EXAMINING THE COMPLEXITIES OF FOSTERING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this 1-year case study was to understand how 5 elementary school teachers in an inner-city school foster social inclusion. Through classroom observations and interviews, the study examined the variations of classroom practices the teachers used to create inclusive environments, the challenges they faced in the process, and the strategies they developed to address these challenges. How their work in the classroom interacted with the school's organizational structures was also explored.

Three concepts frame the study: a broad conception of social inclusion that addresses multiple aims for creating an environment of belonging and takes students of all social identities into account; a detailed conception of the practice of social inclusion from a range of theoretical perspectives and teachers' experiences; and a situated conception of context that interrelates the classroom with the school and the community. Three dimensions of pedagogy—content-based practices, relations, and structures—are used to identify and compare principles of inclusive practice. The study portrays the interactions of daily classroom life through cross-case analysis and reveals the complex decision-making processes that teachers use to foster social inclusion.

This study builds on growing scholarship in the field of social inclusion in education (Ainscow et al., 2006; Dei, 1996a; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Kumashiro, 2002; Topping & Maloney, 2005) and
on the increased interest in inclusive pedagogical practices. The in-depth portraits of the teachers’ classroom practices are compared to literature in 4 areas: citizen-based pedagogy, culture-based pedagogy, race-based pedagogy, and anti-oppression pedagogy. The teachers’ practices are analyzed in relation to 2 principles of social inclusion: connecting content to students’ lives and creating mutually supportive social spaces. The study revealed that the participants' practices were mainly associated with pedagogies based on citizenship and culture, with some connections to race-based and anti-oppression pedagogies. What differentiates this study from most other studies in this area is its detailed attention to the dynamic complexity of applying principles of social inclusion to practice. The portraits offer insights into inclusive work in classrooms that will benefit teachers, teacher educators, and researchers interested in expanding the field of social inclusion in education.
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This thesis journey has been one of the most exciting, interesting, enjoyable, yet challenging and trying experiences of my life. It has changed the ways I think, speak, and write about the world. It has made my dream of being able to share with others deeper understandings of how to foster social inclusion possible. Throughout my journey I have felt the support and generosity of many whose contributions made this achievement possible.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to those who have shaped my understanding of what it means to feel included and to those who inspire me to contribute to the field of social inclusion.

To my father, Cleovoulos Cleovoulou, who left Cyprus in his early twenties and immigrated to Canada with dreams of a new life—your work at the Nabisco plant over the course of thirty years brought home sad stories of exclusion. Over the years I have watched you navigate through the complex social system of your workplace to only encounter isolation and alienation. From your perseverance and hope for belonging, I am inspired to continue your work through the context of schooling. From your struggles I have gained interest in deepening my understanding of what it means to foster social inclusion and in sharing this information with teachers.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Teachers in inner-city schools work with students from a wide range of cultural, racial, linguistic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The diversity of the students' identities not only differentiates them socially, but also often isolates them from one another and their teachers. In this diverse context, many teachers work hard to create inclusive environments where students are affirmed, engaged, and respected. This work is part of a growing area in educational research called social inclusion (SI).

Social inclusion is seen variously as fostering student engagement, improving academic achievement, creating critical citizens, challenging social inequities, and closing the achievement gap. This study takes the perspective that social inclusion involves the equitable participation of all students in the social and educational life of the school, the classroom, and the community. In taking a broad and open approach, it allows for the purposes and principles of social inclusion to emerge from the day-to-day professional practices of teachers.

Although many studies examine specific approaches to social inclusion, there are few that investigate teachers' inclusive practices over an extended period of time through a range of pedagogical perspectives. Through interviews with five teachers in one inner-city school and observations of their classroom practice over the course of one school year, this study aims to develop a deeper understanding of how social inclusion is achieved in practice.

This chapter provides an introduction to the study. It begins with a personal account of my own experiences and understanding of socially inclusive practice and how I came to the research problem. It then explains the concepts framing the study and introduces the research
questions. It concludes by discussing the significance of the study and its contributions to the field of education.

**Emergence of the Study**

This study was inspired by my experiences working with students, teachers, and teacher candidates in various educational settings. My recollections of teaching and the challenges of exclusion led me to think about my own views and practice and how others work toward social inclusion in their classrooms. My experiences taught me that teachers have different views of social inclusion and use a variety of practices to foster it. My aim in this study was to gain a deeper understanding of socially inclusive practice by (a) exploring social inclusion in a broad sense and (b) examining teachers daily classroom practices over the course of a school year.

**Understanding Social Inclusion Through Teaching**

After graduating from a teacher education program, I was ready to teach . . . or so I thought. I remember feeling very nervous on my first day of teaching as I stood before my class, a combined fourth and fifth grade. I looked professional in my navy blue dress, white-collared blouse and navy loafers. My binders were perfectly organized with daily, weekly and long-range plans and were laid out on my desk, ready to go. The students’ desks were set up in rows and I had the “getting to know you” activities ready for the day, just as my instructors at the faculty of education had recommended. The children looked tired, reluctant, and even dismissive. I worked my way through the attendance, mispronouncing many names and feeling awkward. I stood at the front of the class, unsure of what to say and wondered what to do in such strange moments of silence. After 2 days of what I thought were community-building activities and riding the school bus with my students because the driver felt they were misbehaving, I returned to the school, sat
at my desk and cried. My students were not getting along with each other and I sensed they did not feel part of a learning community. The lack of classroom social cohesion and student engagement was apparent. All of what I thought was necessary practices for fostering social inclusion were not working. I did not know how to foster social inclusion.

The principal noticed my distress and came to speak with me. I listened intently as she described the social backgrounds of some of my students. Farida’s family had recently immigrated from Afghanistan and her father was struggling to find work. Shanar’s father had been killed in Jamaica the year before and she now lived in a tiny one-bedroom apartment with her mom and two younger sisters. Sherry lived in the high-rise buildings with her physically and mentally disabled grandmother. Troy lived with his mom who worked nights and often did not come home for days—prostitution was suspected. The stories went on. Most of my students were poor. They lived in the nearby high-rise apartments and most lived with only one parent. The environment I found myself in, while unfamiliar to me, was not uncommon. Teachers today walk into urban classrooms where children come from a wide range of races, ethnicities and social circumstances. There are students whose parents are in prison or addicted to drugs, have never held a steady job, and/or are themselves children. There are also students who are bounced from one foster home to the next, and some who have no home or parents at all (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 14). How do teachers create inclusive environments when they cannot relate to their students’ experiences and circumstances?

The principal shared with me what she felt were key elements of fostering inclusion. In her view, it involved student engagement and every student being able to participate. She gave me examples of simple ways to set up my classroom to encourage participation—being firm, setting up rules (but not having more than three or students would forget), starting with the belief
that students are already successful, and validating students' lives, experiences, knowledge, and work. She emphasized the importance of working together and her motto, “we’re all on the same bus, heading in the same direction” meant that everyone in the school had the same vision and goals for student learning. The principal was a Black woman who spoke to the students about race, inequity, and unfair circumstances, and challenged them to meet high expectations. Now, looking back, I appreciate that she was a critical educator who believed that racism affects students’ experiences. She introduced me to critical pedagogies, though she did not use this term herself. A new perspective was opened for me; one that I could add to my understanding of social inclusion and use to improve my practice.

After speaking with the principal, I realized that teaching inclusively meant connecting the local community to the classroom. I began to spend as much time getting to know my students as I did on the curriculum guidelines. I tried to build close relationships with the students by sharing my own stories of childhood. I also tried to build relationships with their parents through regular communication and conversations about their lives and the lives of their children. Understanding my students’ lives was one way I felt I could foster inclusion. Creating an environment that supported the diverse identities in the classroom was also important. These new practices gave me a wider purpose for fostering social inclusion. Understanding students’ lives and developing strong relationships not only encouraged student engagement, but also led to improving academic success.

**Understanding Social Inclusion Through Graduate Studies**

After 5 years of teaching full time and with several questions and concerns about social inclusion in mind, I entered a doctoral program where I took courses in multicultural education and critical pedagogy. I read Peter McLaren’s *Cries from the Corridor* (1980), a narrative about
his own teaching experiences in Toronto in the 1970s. In the book, he describes teaching fifth and sixth graders in the “Jane Jungle” where most families live in subsidized housing. I read in astonishment as many of his experiences resonated with mine:

During the first week, Duke kept silent, sometimes catnapping at his desk. Occasionally he’d shift his body around to check out the room. Today I got fed up with his sleeping during a lesson I’d worked particularly hard to prepare. I asked the kid next to him to wake Duke up. The kid touched him on the shoulder gingerly, as if he were disarming a bomb. Suddenly Duke shot up from his chair, shouting: ‘Jesus! Don’t do that, man, or I’ll break your ass!’ He was out the door in an instant. (p. 8)

Why was Duke so disinterested? Was he tired? Bored? Did his disengagement have something to do with McLaren’s teaching? Or did it come from feeling excluded? I wondered what the link was between McLaren’s teaching and social inclusion. I turned the pages of the book believing my questions on social inclusion were a legitimate frame for thinking about Duke’s behaviour. "Well," McLaren writes, "my teaching methods don’t seem to be going over as well as I’d hoped; a lot of the kids are resistant to my lessons. I can’t believe how defiant of authority these kids are—and they’re only grade five and six!” (p. 13). In drawing a connection between his teaching methods and students’ reactions and behaviours, McLaren alludes to the idea that student disengagement and underachievement are the result of various forms of exclusion.

Although teachers’ pedagogical practices play a significant role in social inclusion, the circumstances and implications of students' social identities also play an important part. Corson (1998) found that the ways in which students' social identities are situated both at school and in the community, affect how students learn and experience success. Practices of social identity need to be addressed because they affect students’ educational progress:
Formal education is mainly concerned with students’ ability to put meanings together in thought, to communicate them in words, and to learn from the discourses around them. But many other factors have a role in educational success. Matters of race, culture, gender, region of living and social class often affect educational progress. (p. 112)

Therefore, if social circumstances affect educational progress and if the goal is to promote students' educational success, then teachers need to be as concerned with how students’ social identities are perceived and addressed in their classrooms as they are with reading and writing.

With this in mind and nearing the end of my doctoral journey, I began teaching courses in pre-service teacher education. I was committed to teaching concepts and practices of social inclusion as a way of addressing the social inequities that can lead to student exclusion in classrooms. I wanted to create critical citizens in my per-service classes. I had teacher candidates think about how their practices might influence students.

Convinced that critical pedagogies were the way to foster inclusion, I taught the courses from a critical perspective. I spoke of power imbalances and equity and how inclusive practice might look in this context. The information was met with confusion and resistance. Some of the candidates expressed guilt at being White and coming from privileged backgrounds. Others were defensive, while others claimed that inclusion was a natural and instinctive strategy for them. Apart from feeling saddened and surprised by these reactions, I realized that critical pedagogy as a social theory was not familiar to most of the candidates and not readily accepted. I understood that, from a critical perspective, this may be part of the learning process; however, I also felt many of the candidates had completely shut down and removed themselves from the discussion. I realized that I needed to be more inclusive about teaching inclusive practices and needed to broaden my perspective of SI pedagogies in order to reach these prospective teachers.
I changed my thinking and teaching of SI to a more inclusive approach by teaching about social inclusion from multiple entry points. I did this by presenting different ways of thinking about inclusion and making critical pedagogies part of the discussion. The candidates were receptive and appeared more open to talking. Through this experience, I decided that in order to better understand how to frame and talk about inclusive practices I needed a better understanding of how teachers think about and foster SI in their classrooms on a daily basis. Through this research I would not only improve my own practice, but also contribute to the literature on pedagogies that promote social inclusion.

**Framing Concepts of the Study**

Fostering social inclusion in the classroom is fundamentally about pedagogy. It is about teachers’ work and the ways in which their inclusive practices are applied in the classroom. Three concepts help to frame and define the focus of the study. The first concept is social inclusion. This concept examines who social inclusion refers to in this study and for what purpose. The second concept is inclusive practice. It refers to how teachers foster social inclusion from a range of practices. The third concept refers to context and defines where and under what conditions fostering social inclusion occurs. All of these concepts provide a frame for understanding socially inclusive pedagogy.

**Social Inclusion**

*Social* refers to social identity and includes the equitable and affirming treatment of all students with respect to ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, language, ability, and other social markers. *Inclusion* refers to student engagement, participation, and belonging in the educational and social life of classroom. Therefore, in this study, social
inclusion (SI) is about students experiencing a sense of belonging in the classroom with the purpose of all students achieving and participating in equitable ways regardless of their social identities.

Inclusion is a prominent concept in special education, especially in relation to integrated schooling (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Topping & Maloney, 2005) and has been used to refer to students with special educational needs. More recently, however, inclusion refers to a much wider social context “implying concern about all those of all ages who [are] marginalized, unproductive and non-participative in society” (Topping & Maloney 2005, p. 2). As Topping and Maloney (2005) argue: “All commentators now agree that inclusion should mean much more than the mere physical presence of pupils with special education needs in mainstream schools” (p. 5). This study follows the path of many scholars in the field who conceive of inclusion in this broader sense (Ainscow et al., 2006; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Dei, 1996a; Kumashiro, 2002; Melnick & Zeichner, 1997; Topping & Maloney, 2005; Verma, Bagley, & Jha, 2007). In the proceeding paragraphs, I describe their views and purposes for social inclusion and I conclude with the views that guide this study.

Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) approach to inclusive education embraces a wide range of concepts: equity, multiculturalism, critical pedagogy, social justice, academic mainstreaming, community building, and fostering a sense of belonging and purposes. The description they provide of one of the participants in their study on beginning teachers is a good example:

Paul’s profile illustrates a comprehensive approach to inclusive education. . . . In his classroom he addresses matters of race, ethnicity, language, poverty, ability, gender, and sexual orientation. He is concerned not only to critique prejudice and discrimination but also to help disadvantaged students acquire academic skills, a love of learning, a positive self-concept, and direction for the future. (p. 112)
“Inclusion,” Kosnik and Beck argue, "is inherent in a pedagogical approach that emphasizes critical inquiry, recognition of the 'other', respect for student experience, student construction of learning, class community, and a close teacher-student relationship” (2009, p. 12).

Dei (2003) applies a critical lens to inclusion and describes social inclusion as a “proactive educational practice intended to address all forms of racism and the intersections of social difference (race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability)” (p. 2). Kumashiro (2000, 2002), another critical theorist, develops a pedagogical framework that brings multicultural, queer, feminist, and critical perspectives into focus through the broad lens of anti-oppression education. Kumashiro’s views on inclusion are framed in relation to what he calls anti-oppression pedagogy:

Educators [need] to recognize that there is great diversity among the student population and more importantly, that the majority of students, namely all those who are not White American, male, hegemonically masculine, heterosexual, and middle class or wealthy are marginalized and harmed by various forms of oppression in school. Educators have a responsibility to make schools into places that are for, and that attempt to teach to, all their students. (2002, p. 29)

Ainscow’s (2008) interpretation of social inclusion is also broad and includes “any groups that are vulnerable to exclusionary pressures” (Ainscow, 2008, p. 243). For Ainscow, the aim of inclusive education is "to reduce exclusion and discriminatory attitudes, including those in relation to age, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and attainment" (Ainscow et al., p. 2).

Topping and Maloney (2005) investigate social inclusion in terms of special education, but also argue that their work "goes far beyond that to consider issues arising from social class, socio-economic disadvantage, race, gender and other factors” (p. 5). They organize their framework of social inclusion into four levels (see Figure 1), beginning with the integration of
children with special needs at the top of the triangle and expanding to the wider community at the bottom.

Figure 1. Expanding Concepts of Inclusion: Four Levels.
(Topping & Maloney, 2005, p. 6)

Topping and Maloney (2005) have studied inclusion in special education for numerous years and have broadened their focus to embrace people with all social identities both in and out of schools. Their diagram captures the different levels for thinking about social inclusion and offers a wide scope of analysis.

Each of the theorists mentioned offers a broad approach to social inclusion. They believe that inclusion involves the consideration of all students who experience exclusion due to factors beyond academic ability. They also currently focus more on social identity and life circumstances than on the integration of special needs. Although several of these theorists use the term social inclusion, they approach social inclusion differently and with different purposes.
in mind. The purpose for fostering social inclusion in my study is similar to level 3 of Topping and Maloney's (2005) framework in Figure 1. It considers the challenges associated with the life circumstances of all forms of social identities and addresses the achievement and participation of all students in the classroom. I add to the definition, that the aim of social inclusion is to create equitable opportunities for all students to engage in the daily life of the classroom.

Inclusive Practice

Pedagogical practice refers to teachers’ beliefs, actions, and the work they do in the classroom. Although inclusive practices and purposes vary, teachers interested in social inclusion have common goals. They focus on student involvement and want students to contribute to the learning process for the purpose of academic achievement and social engagement. They encourage students to have a sense of agency and be actively engaged in the life of the classroom. Teachers interested in SI respect and affirm students’ identities.

Fostering social inclusion also involves designing the academic, physical, and social environment of the classroom so that all students have opportunities to connect their experiences to the curriculum and develop relationships that are supportive of their social identities. It refers to students feeling a sense of belonging and worth, and to students being able to share their opinions on the social and academic issues that arise in the classroom. It accounts for the needs of the collective as well as the individual. It values, recognizes, and respects diversity. The work of socially inclusive teachers extends beyond the classroom and into the school and community.

How practice is conceptualized affects social inclusion because, as Topping and Maloney (2005) explain, “Teachers’ belief systems and attributions . . . have a significant effect on the implementation of ‘inclusion’ within education systems” (p. 7). The concept of inclusive practice
in this study is framed by a range of perspectives. The literature review illustrates four orientations to fostering social inclusion: citizenship-based pedagogies (Hughes & Sears, 2002), culture-based pedagogies (Banks, 1994; Phillion, 2002; Sleeter, 1996), race-based pedagogies (Dei, 1994; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994), and anti-oppression pedagogies (Kumashiro, 2000, 2002). These orientations and the range of practices they propose are described in Chapter 2.

Multiple Contexts

In addition to exploring what teachers emphasize (social inclusion) and the varied ways teachers engage students (practice), this study focuses on where teachers foster social inclusion. To illustrate the multiple contexts of fostering social inclusion, I have adapted a framework developed by Thiessen and Anderson (1999). Their conceptual framework (see Figure 2) shows three contexts of teachers’ work: the classroom, the corridors, and the community.
Figure 2. Context for Change.
(Thiessen & Anderson, 1999, p. 4)

Thiessen and Anderson’s (1999) frame is based on overlapping and expanding contexts of teachers’ work and thus acknowledges that what teachers do extends beyond the classroom and is often interdependent with what happens in the school and the community. In Figure 2, *In the community* refers to the influence of the local community, other schools, the school board, and government policies on school and classroom practices. *In the corridors* refers to the school context and includes interactions among administrators, support staff, and teachers. *In the classroom* refers to practices and relationships that are formed within the context of the classroom. I appreciate these layered contexts of teachers’ work but, in my study, have
concentrated on teachers' practices in the classroom, with some attention to the corridors and the community.

**Research Questions**

Based on my experiences as a teacher, both with children in schools and with pre-service teacher candidates, and on the growing body of literature on broad approaches to inclusion, I have conducted an exploratory study that examines the socially inclusive pedagogy of teachers. In this study, I ask one main question and three sub-questions. The main question is:

**How do teachers foster social inclusion in their classrooms?**

This question explores the concept of social inclusion and how teachers apply it in their classrooms. The three sub-questions in the study are related to the framing concepts and offer different entry points for examining socially inclusive practice:

1. **How and why do teachers vary their approaches to foster social inclusion?**

   With this question, I seek to understand how and why teachers' socially inclusive practices emerge in response to different situations. Some practices, for example, arise from the challenges of fostering social inclusion. Other practices are planned or deliberate and relate to how teachers want students to learn. Still other practices focus on creating the environment for social inclusion. In examining how teachers foster social inclusion, I explore the reasons behind their decisions and the aims they want to achieve. These include fostering student engagement, building academic achievement, and questioning social inequities. The teachers’ enactments of these aims and decisions bring their inclusive practices to light. While there are several ways to investigate pedagogical practice (Banks, 1998; Comber, 2006; Miller & Seller, 1983; Shulman,
1986), I have chosen to narrow the focus by exploring three dimensions of practice that I believe are prevalent: content based practices, relational practices, and structural practices.

