to assume a certain non-existent homogeneity within or among groups subjugated by racism or any other form of oppression, often reducing origins to singular causes. In addition, such approaches hold little potential for solidarity and joint action by "othered"[4] individuals and groups and provide few answers for overcoming the divisions currently existing among them (Mullaly 2010). However, models conceptualising the intersectionality of different oppressions (see Sisneros, et.al., 2008) illustrate how these intersect, change and become mutually reinforcing in everyday life. Making links between oppressions requires recognising commonalities and specificities in oppressions' different forms and experiences as prerequisites for efforts at social transformation. In making these links, anti-oppressive practice can contribute a wider perspective to those debates on anti-racism in education which predominantly focus on issues of racial or ethnic discrimination as forces of social exclusion within school curricula, pedagogics and institutional practice.

Having said this, AOP shares anti-racist education's goal of promoting critical discourse on race and racism in society and of interrogating the continuing racializing of social groups for differential and unequal treatment (Egbo, 2008). It also sutures issues of racial and social difference to those of power and oppression rather than explaining these by pointing to cultural differences. It is in response to another of anti-racism's aims, that of achieving institutional, systemic change to address racism, that AOP's practice focus may be of

[4] The term "Othered" is used to refer to the process of marginalizing those individuals and groups in society that are deemed *other than* the norm.

particular use. By promoting simultaneous efforts at social transformation targeting personal, cultural and socio-structural levels, it presents a counterpoint to those discourses in anti-racist education which confine efforts at change solely within the walls of the institution while limiting its gaze and engagement beyond them (Kumashiro, 2000). Building community and societal networks represents an integral component of anti-oppressive practice's social change agenda. It is based on the recognition that social partnerships reflect and enhance "glocal" embeddedness and that issues of racism with their societal origins require cross-sectorial, collective responses. Opening up institutions to both community involvement and scrutiny from without is a necessary part of this process as is the grass roots, bottom-up way of working which underpins anti-oppressive conceptions of partnership. In seeking to contribute to debates on anti-racism in education by presenting an AOP perspective on the social inclusion of adult migrant students, it is my contention that good anti-oppressive practice emphasising interventions on interpersonal and societal levels represents good anti-racist practice.

Integration, Inclusion and Assimilation

To this point I have utilised the terms of social inclusion and integration interchangeably in juxtaposing them with assimilationist immigration ideologies, which stand as the antitheses to diversity and egalitarian cultural plurality. In fact, the meaning(s) of the aforementioned terms are actively debated and critically contested. Social inclusion as conceptualised within critical theory in the social sciences and social work has been defined as the "realisation of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of life in [immigrants'] new country" (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003, p. 1). However, some theorists go further in suggesting that sweeping structural changes are required in the way we arrange our societies in order to achieve this due to the constriction of democratic potential within territorial nation states. In seeking to redress the "undesirable" consequences of globalisation such as increasing social diversity and migration, states are increasingly involved in projects aimed at social cohesion where the rallying cry around shared values, beliefs or histories often results in policies of negation and exclusion. Angus Stewart, therefore, posits that a commitment to social inclusion necessitates the pursuit of deliberative democracy and a distributive justice of equality. "Such a pursuit addresses inequalities of class, gender, race, and religion as structured obstacles to the effective exercise of political agency and confronts institutional domination whether bureaucratic, economic or cultural" (2000, p. 69). A

prerequisite for social transformation on this scale is the recognition that present institutional structures are contingent, impermanent and subject to democratic reform and critique. Inclusion so envisaged is not based on "integrationist" responses which often presume absorption into something; into a pre-defined, static, national entity. Instead, it entails a "participationist" response where one is not included into pre-existing social, political and economic arrangements but rather into a structural process where the fluid nature of such arrangements is consistently renegotiated on principles of egalitarianism and the full exercise of *political agency*.[5] Inclusion here is not prescriptive. It is a dynamic, involving and evolving process. Its means and methods are changeable and adaptable to the specifics of social circumstances. As such, it must be recognised that all projects of inclusion have the potential of generating new forms of exclusion subject in their turn to critique and democratic reform (Askonas & Stewart, 2000).

Integration as an ideal shares the characteristics of ensuring migrants' participation as equals in both public and private societal spheres and envisages this process as multifarious with reciprocal responsibilities shared between newcomers and the host society (Kymlicka, 2010; Reinsch, 2001). In practice though, it has been criticised as a thinly veiled attempt of many European countries to assimilate cultural and other differences into the essentialist narratives of "homogenous" national cultures, effectively turning a "two-way street" into a one-way cul-de-sac of ethnic hierarchies and social exclusion. Arguments used to justify assimilative integration measures are often couched in paternalistic terms citing economic or social justifications to disenfranchise, silence and render migrants legally incompetent. The underlying attitude of "we know what's best for immigrants" robs the latter of their critical engagement and agency and creates relationships of dependence for which they are later chastised (Goldberg, 1994). Kritnet (Netzwerk Kritische Migrations - und Grenzregimforschung) a network of critical researchers and academics examining topics of migration and border regimes has gone so far as to depict integration as the "enemy of democracy" in an initiative entitled *Demokratie statt Integration* where integration means "das man Menschen die in diesem Land arbeiten und Kinder bekommen, alt werden und

