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## **Dedication**

**To Chris and Ma for keeping faith – and to me for seeing it through!**

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## Summary

This thesis uses poststructural theory to question how language shapes educational policy and practice. It starts from the premise that the tendency for categorising knowledge as binary opposites, whilst potentially useful, also encourages polarisation, is reductive, and produces closure. Thus, by interrogating the ‘/’ [slash], the boundary between the pairs, the intention is to produce a different, more equitable, productive, and openly uncertain way of questioning unresolved educational dilemmas, hence the search for a question. Educational inclusion/exclusion foregrounds this research.

It did not start out this way. As a scientist, a zoologist by training, and steeped in the rigidity of scientific method, the original study concerned proving a hypothesis, using questionnaires to collect the data and followed by some sort of statistical analysis. However, this approach did not acknowledge the complexity, nuances and shades of meaning within the language of inclusive education that I wished to explore. Poststructural theory offered a different strategy and interrupted my positivist thinking throughout.

Thus, a Foucauldian approach has been used to interrogate the inclusion/exclusion binary in the literature. Searching for the historical *a priori* is followed by an interrogation of the different discourses and the power relations therein. An empirical analysis succeeds the textual analysis, for which data was collected in the form of interviews. Called participatory interactions, secondary teacher educator colleagues were asked to talk about inclusion, and activatory phrases were used to stimulate discussion. Poststructural interruptions about ethics suggested an innovative method of discourse analysis developed using Derrida’s metaphor of a postcard, in which he enacts the performative stance of deconstruction.

Aspects of the data that troubled the inclusion/exclusion binary are presented as verse alongside a reflexive response that stimulates theoretical discussions called ‘new lines of flight’. On the reverse side of every postcard is a photograph, a graphic

representation of some feature pertaining to the data selected, and the stamp is a picture of the philosopher whose work inspired the theorisation.

Interrogating the ‘/’ [slash] reveals the complex interplay of each side of the binary and surfaces a system of ethics regarding legitimation. The final chapter, therefore, proposes a deliberate ethical interruption – an interruption *of* practice in order to interrupt practice. Professional practice should be deliberately interrupted by research in order to interrupt oppositional binary thinking. This research should have a deliberately ethical component foregrounding personal values and attitudes. As a consequence, inclusive education could be reconceptualised. The current discourse of a failing educational experiment might then be transformed into an ethical project worth going on with.

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