Content practices refer to what teachers teach. This includes the subject matter and materials used for instruction. Relational practices refer to the classroom interactions students have with each other and with their teachers. These practices include informal or personal exchanges; formal, guided discussions; and incidents such as arguments, conflicts, or misbehaviour. Relational practices also extend beyond the classroom and include teachers’ interactions with other teachers or with parents. Structural practices refer to the organizational norms in the classroom and the school that influence teachers’ work. They include the daily routines used in the classroom, the physical set up of the room, the visual displays around the room, how the school is organized, the initiatives the school takes, and how these initiatives interact with teachers’ abilities to foster social inclusion. Content practices, relational practices, and structural practices, both formal and informal, are the three pedagogical dimensions investigated in this study.

2. **What issues/challenges do teachers face in relation to their socially inclusive practice? How do they address those issues/challenges?**

This question seeks to understand the challenges teachers face in fostering social inclusion and how they address these challenges. The challenges include: understanding students’ home lives, communicating with parents, resolving tensions between teachers’ and students’ cultural/social understandings (Beck & Kosnik, 2009; Dei, 1996b; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 1998), understanding student (mis)behaviour (Likona, 1991; McLaren, 1980), and creating curriculum that is relevant to students' lives (Dewey, 1968; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Each of these challenges complicate the development of an inclusive environment.
3. **How do the norms, structures and priorities of the school facilitate or constrain the socially inclusive practices in the classroom?**

The final sub-question seeks to understand school norms and practices. Understanding school initiatives is important because “the focus must not only be on practice. It must also address and sometimes challenge the thinking behind existing ways of working” (Ainscow, 2008, p. 255). The ‘thinking behind existing ways of working’ refers to the organizational aspects and structure of schooling. As an institution, schools are guided by norms and practices that interact with teachers' thinking and practice. While much of the responsibility for fostering inclusion in classrooms rests with teachers, “the task must be to develop an education system within which teachers feel supported as well as challenged in relation to their responsibility to keep exploring more effective ways of facilitating the learning of all students” (Ainscow, 2008, p. 240). Understanding the broader school context provides insight into why certain practices find their way into the classroom.

Figure 3 illustrates how the framing concepts and the research questions are interrelated in the study.
Figure 3. Graphic organizer for the study of fostering social inclusion.

I locate my study in the classroom. In the classroom is where teachers work most closely with students. Teachers make content-based decisions to create learning opportunities for students. They create learning environments where students are able to socially engage with one another and they organize their practice in ways that promote social inclusion. In the corridor refers to the interactions between teachers and other adults in the school that help to foster social inclusion. These interactions include a range of relationships: teachers with administrators and school leaders, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents, teachers with specialty teachers in the school (resource teachers, behaviour specialists, psychologists) (Thiessen & Anderson, 1999, p. 2). The study, for example, includes interviews with school leaders on how the structures, norms, and vision of the school support teachers’ practices of social inclusion. In
the community refers to the demographic context of the school and the wider aspects of educational community—family connections, and interactions between the school and other organizations—that influence the school's work. Although I do not directly explore these aspects of community in the study, I acknowledge that the community significantly affects the ways teachers approach their classroom practice. While multiple contexts interrelate and influence teachers’ work, the classroom is the main focus of the study.

The graphics used in Figure 3 are sized to represent how each context is considered in my study. The classroom is the largest and most significant context and is therefore the largest oval. In the corridors is the next largest oval and in the community is the smallest space because it is the least investigated here. The three contexts are interrelated and together they create particular circumstances for teachers’ work. The dotted lines note interconnectedness and the various shapes convey different relationships among the contexts.

The three dimensions of pedagogy (content, relational, and structural practices) are located inside the classroom and are also interconnected. I initially explore them in the study as separate dimensions of pedagogy but acknowledge that they are interrelated. The different levels of analysis reveal that these pedagogical dimensions come together in fostering social inclusion.

The concept of social inclusion is approached through a broad lens and considers the inclusion of students based on social identities. These identities include but are not limited to: class, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, and ability. Inclusive practices for fostering social inclusion are investigated from a range of perspectives and orientations. The concept of social inclusion is situated within multiple contexts that are interrelated. Fostering socially inclusive practices is mainly examined within the classroom context. Three dimensions
of pedagogy are investigated within the classroom context: content-based, relational, and structural dimensions.

**Significance of the Study**

This research will contribute to understanding fostering social inclusion by providing in-depth accounts of the socially inclusive practices of five classroom teachers over the course of a school year. The subtleties, nuances, and storied approaches of teachers’ practices and how the practices range in scope and perspective, among and within teachers’ daily work are described. As well, this study will contribute to understanding fostering social inclusion by comparing the interpretations of teachers’ work as described in the study to current literature on practices for fostering social inclusion.

Few studies have been done that illustrate teachers’ classroom practices for fostering social inclusion over an extended period of time. The study develops in-depth accounts of socially inclusive pedagogy and provides rich portraits of teachers’ daily work. This study documents how inclusive practices vary and it analyzes factors such as: daily challenges, school conditions, and the social dynamics of the classroom that influence how teachers foster social inclusion. It also describes how teachers address the challenges and it reveals the complexities of socially inclusive pedagogy.

Studying socially inclusive practice is important because classroom teachers and teacher educators working toward inclusion can learn from those who have experience and a history of teaching these concepts. The information gathered can offer school boards, school communities, teachers, and teacher candidates’ insight into the experiences, beliefs, challenges and practices of school communities and teachers using inclusive approaches. The data generated from teachers
working in one of Toronto's inner-city classrooms offer a rich sample of what it is like to be a teacher in a diverse, multicultural, urban setting.

Mapping the Thesis

Seven chapters follow this introduction. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on pedagogies of social inclusion. Chapter 3 outlines the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis. It discusses the research procedure, including entry negotiations, sampling, validity, and ethical considerations. It also discusses issues related to my role as researcher and my relationship with participants.

The second part of the thesis, Chapters 4 through 7, describe the findings. Chapter 4 presents the context of the study. I introduce the school setting and describe the school community, including the student demographic and school values. I also introduce the study participants and provide background on their formative experiences and their views on social inclusion.

Chapter 5 presents aspects of socially inclusive practice that relate to content. Drawing on interviews and observations, I describe the resources, practices, and decision-making processes teachers use to create meaningful content for their students. Chapter 6 discusses the social interactions in the daily life of the classroom as they relate to fostering social inclusion. Chapter 7 examines how school and classroom structures interact with teachers' practices of social inclusion.

The third and final part of this thesis, Chapter 8, summarizes the findings, draws conclusions, and reflects on the implications and significance of the research. The study’s limitations and future directions for research are also addressed.
Summary

Socially inclusive pedagogical practice is broadly defined as developing a sense of belonging for all students in the classroom for the purpose of improving academic achievement and student participation. Children come to school with a range of social identities and social circumstances that affect their experiences of belonging. Although there is ample literature on inclusion from different perspectives, few studies look broadly at teachers' daily inclusive practices. In this study, I seek to understand what teachers in one inner-city school do to foster inclusion. The research contributes to the field of inclusive education by offering rich samples of socially inclusive practice from a range of pedagogical perspectives. The next chapter reviews the literature on social inclusion.
CHAPTER 2
PRACTICES FOR FOSTERING SOCIAL INCLUSION:
A SELECTED REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much has been written about fostering social inclusion. The literature takes the form of essays, theoretical writing, and qualitative research studies. Although the literature offers accounts of inclusive practice in various contexts, the studies in this review focus on teaching in classrooms. In the pedagogical literature on fostering social inclusion perspectives vary, with some orientations focused on developing common understandings among students or developing universal values and social norms and others on focused on addressing issues that contribute to inequities or oppression. This chapter reviews literature on teachers’ practices for fostering social inclusion and is organized into four categories:

1. citizenship-based pedagogies,
2. culture-based pedagogies,
3. race-based pedagogies, and
4. anti-oppression pedagogies.

These categories offer a range of practices that include a range of purposes for exploring the study's research questions. They are illustrative and not comprehensive. They are used to document the range of pedagogical practices that I draw on from the participants of this study. What follows next is a review of the four pedagogical orientations to fostering social inclusion. The chapter concludes with a brief comparison of the various practices that each of these orientations support.
Pedagogical Orientations to Social Inclusion

The first group of orientations centres on issues of citizenship and encourages students to develop an understanding of common social values and norms. The second group focuses on culture and sees the affirmation of students' cultural identities as central to inclusion. The third group considers race as central to social inclusion and addresses issues of racism. The fourth group focuses on multiple forms of oppression and recommends that current thinking about social norms and identities be shifted. The first two groups, citizenship-based and culture-based pedagogies, span humanistic and critical perspectives while the third and fourth groups, race-based and anti-oppression pedagogies, take a critical approach. Although there are key differences among these pedagogies and also within each group, there are also similarities in the practices they propose. In the following sections, each group of pedagogies is discussed in terms of its theory of social inclusion, its range of inclusive practices, and the challenges of implementing these practices.

Citizenship-Based Pedagogies

For the most part, pedagogies based on developing citizenship consider the teaching of particular values and social norms as a means of achieving social inclusion. Universal values such as respect, sharing, and fairness are emphasized as is the need to build community in the classroom. Pedagogical practices that foreground citizenship have varying foci and include character education (Baloch, 1998; Lickona, 1991), community building approaches (Kemple, 2004; Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Graves, 1992; Paley, 1992), citizenship education (Hebert & Sears, 2002), and forms of critical pedagogy (Banks, 1990; Bickmore, 2001; Osborne, 2005).
**Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion in citizenship-based pedagogies involves developing “communal beliefs and values of a socio-political nature which transcend racial, religious, ethnic, and other social differences” (Wylie, 2004, p. 238). The focus is on building common understanding among all students for the purpose of developing productive, engaged, and contributing members of their class, school and community.

In these pedagogies, social inclusion means creating a sense of belonging for all students through a common identity. At the classroom level, this identity might refer to being a Grade 1 student in a particular class. At the community level, it might refer to living in an urban centre in Toronto and being an active member of the community. In this way, pedagogies based on citizenship emphasize a collective.

**Inclusive Practices**

Citizenship-based pedagogies offer a range of practices that support the fostering of social inclusion. The practices associated with these different pedagogies range from classroom-based activities that generate democratic processes to community-based activism.

One set of practices has roots in transmission pedagogy. The learning in this approach is teacher directed and the aim is to develop a sense of social and moral responsibility (Haydon, 2003; Osler & Starky, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1994; Winton, 2008; Wylie, 2004). The core goals are to prepare students for the workforce, improve academic achievement, promote active citizenship, create safer schools, teach universal values, and create a sense of inclusion (Winton, 2008).

Character education sees social inclusion as the teaching of moral values. Lickona (1991), for example, explains that “moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and fairness
carry obligation. . . . Moral values tell us what we *ought* to do” (p. 38). He draws attention to universal moral values—treating all people justly and respecting their lives, liberty, and equality. "We have a right," he claims, "and even a duty to insist that all people behave in accordance with these universal moral values” (p. 38). Otherwise, “left to its own devices, the peer group often ends up being ruled by the worst tendencies in children. Domination, exclusion, and put-downs become the prevailing norm” (p. 90). Lickona suggests that to foster inclusion, “teachers must make the development of a classroom moral community a central educational objective” (p. 90). To achieve this, he describes practices that promote social interactions such as class meetings, involving parents, and creating positive incentives.

Other citizenship-based practices also take a humanistic approach and see practice as inter-relational; that is, as promoting interaction among students and between teacher and students. According to Winton, such approaches are common in community-building environments where students learn to "interact, form relationships, work out problems, grow as a group, and learn directly, from their first hand social experience, lessons about fair play, cooperation, forgiveness, and respect for the worth and dignity of every individual” (2008, p. 68). In this approach, difference is viewed as "a resource to be balanced, reconciled, and integrated into a whole rather than isolated, 'melted,' or reduced by compromise or averaging” (Baloche, 1998, p. 69). Social inclusion is fostered through the idea that all individuals are part of a whole or collective. Graves (1992) describes the focus as follows:

Everyone is eligible for inclusion in a truly cooperative community. No one is excluded because of race, religion, personality, quirks, differences of perspective, or non-conventional attitudes or interest. In addition, if I feel I belong, I know . . . that I contribute something that is necessary to the group and is valued by the other members. I also know other members well enough to value and respect their unique contributions. Together we define who we are as a group. . . . This means we must find out what resources each of us brings and communicate this positively to the group as a whole. (p. 65)
Social inclusion is fostered by giving students intentional opportunities to learn about each other as individuals (Baloche, 1998; Lickona, 1991) and to build community as a class. Class mottoes, songs and team names all contribute to a class identity (Baloche, 1998; Gibbs, 1994; Lickona, 1991). Daily rituals and routines such as class meetings, story time, and singing and reading buddies “all help to symbolize and sustain feelings of inclusion and whole class identity while simultaneously incorporating an appropriate emphasis on learning” (Baloche, 1998, p. 71).

In a longitudinal study of 22 beginning elementary teachers, Kosnik and Beck (2009) identified inclusive education as one of seven priorities in teaching and teacher education. Their study suggests six key principles and strategies for fostering inclusion:

1. emphasizing community,
2. developing close teacher–student relationships,
3. individualizing the program,
4. studying diverse cultures,
5. supporting students' decisions, and
6. discussing issues of prejudice and discrimination explicitly.

I categorize Kosnik and Beck’s work in the citizenship-based orientation, not because they place emphasis on particular values or strive to develop commonalities among the group in the class. Instead, I include their work in this section for two reasons; first, their work does not place strong emphasis on the other three identity-based pedagogies (culture, race, anti-oppression) and second, their work has a keen focus on community and developing positive relations in the classroom. Of the six principles that Kosnik and Beck list, numbers one, two, three, five, and six are related to relations while numbers four and six are related to content based practices for fostering social inclusion.
Citizenship education also belongs to this group of orientations. Olser and Starkey (2001) maintain that “citizenship education from its origins has always been intended to help integrate a diverse population into a single national culture” (p. 290). Sears and Hughes’ (1996) typology of policy and curriculum documents on citizenship education in English-language schools across Canada highlights several priorities—active participation, historical knowledge, community service, cultural pluralism, and global citizenship.

Practices drawn from more critical orientations such as service pedagogy and critical reflective pedagogy also attempt to foster social inclusion through the development of citizenship. “Service learning intends to connect students to real issues in their community and develop their knowledge and skills in the area of democratic participation” (Sears & Hughes, 1996, p. 129). Students are actively engaged in community issues through classroom readings, discussions, and activities that promote social action. Through these activities, students have opportunities to share their views on their community and are included both in the life of the classroom and the community. These practices are also promoted in critical reflective pedagogies. Friere’s (1997) approach, for example, emphasizes autonomy and equity for all students in the classroom. Similarly, Osborne (2005) proposes five practices of social inclusive teaching citizenship-based pedagogy and they are paraphrased here as:

1. ensuring students receive a truly liberal education that introduces students to the story of human drama over time and that might provide a sense of connectedness that situates the present in the context of the past
2. ensuring teachers’ and schools’ practices and policies reflect the goal of citizenship development
3. providing pre-service and in-service professional development that fosters citizen-based pedagogy

4. teaching students to recognize issues of power and what is considered valuable knowledge and to participate in ways that are political and engaged with the real world, and

5. in all subjects, teachers should portray human beings, past and present, as actively engaged in shaping their environment

Practices of equity accommodate the differences among students and make it possible for students to participate equally in the classroom. Connecting materials to students’ knowledge and experience and encouraging students to build on each other’s ideas fosters inclusion through the validation of student input. Developing a trusting and open classroom environment also promotes social inclusion as students in such an environment feel safe and free to voice their views.

Challenges

In this section, I describe three challenges that citizenship-based pedagogies encounter in fostering social inclusion. One challenge involves establishing a common school curriculum that also respects diversity (Banks, 1990). A common curriculum attempts to identify common values and social norms for the purpose of developing a collective understanding among students. Teachers working with a diverse student population therefore face the challenge of bringing students from a variety of social backgrounds together within a common understanding of citizenship. Students whose identities, values, and social understandings differ from the curriculum have a hard time connecting to the content and social life of the classroom.
Another challenge involves harmonizing a collective identity with student autonomy (Sears & Hughes, 1996). Citizenship-based pedagogies promote community building as a way of developing a collective identity and fostering social inclusion in the classroom. Students not accustomed to or familiar with the social norms and collective identity of the class can lose their sense of autonomy and feel excluded.

A third challenge involves recognizing, addressing, and overcoming issues stemming from poverty (Banks, 1990). Poverty often influences students’ abilities to succeed in school and in their community. Banks, for example, argues that

A major challenge facing the United States today is how to create effective and reflective citizens out of the thousands of immigrants that are entering the nation each year and how to include the millions of indigenous people of color who remain largely on the fringes of American society, politically alienated from the commonwealth, and who share little in the nation’s wealth. (p. 210)

Banks (1990) locates issues of social exclusion in poverty. “Youths who are victims of poverty are at a high risk of becoming school drop outs, experiencing academic failure, and engaging in anti-social behaviour. It is very difficult for youths who drop out of school or who experience academic failure to become effective and productive citizens” (p. 210). If students who live in poverty have difficulties becoming effective citizens, then practices of citizenship-based pedagogy are failing them.

Similarly, the Toronto District School Board (1999) acknowledges that “certain groups in our society are treated inequitably because of individual and systemic biases related to race, colour, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, faith, sex, gender, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status” (p. 2). Groups that are treated inequitably are therefore excluded from the sense of a collective that citizenship aims to develop. By extension, if students are treated inequitably
because of systemic biases related to their social identities, fostering social inclusion through the development of citizenship is a challenge.

To address these challenges, Banks suggests several citizenship-based pedagogies initiatives. First, “a major goal of citizenship education must be helping low-income students and students of color develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate in the mainstream” (Banks, 1990, p. 211). At the classroom level, Banks argues that the curriculum needs to be more inclusive of varying perspectives. “Citizenship education for the twenty-first century must not only help students become literate and reflective citizens who can participate effectively in the workforce but also teach them to care about other people in their communities and to take personal, social and civic action to create a humane and just society” (1990, p. 211). Therefore, to enhance the effectiveness of social inclusion through critical citizenship-based pedagogies social and civic action is important.

At the school level, Banks recommends a restructuring of school design. He suggests that segregated classes with a disproportionate number of low-income and Black students be dismantled and that all students be included in mainstream classes (Oakes, 1985). The beliefs underlying school structures must also be rethought: “A norm will have to be institutionalized in the school that states that all students can and will learn, regardless of their home situations, race, social class, or ethnic group” (p. 54). In other words, with the changing demographic of student populations, schools need to reconsider their view of citizenship.

At the community level, Banks (1990) suggests a joint parent–school effort. Finding ways to bring parents into the school and to bring the school into the community leads to broader participatory citizenship and education. It helps groups and individuals feel they are an integral part of the community and society (p. 211).
**Culture-Based Pedagogies**

In the context of this study, culture is defined as the shared practices, goals, and history that characterize a group. Culture refers to and includes ethnic and racial identity, language, socio-economic status, and other aspects of identity that form a community. Students’ ways of thinking, socializing, and behaving are dependent on their culture. In any given classroom, students come from a variety of cultures.

This group of pedagogical orientations sees affirmations of cultural diversity as a means of enhancing social inclusion. Teachers are expected to deepen their understanding of the ways in which their students think and act based on their cultures. Culture-based pedagogies value cultural awareness and understanding, mutual respect, acceptance of differences, and the critique of various forms of exclusion. They value the celebration of cultural diversity and the inclusion of diversity in mainstream culture (Baker, 1977; Banks, 1994; Grant, 1973). These pedagogies also include critical approaches that address inequity in cultural relations (Banks & Banks, 1999; Noel, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

This literature review discusses the following culture-based pedagogies: multicultural education (Banks, 1990), critical multicultural education (Sleeter & Grant, 1999), cultural congruence (Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Piquemal & Nickels, 2005), cultural compatibility (Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987), and cultural appropriateness (Au & Jordan, 1981; Feuerverger, 1994). Each of these pedagogies proposes practices that foster social inclusion.

