EQUITY GAPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Katie Pak, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education

Arianna Parsons, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education

Abstract:
When exploring the achievement of students with disabilities (SWDs) in today's educational context of standards-based reform, scholars typically debate the merits and disadvantages of including SWDs in general education classrooms. Yet these debates in the fields of special education, policy implementation, and standards-based reform are largely silent on the inequitable issues of implicit biases (both systemic and individual) against SWDs who also identify as low-income students of color, particularly in urban classrooms, and how these biases may mitigate the effects of inclusion and differentiation. In this commentary, we contribute to these debates by arguing for an equity-oriented reconceptualization of inclusive and differentiation practices in standards-based classrooms.

Though "high academic standards" for all has been the mantra of education reformers for the past several decades (Hardman & Dawson, 2008; Hoover & Patton, 2004; Thurlow, 2000), the educational system continues to underserve students with disabilities (SWDs). As a result, this historically marginalized group has chronically underperformed in the United States when compared to their peers without disabilities, on various outcomes—national and state test scores, graduation rates, post high school earnings, and unemployment rates (L. Fuchs et al., 2015; Mishkind, 2014; Newman et al., 2011; Thorius & Tan, 2015; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). In this commentary, we posit that this underperformance is not due to the learning challenges exhibited by SWDs or to the need for more specialized interventions outside of the general education setting, as is commonly argued—instead, these trends may be the result of the lack of intersectional analyses of the SWD experience, many of whom face biases as low-income students of color in urban classrooms.

Students of color represent the majority of SWDs in the United States. Table 1 presents the racial demographics of these students within the context of all the disability categories recognized by the federal government, according to the data in the National Center for Education Statistics (2017).

Table 1

Racial Demographic Data for Children 3 to 21 Years Old Served under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2015-2016

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Two or More Races
All Disabilities	13.7	15.5	12.2	6.6	11.6	17.2	13.0
Autism	1.4	1.1	1.0	1.4	0.9	0.9	1.4
Developmental Delay	0.9	1.0	0.6	0.5	0.9	1.7	1.1

Emotional Disturbance	0.7	1.1	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.9	0.9
Hearing impairment	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1
Intellectual disability	0.8	1.4	0.8	0.4	0.8	1.1	0.7
Multiple disabilities	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2
Orthopedic Impairment	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other health impairment	2.1	2.1	1.2	0.5	1.3	2.0	1.9
Learning disability	4.2	5.8	5.1	1.4	5.0	6.9	3.9
Speech and language impairment	2.9	2.3	2.6	1.7	1.5	2.9	2.7
Traumatic brain injury	0.1	0.1	-	-	-	0.1	0.1
Visual Impairment	0.1	0.1	-	-	0.1	0.1	-

Note: Number served as a percent of total enrollment

As Table 1 indicates, for every disability category, White students are in the minority. Additionally, many of the Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Native students[1] who disproportionately outnumber White students with disabilities are clustered in urban school districts, where there are large, concentrated populations of communities of color due to forced or voluntary migration to metropolitan opportunities and to national desegregation failures that amplified "White flight" out to suburban areas (Blanchett et al., 2009; Urban Indian Health Commission, 2007). The preponderance of students of color with disabilities living in urban districts also raises the likelihood that they are low-income students served by under-resourced schools. Indeed, data from the National Survey of Children's Health indicate that children living at or below the federal poverty level are more than twice as likely to be classified as SWDs compared to children with a socioeconomic background four times the poverty level (Committee to Evaluate the Supplemental Security Income Disability Program for Children with Mental Disorders et al., 2015).