[5] *Political agency* is hereby defined as; agency in the sense that your actions can affect a situation requires acting to transform political relationships, that is, structures that incorporate and mediate power. Change necessitates an awareness of, and engagement in multi-professional networks, and their social, environmental and community origins. (Payne, Adams & Dominelli, 2002)

sterben, einen Verhaltenskodex aufnötigt, bevor sie gleichberechtigt dazugehören." [6] (Kritnet.org)

Anti-oppressive discourses recognise the pejorative associations connected with these interpretations of integration. In fact, neither integration nor inclusion are unproblematic concepts. Both can be understood in hegemonic and oppressive ways and much depends on how these processes are practically conceived and enacted. For example, integration still holds positive connotations for many practitioners and teachers who describe it largely in terms of the aforementioned definitions of inclusion. In such inclusion-based understandings of integration, it is defined as "where the responsibility of the host society to provide resources, services and supports in the adjustment process rests less on the part of the newcomer and more on the ability of agencies to accommodate these so called 'differential needs'" (Yee, 2005, p. 99). Such inclusion presupposes a *parity of participation* in social arrangements. Parity of participation has a double meaning that affirms the inherent reflexive character of democratic justice. On the one hand it is an outcome notion which permits us to evaluate social arrangements as just only if all relevant social actors participate as equals. On the other hand, it is also a process notion which outlines specific standards of procedure allowing us to evaluate the democratic legitimacy of norms; the latter being legit only if they can be embraced by all in a fair and open process of deliberation (Hick & Thomas, 2009). In this understanding, mere social participation is not sufficient if the structures within which such participation takes place are skewed in favour of dominant groups (i.e. Anglo-centric hiring practices). The other part of the definition; mainly the standards of procedure allowing for an evaluation of the legitimacy of norms, refers specifically to the structural conditions in which such participation takes place. Are these and the hegemonic ideologies which underpin them also open to critique and reform? What constitutes a fair and open process before conditions for parity can be met?

Integration so conceived emphasises a reconceptualisation of the paternalistic state responses to immigration characteristic of many European countries which place the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of already marginalised migrants. In so doing, they covertly promote assimilation to an unequal society which cements inequalities both economic and social (Lentin & Titley, 2011). At its heart, AOP represents a bottom-up approach which is

[6] Where integration means that people who work and have children, grow old and die in this country, have a behavioural code imposed upon them before they can belong as equals. (author's translation)

predicated upon clients setting the boundaries for interactions with authorities based upon their own needs and interests. The key in this type of social partnership is to reduce power imbalances by providing clients "real" opportunities to be involved in deciding over their own welfare and allowing them to seize these. This empowering dynamic includes supporting the choices of migrants regarding the nature of integration strategies central to their acculturation. It further necessitates that workers and educators act as facilitators in helping clients build upon their existing knowledge and strengths. Power relationships are suddenly inverted when educators relinquish their role as experts to become learners, "walking a mile in their clients' moccasins" to co-construct helping relationships from the ground up. In such an understanding of partnership, agreements are negotiated and not imposed.

It is here the emancipatory potential of AOP based on a multi-level social change agenda offers interesting alternatives to current resettlement practice. An integral component, reflecting the "personal level" in anti-oppressive models revolves around the ability of educators and social workers to be self-reflexive in unearthing individually held ethnocentric biases or egocentric values and fostering resistance to conformity in order to make changes in the social world they share with their clients (Fook & Gardener, 2007). In addition, effecting social change at cultural and structural levels requires the mutual development of political agency to mean that in order for migrants or groups of workers to have an impact on policies, they must act collectively to transform political relationships and the power structures which support them (Payne, Adams & Dominelli, 2002). Best anti-oppressive practices are grass roots oriented and create spaces for joint social action. Thus, educators have an obligation to support the integration choices of their clients even if it means challenging the structural arrangements which obfuscate their realisation. In so doing they advance parity of participation combining politics of redistribution with those of recognition and ultimately the right of all to be "differently equal" (Hick, Fook & Pozzuto et. al., 2005).

Methodology

Data Collection

Anti-oppressive research embodies a collaborative, participant-centred, emancipatory methodology in which responsibility and accountability of process and outcome are collectively shared. (Braidotti, 2002; Yellow Bird et. al., 2013; Brown & Strega, 2005;

Denzin & Giradina, 2010). Such an approach is methodologically and epistemologically distinctive as it focuses specifically on how principles of social justice in shifting power to insiders, community building and working for change are put into practice (Brown & Strega, 2005). Inductive qualitative methods are often deemed ideal in highlighting participants' voices to contest mainstream and dominant perceived truths about the Other (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Two questions designed to guide the researcher in integrating an anti-oppressive approach are; can participants see themselves in the study, and; does the analysis ring true to participants? (Potts & Brown, 2005) The most explicit way of answering "yes" to both questions is if participants actively engage in deciding study parameters.