**Social Inclusion**

This group of pedagogies emphasizes the acceptance of cultural diversity in the classroom. The purpose of social inclusion for most culture-based pedagogies is to improve
student engagement and build academic achievement. It encourages teachers to be flexible and to adjust their teaching to students’ cultural differences. For example, in some cultural traditions, making eye contact is considered disrespectful. Teachers need to adjust their teaching to different types of interaction.

Social inclusion is fostered by responding to cultural differences and paying particular attention to groups and students that often experience exclusion. This involves teaching about different cultures and representing student identities in the curriculum content. It also involves bringing community members into the school to share their knowledge of different cultures. Cultural connections made between the school and community can give students a sense of inclusion. Pedagogies that foreground culture also encompass critical approaches where social inclusion is achieved through deliberate acts of recognizing cultural bias or discrimination and encouraging students to rethink their assumptions.

Inclusive Practices

Several studies point to the potential of creating social inclusion through culture-based pedagogies (Cooper & White, 2006; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1989; Moll, Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1989). In this section I describe three approaches to inclusive practice. The first approach links classroom practices to students’ home cultures; the second approach addresses multicultural education; and the third discusses critical practice.

Linking classroom practices to students’ home cultures.

Cultural congruence relates pedagogical practices to culture. In her 2001 study, on the effect of cultural congruence on ethnic minority students, Rickford (2001) explores the use of culturally relevant texts as a way of teaching ethnically diverse students. She found that, despite
the students' weak reading skills, their comprehension and thinking skills were strong and that
the use of culturally relevant texts along with higher order questioning skills helped them achieve
greater results in literacy. Using texts that students can identify with encourages their academic
development and also promotes their social inclusion in the classroom.

Erickson and Mohatt (1982) conducted a study that explored cultural congruence by
comparing the practices of an Athabaskan Indian teacher and a Canadian teacher in the same
school. The study showed that the two teachers taught differently. The Indian teacher used
strategies of group work and community discussion; she also gave praise in public and criticism
in private. She used an approach that foreground students’ cultural identities; as a result, more
students participated in the class environment.

Cultural compatibility matches pedagogy to different cultures (Vogt et al., 1987). In a
study of the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program created to assist underachieving
Hawaiian students, it was found that the students achieved better when instructional practice,
classroom organization, and motivation were made more compatible with their home lives.
Higher student achievement is a signifier of improved social inclusion in the classroom.
Changing the focus, for example, from phonics to comprehension was important because “for
Hawaiian children, learning at home is nearly always bound in a meaning context, usually
involving joint participation” (p. 279). Changing from an individual to a group focus when
praising students was also significant (p. 282). Cultural compatibility was tested when the
practices that had changed the success rate of Hawaiian students were transferred to a Navajo
community. The practices that worked for the Hawaiian students did not work for the Navajo
students. This study showed that inclusive practice depends on cultural compatibility.
Cultural appropriateness, another culture-based pedagogy, maintains that teaching and learning patterns are made more appropriate when connected to the teaching and learning patterns that students experience at home. For example, in a study conducted by Au and Jordan (1981), teachers working with native Hawaiian students changed their approach from phonetics to interpretation in order to make the learning more culturally appropriate. The teachers arranged the students in groups and encouraged them to read for comprehension instead of decoding. They were invited to openly discuss the stories and share their thoughts without the usual question-and-answer and read-aloud strategies. This style was similar to their at-home communication. Designing participation in ways that reflected the students’ home culture led to more students being included in the learning process.

Another example of cultural appropriateness was studied at Crescent Town Public School (Feuergver, 1994) where an innovative literacy program was established to include books in the school library in children’s home language. Most of the students were new immigrants and over 27 languages were listed as first or second languages. The Crescent Town project not only improved the library, but also brought parents into the school and strengthened the feeling of community. The entire school community worked together to implement the program and make it inclusive for all involved. As a result, students who did not normally sign out books from the library began to do so. Using home languages as a way of promoting literacy was a practice that fostered social inclusion.

**Multicultural education.**

The most well known approach in this group of orientations is multicultural education. Banks’ framework, for example, includes five dimensions:
1. content integration,
2. knowledge construction,
3. equity pedagogy,
4. prejudice reduction, and

These dimensions include teaching practices that foster social inclusion. Content integration refers to using examples and resources from a variety of cultures to illustrate key concepts in subject areas. When teachers include material that connects to the cultural understandings of their students, students develop a sense of agency over their learning. The second dimension, knowledge construction, refers to helping students understand and critique biases and assumptions. When students are aware that exclusion is a social construction caused by biases, they learn how to reconstruct knowledge to prevent exclusion from occurring. The third dimension, equity pedagogy, refers to teachers modifying their teaching in ways that "facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups" (Banks, 1994, p. 14). Teachers who practice equity pedagogy take a keen interest in individual learning needs and foster inclusion in their classroom through equity strategies; that is, by not treating all the students the same. The fourth dimension, prejudice reduction, focuses on strategies for modifying attitudes. Students who question their prejudices and increase their ability to affirm others develop a more inclusive classroom environment. The final dimension, refers to establishing school norms and structures that ensure the empowerment and achievement of all students. This school-based dimension emphasizes the inclusion of all students by ensuring social structures for academic achievement.
Narrative multiculturalism (Phillion, 2002) is a perspective of multicultural education that looks “at individuals’, groups’, and communities’ experiences of schools and education” (p. xvii). This kind of research “raises questions about traditional ways of thinking about what “works” with immigrant, minority, English as second language (ESL), and low-income students” (p. xvii). Insights are gained into “what works” through the stories of experiences of people living out multiculturalism in their daily lives. Teachers’ gain a sense of what pedagogical decisions to make and what socially inclusive practices to use based on the unique contexts, understandings and stories that take place in the daily and lived experiences of the teacher and their students. Phillion and Connelly (2004) suggest,

(student) teachers in diverse settings need to take the traveler’s inquiry stance and learn, as much as possible, to explore, through inquiry, the life before them. They need to explore the three dimensional narrative spaces [temporal, interactional, and place] in which they will work. They need to understand something of the character and history of the community, the school, the parents and the children they teach. (p. 469)

Practice is determined by one’s understanding of experiences: of both their own lived experiences and their students’ lived experiences. He and Phillion (2008) offer several examples of teachers’ understandings and practice of fostering social inclusion in their edited book, *Personal ~ Passionate ~ Participatory Inquiry Into Social Justice in Education* where several authors explore their practices of achieving goals of equity, equality, social justice and human freedom (p. 2). Practices range from an ethic of care and justice (Jefferson, 2008, p. 33) that require transformative school leaders, critical teachers who accept responsibility for their students and set high standards of achievement; and partnering with the communities to gain equity in resource to the need to expand the definition and scope of multicultural education curriculum (Turner-Vorbeck, 2008, p. 244) who recommends teachers “confidently and proactively address family diversity in curriculum and in the classroom” (p. 244) by re-
conceptualizing notions of the family and by carefully selecting curricular texts and materials that “reflect and honour the many and varied ways in which people form caring groups that support and honour their members” (p. 244).

**Critical pedagogies linked to culture-based pedagogies.**

Similar to some of the narratives in He and Phillions’ (2008) text on social justice in education, multicultural education also involves critical approaches in which “individuals and communities can engage with others in the critique of culture and of the hegemonic practices within school and society” (Noel, 2003). Students have opportunities to learn about exclusion and are encouraged to work toward inclusion. Nieto (2004) describes five levels of multicultural education. In her final level, “Affirmation, Solidarity, and Critique,” she argues that “social justice is central to education. Reflection and action are important components of learning. Decision-making and social action skills are the basis of the curriculum” (p. 388). In this approach, teachers are encouraged to move beyond fostering cultural understandings through integrative practices. Teachers encourage explore how cultural differences affect exclusion and think about ways of changing exclusive practices. They develop an understanding of why exclusion exists and become aware that not everyone feels included. Social inclusion occurs when those who feel excluded are affirmed and when the class makes a shared commitment to take action against exclusion. Sleeter (1991) suggests that to make this kind of practice possible, the concept and practice of multicultural education should be part of a whole-school reorganization rather than focus on the development of individual teachers.
Challenges

While culture-based pedagogies include practices for fostering social inclusion, several gaps exist between the ideal and the practice. According to Lee (2002), these gaps include: a lack of professional training and development for teachers, a lack of culturally rich curriculum resources, the difficulty of creating a multicultural school environment, and the challenge of involving all parents and community members in the educational process.

The incongruence between teachers’ personal and professional knowledge and their understanding of the lives of their students (Delpit, 1995; Piquemal & Nickels, 2005; Sleeter, 1996) makes culture-based pedagogies challenging for teachers. Cultural discontinuity occurs as a result of “students being forced to behave in ways that are incompatible with the values and norms of their own culture” (Piquemal & Nickels, 2005, p. 123). According to Lee (2002), teachers need training in order to understand the effects of culture on learning.

A lack of culturally diverse curriculum materials also makes it challenging to teach inclusively. Students who do not see themselves presented in positive ways in the curriculum feel excluded from the classroom. Learning materials and textbooks that include diverse characters and show these characters having positive, fulfilling roles are still not adequately provided in classrooms (Manning, 1994).

Lee (2002) also points to the challenge of creating a school environment that respects all forms of diversity. For multicultural education to be effective, teachers need to be supported by broader school structures. “The curriculum, learning environment, and the mindset of learners and faculty and staff must become multicultural in nature and must reflect the cultural diversity of the school” (p. 18). This suggests that teachers do not yet think broadly about culture nor do they approach their daily practice from a mindset inclusive of diversity.
Extending a multicultural perspective outside the classroom involves giving parents and the broader community a significant role in the school. While gaining the attention of middle- and upper-class White parents might be easier (Manning & Baruth, 2000), it is more challenging to connect with and include parents from backgrounds that have traditionally been excluded.

Addressing the challenges of multicultural education also requires the support of school administration. A study by Adalbjarnardottir and Runarsdottir (2006) demonstrated how one school administrator met these challenges by promoting mutual respect, staff professional development, collaboration of school personnel, individual strengths, and a joyful and playful environment.

**Race-Based Pedagogies**

This group of pedagogies focuses on racism and the exclusion of Black students. The literature on this group of pedagogies, however, often refers to culture as well as race. The practices used in race-based pedagogies can be applied to other social groups that experience exclusion. This may create confusion between culture-based and race-based pedagogy. To clarify, the pedagogies in this group take a critical approach to fostering social inclusion. Studies using this approach most often refer to the experiences of Black students, Latino students, and other students of colour who experience poverty. Culture-based pedagogies emphasize social norms and traditions while race-based pedagogies emphasize social identity. In this orientation, social inclusion involves addressing racial inequities explicitly and deliberately. For example, teachers who acknowledge that systemic racism exists and make conscious efforts to address it in their classrooms through content-based, relational, and structural strategies are fostering social inclusion (Dei, 1994).
**Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion involves creating equitable classroom environments where Black students and other marginalized students see themselves represented in the curriculum in normative ways and feel affirmed through the daily processes, images, and texts used in the classroom (Gay, 2000). It involves empowering students who are marginalized who are not well represented in the school system. The purpose of race-based pedagogies is to change the social and power imbalances that exist in schools and society to provide Black students with equal opportunities and access to academic achievement and participation in society. Different from the range of approaches in citizenship and multicultural education, race-based pedagogies deal directly with students' realities and with the discriminatory practices they experience both in and out of school. As Dei (2003) argues:

Anti-racist education is proactive educational practice intended to address all forms of racism and the intersections of social difference (race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability). . . . It is a form of education that makes very explicit the intended outcomes to subvert the status quo and bring about change. (p. 2)

Anti-racist education is politically driven, encouraging deliberate action toward equitable change. Dei (1996a) lists principles of anti-racist education:

1. The social effects of race need to be recognized.
2. The full social effects of race cannot be understood without a comprehension of the intersection of all forms of social oppression (including gender, class, sexuality).
3. White (male) power and the rationality behind its dominance in society need to be questioned.
4. Multiple perspectives and knowledges need to be included. Anti-racist education calls for creating spaces for everyone, but particularly for marginalized voices to be heard.
5. Educational practices must provide a holistic understanding and appreciation of student learning and experience.
6. The focus is on students’ identities and on linking identity to schooling.
7. The challenges of diversity and difference in Canadian society need to be confronted pedagogically.

8. Traditional schooling and the traditional education system produces and reproduces inequalities in society—not just racial inequality but also gender, class, and sexual inequalities.

9. School problems experienced by youth must be understood in relation to the societal circumstances students find themselves in. The search for explanations for some students’ non-conformity and difficulties in school requires a holistic analysis of the social, political, economic structures of society.

10. Seeing the “family” or “home environment” as the source of the problem for students who struggle in school is dismissed.

These principles all relate to fostering social inclusion. However those most closely connected to the concepts that frame this study (see Chapter 1) are numbers 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10. These principles in particular demonstrate a broad approach to thinking about social inclusion, a multi-perspective approach to inclusive practices, and the idea that social inclusion is affected by different contexts including the classroom, the school and the community. The race-based pedagogies used in this study to analyze practices of social inclusion are: anti-racist education, culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and warm demander pedagogy.

**Inclusive Practices**

Dei (2003) offers practical ways of doing anti-racist education:

Asking critical questions is a start. Another place to start anti-racist work is by assuring all students that they are welcome in the class and that each has the right and the responsibility to have a voice that must be heard. (p. 3)

He also calls upon White teachers to engage in self-reflexive thinking on issues of privilege: “Starting with the self means the white anti-racist educator must acknowledge his or her dominance and allow other whites to see their privilege by virtue of a White identity” (p. 4).
Understanding that racism exists and that it produces social effects, Dei's first principle, is a starting point for fostering social inclusion. If teachers and students recognize the existence of racism and that racism produces exclusion, they can begin to work against it and change exclusionary practices.

Culturally responsive teaching is also a race-based pedagogy. Huber (1991) asserts that “culturally responsive content and approaches recognize the influences of culture, language, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, exceptionality, socio-economic level, and home environment” (p. 4). Hollins (1996) adds that education designed specifically for Black students incorporates "culturally mediated cognition, culturally appropriate social situations for learning, and culturally valued knowledge in curriculum content" (p. 13). Culturally responsive teachers realize the importance of academic achievement, but also the maintaining of cultural identity and heritage (Gay, 2000; Huber, 1991, 1992).

Gay outlines four critical aspects of culturally responsive teaching: caring, communication, curriculum, and instruction. In explaining instruction she argues that culturally responsive teaching includes multiple ethnic perspectives and literary genres. She gives examples of math instruction incorporating the consumer habits of various ethnic groups and of math activities that reflect a variety of learning styles (2000). According to Gay, culturally responsive teaching means respecting the cultures and experiences of various groups and then using these experiences as resources for teaching and learning. It appreciates the existing strengths and accomplishments of all students and enhances these strengths through instruction. For example, African Americans' verbal creativity and story-telling in informal social interactions is acknowledged as a gift and contribution and used to teach writing skills (Huber, 1992).
Culturally relevant pedagogy includes students' cultures in the curriculum in order to value their identities and overcome the negative effects of the dominant culture. "The primary aim of culturally relevant teaching," Ladson-Billing (1994) explains, "is to assist in the development of a 'relevant black personality' that allows African American students to choose academic excellence yet still identify with African and African American culture" (p. 17). She argues that culturally relevant pedagogy is based on three principles:

1. students must experience academic success,
2. students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and
3. students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160)

Taken together, these principles support the creation of a socially inclusive classroom. Students who develop cultural competence develop an awareness of themselves and the people around them. This awareness allows them to recognize social inclusion and exclusion. Similarly, critical consciousness helps students to develop inclusive environments that offer greater opportunities for academic success.

In a small-scale ethnographic study on culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (2004) provides exemplary cases of classroom practice. The teachers in these cases believed that all their students can succeed viewed themselves as part of a larger community, saw teaching as giving back to the community, and encouraged a community of learners in their classrooms helped students make connections between local, national, racial, social, cultural and global identities created equitable, fluid relationships between the students and themselves that extended beyond the classroom encouraged students to learn collaboratively
believed that knowledge is continuously re-created, recycled, and shared by teachers and students alike. (p. 35)

Several of these practices are linked to social inclusion. For example, teachers who are conscientious in addressing all of their students and believe that their students can succeed are likely to provide an inclusive learning environment. Teachers who believe in community building are likely to tap into their students’ knowledge about their own communities to encourage student discourse. The hope is that the connections students make to their own communities will help them to achieve academic achievement while also retaining their cultural identity.

Although culturally responsive and culturally relevant pedagogies emphasize the concept of culture, they are grouped here with race-based pedagogies instead of culture-based pedagogies. This is because these two pedagogies view culture in terms of identity instead of social norms and traditions, and because they focus more on the critical dimensions of practice.

Warm demander pedagogy is another race-based pedagogy and a component of culturally responsive teaching (Ware, 2006). Bondy and Ross (2008) used the term warm demanders to describe teachers who did not lower academic standards for Black students. Irvine and Fraser (1998) use the term to describe teachers who provide “a tough-minded, no-nonsense, structured and disciplined classroom environment for kids whom society has psychologically and physically abandoned” (p. 56).Ware (2006) did case studies of two African American educators whose practices demonstrated characteristics of warm demander pedagogy. These characteristics showed them to be authority figures, caregivers, and pedagogues (p. 436). Teachers using warm demander pedagogy adopt an authoritative style of teaching (Toliver, 1993). Their tone is often stern and they speak openly about their expectations and concerns. Discipline is essential—an
attribute that Foster (1997) and Toliver (1993) see in culturally responsive African American teachers. This pedagogy fosters inclusion by paying close attention to those who have been traditionally excluded and by applying practices that address the learning styles and needs of the students.

**Challenges**

The challenges that race-based pedagogies encounter include: changing the Eurocentric focus of the curriculum, implementing African-centred knowledge in schools, applying a transformative perspective to teaching and learning, and preparing new teachers for race-based practice.

According to Dei (1996b), “The danger of Eurocentricity is that it is the only centre; it is presented as the only valid knowledge form through the constant devaluation and delegitimation of other forms of ideas. It is this process which is systemic in formal education” (p. 182). The centrality of Eurocentric or Western values in the education system is difficult for many students of colour (Banks, 2006; Grant, 2006). Ladson-Billings (2004) explains that ethnocentric monoculturalism in school environments is reproduced by teachers who typically do not use culturally responsive teaching practices. Gay (2000) argues that the materials used often do not represent students from diverse cultures. Grant (2006) and Kozol (2005) maintain that racial segregation among students is prevalent in schools. Students who are not from a European background experience exclusion at school because their views and perspectives are not valued. “Many racial minority youth have to contend with a dominance of 'Whiteness' in schools that, historically, has left no room for ideas to flourish” (Dei, 1996b, p. 182).
Eurocentric ideology can also result in teachers being unfamiliar with African-centred knowledge and ill-equipped to teach from this perspective. Differences within Black/African communities can add further challenges. Dei (1996b) argues that African-centred knowledge should be taught in a holistic context. “The challenge is for the anti-racist educator working in Euro-Canadian school contexts to harmonize and integrate the principles of African thought with European, First Nations, Asian and other systems of thought” (p. 180).

A focus on transformative teaching also distinguishes race-based pedagogies from culture-based pedagogies (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Race-based pedagogies see the transformation of current social structures and educational practices as a means of fostering social inclusion. This critical approach is challenging for teachers who are not experienced or familiar with it.

Linked to this challenge is the lack of teacher preparation. In many cases, teachers are teaching in educational settings for which they have not been trained (Dei, 2006, p. 84). Dei (2006) argues that the curriculum and structures of teacher education are not producing anti-racist teachers and that it is unreasonable to expect teachers to teach through an anti-racist orientation when they are unaware of, and untrained in, its foundations. Sleeter (1998) argues that, across North America, over 80% of teachers are White and that “those who attempt to teach White teachers about racism commonly encounter defences that are difficult to penetrate” (p. 38).