However, it is not yet commonplace for scholars and practitioners of urban education to consider the interlocking systems of racism and classism when inquiring into the implementation of classroom practices traditionally geared towards SWDs (Erevelles & Minear, 2010), such as inclusion and differentiation. Such discussions permeate the Disability Studies literature (e.g., Connor et al., 2016), but they have not yet entered the mainstream special education field. As a result, instructional practices for SWDs are often framed in race-neutral or class-neutral terms that do not acknowledge the diversity of students who are seen as having learning challenges in urban schools. Moreover, the implementation challenges associated with the instruction of SWDs are typically attributed to the lack of sufficient professional development (PD; Lerner, 2006), lack of planning time for general education and special education collaborators (Scruggs et al., 2007), compliance and paperwork demands

taking time away from instructional planning (Billingsley, 2017), or the policy tension of individualizing instruction for SWDs based on their areas of growth while also holding them accountable to standard, grade-level learning outcomes (Salend, 2016). While these are all relevant concerns, a missing element is whether educational leaders and educators, many of whom hold ability, race, and class privileges, are actively transforming their practices to explicitly include and sustain the various cultural patterns, tools, values, and experiences that SWDs bring to the classroom (Waitoller & Thorius, 2016). We call this gap in the literature, and this gap in educational practice, an *equity gap.*

Historically, this gap is frequently referred to as the "achievement gap" or "opportunity gap." We argue that these terms fail to represent the heart of the dilemma facing the diverse population of SWDs in urban settings. The achievement gap, which highlights the trend that marginalized student groups (e.g., Black and Hispanic students, SWDs, English learners, low-income students) tend to perform on state standardized tests at lower rates compared to their White peers, reinforces deficit thinking about these students, privileges narrow definitions of learning, and centers White student achievement as the norm (Thorius & Tan, 2015). The opportunity gap, which emphasizes the politically, economically, and socially inequitable systems that contribute to disparities in school resources (e.g., funding, high quality teachers, student materials), locates the injustices *outside* the schoolhouse door without placing equal focus on the injustices occurring inside the classroom.

Instead, we face an ethical dilemma that we label an "equity gap," which moves beyond a focus on achievement gaps measured through standardized tests or opportunity gaps stemming from inadequate resources. Though "equity" is popularly understood as all students having meaningful opportunity for educational attainment through the redistribution of resources or redesign of the educational infrastructure (Crockett, 2017; Kozleski & Smith, 2009), we view equity as recasting systemic and individual biases towards SWDs, leading to transformational inclusion and differentiation practices within rigorous standards-based classrooms. Equity gaps highlight ableist, racist, classist, and other identity-based biases that entrench inequitable treatment of SWDs, despite attempts to include them in general education classrooms, leading to inequitable outcomes for this historically marginalized student population. We argue that studies of instructional practices for SWDs, especially studies that are situated in urban contexts with significant populations of low-income students of color, should explicitly examine equity gaps when analyzing the effectiveness of inclusion or differentiation practices, rather than centering identity-neutral implementation factors that complicate the work of educators.

To aid this work, we present a conceptual framework that first highlights the contemporary educational policy environment influencing the academic programs afforded to SWDs. This is followed by a review of the literature on mainstream inclusion and differentiation practices to illustrate how these terms are popularly applied to analyses of SWDs in general education classrooms. We then identify the shortcomings in these analyses by incorporating an intersectional framework that exposes the equity gaps that SWDs face. We conclude our conceptual framework with our vision for inclusion and differentiation grounded in equity for SWDs.

Conceptual Framework

As standards-based reform took hold in the United States, SWD advocates also ensured that educational rights for these students would be protected by federal legislation. The 2001 passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) required states to report student performance levels including those of SWDs, and to face sanctions if these performance levels did not meet annual performance goals. Three years later, the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) established that "the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the *regular classroom,* to the maximum extent possible" (IDEA, 2004). In other words, SWDs were now legally required to have the same challenging opportunities to learn the curriculum alongside students without disabilities.

