

Chapter 4

Framing Disability Inclusion: A Literature Review and Self-Reflection by an Individual With Disability

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ABSTRACT

Framing theory is essential to understanding how inclusion is seen and acted upon. It is a critical theoretical framework for this chapter and the book as a whole to understand when discussing reframing autism inclusion in praxis. Framing theory is a theory that sees the chaos in the world through frames that inform ideas, beliefs, and values. In order to know inclusion, framing theory can assist in guiding research and scholarly discussion about the concept, both in education and in communication alike. Framing theory is a theory which frames, meaning that framing theory describes a world where frames inform both perception and action reality.

BACKGROUND

Framing theory is an essential theory in public relations and communication as a whole (Bolman et al., 2017; Borah, 2011; Cacciatore et al., 2016; Fairhurst, 2005; Forlin, 2010; Goffman, 1974; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Schedin, 2017; Scheufele, 1999; Valentino et al., 2001). However, framing theory is also seen in education and educational leadership research, though not as often as it is relied upon in communication. The reduced presence of framing theory outside of communication scholarship allows this critical knowledge to be shared across the disciplines. For instance, one pivotal study explores special education as a frame that excludes rather than includes (Deno, 1970, as cited in Forlin, 2010). There is a frame observed of fixing a person with differences instead of including each person with unique abilities (Forlin, 2010). The scholarship of Forlin (2010) directly connects framing theory and inclusion with

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the explication of the idea that the perception of inclusive classrooms is influenced by framing, which subsequently influences outcomes related to inclusion. Other education scholars echo the connection between framing and inclusion in education and teacher preparation, with inclusion treated as a type of reframing, which will be elaborated on in the following sections (Bolman et al., 2017; De Bruycker, 2017; Fairhurst, 2005; Forlin, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2017). Overall, framing theory identifies frames as a theoretical framework that makes sense of preconscious sensemaking of inclusion for individuals with autism that also directly impacts perceptions and actions.

REFLECTION ON FRAMING

The reflections in italics in this chapter are by disability scholar and communication scholar Stephanie Rivas:

Within doing this research, I found answers for myself; growing up with a disability was difficult. There was a sense of frustration along with this feeling of being ashamed for being who I am. These feelings created me to feel as if I had no voice and no assistance. Due to being ashamed, I had forced myself to act normal, never disclose my disability, and struggled with obtaining good grades. This feeling lasted until my sophomore year of college when I took an Intercultural Communication course and saw how my feelings were coming from how society has created stereotypes within the community I am under. Since then, I have brought awareness to the disability community by creating most of my speeches and scholarly work around what it is like to be disabled. As I fell into wanting to know more about framing, I saw how framing could be the cause of why one feels/ thinks a certain way about disability, especially within education. By learning these frames, I was able to see how the abled community has constructed stereotypes affects with how it affects the education system and those who are disabled. By looking in-depth within framing (viewing the history along with how it is being used within communication), I can use this in future research as a critical scholar and find how we can create a positive and inclusive environment within the educational system for people with disabilities.

As a student with a disability, I would like to bring the importance of this frame. Growing up and being put into the disability educational area since age seven, I saw the miscommunication among our teachers, evaluators, and counselors. We were often separated from the others, teachers would tell us we would have to know when to leave class for our appointments, and counselors rarely talked to us. As a 7-year-old with disabilities, it was hard to keep track of times and fear asking others to assist since I always felt as if I was on my own. Although the nondisabled community might assume they are doing this already, they are not doing it correctly/ at its full potential. There will be downfalls within the educational system regarding disabilities and education if there is no proper communication within leadership.

Within looking at frames and education, I see potential in looking at school policies for people with disability and seeing how they might be affecting people with disabilities without the nondisabled community noticing. As a critical scholar, I hope to learn about theories that may explain why there is inequality within minority cultures, along with bringing awareness and creating a movement for change. My passion for speaking for those voices who are not heard has only begun; within the next two years, I hope that the research that I conduct will create a positive change for those who are disabled like myself.

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