Anti-racist education also requires people to be willing to learn and do anti-racist work. Wagner (2005) maintains that fostering social inclusion through anti-racist education is everyone's responsibility, not just the responsibility of marginalized groups:
There are a myriad of potential benefits associated with members of the dominant group teaching from an antiracist perspective. Students, for instance, will be exposed to a White antiracist individual, who may challenge White students to take the issue of racism seriously, reinforcing that the issue is not solely a concern for people of colour. In some cases, this may be some students’ first exposure to a White person who is publicly and professionally committed to antiracist work. (p. 271)

**Anti-Oppression Pedagogies**

Anti-oppression pedagogies work directly and explicitly to end the exclusion of groups and individuals who experience marginalization. The aim is to foster inclusion by changing the ways teachers perceive students and teaching. Several concepts and strategies of race-based pedagogies apply to anti-oppression pedagogies. The key difference is that anti-oppression pedagogies address all forms of oppression including sexism, racism, ableism, ageism, and homophobia. Although race-based pedagogies also address intersecting forms of oppression, their focus is on race. Achieving social inclusion through anti-oppression pedagogies means that social norms in schools need to change. For example, it is difficult for teachers to work with their students on challenging homophobia in a social context where, despite equity policies, homophobia continues to exist.

**Social Inclusion**

In these pedagogies, social inclusion means establishing a sense of belonging for all students through a transformative process of altering social norms and understandings. It requires understanding, appreciating and affirming students’ individual identities. It also means rethinking and resituating one’s own place in society. In this way, pedagogies based on anti-oppression see social inclusion as a matter of considering the needs of the individual within the context of the whole.
Kumashiro (2002) describes four principles of anti-oppressive classroom practice:

1. education for the other,
2. education about the other,
3. education that is critical of privileging and othering, and
4. education that changes students and society.

He defines ‘other’ as “those groups that are traditionally marginalized, denigrated, or violated (i.e., othered) in society. . . . They are often defined in opposition to groups traditionally favoured, normalized, or privileged in society and, as such, are defined as other than the idealized norm” (p. 32).

Inclusive Practices

Kumashiro's first principle, education for the other, suggests strategies for creating school and classroom spaces where students are safe from verbal or physical attack. This includes teachers being advocates for students by "being willing to serve on committees that address sexual discrimination and harassment and to signify their advocacy by, for instance, putting pink triangles on their classroom doors" (2002, p. 35). It also includes building curriculum content, social relations, and school and classroom structures that support students who typically find themselves excluded from the learning process. Kumashiro's second principle—education about the other—suggests expanding the curriculum to include information about and affirmation of others and integrating this knowledge into all areas of learning. Literature, stories, media, and explicit discussions about “the other” can be used in ways that are affirming, but also in ways that challenge oppressive thinking. Education that is critical of privileging and othering implies teaching directly about oppression and creating effective action for inclusion. Kumashiro's fourth
principle—education that changes school and community—argues that teaching and learning need to be based on activism and change.

The conditions required for fostering inclusion through anti-oppression pedagogy are different from those in the other three groups of pedagogies. What is required first and foremost is a shift in thinking. Kumashiro (2002) proposes the following four strategies: doing homework, inverting and exceeding binaries, juxtaposing different texts, and catalyzing action and change.

Doing homework refers to rethinking one's assumptions and beliefs and to reconsidering notions of privilege and mainstreaming (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 151). Along with developing strategies for change, anti-oppression education requires an intensive analysis of one’s position in society and an understanding of self in relation to others; that is, self-reflexive practice.

"School curricula and pedagogies," Kumashiro (2002) argues

need spaces for students and teachers to do this kind of reflexive homework. . . . It is important that students and teachers have significant opportunities to reflect on their reading practices as they work to critique and transform their own investments and complicities and imagine new possibilities for bringing about anti-oppressive change. (p. 153)

“Of course," he continues, "different students, teachers, and contexts require different kinds of homework; there is no one best form. In each new situation, educators have their own work to do as they plan lessons that invite each student to do the kind of homework that will benefit that student in that moment” (p. 153). To foster social inclusion from this perspective, teachers need to first re-imagine current practices and social structures. They then need to consider how to apply these new foundations to their classrooms and how to modify their teaching strategies accordingly.
Anti-oppression education also involves working on and looking beyond binaries (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 170). Using the story of a transgendered woman, Kumashiro argues that educators and community members need to reconsider their current thinking about identity and gender:

“Being” identities that contradict one another, that invert social hierarchies, and that exceed binary logic can be exactly what helps to bring about anti-oppressive change. In the classroom, these processes of inverting and exceeding binaries can go in many directions. I can imagine a class where students work constantly to become the “other” gender at the same time that they work to become or ally with something outside of the gender binary. . . . I can imagine a class where students work constantly to imagine a society that is the opposite of their own (where, for instance, being deaf is the norm). . . . I can imagine a class where students work constantly to learn criticisms of what they are being taught as well as tools to ask questions that have not yet even been asked. (p. 169)

Juxtaposing texts, as this example also illustrates, is Kumashiro's (2002) third strategy for doing anti-oppression work. This process opens identity and discourse to various ways of being and makes space for difference:

Juxtaposing stories to different texts helps us to use stories in paradoxical ways: to learn from them, while looking beyond what we are learning. . . . What makes juxtaposition helpful for anti-oppressive education are the multiple and contradictory insights, questions, and practices it can open up. (p. 182)

Kumashiro's (2002) fourth strategy refers to members of the community and school engaging in activism for social change. He encourages us to listen to and surround ourselves with those engaged in activism and to take responsibility for what we can contribute (p. 195). This can take several forms in the classroom such as letter writing, researching and understanding historical oppression, prompting changes both in the classroom and the community, and engaging students in discussions that inspire them to shift their thinking about exclusion.
Challenges

Challenges to achieving anti-oppression education include:

1. working against norms in the school system that are deeply entrenched in oppressive social norms,
2. training and finding educators who understand and believe in anti-oppression work,
3. translating research and theory on anti-oppression education into practice, especially postmodernist, poststructuralist, and post-colonialist theory, and
4. recognizing that the task of changing oppression should not fall only on educators (Kumashiro, 2004).

Each of these challenges questions the way education is viewed and institutionalized.

Teachers, like all people, are products of social systems, and educating teachers in anti-oppression education is often met with resistance. Many teachers enter the profession with a limited understanding of anti-oppression education and are introduced to it for the first time in professional development workshops. In addition, anti-oppression language and theory is often complex and inaccessible. Research presented through a postmodern or poststructuralist lens is not only new for many educators, but also difficult to translate into practice (Kumashiro, 2002).

Teachers also face the challenge of finding the time and energy for anti-oppression education. Equity work is hard and requires commitment. Teachers often feel this work should not be their responsibility when they already have a comprehensive curriculum to teach and standardized tests to prepare for. The demands on teachers are heavy and teachers can feel that anti-oppression work is too much to attend to.
How School Norms, Conditions and Routines Facilitate or Constrain the Fostering of Social Inclusion

This study centres on teachers’ classroom practices. However it also acknowledges the influence of contexts beyond the classroom. Although not a central focus of the study, understanding how the norms, structures, and priorities of the school relate to classroom practice offers further insights into how teachers foster social inclusion. This investigation responds to the third sub-question of the research questions. Ainscow et al. (2006) argue that

Schools are inevitably characterised by complexity, ambiguity and contradiction, and their achievements are inherently unstable. On the other hand, the potential for inclusive practices to emerge in schools is, by the same token, not exceptional. Provided that we are prepared to accept that inclusive development will indeed be halting, partial and ambiguous, there is every reason to believe that conditions may be created where widespread movements in this direction begin to emerge.

(p. 171)

They suggest two main factors that influence inclusive school structures: the relationships, attitudes, and dominant values within the school, and what Ainscow (2006) refers to as “the sorts of ‘disturbances’ to which the school is subject” (p. 161). School principles, practices, and use of resources are guided by its vision of social inclusion. The disturbances refer to external factors (the school board, the community, Ministry policies) and internal factors (issues arising from parents, staff, students) (p. 164).

Ainscow and Angelides (2006) state that school culture influences school improvement. For example, Adalbjarnardottir and Runarsdottir's study (2006) showed the inclusive strategies that one administrator initiated at his school: promoting mutual respect, providing staff professional development, encouraging collaboration of all school personnel, focusing on individual strengths, and creating a joyful and playful environment. Each of these strategies
focused on building multicultural awareness and positive relations among all members of the school.

In the context of critical pedagogies, certain conditions at the school and community level need to be met. Dei (2006) suggests that educators redress the curriculum by focusing on marginalized groups and integrating these groups’ perspectives and knowledge. He offers two strategies: first, integrating African-centred knowledge with other knowledges to achieve “multicentric inclusive schools” (p. 106); second, creating African-centred schools as an alternative learning environment. For example, Dei’s work has come to fruition with Ontario’s first Afro-centric school opening its doors in 2009.

The Literature in Relation to the Research Questions

The literature review provides information that is relevant to the research questions. I explored responses to the main question that were based on theories and empirical studies from a range of perspectives from scholarly works. Many scholars across the orientations recognize the importance of addressing the pedagogical areas that are explored in this study (content, relations, structures) as seen in the principles they recommend. In this section I summarize the literature in terms of insights gained about content, relations and structural considerations for fostering social inclusion. Principles for Fostering Social Inclusion Based on the Literature Review (see Table 1) provides a reference for the various scholars and their principles for fostering inclusion. A discussion of the similarities and differences follow the table.
Table 1

*Principles for Fostering Social Inclusion Based on the Literature Review*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Fostering social inclusion</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Relations</th>
<th>Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lickona (1991)</td>
<td>Conditions for moral community</td>
<td>teach about values (respect, responsibility, honesty)</td>
<td>involving students in making decisions about the classroom</td>
<td>fostering a sense of moral responsibility at the school level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosnik &amp; Beck (2009)</td>
<td>Principles for inclusion</td>
<td>studying diverse cultures</td>
<td>emphasizing community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>discussing issues of prejudice and discrimination explicitly</td>
<td>developing close teacher-student relationships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Osborne (2005)</td>
<td>Practices of citizenship education</td>
<td>introducing stories of human drama and connecting the past to the present</td>
<td>participating in ways that are political and engaged with the real world</td>
<td>schools’ practices and policies reflect the goal of citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>recognizing issues of power</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>portraying people as engaged in shaping their environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>Fostering social inclusion</td>
<td>Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banks (1990)</td>
<td>Dimensions of multicultural education</td>
<td>representing all students’ identities</td>
<td>modifying teaching strategies to address learning styles of all students</td>
<td>school norms and structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>recognizing assumptions and bias in content</td>
<td>questioning prejudices that arise in classroom and modifying actions and thoughts to more affirming attitudes</td>
<td>ensure empowerment and achievement of all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dei (1996a)</td>
<td>Principles of anti-racist education</td>
<td>include multiple perspectives and knowledges in order for (excluded) students' voices to be heard</td>
<td>identifying social identities and interactions in the classroom in relation to societal circumstances</td>
<td>school problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>focus of content is on students' identities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladson-Billings</td>
<td>Principles and practices of culturally relevant pedagogy</td>
<td>developing cultural competence through content</td>
<td>collaborative learning emphasizing community challenging the status quo</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In the area of pedagogical content, scholars from each of the orientations recommend approaches and principles for fostering social inclusion. Most stress the inclusion and integration of content that represents the social identities of students in the classroom and people in the community. The representations of social identities need to be affirming and positive; they also need to represent the past and present experiences of people. Most scholars also stress that bias, prejudice, and discriminatory content that provokes inequity should be addressed. For example, Osborne (2005) suggests including content-based practices that introduce students to the life experiences of people from a historical perspective and that also discuss how the experiences have evolved over time as a way that might provide a sense of connectedness that situates the present in the context of the past. Banks (1990) recommends that students are taught to recognize assumptions and bias in content and to be able to discuss the implications of such messages. Dei (1996a) and Kumashiro (2000) emphasize that the content must focus on marginalized (excluded) students and they stress it is those student voices that need to be heard and included throughout the curriculum content. Though most scholars share similar ideas for content-based socially inclusive practice, there are some differences. One scholar concentrates more on
content-based practice that teaches values for social inclusion. Lickona (1991) suggests teaching students about respect, fairness, honesty, compassion, as content to lead to social inclusion. Lickona’s focus on teaching content centred on common values and social norms differs from scholars from all four orientations in the literature who focus more on equitable representation of social identities and marginalized people.

The relational dimension of pedagogy considers practices that address social aspects of classroom life. The most common practice suggested for fostering social inclusion is community building (Beck & Kosnik, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lickona, 1991). Although the practice of building community is similar across the orientations, their underlying premise differs. Lickona (1991) offers several strategies for hosting classroom meetings as a way to build moral community; Kosnik and Beck (2009) use community as a way to develop safe space for students to experience the social life of the classroom, and Ladson-Billings (1994) builds community for students to engage in collaborative and equitable practices that extend beyond the classroom. Some scholars stress recognizing students and groups who are often excluded from the social aspects of classroom life and recommend fostering social inclusion by identifying and addressing exclusion through discussions and instructional methods that are aimed at inclusion of marginalized students (Banks, 1990; Dei, 1996a; Kumashiro, 2000). When scholars make recommendations about relational practices, most stress that students should be actively engaged in decision making and in class participation, though they differ in the ways in which such participation should occur. For example, Osborne (2005) and Ladson-Billings (1994) encourage students to participate in ways that are political and engaged with the real world so that they gain a sense of “cultural competence” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 160). Dei (1996a) extends this concept by suggesting students not only participate to develop cultural competence but also to
develop an understanding of the effects of racism and other forms of oppression. Lickona’s (1991) practices for participation are more centred on relational acts of respect, sharing, and compassion and focus much less on issues of social identity.

In terms of addressing the pedagogical dimension of structures, most scholars in the literature mainly address principles related to wider structures. For example, Ainscow et al. (2006) study school improvement through inclusion in education. Much of their work focuses on the school level and beyond and explores how policy (school, school board, and government), influence inclusion in schools. At the school level, some scholars suggest particular kinds of attitudes and cultures for fostering social inclusion. Osborne (2005) recommends ensuring teachers’ and schools’ practices and policies reflect the goal of citizenship development and Dei (1996a) states schools need to begin with the belief that school problems (e.g., exclusion) are rooted in societal problems. There is much value in such literature, however, this study focuses more on the structures created and/or managed by teachers in their classrooms as they relate to what teachers teach (content) and how they build relationships and community in their classrooms (relations).

This study provides an opportunity to trace and compare the orientations that generate these practices. By bringing qualitative research on teachers’ work together with varying perspectives of socially inclusive teaching as presented in this literature review, this study aims to develop a deeper understanding of how teachers think about and foster social inclusion in their daily practice.
Summary

This study investigates the pedagogical practices of teachers in one school in order to explore the complexities of social inclusion and to deepen our understanding of how it is fostered in classrooms. The focus of this study is on practice. The literature reviewed illustrates a range of pedagogies on social inclusion in classrooms and shows that teachers can approach inclusive practice through multiple perspectives and orientations. The literature in this area is extensive and varied. I organized the literature on socially inclusive practices into four groups, pedagogies based on: citizenship, culture, race, and anti-oppression. Each group contains a variety of practices, from a range of perspectives.

How teachers foster social inclusion depends on the orientation. Most citizenship-based pedagogies are a familiar orientation already embedded in several school systems. This group of pedagogies values community and works to include everyone within a common system. Pedagogies based on culture range from liberal approaches that celebrate difference to more critical approaches that challenge inequities. These pedagogies focus on developing cultural awareness. Pedagogies that foreground race share similarities with critical cultural pedagogies in that both acknowledge marginalized groups and work toward promoting not only greater awareness of difference but also changes in relations of power. Anti-oppression pedagogies are similar to anti-racist education in that both address practices of marginalization and oppression. Anti-oppression education emphasizes all forms of oppression and includes sexuality, gender, race, and class as the more dominant forms. Race based pedagogies also acknowledges intersecting forms of oppression but foregrounds race. I also learned that certain groups are also closely connected. For example, culture-based pedagogies and race-based pedagogies not only have a common language (e.g., culture) but also share practices of learning about diverse
cultures and affirming diversity in the classroom. Race-based and anti-oppression pedagogies are grounded in critical theory and stress the importance of activism for social change. The literature review reveals that social inclusion can be a product of any of these perspectives and may also be a combination of them all.

The numerous approaches of social inclusion and their associated practices divide the literature on how teachers foster social inclusion as they are seldom brought together. Although the practices do share common elements of social inclusion (selecting particular content, developing mutual respect, developing mutual understanding), they are not discussed in this way in the literature.

The review reveals that few studies have been done that investigate socially inclusive practice in the detail, depth, and length of time used in this study. It also reveals that few studies have investigated teachers’ socially inclusive practices through a lens of multiple pedagogical orientations. The research presented here adds to the existing literature a year-long study that explores the nuances, subtleties and complexities of teachers’ daily work as they strive to foster social inclusion in their classrooms.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

According to Patton (1990), qualitative research aims to "understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context." This understanding”, he explains

is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of a setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting—and, in the analysis, to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting.

(p. 1)

This study locates understanding of social inclusion in the daily work of teachers. Looking closely at what teachers actually do in their classrooms to foster social inclusion—"what's going on for them and what their meanings are"—reveals the complexity of responding to diversity and the challenges posed by different beliefs about inclusion, by student and community demographics, by the curriculum, and by the structural settings of the school and classroom. Drawing on extensive observations, in-depth interviews, reflective field notes, and documents, this study investigated the socially inclusive practices of five teachers and four school leaders in one inner-city elementary school between October 2006 and September 2007. The data obtained from the fieldwork were analyzed according to one principal research question and three sub-questions:

**How do teachers foster social inclusion in their classrooms?**

1. How and why do teachers vary what they teach, how they teach, and the conditions under which they teach in order to foster social inclusion?

2. What issues/challenges do teachers face in relation to their socially inclusive practice? How do they address those issues/challenges?
3. How do the norms, structures and priorities of the school relate to the socially inclusive practices in the classroom?

In this chapter, I outline my rationale for using a qualitative case study approach and explain the methodology used. I discuss entry to the field and how the sample was put together, focussing on the criteria and negotiations involved in selecting the school and the participants. I explain how the data were collected and how the analysis was done during and after the fieldwork. To conclude, I look at issues of validity, dependability and ethics.

**Qualitative Approach**

I chose a qualitative approach because I wanted to discover the processes, nuances, details, complexities and experiences of teachers' daily classroom practice. Merriam (1998) explains that the key philosophical assumption of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality as they interact with their social worlds. By extension, teachers and students construct reality as they interact with the social worlds of the inner-city school and their inner-city life.

McEwan and McEwan (2003) explain that qualitative research is descriptive, naturalistic, and focused on meaning. Spending a year in the school observing the practices of each teacher enabled me to track changes, consistencies, patterns, and interesting occurrences. It also allowed me to better understand the natural setting of the school. I attempted to make sense of what I observed, heard and read; I asked many questions in multiple interviews to understand how the participants understood their practice in relation to the setting. A qualitative approach allowed me to witness teachers’ practices over an extended period of time and it also allowed me to listen to the voices of those engaged in fostering social inclusion.
Case Studies

My study consisted of multiple in-depth case studies (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994) of teachers' socially inclusive practices. Case studies are used to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than specific variables, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice and future research. (Merriam, 1998, p. 19)

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) claim that a case study approach is best for researchers who ask how and why questions and are interested in a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context and case studies, according to Stake (1989) "are not something we want to represent by a score. [...] We want to understand [their] complexity. [...] The case study tells a story about a bounded system" (p. 256).

My study included multiple cases of teacher practice in order to understand the complexity of social inclusion. I chose a multi-case study approach (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998) because I collected data from five classroom teachers. I first analyzed the cases separately and then compared them to see the differences and similarities in practices of social inclusion. I used multiple cases to gain data from various settings and to build triangulation into the analysis.

The cases in this study are bounded by space, time, population, focus, and scale:

**Space.** The study was conducted in an inner-city school. Within the broader context of the school, I chose four classroom settings (one of the classrooms was shared by two teachers).

**Time.** The study period was 1 school year: October 2006 to September 2007. This was also the year the school received extra funding from the local school board to support the needs
of its inner-city student population. The study period was therefore also bounded by special funding circumstances. The additional funding provided more staffing, events, professional development and resource materials for the school than they had in previous years.

Population. The study was limited to teachers in one inner-city school. All 5 teachers in the study had an interest in social inclusion and were seeking to establish inclusive classrooms. The teachers ranged in age from 26 to 60 and in experience from less than 1 year to 30 years.