The advent of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2009 once again promised that high standards for all students would help close achievement gaps. The standards are theoretically designed to "increase the rigor of education in the United States… [and] to help bridge the gap between K–12 education and college and career readiness" (Konrad et al., 2014, p. 76). The power of these standards lies in accountability systems that hold schools and districts responsible for adequately implementing such standards, especially for SWDs. The consideration of SWDs in every facet of standards-based reform is considered a major victory for the special education movement (Tefera et al., 2013), indicating to some people that equitable treatment of SWDs is now the norm. Currently, all fifty states and the District of Columbia require teachers to implement K-12 standards for SWDs in core academic content areas.

As schools implement these standards, teachers of SWDs are tasked with differentiating instruction to accommodate a variety of learning differences (Haager & Vaughn, 2013; Powell, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2013). However, it is beyond the scope of CCSS and other standards to specify how teachers support students who perform below grade-level standards (Van Boxtel, 2017). It is therefore the task of educational leaders to help shape how in-service teachers equitably support SWDs in standards-based classrooms through the messages they communicate about inclusion and differentiation, and through the supports (e.g., PD, curricular materials) they provide to educators to actualize these messages.

This discussion of equity, however, cannot be decoupled from the racialized origins of disability in the United States, and from current trends suggesting both the disproportionate classification of students of color as having disabilities and the segregation of disabled students of color from general education classes, more so than White peers with the same label (Annamma et al., 2016). The notion of disability first emerged from scientists in the 1800s promoting the pathological view of the intellectual inferiority of communities of color, continuing into the 1900s where "feeble-minded," "mentally deficient" young people were excluded from public schools (Artiles, 2011; Waitoller & Thorius, 2016). Such segregation is inextricably linked to movements excluding people with disabilities from mainstream society based on fears of social chaos produced by racial and immigrant groups in the 20th century (Connor & Ferri, 2013; Kozleski et al., 2014). These trends lead Artiles (2011) to call out the "racialization of ability," or the practice of subjectively identifying students of color as having learning disabilities based on the implicit biases towards minoritized youth. Though current federal legislation requires local actors to reduce rates of disproportionate identification of disability among students of color, and to provide SWDs with equitable access to the general curriculum, if the underlying perceptions of disability remain couched in racialized mindsets, then efforts to support SWDs will continue to perpetuate social injustices.

To investigate how educators are understanding and supporting equitable instruction for SWDs in the midst of standards-based reform, we turn to our framework for how two common supports—inclusion and differentiation—should be reimagined with an intersectional approach.

Inclusion and Differentiation

Though equality of opportunity is a civil right for SWDs, the field has documented numerous inequitable outcomes even when schools seek to implement inclusive classes that incorporate differentiation strategies. There is some agreement that including SWDs in general education classrooms when possible and implementing differentiated instruction in these inclusive classrooms benefit SWDs. Yet when considering the population of students who are mostly labeled as having a learning disability—low-income students of color—one wonders whether and how these two practices should adapt to these intersecting identities. Could the aforementioned inequitable outcomes be the product of day-to-day implementation of inclusive supports, and the scholarly analyses of these supports, that do not center the diverse identities of the students?

We argue that every study of SWDs requires an intersectional lens based on the characteristics of students in the classrooms under investigation. Intersectional theoretical frameworks explore the specific positions of students presenting myriad identity markers (e.g., students of color with a learning disability) situated in particular cultural or historical contexts, as these experiences are not the same as being a student of color without a disability or as being a White student with a disability (Artiles et al., 2010; Connor, Ferri, & Annamma, 2016). Thus, the goal of this framework is to illustrate how inclusion and differentiation can be recast with an explicitly intersectional lens. We do so by first presenting how the two approaches for SWDs are conceptualized theoretically and in practice, the implementational successes and challenges of these approaches, and where these approaches might be strengthened.

Inclusion. IDEA requires SWDs to be placed in "least restrictive environments," which means they should be in instructional settings with peers who do not receive special education services to the extent that is appropriate and possible. The most common model for inclusive education is co-teaching, in which classes are taught by both a general education teacher with content expertise and a special education teacher with expertise in individualized, adaptive instruction (Cook, McDuffie-Landrum, Oshit, & Cook, 2017).