My research data consists of 22 in-depth qualitative interviews with NorQuest LINC teachers, administrators and counsellors. Interviews varied in length from 45-90 min. and were based on a semi-structured interview guide. Discussion topics included LINC aims, self-reflexivity, cultural accommodation, agency, partnerships, and structural factors. Staff were recruited during initial information and discussion sessions which served to introduce my study, elicit questions, and discuss the ethical implications further explained in letters of consent. In addition, 9 small group interviews with 47 adult migrant students studying in LINC integration programs were carried out varying in length from 35-70 min. Discussions with students who ranged in CLB language ability levels from 3-6 were free-flowing with themes co-constructed between participants in keeping within a critical anti-oppressive research paradigm. Topics arising from student interviews ranged from views on program structure, teaching, studies and life, student agency, and cultural inclusion. Student groups were recruited in information sessions akin to those for staff with letters of consent tailored to specific language levels. Lastly, student interviews were supplemented with 6 weeks of participant class observation with four LINC groups including sharing in extra-curricular activities.

In returning to the questions gauging the anti-oppressive nature of research referred to above, the data collection process with migrant students reflected a collaborative approach, even though the methods of collection were decided by the researcher. Participation was negotiated in information sessions and supplemented by individual discussions eliciting consent. Furthermore, interviews were not pre-structured and themes emerged creatively depending upon the varying constitutions of student groups. Giving voice and choice to participants dictated arrangements; a policy which also guided my interactions during the observation

period where I participated as one of the group in all activities. With NorQuest staff, however, given time and logistical constraints, the interview process became more researcher-centred. Interview guides were semi-structured and although transcripts were sent for approval upon request, similar open collaborations in shaping the process of data collection were limited.

Margaret Boushel (2000) argues that researcher reflexivity is crucial in anti-oppressive research because we develop an *experiential interdependence*, or the almost unconscious perpetuation of dominant roles given us by our status within powerful groups which must be interrogated. Being a white, educated male from an Anglo-Saxon Western country, I belong, by virtue of my background to a dominant group and yet my migrant background in Canada, arriving as a political refugee, and spending my formative years in Edmonton placed me in the eyes of many LINC students in the position of someone "who had made it", creating feelings of positive regard which facilitated my interaction with them. The fact that I had studied within the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta also provided me with links to the staff at NorQuest many of whom had similar educational backgrounds.

Data Analysis

Anti-oppressive principles as applied to data analysis question to what extent the reality of the Other is reflected in this process as well as how findings are presented and communicated. This study falls in many ways short of Bishop's principles of decolonising research which emphasise participant-driven solutions such as collaborative coding and shared partnerships in reporting and dissemination (Yellow Bird, et.al., 2013). Due to the limited duration of fieldwork, competing schedules of both staff and students and the summer term structure, I had limited access to many of my collaborators after the data collection phase which necessitated analysing the material alone. However, in seeking to represent the descriptions of participants' experiences as closely aligned to the data as possible, I opted for less abstract approaches. Thus, the collected data was analysed employing inductive content analysis of transcribed interview material and observation logs. By adopting open coding from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) in generating categories and themes, I have attempted to steer away from some of the more prescriptive approaches to content analysis (see Schreier, 2012) which apply theory driven pre-constructed coding frames and statistical representations in working with data. Data-driven, descriptive approaches to content analysis (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) utilising open coding in conceptualising, defining and developing categories

and axial coding in comparing categories and building thematic descriptions allow meaning to emerge without the imposition of pre-existing concepts. They can be used in developing a more general theory of what is going on, but don't depend on this theory (Flick, 2014). This was especially useful in my case where themes were then juxtaposed with anti-oppressive theory allowing new understandings to emerge from this dialectic (Roulston, 2014).

Folklorist, Barbro Klein (1990) postulated that transcription is in itself an analytic act guided by clear conscious choices on the part of the researcher as to how text should convey meaning. In this study, emphasising the communicative impact of participants' voices entailed that interviews were transcribed word for word but utterances such as "uh" which obfuscated meaning were omitted from the final text. In turning to the process of writing log entries during the participant observation stage of the research, this procedure was complemented by the concurrent conducting of interviews. Reflecting on interview material while engaged in observations and interactions with staff and students added another dimension to the entries. Log entries thus moved from the descriptive to the interpretive and correspondingly informed interview inquiries. Transcripts and observation logs were analysed post-fieldwork through open and axial coding employing both emic and etic codes in establishing core categories. The latter yielded themes such as Diversity of Choice, Voice and Experience; Cultural Relativism vs. Conformity; Structural Barriers; Inclusion vs. Assimilation; and Partnerships.