Focus. The study focused on the socially inclusive practices of teachers in an inner-city school, the challenges they faced in trying to foster social inclusion, and the ways in which they addressed the challenges.

Scale. The cases involved elementary school classrooms and varied in grade level. The purpose was to compare practices used in primary and junior grades.

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are three framing concepts of the study:

1. a broad approach to social inclusion that considers the social identities of students;

2. a multiple perspective lens inclusive practices; and

3. a multiple context approach.

The case studies in this study are situated within the classroom context. To support the findings from the classroom and to deepen my understanding of inclusive practices, I spent time observing teachers in their classrooms and interviewing them on their beliefs and understandings of socially inclusive practices. I also included interview questions on how the broader school and local community influenced their practices of social inclusion.
Entry Negotiations

Gaining entry into the school was a time-consuming and lengthy process. After developing the methodology and preparing letters of information and consent, I prepared the ethical review. Once the study was approved by the university, I began entry negotiations with the school board. Given the number of hours I had initially allocated to the interviews (15 hours per teacher), the school board rejected the proposal. This resulted in amending the number of interviews (3-5 hours per teacher) and a resubmission of the proposal. Then, 2 weeks later, the school board approved the design and I embarked on the task of finding a school and teachers that would be interested in the study.

Sampling

Sampling in field research involves the selection of the research site, the participants, the events, and the use of time during the study (Burgess, 1982, p. 76). To keep the study practical and feasible, I decided on one site, one school, and five classrooms. It became apparent that getting to know a local community, a school community, and a variety of classroom settings within one school would be a large task.

School Selection

My interest in inner city schools narrowed the selection of schools significantly. I searched the school board website for school profiles that suggested social inclusion as a priority. To narrow my search, I contacted one of the directors of a local university’s Urban Schooling Centre and sought his advice for entry. He suggested three schools and provided their contact information.
I made appointments and visited two of the three schools recommended. One of the schools, Mark Reginald\(^1\), showed interest in the study and requested more information. I prepared a two-page outline and gave it to the principal in the hope there would be further interest (see Appendix B). I then met with school administrators and coordinators at Mark Reginald to discuss the possibilities and requirements of the study. One of the school leaders, Eleanor, explained that the school wanted to increase the level of research conducted and that the topic of socially inclusive practice was of interest. She also stated that she felt confident that teachers at the school would be willing to participate. The principal, vice-principal and Eleanor welcomed me to the school and showed support for the study.

**Selection of Participants**

I revisited Mark Reginald several times between August and October 2006 to meet with Eleanor. She introduced me to staff she felt would be interested in the study and who were known to foster social inclusion in their classrooms. I included two categories of participants: principal participants (classroom teachers) and secondary participants (school leaders). I used purposeful sampling (Cohen & Manion, 1997; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990) or criterion-based selection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) “to increase the utility of information to be obtained from small samples. The power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 397). To find participants suitable for the study, I used snowball sampling (Merriam, 1998; Patton 1990); I asked school leaders and teachers to recommend participants that would be “information-rich,

\(^1\) Mark Reginald is a pseudonym.
that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects” (Patton, 1990, p.182). Some of the
teachers I met also recommended colleagues interested in socially inclusive practice.

Because the sample was purposeful, I developed criteria for participation. I sought
teachers who were

1. recognized as thoughtful about social inclusion in their classroom program;
2. articulate about their practices
3. pro-active in trying to maintain and develop good socially inclusive practices; and
4. willing to share their classroom and time with me for the purposes of the study.

I met with teachers who fit the criteria and expressed interest in the study. We spoke informally
about the study and the topic of social inclusion. I shared the consent letters and sample
interview questions with them (see Appendices C and D).

Initially, Eleanor suggested that one entire grade team participate in the study. This team
included a diverse group of teachers (men, women, straight, queer, Black, White, bi-racial,
Asian, Christian, Muslim). The idea of studying such a diverse group teaching the same grade
seemed fascinating. However, this was not possible because only two of the five teachers showed
interest. In addition, although it would have been interesting to have a diverse group of
participants, it would not have added to the study in terms of validity. Understanding this key
distinction encouraged me to continue my search. Other teachers working with other grades in
the school showed interest and I met with them to discuss the study.

I was careful not to “sell” the study as I wanted participants who were genuinely
interested in committing to the entire observation and interview process. Convincing teachers to
participate was not the approach I wanted to take, so when I met with them, I took time to
explain the study in a clear and open way. Our discussions focused on the research problem and the questions (the topic), the expectations (time commitments and the nature of the interviews), and what they could expect from me (my role in the classroom, frequency of visits, my approach).

Initially, 6 teachers signed up for the study: 2 primary teachers (same class, Grades 1/2); 2 primary/junior teachers (same class, Grades 3/4); and 2 junior teachers (one Grade 5/6 teacher; one resource teacher). After 1 month, 1 of the primary/junior teachers decided to suspend her participation for personal reasons. This left 5 main participants, all of whom completed the study. These participants ranged in age and in years of teaching experience and taught different grade levels. All the participants were women; one was bi-racial and the others were White. Chapter 4 provides more descriptions of their social backgrounds.

In addition to the 5 principal participants, I included 4 secondary participants. The findings from the interviews with the secondary participants supplemented the data and also broadened the perspective of the study. The secondary participants were school leaders and included the principal, vice-principal, school co-ordinator and a literacy lead teacher. The criteria for selecting the secondary participants were that they had a leadership role in the school and that they worked in the school in a broad capacity (beyond a classroom). The secondary participants were part of daily school life and were familiar with the school vision, culture and initiatives.

**Data Collection**

According to Glesne (1999), “Qualitative researchers depend on a variety of methods for gathering data. The use of multiple data-collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data” (p. 31). Using multiple methods does not involve "the simple combination of different
kinds of data, but the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each” (p. 31). The methods I used for collecting data consisted of extensive observations; semi-structured, in-depth interviews; informal conversations; documents; and reflections.

The fieldwork component ran from October 2006 to September 2007. Initially, I had hoped to spend 4 to 5 consecutive weeks in each teacher’s classroom but soon realized that prolonged visits and observations were stressful for teachers. Also, the time I spent away from the other teachers and their students was too long. As a result, I changed the schedule to a more flexible routine of observing each teacher for 1 week at a time, 3 to 4 days per week. I tried to keep rotation between classrooms consistent, but the teachers’ schedules made it complicated. Instead, I worked around their schedules and availability. This resulted in approximately 1-week visits with each participant every 5 weeks during which time I collected data through observations (see Appendix A). The revised schedule worked well as the teachers were more relaxed with my presence and I was able to stay more connected with them over the course of the year.

Observations began in October and individual interviews began in December 2006 at times convenient for the participants (usually after school but occasionally on weekends at an offsite location). The secondary participants were unable to meet during the school year, which resulted in the fieldwork extending into September 2007.

I spent the weekends reflecting on the data and adding to my field notes. During the school holiday breaks in December 2006, March 2007 and July/August 2007, I transcribed the interviews and organized and analyzed the data.

Data collection was a lengthy yet enjoyable experience. I visited the school daily, met and spoke with people, recorded observations and conversations, interviewed, and learned a
great deal about classroom life and social inclusion. During this time, one of my greatest challenges was remaining aware of my own subjectivity and the ways in which it could influence the data collection. Peshkin (2000) emphasizes the importance of reflecting on one's interpretations through the entire process as it helps to “show the way a researcher’s self, or identity in a situation, intertwines with his or her understanding of the object of the investigation” (p. 5). Being aware of the relationship between my own identity and what was happening around me allowed me to keep track of the ways I was recording the data. For example, in cases where I made interpretations that seemed inconsistent with statements made by the participants in the interviews, I would use the next interview to clarify.

**Observations**

Observational data represent a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a second-hand account of the world obtained in an interview” (Merriam, 1998, p. 94). I observed the practices of the principal participants, looking for examples of socially inclusive interaction. I approached social inclusion from a broad lens and focused on the three areas of pedagogy that were introduced and discussed in chapter 1: content, relational, and structural strategies. At times I was an observer, sitting back and noting what I saw; at other times, I was a participant-observer interacting with students. It was easy to engage in classroom life because of my years of teaching experience; however, I kept my participation to a minimum to avoid missing important observations. Balancing participation with observation was difficult, particularly in the primary classroom. It became increasingly difficult to stay focused on the details of observing when my attention was geared to helping a group of students. Despite my desire to help in the classroom, I had to decline some requests in order to remain focused on the data collection.
Spending a prolonged time at the school in participant-observations allowed the participants to get to know me and trust my work. During the observations, I recorded questions in my field notes that were later used for discussion in the interviews. For example, I often observed Annette standing close to particular students and quietly offering them positive reinforcement and support. I wondered why she did this and whether or not she felt inclusion had anything to do with it. I noted my observations and, in the interview, used them to ask questions. Strong relationships coupled with extensive observations allowed for interesting and, in some cases, complex interview data.

I spent most of my time observing classroom practice. I had approximately 75 classroom observation days and spent approximately 23 days in the classroom with each teacher. The observations varied from 3 to 4 hours per visit. I had hoped initially to spend full days in the classroom (6 hours per day) but this presented hurdles. Some of the teachers felt full day observation was too much; many interruptions (student rotary, assemblies) made full day observations impossible; and observing beyond 4 hours was very tiring, resulting in less detailed data collection.

During classroom observations I noted the visual displays in the classroom and the physical layout; the design of the lessons, content, instruction and assessments; classroom management and interactions; and formal and informal conversations (see Appendix G). I looked for moments when the students were engaged in their work, actively participating in lessons and activities, and discussing issues of inclusion and equity. I also noted observations of students disengaged and removed from classroom life.
Interviews

In addition to observations, I used interviews to gain insight into teachers’ thoughts on their practice and to discover, as Patton puts it, "what is in and on someone else's mind (1990, p. 278). “Observations," in Glesne's words, "put you on the trail of understandings that you infer from what you see, but you cannot, except through interviewing, get the [participant’s] explanations” (1999, p. 69). One-to-one interviews complemented the observations with explanations and details. I used interviews because I wanted to discover what is "in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 1990, p. 278) and used the most common form of interview—“person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another” (Merriam, 1998, p. 71). I chose a semi-structured format because I wanted an open framework and a conversational approach. I began each interview with a specific focus and prepared guiding questions that probed particular areas but also allowed for new directions to emerge. This approach encouraged the participants to direct the discussion and helped me to minimize the tendency to lead the interview or impose meanings. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) describe semi-structured interviews as the most favoured by educational researchers because the option to probe allows for deep, rich data. This type of interview also expands the data because it encourages participants to respond broadly (p. 83).

Location and environment were important factors in considering where to hold the interviews. The time of day and social events during the day were also taken into account. Interviews were often rescheduled because the teachers were too tired or emotionally exhausted after a busy day. This was a process I welcomed and supported as I wanted the participants to enjoy the interviews and feel relaxed. I invited the participants to decide on the time and place. Most of the teachers preferred to meet in their classrooms immediately after school. However, I
did meet with 2 of the teachers in different settings—once at the teacher's home and once at my home. In all cases the rooms were comfortable, well lit, and quiet. I met with the secondary participants in their offices during the school day. These interviews were more difficult to schedule because of the participants' school leadership responsibilities.

**Interviews With Principal Participants**

During the 10 months of data collection, my aim was to conduct three interviews with each of the 5 teachers (see Appendix H). Each interview took from 1 to 2 hours at a place and time that was convenient for the participant. I began the data collection with classroom observations and casually speaking with the teachers at opportune times throughout the day. The teachers had opportunities to ask questions about the study and the process. At approximately 1 month into the observations, I conducted the first interview. The second interview was arranged midway through the fieldwork, and the final interview at the end. Two of the 5 participants felt a third interview was redundant despite explanations as to the importance of this interview.

In the first interview, I focused on gaining insight into the teachers’ lived experiences, significant memories, and thoughts about social inclusion. I asked questions about their life histories and about their teaching experiences, particularly in their current inner-city school setting. If time permitted at the end of the interview (which in most cases it did not), I asked them to share their ideas about social inclusion. The purpose of the first interview was to get to know the participants, learn who they were as teachers, and understand how they thought about their pedagogy.

In the second interview, I focused on the teachers’ current practices and probed them to talk about the practices I had observed in their classrooms. At this point in the study, I had spent
3 to 4 weeks observing and was familiar with the teachers. This second interview also focused on the challenges of socially inclusive practice; I asked the teachers to discuss how they addressed these challenges in the classroom.

The third interview, at the end of the observation period, was used to clarify and expand on ideas that emerged in the first and second interviews. I used the third interview to delve deeper into the teachers' thoughts about their practice. I referred back to observations and content from the second interview and asked them to elaborate. In this interview I also directed the discussion to the challenges associated with social inclusion.

The interviews were audio taped with the participants’ permission. I also took notes and used them as prompts for further discussion. The participants were given copies of their transcripts and invited to add, change or delete parts. All of the participants appreciated the transcript and no one requested changes.

**Interviews With Secondary Participants**

I also conducted interviews with the principal, vice-principal, school coordinator and junior division literacy coordinator. I used these interviews to gain additional data about the wider school community and how it supported the teachers in their classrooms. These interviews provided data from outside the classroom, thereby offering a wider perspective on the concept and practice of social inclusion. Each secondary participant was interviewed once for 1 hour (see Appendix I). Most of the interviews took place near the end of the study because it was difficult to find suitable times. For example, the interview with the principal was rescheduled five times due to his demanding workload and was finally conducted in September 2007. The vice-principal was only available to meet in the summer months and we were limited to her hot office
bombarded by noise from the construction site just outside her window. The literacy coordinator and school coordinator could only meet during the school day between meetings and student emergencies.

The data gained from these interviews were well worth the persistence as the insights they provided offered both complementary and new perspectives on socially inclusive practice in the inner city. Conducting these interviews in the latter part of the fieldwork worked well because, by that time, I had a greater understanding of the school climate and classroom environments and was able to ask questions on the school support systems. The questions focused on the school environment, the participants’ roles, school-wide policies and programs, and issues surrounding social inclusion.

**Documents**

Merriam (1998) notes that data collection in case study research usually includes a combination of three strategies: observations, interviews, and documents. Although I incorporated documents in the data collection, I used this strategy in minimal ways. As Merriam comments, “rarely . . . are all three strategies used equally” (p. 137). School-wide documents such as the school profile, minutes of staff meetings, school vision statement, letters to parents, newsletters, inner-city reports and other materials were juxtaposed to teachers’ work and provided background information on school initiatives. If something of interest came up in the documents, I asked questions about it in the interviews. For example, in her interview, Eleanor talked about the school’s vision and goals for 2007 which had been outlined in a document produced by the school staff. I used this document to interview school leaders on how the goals were being met in classrooms.
I used notebooks to record observations and field notes. I recorded relevant informal conversations as soon as I could. At the end of each visit, I took 15 minutes to reflect on the data, summarize the experience, and consider questions for further research. I used a similar process with the interviews, recording brief notes on important comments. These notes helped me to probe issues that arose during the interviews and to capture facial expressions, body language and other reactions that would otherwise have been lost. While I tried not to record too much during the interviews, I found these notes to be useful reminders during the data analysis.

All of the interviews were audio taped and transcribed. I transcribed each interview myself. Although it was time consuming, I found it useful for analysis and for formulating questions for the next interview. Aside from the interview with the vice principal, which was almost lost due to background noise, the sound quality on the tapes was excellent. The participants were comfortable with the tape recorder and showed no concerns with the process.

I kept the field notes and reflections in a three-ring binder. Each teacher was assigned a notebook and I had a separate notebook for school-wide observations. I also assigned a binder to each teacher and each school for the transcripts and documents. I placed all the secondary participant interview transcripts in the school-wide binder. These methods of organization were helpful and convenient for storing the raw data.

**Data Analysis**

“Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (Glesne, 1999, p. 130). Data analysis starts at the beginning of data collection and continues after collection is completed. “The right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it *simultaneously* with data collection” (Merriam,
The process involves systematically searching, organizing, consolidating, synthesizing and evaluating the gathered data (observations, field notes, interview transcripts, documents and reflections) in order to respond to the study’s research problem. I used coding, charting, and writing “observer’s comments” to begin organizing and analysing the descriptive data (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

The data analysis in this study involved three stages of “data transformation” (Glesne, 1999, p. 149). Analysis techniques included organizing patterns, themes and categories; exploring the relationships between themes and categories; and developing deeper insights into socially inclusive practice (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990; Wolcott, 1994). During the fieldwork, I engaged in stage one of the analysis. I also used stage two, which Wolcott (1994) refers to as "analysis". In the post-fieldwork analysis, I used stage three, in Wolcott's terms "interpretation".

**Analysis During Fieldwork**

In the early stages of data collection, I recorded as many observations as I could in my field notes. I mapped out each classroom and recorded the movement patterns, the conversations, and the activities that the children were assigned. Because I was unsure where the data would lead and what kinds of practice I would see, I tried to capture everything. I began analyzing the data by reflecting on what I was observing. I continually asked myself, “What’s going on here? What does this incident mean?” I recognized that I was already engaged in forms of interpretation (Kaplan, 1964; Peshkin, 2000) and was thoughtful about the questions I was asking to further the analysis. I jotted down notes to remind myself to look for repeated moments or similar observations. The beginning of the data collection was an exciting and interesting time in the study as everything was new. Sights and sounds related to my research questions were
being presented to me for the first time, and I was careful to think critically about what I was observing and the ideas I was formulating.

I used the same approach for my early analysis of the interviews. In the first round of interviews, I allowed the information to flow freely. I prepared a series of probing questions and then adapted the direction of the interview to the leads offered by the participant. In preparing for the subsequent interview, I relied on the information gathered in the first interview and in my observations. For example, in Annette’s class, I repeatedly observed one student working separately from the rest of the class. In the second interview, I referred to the observation and Annette responded by giving her professional insight on issues of social inclusion. In the third interview, I probed the issue further by referring back to the comments she had made in the second interview. The third interviews were particularly helpful for analysing and interpreting what I had observed and heard. They also helped me to test my understandings, hunches, and analyses with the participants.

During the data collection stage, I began recognizing themes in each case study and the ways in which the issues presented themselves in particular settings. In the latter part of the observations, when I started to see patterns, I noted key words in the margins that reminded me of what I had originally perceived. I also wrote out reflections on ideas that extended beyond description. I used a similar technique when I transcribed the interviews; I kept track of thoughts, themes and theories that were emerging and noted significant passages. This helped me to locate particular sections when I began to look at the data more critically later on. I searched for patterns in the transcripts and field notes (key words, practices, approaches) as a way to further the investigation. At times I felt unsure of this approach, worrying that I was imposing too many of my own biases on the study. I constantly asked myself, “Am I forcing the themes?” This
continuous questioning kept me aware of my subjectivity. I recorded times in my field notes when I was looking for particular themes or when themes just presented themselves. This alertness to my own subjectivity contributed to greater trustworthiness in my findings (Glesne, 1999, p. 151).

**Post Fieldwork Analysis**

Once the data were collected, I looked at socially inclusive practice more closely, first separately (case-by-case) and then comparatively (across cases). Looking at each teacher’s practice individually, I wrote summaries for each case based on the three dimensions of pedagogy I was considering (content, relations, structures). I rewrote each summary several times, each time making decisions on what to include. I then combined the individual cases into one case study of socially inclusive practice. Having organized the raw data into binders and notebooks made the information easy to retrieve. I began by creating what Patton (1990) refers to as “case records”:

The case record pulls together and organizes the voluminous case data into a comprehensive primary resource package. The case record includes all the major information that will be used in doing the case analysis and case study. Information is edited, redundancies are sorted out, parts are fitted together, and the case record is organized for ready access either chronologically and/or topically. (pp. 386-387)

**Individual Case Analysis**

I had six case records altogether, one for each of the five teachers and one for the school context. First, I analysed each case separately. I took my notes, observations and transcripts for each case and analysed them individually in terms of socially inclusive practice and the approaches each teacher used to meet challenges. As I went through each case, I coded passages, excerpts, and events according to the three categories of practice I had selected. Whenever I
found significant information that did not quite fit a category, I marked it as “other.” I also looked beyond the categories. For example, I had noted the exclusion of one student in Annette’s class. I began to see instances where, despite working alone, he was nonetheless learning. By revisiting the whole text and looking at data that appeared to contradict the categories, new ideas on socially inclusive practice emerged. I also began to think about the data in terms of context (grades and classrooms).