Inclusion is based on the premise that all children are entitled to be educated in a challenging learning environment where there is a collective sense of acceptance, belonging, and community (Opertti et al.; Salend, 2016). Inclusive education is believed to be an equitable form of instruction because it gives SWDs access to a broader range of educational and social opportunities, from general education curriculum and pedagogy, to extra-curricular activities (Mittler, 2000), and it signals that SWDs are not

inherently different from their general education peers (Schifter & Hehir, 2018). From this perspective, some view inclusive education as a matter of human rights, with the goal of reducing exclusion and discrimination towards SWDs (Ainscow et al., 2006; Hall, 1997). It is a matter of not just educating SWDs in the general education setting, but also seeks to change the "values, attitudes, policies, and practices within the school setting and beyond" (Polat, 2011, pp. 50-51).

There is evidence that inclusive practices benefit a range of stakeholders. For SWDs, the overall trend is that their academic and socioemotional performance is positively impacted when they are appropriately included in classrooms (Biklen et al., 2014; Hang & Rabren, 2009). Inclusion does not interfere with the development of general education students either: some even benefit from having teachers who utilize individualized strategies and supports for all students, and they also come to see disability in a positive light (Hang & Rabren, 2009; Salend, 2016). Special educators, when included in general education classrooms, feel a greater sense of belonging in the school community and experience more satisfaction from working with a greater range of students (Salend, 2016). General educators develop a greater sense of teaching efficacy, more favorable attitudes towards SWDs, and more productive relationships with colleagues when inclusion is implemented appropriately (Scruggs et al., 2007; Salend, 2016).

On the other hand, critics of inclusion reference studies that point to the challenges teachers face when students labeled with "Emotional Disturbance" disrupt the classroom environment, especially in light of the lack of preparation general education teachers receive pertaining to inclusion (Gilmour, 2018), or they issue the reminder that special education advocates fought for SWDs to be treated differently, with specialized supports (Zigmond & Kloo, 2017). Some of the other challenges associated with inclusion include structural factors, such as insufficient co-teaching supports. Though multiple co-teaching styles exist (e.g., parallel teaching, station teaching), most co-teaching teams inevitably utilize the one lead, one support model of the general educator serving as the main instructor and the special educator floating around the room supporting individual students (Cook et al., 2017). This arrangement promotes whole group instruction with teacher check-ins as the primary means of support, rather than tiered instruction that provides different students with different types of content and tasks. Lerner (2006) also cited barriers such as inadequate PD for content-area teachers, challenging curriculum, and vast discrepancies between course expectations and students' current levels of proficiencies.

Differentiation. While inclusion refers to the philosophy of supporting all students in accessing the CCR standards in a common setting, differentiation refers to the specific pedagogical approaches used to do so. Even in this era of 21st century standards-based instruction, differentiation is still largely rooted in the techniques popularized by individuals like Carol Ann Tomlinson in the late 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. Tomlinson, 1999).

"Differentiated Instruction" has been used as a catch-all phrase used to refer to strategies and models of instruction that assist teachers in planning instruction suited to fit each student and their particular needs (e.g., Algozzine & Anderson, 2007; Levy, 2008). Broadly speaking, differentiated instruction is used to refer to the process of determining what students learn, how they will learn it, and how they will demonstrate cognitive growth through application and synthesis (Simpson & Bogan, 2015). Differentiation includes tailoring curricular goals to the students, providing personalized supports, using a combination of direct instruction, reciprocal teaching, collaborative groups/ing, metacognitive questioning, outlining, summarizing, visual representation, and other such strategies to help make content accessible (see Salend, 2016).