Although some of the truly collaborative potential of anti-oppressive data analysis was not realised in this study, other strategies were used to ensure that the analysis "rang true" to participants and reflected their experiences. Transcripts were made available to contributors for perusal prior to being finalised. Dissemination presentations and discussions of findings individually tailored to both students and staff at NorQuest were arranged during which the main results were presented and interrogated. In the student sessions it became clear that the results validated their experiences with many wondering how and when changes would be implemented by administrators. The staff sessions also clarified findings and gave opportunities for many to critique those institutional procedures and practices they experienced as disempowering. Notes taken after the sessions served to further nuance understanding. Lastly, agreements for continued cooperation with NorQuest College have been made including additional planned visits and consultations.

Findings and Discussion

For the purpose of this chapter, I focus an anti-oppressive lens on the theme of Inclusion vs. Assimilation emerging from the data to highlight contested understandings of how inclusion is perceived and negotiated by staff and students at NorQuest LINC and suggest some ways forward. In AOP, social exclusion and oppression operate at personal, cultural and structural levels meaning that efforts at social inclusion must be correspondingly multifaceted and based on a reflexive praxis[7] between individuals, their cultural environments and the structures which support them (Baines, 2007). Therefore, in examining contestations of inclusion, the sub-categories of *teaching culture & language, cultural negotiation, critical citizenship* and *fostering community partnerships* reflect multi-level discourses and responses which illuminate how this phenomenon is practically interpreted both within the confines of the institution and beyond its walls.

Teaching Culture & Language

"I think this whole issue of "Canadian society", what is Canadian society? We don't ever problematise or look critically at that in a LINC context. It is all, multiculturalism is so wonderful and never mind that we are all settlers in this country. We are an occupier's land."

The above quote by a LINC instructor avows the need for more critical dialogue on perceived "cultural facts" and dominant national identity discourses in the program which de-emphasise the history of colonial oppression in the process of Canadian nation-building. It further raises pertinent concerns as to how cultural knowledge is then transmitted to migrant students. As such, it illuminates a question central to inclusion, namely; how does one reconcile the co-constructed nature of Canada's cultural mosaic, which allows for a diversity of cultural traditions and "belongings" to be subsumed under a definition of "Canadian," with the aims of teaching a coherent culture and language. The quote further challenges teachers to expose the silences, the gaps in the story of Canada thereby interrogating the power relations underpinning dominant narratives. Previous studies (see Sauvé, 1996; Ilieva, 2001; Thomson & Derwing, 2004) have pointed to the contentious nature of teaching Canadian culture due to the difficulty in articulating its essence. Some authors question if teaching culture as a

[7] Reflexive praxis is to take action to transform the social world based upon our awareness of how we may be complicit in perpetuating social hierarchies and privilege. (see Fernández-Balboa, 1998)

disassociated classroom topic is even possible or if direct observation or cultural immersion in society are the only ways to achieve this (Fleming, 2003). At NorQuest LINC, one commonly adopted strategy in seeking to reconcile the contradictions of cultural transmission with the postmodern realities of cultural pluralism is explained in the following way by a teaching staff member;

"I think most teachers in teaching Canada and culture and so on would…draw the distinction of this is how we do it in Canada, but also recognising, I'm not saying that this is the best way."

While this demonstrates an awareness of the multiplicity of competing values, beliefs and ways of life, it seems to implicitly accept the existence of an objectively definable "Canadian culture". One question this approach raises is if such presentations of Canada include the cultural experiences of migrant students within such a definition? Critical understandings of multiculturalism[8] maintain that if students own cultural backgrounds are portrayed as distinct from, instead of a part of being Canadian, then they inevitably become cultural add-ons (Goldberg, 1994). Anti-oppressive perspectives on inclusion at the personal level support the creation of more forums for dialogue where students and staff could interrogate the concept of "Canadian" and the curricular materials which transmit such reflections. Such institutionally embedded forums, would also be invaluable in negotiating other issues such as those concerning religious and cultural allowances and develop critical self-reflexivity - the deliberate effort to foster resistance to conformity and ethnocentric biases (Fook & Gardner, 2007). Moreover, they could make room for ad hoc cultural exchanges where learning about ourselves and others becomes inadvertent and incidental; something often referred to as the "intangibles" inherent in multicultural educations. Consequently, they may even inform a "hyperreflexivity" one of the components of which is the committed collaboration on an equal footing of all participants in the learning process (Dervin & Clark, 2014). It is here the innovative implementations of Portfolio-based learning assessments (PBLA) as adopted by NorQuest which envision bottom-up, student-centred approaches in curriculum development could be instrumental in renegotiating *teaching culture*.