**Cross Case Analysis: Level 1**

In a second layer of analysis, I looked more closely at the practices and brought the cases together. I marked the different categories and significant pieces of information in each case. I then wrote a six-to-eight-page summary of each dimension of practice: content, relational strategies, and structure. I consolidated ideas, noted similarities and differences, and redeveloped sub-themes within each dimension. I labelled each part of the data with the case it came from because I wanted to consider the appropriateness of the pedagogy at each grade level.

This process of analysis worked well. At the same time, reading, re-reading, scanning and reviewing the notebooks and binders was a tedious and time-consuming task. I was constantly concerned that I had missed something or had skipped over an important piece of data; however, after many hours and continuous review, I felt that I had captured the relevant information.

**Cross Case Analysis: Level 2**

Miles and Huberman (1994) warn that "cross-case analysis is tricky":

Simply summarizing superficially across some themes or main variables by itself tells us little. We have to look carefully at the complex configuration of processes within each case, and understand the local dynamics, before we can begin to see patterning variables that transcend particular cases. (pp. 205-206)
After reading more about interpretive work in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1995; Wolcott, 1994) I had the feeling my analysis was not yet complete. The first level of cross-case analysis was an initial step in analyzing the dimensions across the cases, but I still had to interpret what all of this meant for fostering social inclusion. Merriam (1998) confirms this when she says that

Data often seem to beg for continued analysis past the formation of categories. A key here is when the researcher knows that the category scheme does not tell the whole story—that there is more to be understood about the phenomenon. This often leads to trying to link the conceptual elements—the categories—together in some meaningful way. (p. 188)

I then conducted a second level of cross-case analysis where I began to consider what socially inclusive practice meant. I examined the cases to see how the teachers’ socially inclusive practices were situated, which practices were shared, and which were unique and focused the analysis on a comparison to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The degree of dynamic complexity in the teachers’ work of fostering social inclusion stood out as the most striking finding of all.

Validity and Dependability

Merriam’s (1998) description of validity and reliability helped me to think more about qualitative research. Given the focus on meaning making and developing understanding (Merriam, 1998; Wolcott, 1994), establishing criteria of validity and reliability are integral to qualitative studies (Merriam, 1998, p. 22). Notions of reality and truth are exchanged for the understanding that, in research, there is always an interpreter. “One cannot observe or measure a phenomenon/event without changing it”; data in any form (numbers, words) “are all abstract, symbolic representations of reality” (Ratcliffe, 1983, in Merriam 1998). Therefore, there is no
true reality to be captured in research. Instead, I sought to develop a “more real” or greater understanding of a phenomenon in teaching (social inclusion). My intention was to create a rigorous study that was rich in description and that captured a thorough knowledge of socially inclusive practice as it is experienced in one inner-city school (Stake, 1994). I designed the study carefully, attended systematically to the data gathering process, approached and worked with participants mindfully, and reflected consistently on my role.

I used five methods for enhancing validity: triangulation, negative case analysis, member check, long-term observation, clarification of researcher’s biases, and rich, thick, description. I also considered both internal and external validity (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam defines internal validity as the congruence between the findings and what really exists (p. 210). I used multiple methods of data collection or triangulation to relate the findings to one another (Denzin, 1970; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998). Observations, interviews, documents and reflections were triangulated to develop “holistic understandings” (Mathison, 1988) of socially inclusive pedagogy. I shared the interview transcripts with the participants for a member check to ensure they agreed with the information recorded. I also shared observation notes and asked the participants to confirm that I was representing their practices accurately. This was a time-consuming task for the participants. Although not all of them chose to participate in this part of the process, I did receive some useful feedback.

Over the year of my fieldwork, I noted biases in my reflections and how these may have influenced the data during the collection and analysis. As an elementary school teacher, I had to recognize my own views and understandings of socially inclusive practice and stay focused on the particular classroom setting and teacher I was observing. At other times, I used my teacher
self as a way to build common understandings with the participants; we shared stories of significant moments in our careers and of teaching particular curriculum units.

External validity is concerned with generalizability (Merriam, 1998). Although I used more than one case to study one phenomenon, I found that generalization in its traditional sense (applying findings to other settings) was inappropriate. I chose a qualitative case study approach because I wanted to understand, in particular depth, the practices of a group of teachers in an inner-city school. Instead of generalizations, I aimed to develop a description and understanding of a particular context that could be transferred or generalized to similar contexts (Erickson, 1986). Naturalistic generalization (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1994, 1995) describes what I envisioned for my study; I created a full, detailed and rich description of socially inclusive practices with the intent that others might see similarities in other contexts and make their own judgements about connections and applicability. This is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as transferability. Even if external validity is taken into consideration, we cannot assume reliability in qualitative research if reliability means that findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). Instead, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend the idea of “dependability.” To ensure that my findings were dependable, I used triangulation during the analysis.

Ethics

As a researcher, I was thoughtful about my place, purpose, and the needs of my participants at all times. However, issues of sensitivity arose during the interviews and issues of anonymity emerged in the data collection and writing that required care and attention.

I began by following the university ethics protocol and had participants review and complete a consent form; I explained the purpose of the study, the expectations and the
limitations. I received permission to conduct the study from the school board and, because I was not studying children, did not require parental and child permission. However, I did write a letter to parents informing them of my work and inviting them to speak with me if they had concerns (see Appendix F).

To keep the study site and participants anonymous, I changed the school name and the participants’ names. The participants, however, were not concerned about confidentiality or anonymity. During staff meetings or after-school programs, they often introduced me as a researcher and proudly explained that they were part of my study. I made efforts to remind them of my obligation to protect their identities but they were not concerned. Other teachers in the building often asked who was in the study, and I always politely declined to answer. It was clear, however, by my daily visits to certain classrooms and informal hallway chats who the participants were; therefore, to some degree identifying the participants within the school was unavoidable. Recognizing this, I spoke to each participant, but they comfortably shrugged off my concerns. While some teachers at the school know who the participants were, the broader audience reading the study will not.

Protecting the identity of the school was more of a challenge. In my attempt to describe the school context in rich detail, I was continuously drawn to include facts and images unique to Mark Reginald that would have ultimately identified the school. Even in conversations with colleagues, I wanted to locate the school in the city as a reference point for my work.

As a relatively young, female researcher, I was unsure how I would be perceived by the participants and unsure of the relationships that would form. Would they take me seriously? Would they feel intimidated? Would we get along? How would Sharon and I connect on the
research issues given her 30 years of teaching experience? As an outsider to the school and the local community, would I be let in?

I came prepared each day. I was punctual and consistent with my visits. I was not intrusive during observations. I entered classrooms only when the teachers noticed my presence at the door. I asked the teachers questions to gauge how their day was going, which helped determine how much time we would have for informal talk. To me, these were common sense practices; however, I realized that they are essential ethical, political and social components of any qualitative study. Stake (1994) comments that “Qualitative researchers are guests in the private world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (p. 224).

As our relationships grew over time, the participants felt more comfortable with my presence and trusted that I would not interfere with their teaching or criticize or judge their work. I repeatedly encouraged them to teach as they would any other day and to try to forget that I was in the room. Indeed, soon after the start, they said they had forgotten I was even there. On three occasions when I entered a classroom for observations, the teachers said they were unable to talk that day. I expressed appreciation for their candidness and kept to the observations without informal talk. On two occasions, teachers asked to cancel the observation for the day. I realized that the participants had agreed to extra responsibility and work by participating in the study, and honoured their requests.

With the exception of Margaret, my relationships with the participants did not blossom into friendships. The researcher–participant relationship remained professional throughout. I felt that what guided the relationships was a sense of mutual respect and genuine interest in the work. The interviews were straightforward and did not lead into sensitive matters. The participants were aware they could decline response to any question although this did not happen. While all
of the participants understood this study was a doctoral thesis, several felt the process was saturated and declined a third interview. I recall feeling concerned that I would not gain the data I needed; however, I respected their request.

The nature of my study posed minimal risks to my participants although I believe it was through an ethical, professional and sensitive approach that I remained focused on the research and was able to proceed with few dilemmas.

Summary

My research took place in one school between October 2006 and September 2007. I used a qualitative case study approach to answer the main question: How do teachers foster social inclusion in their classrooms? The 5 main participants were classroom teachers; the 4 secondary participants were school leaders.

The methodology consisted of intensive observations, interviews, document reviews, and reflections. I used field notes, journaling, transcriptions and documents as tools for data collection and analysis. I used multi-layered case analysis and cross-case analysis that included coding, categorizing, synthesizing and interpreting the data.

I began the analysis by describing each teacher and her experiences and practices of social inclusion. I then looked more closely at each teacher’s practice and began identifying patterns. Themes began to emerge within the broad areas I had established in the conceptual framework. I then began cross-case analysis, combining the five cases and looking at the three dimensions of pedagogy in each case. At this level of analysis, I synthesized aspects of teachers’ practices that showed the complexity of fostering social inclusion. The cross-case analysis aimed to reveal key pedagogical principles for fostering social inclusion. In the final level of analysis, I
synthesized the practices represented in the principles and interpreted what the findings suggest for social inclusion.

I addressed issues of validity and reliability from a qualitative perspective and used triangulation, prolonged observations, member checks, and consultation to enhance validity.

The ethical considerations for this study were standard: permissions, anonymity, confidentiality, and professionalism. Ethical considerations were consistent in the fieldwork, analysis, and writing.

The methodology of the study is complex. The multi-layering of methods and analysis was a challenging process but it led to dynamic and interesting findings on how teachers in one inner-city school foster social inclusion in their classrooms.
CHAPTER 4
THE SETTING AND THE PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the context and the participants of the study. This information is helpful in analyzing teachers' pedagogical practices in later chapters. I begin with the broadest lens by describing the local community. Understanding the social and demographic context of the community helps to situate school and classroom practices as well as interactions between teachers and students. I then narrow the context to the school, which offers insights into the learning environment. The second part of the chapter describes the participants in the study—first, the secondary participants who help to broaden understanding of the school context and, second, the principal participants. The principal participants are introduced through biographical sketches that focus on their views of social inclusion and on the memories and experiences that ground their approach to teaching.

Setting

This section begins with the community context and then describes the school context. My own understanding of the community is combined with statistical information to describe the setting in which the school is located. To illustrate the school context, I weave together school leaders’ perceptions of the school community from the interview data. This approach provides an account that is factual, but also current and personal to those working in the school.

The Local Community

Mark Reginald Public School is located in one of the oldest and largest government subsidized communities in Canada. Situated in the heart of Toronto, the area is bounded by a major highway to the east, Lake Ontario less than two kilometres to the south, and trendy shops
on narrow streets for blocks around. A Subway sandwich shop and a new Shoppers Drug Mart frame the nearest major intersection and furniture stores and art galleries are opening in the neighbourhood. A large condominium development meant to ‘revitalize’ the area is currently underway.

Most of the housing in the community is subsidized. Many of the students attending Mark Reginald live in the low-rise buildings, high-rise buildings and row housing in the area. Next door to the school are row houses with newspapers or tin foil over the windows. The walls of the houses are covered with graffiti—symbols and messages that I was told are gang-related. Bags of worn clothing and well used toys such as bicycles and skateboards are scattered on neglected lawns; garbage lines the sidewalks. The school itself is located on a relatively busy street. Crosswalks border both sides of the school and on the west side there is a small variety store. Steel bars cover the front door and windows. Inside the store, candy bars are kept behind the counter. Students often talked about late night shootings in the area and the sound of gun shots.

While there are many challenges in this neighbourhood, there are also efforts to make it more safe. Parents have rallied together to try to end the violence. For example, a group of Bengali and Tamil women created a Peace Garden in the park close to the school; parents gather in this park with their children and make their presence felt in the community. More recently, community members have been using the school for language classes, parenting classes, high school accreditation, and social occasions like barbeques and film festivals. The school is a significant part of the community.

The school is in a community with a diverse population. Over 50% of the population are new immigrants from the Middle East, South East Asia, and Africa. Over 50% of this group are
under the age of 18, making the ratio much higher than the city-wide average of approximately 30%. Young families and single-parent households dominate the community. Seventy-one percent of the student population has a primary language other than English. A school board profile written in 2006 describes Mark Reginald in the following way:

The school serves a highly diverse population of just under 500 students coming from a mix of ethno-racial backgrounds, including Asian, Black, South Asian and White students. The newest group of students immigrated in recent years from African countries, mainly Somalia, and from South Asia, mainly from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. A common characteristic of our student population is that all deal with issues related to poverty.²

Most people living in the community are on social assistance. Low income, high unemployment, minimal education, and single-parent families are some of the factors contributing to the low socio-economic status of the area (Rowen & Gosine, 2006, p. 278).

Issues stemming from poverty such as stress and malnutrition trouble students and influence their social and academic development. Differences in what students come to school knowing and what the Ontario curriculum expects them to know also reinforce their social and academic challenges. Teachers interviewed at Mark Reginald believe the complexities of students’ lives outside of school make learning an often challenging experience and different from the experiences of students living in more privileged circumstances.

**Mark Reginald School**

The building is old, yet well maintained. Student work lines the hallways on each floor and large bulletin boards outside the main office post information for parents and the community. The school has three storeys plus a basement. Every room of the building is used. Classrooms, computer labs, a library, resource rooms, gymnasiums and multipurpose rooms

² Reference has not been included to ensure anonymity of school.
form the school. The staff at Mark Reginald gave up their staff room to create another literacy resource room.

At Mark Reginald there is a large foyer in the center of the building. Several school initiatives take place or are displayed in this area. Eleanor hosts short meetings with student leaders along the very wide staircase at one end of the foyer. Classes of students walk by on their way to various classes, and witness the meetings with student leaders. “The foyer area is a very centralized space where students are able to see and hear all that is happening throughout the school. Modelling leadership and stewardship is something we highlight in the foyer.” School-wide fundraising events such as popcorn sales and food drives take place in the foyer. Sheryl, another school leader and secondary participant in the study, tearfully explained how despite the poverty faced by the students and families, "they all pull together and do a wonderful job of giving back."

At the end of the foyer is Room 7. This is a large room used to hold presentations, host guest speakers, and welcome community, national and international organizations that involve students both in the life of the school and in the broader social context. For example, 1 week during my time at Mark Reginald, an organization called "Right to Play" came to the school. Every class in the school visited the organization in Room 7 to participate in different activities from around the world. Children from kindergarten to Grade 8 joined in with enthusiasm and interest. The purpose was to demonstrate to the students that all children around the world have the right to play and to open discussion with students on ways of ensuring that right. This school-wide program was then taken back to the classroom where teachers extended students’ thinking about a child’s right to play.
Eleanor, a school leader, described some school-wide philosophies and initiatives beginning with the school's “Open Door” policy. In an interview, she explained that although school board policy is to keep school doors locked for safety, at Mark Reginald the policy is to leave the doors that lead to the community unlocked and to welcome parents and community members into the school at all times. Having an open door policy provides a welcoming atmosphere that encourages inclusion for parents. Students who see their parents involved in the school may feel a stronger sense of inclusion themselves. In line with the policy, several community events are held at the school over the year—a beginning-of-the-year barbeque, a week-long free film festival, and parent information sessions. The purpose is to bring the families and community into the school and to develop shared responsibility for the learning that takes place in the school. Eleanor explained that most of the events are free and that this is key to bringing parents into the school. Although most of the families want to access information and services, they cannot afford it. The last few years have seen a significant increase in community participation in the school. This, Eleanor believes, has led to stronger feelings of inclusion for students.

In 2004, a group of educators from Mark Reginald School formed an organizational committee to create a mission statement. In 2006, the mission statement was updated and was included in a proposal that granted the school additional funding for inner-city needs:

We believe that students, staff, parents and community are all members of a learning community. As members of this community, we strive to affirm the social justice values represented by Mark Reginald. We value clear and effective communication; ongoing partnerships between school, parents and community; academic achievement resulting from appropriately challenging and engaging experiential learning experiences; fostering leadership in all members of our community; equity and diversity through the development of learning opportunities that promote social justice; and a collaborative environment in which staff, students and community help, support and respect each other.
Based on these values, the school outlined five guiding principles for its school plan. These principles show how Mark Reginald’s vision is tied to the community:

1. Work to build a cohesive team of educators in our school;
2. Ensure that social justice is a central part of how we operate, what we teach, how we treat our students and how we relate to our community;
3. Maintain high expectations for all students;
4. Meet the needs of all students; and
5. Connect to the Mark Reginald community and beyond.

The Secondary Participants: School Leaders

I introduce the secondary participants first as they contribute to the contextual information about the school. I do not describe them in detail because I did not study them closely; instead, their contributions support the information gathered on the setting of the study. There were 4 secondary participants: the principal, the vice-principal, and two school leaders. At the time of the study, Paul was in his 2nd year as school principal; Mark Reginald was his first school. Sally, the vice-principal, was in her 1st year as an administrator. Eleanor, a school leader, had been at the school for 8 years, first as a classroom teacher, then as a special education resource teacher. At the time of the study, she was in her 1st year as a school leader. She was responsible for developing partnerships with the broader community, developing programs between the school and parents, and overseeing the needs of the junior division (Grades 4 to 6) and the intermediate division (Grades 7 and 8). Sheryl, the fourth secondary participant, had been a teacher for over 17 years. She was a regular classroom teacher, special education facilitator, and junior division co-ordinator. At the time of the study, she was a literacy lead teacher.
Paul, the principal, described the importance of involving parents in the school:

They’re a very integral part of the school. Education and learning doesn’t go forward without parents. It’s what I call the golden triangle where you have the school administration, parents and teachers working together to further the education, teaching and learning of the students. If parents are missing from that equation then it does not occur.

Sheryl, a school leader, confirmed Paul’s view of community involvement. During our interview, Sheryl was overcome with emotion as she described how the community had pulled together to help 11 students travel to South Africa. As she explained,

It was always so amazing how our school came together for those 11 kids. If you think about the poverty issues that they have dealt with, that they deal with on a daily basis, and they came together to fundraise and to support emotionally, every way, those kids.

The principal and school leaders felt there was a deep sense of community and spirit among the staff and local residents.

Paul’s view on the school community revolved around partnerships with parents. He pointed out that many of the teachers worked extended hours to ensure that programs and events were available to parents at the school. He described the staff as intensely committed and hard working: "If I can just say that there is a clearly dedicated staff who not only care about the students but the well-being of the parents and also their interactions with the community agencies are immense."

The secondary participants emphasized the importance of understanding the school and community context and the need for teachers to consider this context in their practice. Eleanor described how poverty affects the social environment:
You know, to hear gun shots in the middle of the night, to hear, to see people being shot in the afternoon, to see drug dealers you know, and the houses are falling apart here in this community . . . All students are living in poverty, all of them in this school are living in social assistance, all of them are.

Economic status and social circumstances influence students’ schooling. The teachers in the study felt that the students' challenges came from a lack of a varied life experiences, from their social and cultural backgrounds, and from knowledge bases different from the school curriculum. As Eleanor explained

When I say lack of experience and background knowledge, I mean the lack of experience and background knowledge that is directly related to what the Ontario curriculum expects the students to know. So most students have an immense knowledge about their culture or an immense amount of experience that is culturally relevant to them. They’re not coming to school starting with the tools that are deemed important by the curriculum or the test that we are, you know, mandated to apply to them.

The stress of living in difficult socio/economic conditions also influences students' schooling experience. As Eleanor commented

When children are having children, when parents are under the immense stresses that poverty brings, when they’re working five jobs and up late nights and when they’re having their own stresses, they don’t have always the time nor the tools to parent. So when they’re not able to give that early stimulation, we’re finding students coming in with very poor motor skills, both gross and fine motor skills, and those are all due to lack of experiences. If you don’t have crayons at home and you don’t colour at home, how could you possibly hold a crayon or a pencil in JK? It’s quite impossible. We also find that because of the stress the parents are under, the students, I mean children that are living in a house filled with a lot of
stress, have a lot of stress. So you start to see some students with emotional problems.

Sally, the vice-principal, emphasized that despite the context being challenging (language barriers, poverty), the expectations for students are high.

The secondary participants provided additional information about the school community as a whole, about school philosophies, and about the school's challenges and initiatives related to social inclusion. Their views and perspectives contribute to an understanding of the inner-city school community and culture of Mark Reginald.