In addition, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)—two models for reimagining instructional opportunities for all students—may not have been originally conceptualized as differentiation in practice, but they have certainly been taken up by practitioners as representations of the differentiation ideal. Both models, as they are understood today, adhere to principles of differentiation and accommodating individual needs within a standards-based classroom. UDL refers to the design of spaces and products that are accessible to all (Waitoller & Thorius, 2016). The principles of UDL focus on the differentiated ways in which teachers can present content in a variety of settings using a variety of means and assessed with a variety of performance tasks (McLaughlin, 2012). Similarly, MTSS focuses on *all* students, not just SWDs, and communicates a vision of equitable implementation of the standards that simultaneously addresses individualized areas of need (O'Rourke, 2015). The premise of MTSS schools is that general education teachers are responsible for differentiating for all students, not just students without Individualized Education Plans, and that they utilize three tiers of increasingly intensive, data-driven interventions to help each student access grade-level standards based on their unique needs (Kauffman et al., 2017; O'Connor & Sanchez, 2017).

Though these differentiation models are widely promulgated, scholars find that differentiation is rarely done well. Undifferentiated whole group reading instruction (Zigmond & Kloo, 2017), infrequent use of evidence-based practices for differentiating writing

tasks (Troia et al., 2017), and lack of adapted curriculum delivery in math (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006a; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006b) are often found in classrooms including SWDs. One impediment for teachers is the overwhelming amount of paperwork special education teachers must fill out to be in compliance with IDEA (Billingsly, 2017), preventing them from focusing on designing adequately differentiating instruction. Another impediment is the sheer number of "differences among differences" (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009, p. 186) that exist among students, causing the task of differentiation to seem daunting. And finally, for many teachers and school leaders, entrenched beliefs about SWDs' capacity to learn, especially for those with other marginalizing identities, are some of the most prohibitive barriers to rigorous differentiation. The belief that "underachievement and unconventional ways of learning" automatically translates to a disability (Jones, 2015, p. 47) leads to a lowering of the quality of work demanded from students and the reinforcement of stratified learning expectations (Harris, 2012; Park & Datnow, 2017).

The Intersecting Factors of Race and Class. This recognition of "differences among differences" brings to bear the argument that each student possesses unique assets, skills, and cultural repertoires despite their categorization in the educational system. The "differences among differences" recognition also testifies to the need for intersectional analyses of student experiences, as an analysis of just racism or ableism separately will result in "one system of oppression transmut[ing] into the other. When it is no longer okay to segregate kids by race, we segregate by disability. When it is no longer okay to segregate kids by race, we find other ways to justify exclusion" (Harvard Educational Review Forum, 2017, p. 8). Students who face the intersectional systems of oppression such as being labeled as having "specific learning disabilities" as well as being labeled "Black," "low-income," and other such labels will face differential obstacles to learning in standards-based classroom. For one, they may find the interventions, accommodations, or modifications that comprise the limited menu of differentiation options to be irrelevant to their lives. Moreover, teacher perceptions of these students likely impact the extent to which they believe students can master the academic content of inclusive classrooms.

Educators faced with the task of including students with different racial and class backgrounds than their own must consider the ways in which implicit biases influence how differentiation occurs. Students of color often encounter low academic expectations in the classroom (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Gillborn et al.; Samuels & Harwin, 2018). Fergus (2016) surveyed teachers and found that those with limited knowledge of their students' cultural backgrounds, or limited sense of responsibility to become more culturally aware, exhibited higher rates of deficit thinking about their students. Similarly, teachers in this survey that expressed deficit thinking tended to be the ones who expressed color-blindness or discomfort with racial conversations (Fergus, 2016). These findings suggest that SWDs whose racial identities differ from their teachers' will likely face problematic mindsets if these teachers gravitate towards color-blind instructional approaches. In the United States as of 2015-2016, 80% of the teacher workforce identified as White, and in urban districts more specifically, 69% are White (U.S. Department of Education, National Center on Education Statistics, 2019a). Additionally, approximately 77% of teachers are female (S. Department of Education, National Center on Education Statistics, 2018). These statistics stand in stark contrast to the declining percentages of White students in public schools, which was 49% in 2015-2017 and compared to 61% in 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center on Education Statistics, 2019b). Given our previously established assertion that SWDs are disproportionately students of color (see Table 1), it is clear that most educators share identities that differ from their students.