However, changes at cultural and structural levels can only be achieved if the forums of

[8] For an in-depth discussion of contested understandings and manifestations of multiculturalism including conservative, liberal and critical or resistance interpretations (see Goldberg, 1994; Sisneros et.al, 2008)

dialogue lead to an examination of the hidden assumptions and dominant narratives in curricular materials and change the concrete institutional procedures guiding how these are taught. Some suggestions by participants for inclusion-based strategies include broadening the programs' knowledge base to encompass more global perspectives and incorporating student-created instructional materials to reflect their stories and their realities in the learning tasks. The juxtaposition of different or more voices into a curriculum can create different "stories," a different framework for thinking and acting in anti-racist ways. However, if structural and institutional changes are restricted to modifying curricula and teaching to learn about the Other, they fall short of forcing educators or students to interrogate privilege nor illuminate the wider societal processes of othering. Confronting racism and oppression requires disruptive knowledge, knowledge which resists the desire to essentialise and close oneself off from learning more (Kumashiro, 2000).

The tension between fostering policies of inclusion predicated upon diversity and essentialist strivings for sameness which is inescapably present in *teaching culture* at NorQuest also resurfaces in how language instruction and language competences were perceived. A LINC 5 student interestingly adopted a pluralist standpoint relating to language learning within the program;

"When you study in multicultural groups you improve your skills especially in language because you have to speak English and it is good that it is not the same pronunciation and here you catch all [types of] *pronunciations. And I think Canada is multicultural and you have to know the* [different] *pronunciations."*

However, this astute acknowledgement of the vicissitudes of multi-linguistic landscapes problematising the striving for a "perfect English" in language learning and teaching within multicultural contexts was not without its detractors. A number of teachers and students continued to emphasise the importance of attaining Canadian language perfection with some advocating more English practice at home and others seeking to dissuade parents from practicing English with their children as the latter will then adopt "wrong" ways of speaking. However, as one instructor laughingly related about her own teaching experience abroad in problematising the elusiveness of "perfect" language competence, *"a family member of one of my students came to visit and said, where is your child learning this horrible English? She said, oh, she has a Canadian teacher. Well that explains it!"*

Cultural Negotiation

If debates on teaching culture and language demonstrate the need for a socially critically approach involving participants in LINC as partners in curriculum development and implementation, then the theme of *cultural negotiation* extends this principle. It examines the institutional arrangements which govern how issues of inclusion ranging from religious and cultural allowances to staff recruitment are dealt with. In general, there was a genuine willingness to provide opportunities for LINC students to decide over matters concerning their education and involve them in consultations. However, questions did remain as to how this was best achieved and what concrete outcomes their involvement would have in affecting change. Examples of negotiating cultural diversity could be seen in addressing religious differences by installing foot washing stations in some washrooms and designating prayer rooms for religious observances. A certain flexibility in arranging LINC schedules to coincide with other than Judeo-Christian religious holidays also existed though this was critically contested and adopted on a case-by-case basis as one administrator explained;

"So we always have this end of term testing and it just so happened that this was right at the end of Ramadan, at Id the big festival and it was becoming a really big issue and when you have that many students saying that we can't test because this is our one big special day?...You know there were different opinions about what we should do about that and because of the number of students involved, I really pushed to change the date…I know we were opening up a can of worms [but] I still feel that that was the right call to make in that situation and I know there were people who felt, well no, they have come HERE…I don't know, it is an ongoing learning thing for both sides. It is a settlement thing for students but it is also an education thing for the rest of us to learn."

The quote reflects the different opinions among staff ranging from cultural conformity to inclusion which had to be negotiated in making this rather controversial decision. It further affirms the resulting risks perceived in exposing oneself to demands for changes from other religious or cultural groups implied in the "*opening up a can of worms*". Yet there is also an acknowledgment that inclusion demands compromise, even structural change and that this is essential for students' own settlement process and reciprocally for the development of intercultural competences among staff. The above example echoes Will Kymlicka's (2010, p. 18) assessment that "religion is now the most controversial domain of multiculturalism" and

that innovative ways must be found to negotiate and "normalise" such issues. From an anti-oppressive perspective, it is notable that such efforts at inclusion necessitate changes to institutional arrangements and procedures for prioritising the voices of more disempowered individuals and groups (Mullaly, 2010). Other examples of institutional changes supporting social inclusion at NorQuest College include an official policy of intercultural training enjoined on 85% of staff and administrators by 2017, the creation of a centre for intercultural education and the drafting of a College-wide "immigrant strategy" designed to develop educational, social and employment supports. The many extra-curricular activities and events ranging from class potluck dinners to Canada Day celebrations, though often dependent upon the initiative of individual teachers and students, also attest to an openness in validating LINC students' "differential needs". (Hick, Fook & Pozzuto et. al., 2005).