**The Principal Participants: Teachers**

The practices of the 5 teachers are analysed in the study as individual case studies of socially inclusive practice. Each teacher has a unique profile and view of social inclusion that influences their practices and their reasons for fostering social inclusion. From the data available, based mainly on the interviews, teachers’ experiences of social inclusion and their views on fostering social inclusion are illustrated. Table 2 offers a synopsis each teachers’ position in the school, their purpose for fostering social inclusion and the dominant practices they use. The biographical sketches that follow the table provide more detail and are based on the personal memories and views of social inclusion described by each teacher in the interviews. In chapters 5 through 7 I describe key features of each teacher’s practice and then I look at the practices together, as one social phenomenon.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Years teaching</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Teaching assignment</th>
<th>Major purposes of fostering social inclusion</th>
<th>Key practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annette</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1 and 2</td>
<td>works part-time (2 or 3 days/week)</td>
<td>Student empowerment</td>
<td>Provide students with choice</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>team teaches with Joan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Community building</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Build student autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1 and 2</td>
<td>works part-time (2 or 3 days/week)</td>
<td>Student empowerment</td>
<td>Community building</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Academic achievement</td>
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<td>Provide ownership to students</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>team teaches with Annette</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3 and 4</td>
<td>team teaches with another teacher</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Developing productive citizens</td>
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<td>Social skill building</td>
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<td>character education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5 and 6</td>
<td>Resource teacher for Grade 5 and 6 division</td>
<td>Developing critical citizens</td>
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<td>Addressing issues of inequity</td>
<td>Personalizing student work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 and 6</td>
<td>Sole responsibility</td>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>Community building</td>
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<td>Developing interpersonal relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Camp based activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annette

Born and raised in Quebec, Annette described her childhood with images of a safe and stable environment in a community where there was little known diversity. A White middle-class woman, Annette became an elementary school teacher later in life. She taught in numerous schools and different grades over her 15-year teaching career. At the time of the study, Annette was teaching part-time and shared a combined first and second grade classroom with Joan, a colleague, good friend, and fellow participant in the study. Annette worked 2–3 days per week. Together with Joan, she established consistent routines and daily practices. An enthusiastic, energetic and caring individual, Annette explained how her experiences and memories of exclusion inspired her to think and teach inclusively.

Personal Memories of Social Inclusion

Annette’s first memory of inclusion was at a young age. She was riding her bicycle with friends and among the group was a boy who was "not part of the gang that ran around and did stuff together." Annette described him as developmentally delayed. At one point, he fell into a ditch with his bike, but the others kept going. Annette felt ignoring the boy was wrong and stopped to help him up. He gathered himself and his bicycle and continued to ride. Annette recalled standing by the roadside watching him ride away and asking herself, “Why can’t people be a part of things?”

Annette described herself as a very shy child who never spoke in school. She remembered a humiliating incident in Grade 6 when the teacher singled her out in class. Her teacher had given an assignment that included an oral presentation. Annette recalled standing in front of the class and giggling because she was nervous. When she attempted to speak, her voice was too quiet to be heard. The teacher sent one of Annette’s friends to the hallway so Annette
would have to shout loud enough for her to hear her. Annette tried to speak more loudly but the teacher pressed her until she was screaming. For Annette, “that was appalling. I felt like I had no choice and I did it. It’s funny that I became a teacher. Most people have positive experiences.”

As an adult, Annette spent time working with adults who were learning to read English. She explained that working with adults who were illiterate and listening to their stories helped her to understand the circumstances and hardships many people face. Annette described the relationships she had with them as respectful and “real trust on both ends.” She wanted them to "feel okay sharing their stories."

**Views about Social Inclusion**

Annette’s aim for fostering social inclusion centres on achieving student empowerment. When asked to describe her views on social inclusion Annette pointed to issues of student voice and agency. She talked about the importance of developing strong problem-solving skills so students are able to solve their own problems when faced with adversity. She described her views in the following ways:

I truly believe [teaching] is a communal experience. I realize that, as the teacher and the adult, I have a responsibility but I also take the lead from the children.

Socially inclusive pedagogy means every child being valued. It means they can be heard if they want to be heard and that everybody’s lives are valued.

I guess [social inclusion] is when kids see that they can be problem solvers and they can come up with the answers and they can work in a situation where they feel like ‘well of course I can do this and I will be heard."

Annette also felt that student choice was an important aspect of social inclusion. She explained that not all students need to be part of a whole group all of the time. She explained that
from her personal experiences she could appreciate if students chose to work independently, did not want to share ideas, or were reluctant to speak out in class.

**Joan**

Joan’s family immigrated to Canada from England. Her father came as a young boy with very little money: “My father was sort of a rags to riches story.” She grew up in one of the wealthiest communities in Toronto in a large home with her parents, grandmother and several siblings. Joan became an elementary school teacher later in life. Prior to coming to Mark Reginald, she worked in a private school. Joan was Annette’s teaching partner during the year of the study. She taught 2–3 days per week in the same combined first and second grade classroom.

**Personal Memories of Social Inclusion**

During childhood, Joan’s family had domestic help living in the home. She developed a special relationship with one of the Jamaican housekeepers, Verma. “She was like a substitute mother in the sense she gave me affection and attention.” Joan describes feeling confused when her family would sit for dinner and her nanny, Verma, would serve them. Joan wanted to get up and help Verma but her parents did not allow it, explaining that in life there are expectations about “who is who and what is what.” As a young child, Joan could not understand how someone she loved could be treated differently by her parents. “I gleaned awareness through this woman Verma, and the stories of my grandmother’s experiences, and even the stories that my father had of his childhood growing up in Toronto that were pretty rough and tumble, that there was a world out there with people who didn’t have what I had.”

Joan recalls stories by her father of anti-Semitic discrimination. He grew up in Toronto during the Second World War and although not directly involved, “the Holocaust was a shadow
over all of us and we knew that it happened.” She describes her father as someone "who perceives an anti-Semite around every corner." For example, as a boy, Joan’s father went to a hospital for emergency eye surgery. The doctors did not give him anaesthetic because the family could not afford it. Joan recalls her father’s memory of his mother begging the doctors to give him some pain medication. But the doctors unsympathetically replied: “What do you expect? You do not have any money.” Later in life, he became the chairperson of one of the city’s largest hospitals and helped to develop its policies and practices.

As a young adult, Joan travelled to Nicaragua to work with children abandoned in the war. “It was a real eye opener for me not just to see poverty up close, but also to see the human spirit at the same time.” Joan observed a literacy campaign that sent adolescents from the community into the country to teach people how to read and write. The campaign and the youth workers inspired her. It was at this time that she realized

that just because they were a poorer country, they weren’t necessarily the ones at a disadvantage. They had a lot going on that we don’t have going on here. It changed that sense of just being charitable to realize that it is a two-way street and there really is learning to be had on both sides.

After graduating from university, Joan worked for over 10 years for an agency that provided immigrant and refugee services for women. Years later her friend Annette (the previous participant) called to ask if she would consider becoming a teacher.

**Views About Social Inclusion**

Joan’s purposes for fostering social inclusion are situated in student engagement and academic achievement. Joan believes that what students at Mark Reginald lack is a feeling of entitlement and that, without this, they do not have a sense of belonging “not only at school but
also within greater society." Joan believes feelings of entitlement enhance students’ belief in achievement and that if students feel successful, they are more likely to feel included. “If students believe they own their learning then they are more inclined to participate and contribute to the learning. However if students do not feel ownership over their learning, then they are more inclined to retreat, feel insecure and excluded.”

Joan felt there was a strong sense of community at Mark Reginald: “Certainly some of the families here are some of the warmest and loving that you’ll find anywhere. There are some well-nurtured children right here in this classroom.” She believes that students can learn regardless of class, race, and circumstance and that all children can experience feelings of exclusion. For Joan, the key to inclusion is to address the concept of entitlement so that students feel more connected and in control of their learning.

Sharon

Sharon is a middle-aged, middle-class, White, French and Irish woman. She grew up on the west coast of Canada. Her father, an engineer, and her mother, a social worker, “were part of that generation that moved out of the working class and into the middle class. […] I think there were many of their peers who made the move off of rural life that was very much a part of White Canadian experience in the early part of the 1900s through the Depression.”

Sharon had 30 years of teaching experience and was the most experienced staff member at Mark Reginald. After many years of teaching segregated special education classes, Sharon re-entered a regular classroom and, at the time of the study, was teaching a combined third and fourth grade class. With 17 students in the class, Sharon was teaching students with a range of abilities and needs.


**Personal Memories of Social Inclusion**

Sharon recalled listening to the radio during the doctor’s strike in Saskatchewan when Premier Tommy Douglas was trying to initiate public health care. She remembered her mother angrily talking back to the radio, questioning what was happening. Sharon remembered her parents as “questioners”; they questioned what was going on around them and had radical left-wing views. The message she received in her youth was “you have to be engaged in this society. You have a responsibility to it and it has a responsibility to you.” Her parents encouraged everyone to express their views. They explained that stating different opinions should be promoted and encouraged rather than feared. Sharon claimed her parents were responsible for her first lessons in respecting diverse and alternative views, and in building relationships to enhance community.

Sharon entered teacher’s college in the early 1970s. On graduation, she began teaching in Toronto, in a White middle-class Christian community. She described the community as “Dick and Jane land” where parents appear happily married and the father went to work while the mother stayed home. At this time, Sharon lived on her own in the city. She described herself as living a split existence. Her personal life did not match the conservative, mono-cultural views of her professional life. She told the story of when the first Black student entered her classroom:

This child arrives in my classroom who has dark skin. She was the first one in my class. Now, there are Black kids in the school but everyone sort of pretends that they are not there. “Oh those Jamaicans” and that kind of thing. She’s part of the Indians fleeing from Uganda so they have literally run for their lives. I wasn’t paying attention to her colour, I was more concerned that this kid was really lost. Finally, I realized that this has nothing to do with this girl but that there were a lot of other things going on. I remember one day dealing with the class who were excluding this girl and I wasn’t getting anywhere with it and I didn’t know what
the heck I had to do. My argument at the time was 'well that’s the colour of her skin. She can’t help it.' I myself was very naive. I knew the way she was treated was wrong but I had no analysis.

Then Sharon met a woman who worked at the Cross Cultural Communications Centre and she began to learn alternative ways of thinking about race, class and diversity. The woman from the Centre spent 1 day a week for an entire term in Sharon’s room, helping her develop social equity and inclusion in her classroom. Sharon learned about institutional racism and how to turn to the students to direct the curriculum. “I began to pull from them rather than stand in front of the classroom.” From these initial experiences Sharon discovered alternative ways of interacting with her students and developed relationships with them that gave them opportunities to improve academically and feel included.

Views About Social Inclusion

Sharon’s practices for fostering social inclusion have two purposes: the first is academic achievement; and, the second for developing productive, participatory and contributing citizens. Focusing on academic skills and literacy development was how Sharon approached social inclusion: she believed that if children can learn, then they are included in the classroom. She also believed that “you cannot talk about social inclusion without talking about behaviour.” Sharon believes that relationships drive behaviours in the classroom and influence teaching, learning and inclusion.

Sharon expressed confusion about what constitutes social inclusion and what the purpose of social inclusion is. Her frustration was expressed numerous times throughout our interviews. She believes that personal politics affect professional politics which, in turn, affects philosophies of teaching. Her views of social inclusion extended beyond the classroom and took the wider
social context into account: “This [social inclusion] relates to the larger issue about what is this
country that we live in and what is Canada? We have not defined what it means to be Canadian.”
Her political views drive her pedagogy and building a strong sense of national identity was part
of Sharon’s view of what it means to foster social inclusion.

On the one hand I want children to grow up acknowledging, respecting and not running
from their cultures. On the other hand, I think there are many things we have in this country that
are worth fighting for and preserving so I want children to appreciate what we have as a nation.

From her experiences as a special education teacher, Sharon believed that not all children
learn at the same rate nor do they all have a strong desire to learn. Inclusion added complexity to
her teaching because Sharon also believed that children who have a hard time in school or are in
special education are excluded most of the time and actually prefer to be in more private spaces.
After many years of experience in special education, Sharon returned to a regular classroom in
the year of the study. She continues to question her practice by asking, “How do I foster a
socially inclusive environment where the seven identified special education students and the 10
 unidentified but equally needy students can learn in my regular sized classroom? How do I
balance academic acquisition with social inclusion?”

Sharon questioned what social inclusion meant to her and felt strongly about learning
more. Inclusion for her consisted of

ongoing attempts to help students with their serious learning disabilities and my
constant attempt to be alone with them and to spend time with them. I’m always
trying to present things in a way that children with limited literacy are able to
participate in.
Margaret

A woman from a White working class family, Margaret brings to her practice a keen sense of social justice. With a strong background in the arts, Margaret combines her interests in social justice and art to inspire children to think about ways of challenging inequities in society. At the time of the study, she was teaching in the junior division. She did not have her own class; instead, Margaret worked with teachers and students in the fifth and sixth grade division as a resource teacher.

Born and raised in a rural, predominantly White community a few hours outside of Toronto, Margaret grew up in a working class home. Her ethnic background is Irish with some Spanish. Although her family has been in Canada for multiple generations, her father’s side maintains a strong Irish identity. Margaret stated that her Irish heritage was a big part of her identity growing up.

Personal Memories of Social Inclusion

Margaret did not grow up in poverty but she was aware that she had a lower socio-economic status than many of her friends. While her family came from working class roots, several of her friends’ families worked in academia and other middle class professions. Her best friend’s mother was the Art Department head at her high school. She developed an awareness of her social class during adolescence when her peers had opportunities to travel. Her family could not afford to give her these experiences. She remembered being in high school and working part-time in a clothing store. A customer entered the store and asked for directions to a particular part of town. Her friend replied, “Oh that's where Margaret's from. That's the dangerous part of the city.” This story resonated with Margaret and marked social class differences as part of her experiences.
Margaret did not consider teaching as her main identity:

I think teaching is a big part of my life, definitely. It hasn’t been my only career and it will continue probably not to be, but I think it’s a very important part of who I am. But I think first and foremost I’m more of an artist and I think that comes through with my teaching and what I’m involved with in the school.

Margaret completed an undergraduate degree in fine arts. She then left her hometown and did a Bachelor of Education and Master’s degree. On graduating, Margaret moved to London, England, to teach in the inner city. Since she lived in the area where she taught, she experienced first-hand some of the issues that her students experienced. These were eye-opening experiences that revolved around issues of class and race.

Margaret described the apartment she lived in as run down and prone to continuous flooding due to the low standard of housing. She called someone from the housing council to fix the problem. After several days, the superintendent arrived and Margaret explained that there was water falling through the ceiling from the sink in the unit above. His response was, “Oh, are there coloured upstairs?” He did not return to repair the problem.

Another experience Margaret described as influential occurred when she attended a poetry reading and found she was only one of two White people in the audience. The reader was a Black man who had written about his mother being shot. Margaret retold his story of the police breaking down the front door and, when his mother came to the top of the stairs, they shot her. Although she was in her nightgown, the police claimed they thought she was armed. This incident sparked the Brixton riots of the early 1980s. She explained that she felt unwelcome at the poetry reading. This taught her that “you’re not always invited to things, you’re not always welcome as a White person. That feeling of entitlement . . . you don’t realize that you’re not
always welcome everywhere and you shouldn’t be everywhere. I was definitely an outsider and I think that changed the way I saw things.” Margaret compared her experiences teaching in London and Toronto:

I knew I wanted to teach in the inner city but I think realizing what that meant is different. London opened my eyes a lot. I had never lived anywhere as diverse as London which is equally as diverse or more so than Toronto because it has been for such a long time and I think that for me it was just a complete learning experience.

**Views About Social Inclusion**

Margaret’s aim for social inclusion is to create critical citizens and to raise awareness of social inequities in society. She noted in her interview that she wanted to change social structures so all students, particularly those marginalized, had equitable opportunities in life. Her views of social inclusion included critical pedagogies. She described a lesson where she used cultural relevance to teach a mathematics concept. She said to her students: “Perhaps we can look at statistics of Black males being pulled over in cars.” As she went on to explain: "That can bring in questioning of the social phenomenon and you’re inviting students to bring in their own experiences and you're inviting them to question the world around them . . . but you’re still doing statistics." Margaret recognizes power structures in society and works toward breaking these structures down by teaching her students about them.

“My own life beliefs are very much that differences need to be recognized simply because of the power structure in society." Margaret talked about “institutional ‘isms’” (racism, sexism, classism) and the inequities that exist in society:

For me, I don’t care what these students are labelled or what their academic performance is when I get them in or what the stories are from the year before.
For me, it’s Who is this person? What is happening? Who is their family? What is going on in their lives?

She believes in looking beyond the labels that students are given (yet recognizing that they’re there) and looking more at students as individuals who have something valuable to contribute to the learning community. Margaret emphasized building relationships and fostering community in her classroom and in the school. She also stated that her professional view is to “look outside the box.”

Ingrid

Ingrid grew up in a loving nuclear family. Her father was from Sweden and her mother from Jamaica. Ingrid recalled that “my brother and I were the only bi-racial kids in the school.” She remembered that when her father and mother walked her to school, kids would say: “That’s not your dad. He’s white and you’re not white.” Ingrid would feel embarrassed and hide behind her father. Other children would look at her mother and then look at her with confusion.

Ingrid was the youngest staff member and was in her first year of teaching. In her mid-twenties and new to the profession, I appreciated Ingrid’s willingness to participate in the study despite the numerous demands on new teachers. She was teaching a combined fifth and sixth grade class. She described herself as a happy and social person yet recalled her formative years as socially challenging because of her bi-racial identity.

Personal Memories of Social Inclusion

When Ingrid was in kindergarten, a classmate approached her and asked, “How do you make brown?” Ingrid replied, “Oh that's easy, you mix black and white together because my mom is Black and my dad is White and I’m Brown.” When her classmates laughed and she
learned that black and white mixed together makes grey, she was very confused. She remembered being teased all the time for being bi-racial and also remembered being called “Oreo.” She described this time in her life as exclusionary because the White kids stayed together and the Black kids stayed together and this became evident in middle school and high school as well. She felt she belonged in neither group.

Ingrid had several memories of her schooling experiences. She recalled a favourite teacher who made her feel included and she also had memories of a teacher who accused her of cheating and embarrassed her in front of her peers. For the most part, she felt alienated and was disinterested in learning. Ingrid felt most of her teachers did not believe in her. “To prove [my former teachers] wrong, I decided to become a teacher.” Ingrid graduated from college with a diploma in Early Childhood Education. After working for a year at a day care, Ingrid went to university, completed a sociology degree, and then a Bachelor of Education degree.

Ingrid’s first teaching job was at Mark Reginald. The administration felt that her ethnic background would be beneficial to the community and that her Jamaican heritage might help students connect with her. Ingrid acknowledged that while some of the students identified with her ethnic background, most did not relate to her social class background, and this was something she had to work through. Ingrid did not want to pretend she understood her students’ experiences when they were not similar to her own. Ingrid’s first months as a teacher were tough:

In September I walked in and I had all the kids on the carpet and I was sooooo nervous and for about 2 minutes they were very, very quiet just staring at me and trying to figure out what was going on. ‘Who is this kid who’s teaching us?’ I could see them looking at me.
Ingrid described the beginning of the school year as difficult. The children called each other names, swore, did not follow instructions, and did not complete any work. Ingrid repeated instructions, used camp-based activities to build trust and community, and used sharing circles to increase communication and understanding. By April of that year, her students were more respectful and focused on learning.

Views About Social Inclusion

Ingrid believed fostering social inclusion was important for creating student participation and engagement. Her views of social inclusion were based on establishing an affirming community and ensuring students were active participants in the classroom. Ingrid’s priority was building strong relationships in her classroom.

She was open with the students about her background and was keen on understanding their lives in return:

We have many sharing circles and I’m very open with them when I say I’ve never experienced many things they’ve seen or heard like gun shots or someone being attacked. They know I went to a middle class school, so I want them to know that I don’t want to pretend that I know where they’re coming from but I want them to know that I understand and I want to learn and I want to help.