Students' socioeconomic statuses also enter the equation when we consider the disproportionate presence of low-income students among the population of SWDs (Sullivan & Bal, 2013). There is some evidence to suggest poverty, in and of itself, does not necessarily predict the over-representation of disability (Artiles, 2011; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Renae Feggins-Azziz, & Chung, 2005). When coupled with race, however, especially with Black and Hispanic racial identification, poverty does increase the risk of students being seen as having a disability (Capper et al., 2011), and these factors also contribute to lowered expectations for students' educational attainment (Mahatmya et al., 2016). These deficit-oriented attitudes towards, and biased perceptions of, SWDs, students of color, and low-income students perpetuate equity gaps despite commitments to inclusive models (Cherng, 2017; Fergus, 2016; Gillborn et al., 2016; Opertti et al., 2014; Mittler, 2000). In these instances, individual students are viewed as the problems that need to be fixed, rather than the issues that lie within an educational system that disproportionately labels low-income students of color as disabled when they fail to assimilate into the White, middle class norms of inclusion (Capper, 2018).

In addition to facing deficit perspectives from individual teachers, SWDs are systemically subject to instructional procedures with rigid notions of difference. As Ladson-Billings noted (see Harvard Educational Review Forum, 2017), teacher education programs prepare teachers "with the idea that there's a generic kid out there that you can teach, and for anybody who doesn't fit that generic model, then you do this one little thing differently" (p. 6). As a result, educators are taught to understand differentiation as an identity-neutral way to accommodate a range of ability levels, not as a way of responding to, or sustaining, young people's various cultural frames. Differentiation techniques such as MTSS tend to rely on "standardized instructional protocols and assessment measures with no apparent regard for cultural or linguistic variability" (Artiles, 2011, p. 437). MTSS is intended to

reduce the overrepresentation of students of color in special education through the technical approach of diagnosing learning challenges using universal progress monitoring tools and utilizing different interventions to address the issues before finally testing the student for a disability (Artiles et al., 2010). Yet these technical approaches are still grounded in subjective interpretations of learning difference, and they do not address the social injustices of misrecognizing "disability" among predominantly youth of color (Allan, 2014) or the injustice of schools in low-income communities of color receiving fewer resources to adequately support instruction (Klingner & Solano-Flores, 2007). It is therefore of no surprise that MTSS practices have not yet shifted rates of disproportionality in SWD populations (Fergus, 2016). UDL has similarly been critiqued for promoting the myth of meritocracy (i.e., the notion that successes and failures are located in the effort of the individual student) when the differentiation pedagogies uncritically center Whiteness, able-bodied privilege, and middle-class norms without disrupting racial, intellectual, and classist superiorities (Waitoller & Thorius, 2016). UDL, without this critical stance, is merely endorsing integration or assimilation into oppressive systems (Harvard Educational Review Forum, 2017).

Instead, ongoing conceptualizations of inclusion and differentiation invite dialogue around "equity" that pushes beyond the question: "How can 'we' get 'these' working-class kids of color to speak/write/be more like middle-class White ones" (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 3) Equity stems from inclusive classrooms that value difference and the universal need for extra assistance as the norm (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004; Danforth & Rhodes, 1997), and that reject racial and socioeconomic assimilation as an end goal (Kozleski et al., 2014). In these classrooms, educators examine the types of language used in classroom discourse, as "identities, including racial and ethnic identities, are performed, in large part, through language… Subordination of one's language(s) is tantamount to the subordination of one's identity" (Irizarry, 2017, p. 88). Language can also reinforce hierarchies between ability and disability, and therefore in equitable inclusive classrooms, educators disrupt communication patterns signaling the inferiority of disability (Biklen et al., 2014; Danforth & Rhodes, 1997). Inclusive classrooms give voice to minoritized learners in order to advance anti-oppressive solutions (Waitoller & Thorius, 2016).