However, as the following discussion on staff diversity demonstrates, certain issues pertaining to the structural embedding of inclusion principles remain largely invisible. In discourses with most white staff members, staff diversity, or the lack thereof, was not cited as an obfuscating factor to inclusion. It is therefore interesting that the statement below expressing surprise in describing the colour homogeneity of instructors, originated from a research participant representing a visible minority background;

"I feel like this campus is very white in terms of the staff. I believe that in every institution the staff's cultural or ethnic background should reflect the student population. I feel like that it's not diverse."

This observation raises crucial questions as to the inherent responsibilities of institutions to reflect the demographics of their clientele at all levels when we speak about operationalising inclusion. The Maritime School of Social Work in its recipe for building anti-oppressive schools ranks the diverse nature of the institutional staff as one of its most poignant indicators of diversity (MacDonald et. al., 2003). The often posed argument of "we hire the best" is challenged for its colour-blindness, which overlooks that individuals or groups with histories of marginalisation often don't have the same educational opportunities, resources or access to social networks (Malik, 1996; Lentin & Titley, 2011). A comment by one LINC staff member echoed these challenges;

"I think teachers who are from visible minority backgrounds or who are perceived as English learners themselves find a lot of challenges. I think they are judged more critically by their students and maybe, I don't know, by their colleagues. From student feedback there is a lot of "I want a Canadian Teacher," and by Canadian teacher they mean a white, native English speaker even though somebody could be from India and be a native English speaker."

The above quote provides an eloquent answer to the question of why, especially in integration programs espousing multicultural ideals, the staff should "reflect the student population". If instructors who are often viewed as the primary representatives of "Canada" predominantly represent a certain ethnic, linguistic, or "racial" background, then it is not surprising that those who deviate from this norm are going to be viewed as atypical or un-Canadian. It is also interesting how the invisibility of whiteness[9], alluded to above, then becomes a norm obvious to all who deviate from it. Sara Ahmed (2012, p. 33) argues that although institutions might not have an intrinsic "white" character, they are given character partly by "being given a face." Anti-oppressive recommendations by program developers at Maritime College in promoting staff diversity include a designated hiring policy as part of larger diversity schemes with support mechanisms to assist minority faculty in undertaking further studies as well as addressing institutional barriers to employment (MacDonald et. al., 2003).

One thing the above examples of cultural negotiation demonstrate is that adding "difference" to a learning environment does not necessarily have to change teaching and institutional practices that affirm our sense of normalcy. Kevin Kumashiro (2001) postulates that perhaps we desire teaching and learning in ways that affirm and confirm what we have come to believe as normal or common sense in society, are the way things really are and are supposed to be. The alternative of seeing ourselves and our perceptions of "normalcy" as social constructs maintained only through the othering, or the silencing of other narratives in which we are complicit can be troubling. His point is that perhaps we resist anti-racist or anti-oppressive practices because they challenge not only how we think and feel about the Other, but also ourselves.

[9] for discourses on whiteness and privilege see Malik, 1996; Mullaly, 2010.

Critical Citizenship

The previous discussions on *teaching culture & language* and *cultural negotiation* represent snapshots of how such discourses serve to shape and reify inclusion at NorQuest LINC. It must be recognised, however, that all of these internal contestations also have very real external ramifications. They circumscribe how both students and staff understand integration and inclusion not only by what is subsumed under these definitions but also by what is left out of them. This in turn frames their interactions with wider society. The debate on critical citizenship illuminates this periphery. It highlights the marginal, the backsides of integration and thus essentially its multidimensionality. Critical citizenship necessitates uncoupling ideas of citizenship from specific national, cultural and religious identities where in the face of globalisation it is used as a model for false, enforced homogeneity and hegemony by nation states (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). Instead it means linking "belonging" to values of diversity and social justice and in the case of anti-racist practices in education to active strategies of exposing white privilege and racial oppression (Dei, 1999). As LINC provides a gateway to citizenship and a preparation for students to actively participate in all realms of social, political and economic life, it seemed curious that curricular topics which developed a social critique of the host society or explored integration's downsides were lacking. Topics such as discrimination or racism were, according to both staff and students, rarely discussed or broached by teachers. Reasons for this varied as a staff member postulated;

"Maybe the first response when a student comes up and those issues of race and discrimination happen, we tend to say that that is just one individual who does that, or "No, No, we all live in a multicultural society, we all have to get along", or "We have to stop seeing difference." We kind of got to those standard responses rather than saying, oh, tell me more. So sometimes those bigger conversations could happen but I think they get stopped."

The justifications, encapsulated in the above quote, for relegating these issues to the margins reflect a number of current post racialist discourses; namely that racism is an aberration - the domain of a lunatic fringe – something which enlightened multicultural societies have left behind and that highlighting "difference" is incompatible with the colour-blind ideologies of liberal egalitarianism. In such discourses one has successfully unlinked culture from biology by substituting "cultural differences" for biological ones in justifying Othering. "Race" has been semantically conquered by being defined solely in terms of what has been rejected; the

narrow and selective terms of false biology and phenotypical classification (Lentin & Titley, 2011). It has thus become invisible; its mutability ensuring that challenges which interrogate the interconnections between the idea of race and the institutions of modern nation-states can be ignored. The new face of racism is a pseudo-biological culturalism where nations are seen to be constructed not out of politics and economics, but out of human nature. "It is in our biology, our instincts, to defend our way of life, traditions and customs against outsiders – not because they are inferior, but because they are part of different cultures." (Barker, 1981, p. 24).