When equitably approaching differentiation in inclusive classrooms, educators express the belief that specialized services work well with all students, not just for SWDs (Florian, 2014). This belief is operationalized through flexible instructional arrangements that group different students together at different times, rather than fixed groups of students working together on instructional tasks according to their disability classification (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). Educators committed to equitable differentiation also reflect on whether their pedagogical approaches disenfranchise or support students (Kinloch, 2017), depending on the extent to which differentiation decisions are grounded in racial or socioeconomic biases. Pedagogical practices such as guided reading of a high interest, 6th-grade level book about Black youth in Philadelphia for an 11th grade English class may be an attempt to differentiate instruction with culturally relevant intentions, but if the instruction lacks rigor, it may suggest that educators possess implicit biases related to Black students' ability to master grade-level learning objectives. These deficit beliefs then negatively impact the quality of work they demand from students, and their expectations of student learning. To overcome equity gaps, educators need to view differentiation as a way of leveraging students' various funds of knowledge to enrich the collective learning experience (Moll, 2010) so that SWDs can view difference as an instructional asset, and not an impediment.

Treated this way, differentiation is less about accommodating various ability levels with standardized outcomes as the end goals, and more about cultivating learning environments that uplift intersecting identities and goals. These differentiation principles would seek to equalize opportunities for students whose experiences with marginalization and oppression too often remain invisible in the classroom. Given that students of color have now become the majority of public school enrollment as of 2014 (Alim & Paris, 2017), it is our moral imperative to consider who is determining what counts as differentiation. In other words, though differentiation is described as the educator setting tiered levels of proficiency in the areas of content, student performance tasks, and student learning goals (Hoover & Patton, 2004), we must always interrogate the social location of these educators and how they determine these differentiation standards.

Conclusion

Students of course experience many more systems of oppression (e.g., gender, sexuality, ethnicity) than are presented in this framework. However, since race and class are the demographic characteristics for which there is trend data, we highlight these factors in our recasting of inclusion and differentiation. There are many more ways of reconceptualizing inclusion and differentiation that account for other student differences, and we hope other scholars will develop these necessary frameworks.

Inclusion and differentiation are incredibly complex expectations for educators, especially considering the intersectional identities of SWDs who come with a variety of diverse backgrounds. When schools and districts do not actively work to disrupt the deficit narratives that teachers may have about low-performing students and students who come from minoritized subgroups or

disadvantaged backgrounds, especially in urban settings, the potential of inclusive education to enhance the equity of educational experiences for all students is greatly reduced (Harris, 2012). However, researchers have not yet produced a sufficient number of intersectional evaluations of instructional approaches for SWDs, nor have we sufficiently examined how educational leaders and teachers implement pedagogies that center intersectionality (Kozleski et al., 2014). While we know that educators would benefit from policy expectations, resources, and professional learning opportunities that showcase anti-racist, anti-classist forms of inclusion and differentiation, we have very few case studies that describe such systems. We hope that this framework inspires future investigations into inclusive environments, and whether learning outcomes are enhanced, mediated, or unaffected by the extent to which educators honor students' intersectional identities.

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[1] We refer to these students as students of color, with the caveat that East Asian and bi- or multi-racial students are least likely to be identified as a student with disability.

Dr. Katie Pak is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, where she has studied educational leadership, policy implementation, and leadership for critical social change. She has previously served as a special education teacher in Washington, D.C.

Arianna Parsons studies curriculum development and professional learning, in both domestic and international settings. As a former special education teacher, she is especially interested in how these topics play out in inclusive instructional settings for students with disabilities.

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