The unfortunate bi-product of the invisibility of race resulting in *"those bigger conversations getting stopped"* mirrors research findings postulating that teachers representing the "dominant" culture have internalised idealised narratives about multiculturalism and Canada as a tolerant nation. "One consequence is that teachers do not validate student's experiences of racism and discrimination…but rather focus on harmonising relations in the classroom" (Richardson in Pinet 2007, p. 61). Indeed, a variety of responses ranging from deflection and defensiveness to a paternalistic desire to protect students from social ills by counselling adaption rather than challenging discrimination were all present in the fieldwork material. In "individualising difference" exemplified by harmonising and adaption strategies, the responsibility of becoming multiculturally competent Canadian citizens is placed primarily on the shoulders of migrant students. Therefore, structural factors, even present within schools, which underpin racializing practices are obscured.

However, there were also those who welcomed the opportunity to extend discussions to the "negatives", as a senior LINC teacher disclosed;

"When people say I hate Canada, I don't get defensive because I think they need to get it out and I want to make this a safe place so whatever you think and whatever you feel you can say it because maybe out there in your real world you can't say it. I think for them it is kind of good. Sometimes, depending on the issues it is almost like a therapy session."

There is an explicit recognition in the above quote that integration is an oft conflictual process whose complexity is diminished if topics like racism or social exclusion are considered taboo - to the detriment of mutual learning for both students and staff. For certain instructors,

discussions of Canada's colonial history and its marginalisation of indigenous peoples offered a natural Segway in linking cultural knowledge with topics of oppression and discrimination.

These findings confirming the lack of a critical citizenship component in implementations of LINC with a corresponding focus on cultural adaption echo similar conclusions reached by Cervatuic and Ricento (2012) and Pinet (2007). Anti-racist and anti-oppressive pedagogies suggest possible explanations for this, positing that teachers feel insecure about relinquishing control of how learning is structured, what is learned, and how this is communicated. Correspondingly, they may also feel insufficient and incompetent in participating in such forms of learning, not least because of the responsibility it places upon them to challenge their own privilege (Kumashiro, 2000). Morgan's (2002) call for a critically reflexive pedagogy emphasising a *Weltanschauung* of social engagement with curricular contents built around identity questions, community participation and societal critiques may provide cogent ideas for new ways forward.

Fostering Community Partnerships

The adoption of a "dual perspective" as a prerequisite for anti-oppressive practices serves as a foundation for the last theme on *fostering community partnerships* which highlights discussions on NorQuest's social responsibilities in furthering inclusion. A dual perspective requires the recognition of one's embeddedness in society and linking this subjective world to a greater social reality (Dalrymple & Burke, 1997). For efforts towards inclusion at LINC this entails recognizing how wider social policies and global pressures affect the individual lives of students and staff. It also recommends casting a correspondingly wide net to include a myriad of social actors when planning initiatives.

It became apparent from discussions with students that there was an intersectionality in mechanisms of social exclusion some of which had societal origins such as provincial differences in recognising foreign qualifications and subsistence levels of social benefits institutionalizing poverty, and how these interfaced with NorQuest processes and regulations. For example, many professional students felt that their skills atrophied within a LINC program structure they perceived to be too lengthy and inflexible and which focused on language and culture to the exclusion of other subjects such as maths, sciences or work training schemes. In addition, the limited social assistance levels coupled with the lack of day-

care facilities at NorQuest meant that many, primarily female students, had difficulties in balancing childcare requirements with studies. This begs a number of future questions of the educational institution if social inclusion is to reach beyond the walls of the school. Firstly, does the recognition of these structural obstacles have an impact on program implementation, and does NorQuest have a role and responsibility to support the political agency of students and staff by seeking to collectively transform existing social policies? (Payne, Adams & Dominelli, 2002). In response to the first question, there was an awareness at LINC that the structural obstacles impeding student employment, welfare and the building of professional/social networks could not be ignored nor overcome by simply focusing ameliorative strategies on internal institutional processes. A recurring theme in conversations with students was their curiosity about Canadian society and the wish for more participation within it. This ranged from extending "real life" language practices, increasing their participation in various workplace practice schemes or traineeships to opening up the curriculum process to more input from without, as one student expressed it; *"We need some people especially Canadian people to develop this course and talk together."*

The need to foster meaningful community partnerships, reflecting similar recommendations from recent LINC studies (see Derwing & Waugh, 2012), was also shared by many staff members who realised that student inclusion necessitated a perspective which looked beyond the confines of the campus. While there was evidence of fruitful connections with other educational institutions and some third sector volunteer associations there was a gap where links with cultural or religious organisation were concerned as one administrator confided;
"One of the proposals was to build an international education career centre… but some of the feedback was that we hadn't demonstrated things like partnerships with the ethno-cultural organisations."

It also appeared that third sector or ethno-cultural organisations were not involved in the CIC proposal drafting, curriculum planning or assessment processes. In the Maritime School of Social Work's program realignment according to anti-oppressive principles, questions such as what is the nature of relations with stakeholders and how are they participating in the education and in program reviews, were of central importance (MacDonald et. al., 2003). AOP includes all as shareholders in inclusion endeavours with corresponding rights to participate in discussions relating to the LINC course. Such efforts demand including ethno-

cultural associations whose role in the lives of students is often incalculable and whose expertise in negotiating questions of exclusion and inclusion is unique.

In developing community partnerships at NorQuest there was one ideological position expressed by a senior LINC administrator characterising outreach efforts which set a particularly vital prerequisite for such contacts and truly reflects "best practice" according to anti-oppressive theory.

"the foundational principle for the last eight years, [is] *that we will only work with you through a two-pronged approach, so the Canadian moves this way and the immigrant moves this way, and somewhere you meet whether you are pulling one along or the other way. So all the work we do with companies…if they are not willing to have all of their managers come to the intercultural sessions and the educational piece we are not willing to come in. We have never put the responsibility or the accountability on the immigrant alone in any of the work we do outside of that."*

This recognition of integration's distinctly transformational essence incorporates a social change agenda as part of the democratic mandate of NorQuest and reflects the dual perspective alluded to at the start of the section. The quote also addresses this reciprocal fluxion which takes place when inclusion is conceptualised as a process from which all sides emerge changed. When one adds this to the forthcoming immigrant strategy and other efforts at diversity a progressive pattern of institutional reform emerges. Sara Ahmed inverts the old axiom of knowledge leading to transformation by arguing that institutional transformation leads to knowledge. Therefore, one can interpret the tangible "hands-on" changes undertaken by NorQuest as opening worlds of insight into diversity. Diversity as praxis in this view generates knowledge for and about institutions in the process of transformation (Ahmed, 2012).

Conclusion

It is argued that integration interpreted as assimilation runs counter to modern sensibilities as "it is incompatible with a modern understanding of cultural liberties and more likely to trigger resistance than compliance" (Bauböck, 2000, p.10). One could go a step further and claim that according to anti-oppressive principles, assimilation violates human rights conceptions of

social justice and institutionalises oppressions which are at once personal and structural. The previous chapter has focused on how contested negotiations of social inclusion by participants in Norquest College's LINC program when juxtaposed with anti-oppressive practice principles may offer new perspectives of conceptualising critical and anti-racist pedagogies. This chapter highlights the theme of Inclusion vs. Assimilation emerging from wider fieldwork data chronicling the experiences of program participants.

The inclusion discourse yielded findings which call on educational providers to transcend their institutional boundaries by adopting structural, cross-sectorial and distinctly political responses. Such responses include creating more egalitarian educational partnerships with all stakeholders comprising teachers, students and community organisations involved in LINC. They further entail re-examining institutional procedures, curricular aims and contents, as well as promoting public education programs and collective political agency to address the socio-structural factors circumscribing the lives of migrant students. A complementary finding in furthering inclusion suggests that components of social criticism and critical citizenship including students' own experiences should become more entrenched within NorQuest's integration educations. Inclusion so interpreted does not entail subsuming the Other within a pre-existing societal order but rather within a fluid structural process where this order is interrogated and changed collectively.

If a foundation for anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice fostering collaborative learning is built on principles of self-reflexivity, egalitarian partnership and social transformation then inclusion becomes a real possibility. Becoming cognisant of the intersections between cultural and individual norms and bringing an openness to sharing all the "others" world in our encounters are both preconditions and outcomes of such a process (Yellow Bird et. al., 2013). As a prerequisite for inclusion on such terms, Gloria Anzaldua, (1988) advocates adopting a "borderland perspective" where we find comfort in ambiguity and contradiction and make ourselves vulnerable to different ideas, thoughts, and ways of being. Seeing from the margins, and using one's own experiences of exclusion in relating to "Othered" groups is, as one LINC teacher expresses it, one way of connecting;

"Well, that is the nice thing because I never really did fit and a lot of these people feel that they don't fit either so we're a team [laughs] *and I can give them encouragement and support."*

Dislodging comfort zones and positioning oneself at the intersections of discourses on culture or religion may provide a perspective for NorQuest staff and students from which it is easier to negotiate integration and inclusion's varied interpretations. Ultimately, it may be more satisfying than the insecurity of oscillating between approaches of cultural relativism and social conformity.

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