Sharing circles and class discussions took place on the carpet in her classroom. The discussions gave her opportunities to teach social skills and set expectations. They also included sharing thoughts, information and feelings. I recorded an example from one of the discussions in my early observations. For several days students were mimicking a Pakistani-English accent and making fun of it. Ingrid felt she had to address the issue and explained to the students, “Well, you’re not Pakistani so why are you trying to make that accent?” They were unable to answer.
Ingrid asked where they had learned the accent and the students responded they had heard it on television and the Internet. At that point, Ingrid gently personalized the issue by explaining: “A lot of your parents are immigrants and we all have accents. How would you like it if others made fun of their accent?” Ingrid was able to tell by looking at the children’s expressions that they understood. She then used her own life as an example. “My parents weren’t born in Canada and my dad has an accent and I’d be very upset if someone was making fun of him by mimicking his Swedish accent.” The discussion was left at that and the next time students made fun of an accent, others in the class stopped and asked, “Why are you making that accent?” It was no longer perceived as a fun thing to do. The conversations about social issues and daily occurrences in the classroom influenced student behaviour.

A large part of Ingrid’s views of social inclusion came from her camp experiences. As a group coordinator, she had learned to manage large groups of children and communicate with parents. Ingrid claimed that camp “helped me a lot with teaching. If I hadn’t had the experience of camp I wouldn’t be the teacher I am today.” The games and activities she learned at camp involved building trust and respect. She used the activities to make sure everyone’s voice was heard. She believes everyone is important and does not want anyone in the class to feel that they are less than anyone else.

As a first year teacher, Ingrid’s experiences in the classroom were limited, but her views of social inclusion were clear. They were based mainly on relationship building. She spent a great deal of time on the carpet with the whole class engaging in discussions about classroom and community issues. Ingrid feels communication is the most important element of inclusion.

Annette, Joan, Sharon, Margaret and Ingrid are the five main participants in this study. They are elementary school teachers who range in years of teaching experience and have
different backgrounds and views of social inclusion and varied purposes. Yet they share the same goals. They are all concerned with inclusive practice and want to develop inclusive classroom environments. This study explores their practices and examines the ways they foster social inclusion.

Fostering social inclusion is achieved through a complex set of processes that come together differently for each teacher. The teachers worked with different grade levels, the contexts and social circumstances in each classroom were different, and teachers had different systems for relating to students, planning activities, and setting up rules and routines. Also teachers had different pedagogical perspectives. Indeed, to varying degrees, the teachers in the study demonstrate practices associated with one or more of the orientations to social inclusion reviewed in Chapter 2.

Summary

This chapter presented the school context and the study participants. Mark Reginald is an inner-city school in one of the largest urban centres in Canada. The students come from all parts of the world and predominantly from Southeast Asia and Africa. Because of the high number of recent immigrants in the community, there is a growing non-English speaking population. Poverty challenges students in every aspect of their lives including their academic development. Malnutrition, lack of sleep, social and emotional stresses, racial and ethnic differences, and a new language contribute to the challenges students face at school.

The school offers several community programs. It has an open door policy that encourages parent and community involvement in school events as well as in activities and courses independent of the school. One of Mark Reginald’s values is the development of
ongoing partnerships among the school, parents and community. Staff members are committed to projects outside the school and often become involved in local community work. They are highly dedicated educators who spend many hours beyond the regular school day to give their students the best learning opportunities.

Four secondary participants with leadership roles in the school were introduced in this chapter. Each of these participants noted that poverty is the biggest challenge confronting the school community. The interviews with these participants also provided school-wide perspectives on socially inclusive pedagogy.

Five teachers were chosen as principal participants for the study. These participants were recognized as teachers who foster social inclusion in their classrooms. Although they have certain formative experiences in common, their views on social inclusion differ considerably. Annette focuses on student voice and empowerment. She believes in choice and in encouraging students to be problem solvers. Joan focuses on issues of community. She feels having a sense of entitlement is key to fostering social inclusion. Sharon focuses on students understanding issues of nationhood and identity. Margaret focuses on social justice, and issues of power and equity are at the forefront of her views of social inclusion. Ingrid, the newest and youngest staff member, focuses on fostering social inclusion through community and relationship building. Their formative experiences and their views of social inclusion provide insight into their practices in the classroom.
CHAPTER 5
CONTENT-BASED PEDAGOGY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

This part of the thesis, Chapters 5, 6 and 7, presents the findings of the study. Each chapter investigates a different dimension of pedagogy and teases out the nuances and practices of social inclusion. This chapter explores how the teachers in the study used content to support social inclusion. Chapter 6 looks at the relational strategies teachers used to create an inclusive classroom environment. Chapter 7 addresses the structural conditions both within and beyond the classroom that influence students’ experiences of inclusion. The first two research sub-questions are explored in each of the aforementioned chapters. While I also make some reference to responses to the school’s influence of teacher’s work, I reserve the discussion of the last sub-question which looks more closely at school level effects for Chapter 7 because of its direct connection to structures.

The three chapters are designed in the same way. The first section describes the challenges the teachers’ faced in fostering social inclusion. The second section uses examples from teachers’ classroom practices to illustrate how the challenges were met by each teacher and then the majority of the section describes the phenomenon of socially inclusive practices as demonstrated across the cases. The final section offers a brief summary and synthesis of the teacher's practices.

Challenges

This chapter explores the pedagogical dimension of content and how teachers approach this aspect of their teaching to foster social inclusion. The teachers in the study encountered three
key challenges in developing and using socially inclusive content—content selection, content delivery, and availability of resources.

**Content Selection**

In classrooms where students come from a wide range of backgrounds, navigating a prescribed curriculum can be challenging. As Hertzman (2002) argues, the middle-class Eurocentric focus of the curriculum can result in many inner-city students feeling excluded and unable to participate. The teachers in the study felt that the prescribed curriculum did not always provide opportunities for students to make connections to the content and that the language, history and perspectives of the content were not relevant to them. This mismatch between students’ life experiences and the curriculum made fostering inclusion difficult. Moreover, teaching methods that exclude students’ cultural knowledge and experiences can result in student resistance (Foster, 1997; Hale, 1994; Hollins, 1996; Tatum, 2005). The teachers in the study faced the challenge of identifying and using content that differed from the prescribed curriculum.

A second content-based challenge involved discussing sensitive social issues in the classroom. When the teachers explored issues of social exclusion (e.g., bullying, racism, conflicts in the classrooms) or global matters like war that have underlying issues related to exclusion, they had to consider how best to present these issues in terms of content. Matters of social exclusion are often sensitive. Discussions on race, class, and other social identities are personal and leave students feeling vulnerable. The teachers in the study questioned how to address social issues and whether or not it was necessary to focus on them explicitly.
Content Delivery

Choosing suitable pedagogical content involves knowing how to respond to students in ways that will connect their interests and lives to the curriculum. Ainscow et al. (2006) situate this question in a generational and intercultural context:

The children and young people of today live in a world of remarkable interest and excitement. Many have opportunities to travel, while even those who do not are accustomed to a rich diet of stimulation through television, films, and computers. In this sense, they present a challenge not faced by earlier generations of teachers. Faced with this challenge, including the presence of students whose cultural experience or even language may be different from their own and the presence of many others who may experience barriers to their learning within conventional arrangements, teachers have to think about how they should respond. (p. 240)

Selecting content that is beneficial for students not only in terms of inclusion but also in terms of academic development is also part of figuring out how to respond. For example, in classes where students lack basic literacy skills, teachers must decide if developing skills is more important than exploring social issues. Sharon, for example, saw a mismatch between the curriculum expectations and her students' skills. She felt her students needed to know certain content in order to be included in society:

I was talking to the Grade 4s about general knowledge and what general knowledge is and it’s having a body of knowledge of a little bit of this and a little bit of that and they really, really lack that. You can’t teach without something to scaffold. I’ve got a lot of curriculum I need to get through. There are certain kinds of factual information that I want them to have. For some bizarre reason I think it’s important that students have a picture of Canada in their head so that when they’re studying Canadian history in Grade 8 and they are reading about the voyageurs on the St. Lawrence River they can actually see a picture in their head of that river and where it is in Canada. It’s sort of old fashioned.
Sharon felt unable to engage her students in content that fosters social inclusion through history, tradition and nationalism because they did not have enough general knowledge or basic skills.

**Availability of Resources**

Two teachers in the study, Margaret and Ingrid, felt that the school did not provide enough resources to meet both the learning needs and the social interests of their students. The few resources they had that represented the social identities of their students were often about issues of race, poverty, and inequity and seldom about interesting and exciting characters that resembled the students. Margaret was frustrated by the lack of resources in her school and felt that her students were not represented positively in the resources that were available. Ingrid also commented on the limited resources in her classroom: only a few old textbooks were scattered around the shelves. Her classroom library was a combination of books given to her by the librarian and some of her favourite books brought in from home. Not only were Ingrid’s resources limited in content and perspective, but she had few resources in the classroom. Some of the books that were engaging were signed out repeatedly by the students—these were books from Ingrid's own collection. The lack of resources made fostering inclusion a challenge. The teachers had to find ways of designing curriculum using the resources they had.

**Addressing the Challenges**

Although the 5 participants—Annette, Joan, Sharon, Margaret, and Ingrid—approached teaching from different perspectives, they did demonstrate similarities in their content-based practice. The following sections illustrate how each participant addressed the challenges of selecting inclusive content, delivering this content, and making use of resources.
Key Features of Teachers’ Content-Based Practices

In the first and second grade classroom, Joan and Annette used various media to foster social inclusion. For example, films enabled the students to identify with the characters and talk about social issues. Building relationships and getting to know students well as a means to decide on relevant content was another inclusive practice. Joan, for example, believed that building relationships and taking time to engage students in discussions about their personal lives was helpful for selecting content to make students feel empowered about their social identity and improve academic development; two aims of social inclusion.

In Sharon’s third and fourth grade classroom, inclusive content practice meant different things. Sharon drew connections to student’s prior knowledge. In a unit on urban and rural communities, she asked the students to recall their experiences as they were learning new concepts. She felt it was important to teach new concepts connected to national and social identity. Sharon regularly integrated Canadian facts and history into her lessons in the belief that the students would develop a sense of pride in being Canadian and that this, in turn, would foster social inclusion by developing students in more productive citizens.

In Ingrid’s fifth and sixth grade classroom, fostering inclusion meant developing student engagement. Ingrid did this by using content to build students’ sense of empathy during whole class discussions on interesting, yet sensitive topics. For example, Ingrid prepared her students for a play they were to attend that was about the Holocaust. She led a class discussion about World War II and discussed how Jewish families had to hide in order to try to save their lives. Students brought up Anne Frank as a familiar person from that time. Several students, particularly girls, shared their thoughts and ideas about how scary and difficult Anne’s experiences must have been. Ingrid used a non-fiction, picture based text for the discussion and
graphic pictures about concentration camps and gas chambers were images the children struggled to understand. It was at this time that Ingrid felt uncertain about the content that was presented.

In Margaret’s fifth and sixth grade remedial classroom, using content to foster social inclusion meant thinking critically about issues of equity and social justice, drawing personal connections, sharing personal knowledge, and in several instances, taking action to foster change. For example, the students wrote letters to the mayor about their community. Margaret also published her own children’s books and a textbook for use in schools.

From these leading features of each teacher’s practices some general considerations for fostering social inclusion emerge. These include:

1. integrating students' personal knowledge and experience,
2. building relationships and rapport as a means for understanding students’ lives,
3. encouraging class and group discussions that generate ideas and feelings related to students’ lives, and
4. taking action for social inclusion for the purpose of improving their own lives.

These considerations, as demonstrated by teachers’ practices, are the beginnings of a principle for fostering social inclusion based on linking content to students’ lives. An examination of day-to-day classroom practices illustrates how teachers use content-based practice to link curriculum to students’ lives.

**Socially Inclusive Practices**

The teachers in the study responded to the challenges of teaching inclusive content by using a number of strategies to link content to students’ lives—personalizing student work,
choosing suitable topics, creating contextual interest, diversifying resources, and utilizing resources in meaningful ways.

**Personalizing Student Work**

Selecting content that was personal and relevant to the lives of students was a challenge. “I’m governed by the bloody curriculum,” Sharon commented in one of her interviews. The curriculum in Ontario is prescribed. It includes over 300 curriculum expectations for each grade. In many ways, these expectations bind teachers to standardized forms of knowledge that do not include the identities of all students. Inner-city schools present challenges to a prescribed curriculum because the students often “do not fit the norm” (Goldstein, 2007, p. 99) and often lack the background knowledge or skills required to meet the skills and expectations in the official curriculum.

Sharon found it challenging to explore social issues with her students because they lacked the basic literacy and numeracy skills expected in the curriculum. She used various strategies to address this challenge. For example, she begins her Monday mornings the same way each week. Her group sits on the carpet and she addresses the students in turn. “Good morning. How are you this morning?” to which each student replies, “Good. And how are you?” Sharon replies the same way to each student, “I’m fine, thank you. How was your weekend?” The students then take turns sharing what they did on the weekend and Sharon asks questions that prompt further description. The goal is to have the students write a weekend report. Sharon is able to teach and have students practise basic oral language skills (retelling, sharing, reporting) and narrative writing. It is also a good opportunity for Sharon to gather information about her students and how they are feeling. After sharing, the students are expected to go to their tables and write a weekend report in their journals. Beginning with students’ personal knowledge can foster social
inclusion since the content relates to the students' lives and the students know the content they are asked to write about. Sharon reminds them to refer to the word wall. She has them recite sight words such as “and” and “because” and tells them to include five words from the world wall in their writing. Sharon then hands out the workbooks and the students appear alert and prepared to write. Prior to beginning, Sharon has all the students open to the first blank page. She talks about the margin and reviews what it is used for. Sharon spends time focusing on basic skills and uses students’ lives as the content.

Joan's practices were similar:

I was reading with individual children and even just in academic support you build relationships. So any time you can find to do ‘one on one’ with the child and give those encouraging words about what they’re doing that’s good, make them feel good about what they’re accomplishing. It goes so far in terms of building a relationship and that’s just on the academic side. Taking an interest when they come in, if they want to show you something or if something happened on the weekend . . . all that finding the time to talk with them about their personal lives. And a lot of that comes out in academic content.

Sharon and Joan used a range of practices for linking content to students’ lives. They did this through getting to know their students, asking questions about their lives outside of school, and encouraging the students to use their prior knowledge when learning new skills.

**Selecting Suitable Content**

Ingrid had concerns about deciding what content would be of most interest to her students and to what extent she should explore sensitive issues with them. For example, in one lesson, Ingrid discussed World War II with her fifth and sixth grade students. She believed that discussing issues of power and war were relevant to understanding inclusion, but she also felt
that many of the images in the texts were too graphic and the information too depressing. However, given that the school was organizing a field trip to “The Secret of Gabby’s Dresser”, a play about a little girl who hid in her family’s dresser during the Holocaust, Ingrid provided information to help her students prepare. During an introductory discussion, the students were seated on the carpet and Ingrid set the scene by saying, “Imagine if you close your eyes, you’re in the dresser. You can’t see anything but you can hear your mother screaming because the soldiers came in.” Ingrid led a discussion on the history of the Holocaust and often paused to listen to children’s questions and points of view. She used their responses to as information to guide her decisions as to how best to proceed with content delivery.

Ingrid shared with me her concerns about the suitability of the content and teaching about suffering and tragedy. She worried about the kind and degree of information to share. She believes that teaching historical content that is familiar to her students (many had experiences of injustice, violence, and war) can help them connect to the curriculum and feel included. But she also wondered if it fostered inclusion: “Does this content validate students’ experiences and if so, does it foster inclusion? Or does this content further alienate students by connecting them to images of exclusion and tragedy?”

Sharon on the other hand felt that discussing issues of poverty, war and tragedy alienated her students by “pigeonholing” their experiences:

We come into school as middle class people. Even if you lived in this neighbourhood, to go and become a teacher, to a certain level you got out of this neighbourhood. So we come in here and they’re poor. From our point of view, these children are poor and underprivileged. But it’s their life! Who the hell am I to go around talking about how under privileged they are and how poor they are. That is not respectful or inclusive of anything. From my point of view, they may
be poor and life may be difficult but for them, that’s their life. And so there’s a part of me, that while I think it’s important to discuss their lives and the social justice issues because I think kids are interested in right and wrong and good and bad, there’s also a part of me that says, why the hell can’t I just do a unit on fairy tales and take them away somewhere else? Why do I have to be slogging social justice issues with these kids? Why are we constantly doing it to these kids? I’m very torn about that.

For Sharon, connecting to students’ realities and linking their experiences to the curriculum was problematic because it reinforced the social oppression they were already experiencing and limited their opportunity to engage in other kinds of learning. In asking "why are we constantly doing it to these kids," she also felt it made her, as the teacher, complicit in reproducing stereotypes of inner-city life. In other words, for Sharon, "discussing social justice issues" was part of the problem of social inclusion rather than the solution.

In her first and second grade class, Annette used a film to prompt discussion of social inclusion. Called "The Peace Tree," it raised sensitive issues about religious traditions. The film tells the story of two girls in a class who want to attend each other’s family holidays. In the film, the Christian girl attends her Muslim friend’s Eid celebration and the Muslim girl buys a tiny tree to celebrate Christmas. The antagonists in the film are mainly the parents who have difficulty accepting different faiths and celebrations. The students in Annette’s class were engaged in the film. When it ended, several students of Muslim faith, particularly the girls, stood up and proudly announced their religion and where they were from. The students were able to share their thoughts confidently in the classroom because the content in the curriculum was directly related to them. Their reactions demonstrated their enjoyment in seeing a part of their identity
represented in the film. In the discussion after the film, the students raised their hands and eagerly responded:

“I like the movie because I celebrate Eid.”

“I liked the part when they hid the Christmas tree because I’ve done that too.”

“I liked that the girls made a peace tree.”

Annette then took the discussion in another direction. She noted that some of the students were laughing during the scene when the Muslim girls were praying. She told the class that it was understandable because people laugh when they hear things different from what they are used to. Then a girl in the class jumped into the conversation and stated, “No! It was funny because I do the same prayers too.” Annette smiled and responded, “I see.”

Later in the discussion, Annette asked if the students recalled some of the name-calling at the beginning of the film. They nodded and remembered that the students in the film had called the Muslim girls “rag head.” Some commented on how it was mean and not very nice. Annette named this behaviour as racist and agreed it was mean and not the right thing to do. The students stated that they identified with the characters and they took pride in explaining some of their own stories. By moving the discussion to issues of racism and bullying, Annette also fostered a sense of inclusion. As the students discussed their ideas, they recognized that racist comments and bullying are wrong. By bringing these issues out in the open and explicitly stating that they are wrong, students are made aware of some of the issues surrounding exclusion.

Creating Contextual Interest

The teachers in the study faced two challenges in terms of content delivery. The first was how to create opportunities for students’ to connect the content to their lives. Margaret believed
that sharing personal stories and histories was important because it allowed students to make connections and offered an entry point to discussing social issues. Margaret demonstrated inclusive practice by responding to the understandings and reactions of her students. For example, during her reading group’s study of Kogawa's (1989) novel *Naomi’s Road*, Margaret used the text to explore issues of race, class, gender, power, and oppression in historical, global and personal contexts with a group of junior students (Grades 5 and 6). Students read the text and Margaret prompted the students to respond in ways that required personal reflection and critical thinking.

Kogawa's (1989) historical fiction of a young Japanese girl’s experiences in the internment camps of British Columbia during the Second World War introduced students to a part of Canadian history and prompted discussions of broader social issues. At one point in the lesson, Margaret and her group of six students were seated at a rectangular table with novels in hand. Students voluntarily took turns reading. One of the students read the following passage out loud:

“When’s Mama coming home” Naomi asks.

“Oh” Daddy says. Then he stares and stares at the ceiling. “She can’t come home til the war is over” he says quietly. “We’re at war with Japan.”

“What’s war?” Naomi asks. Daddy tells her that war is the worst and saddest thing in the world. People get hurt and learn to be afraid. It turns friends into enemies. In Canada, some people think Japanese-Canadians are enemies.

“But we aren’t,” Daddy says.

The discussion that followed centred on several topics, including nationality. After helping the students to investigate the text and make sense of why Japanese-Canadians were believed to be the enemy, Margaret asked, “What does it mean to be Canadian?” The students
began to identify their nationalities. One student said, “My mom is from Angola and my father is from the Congo.” Another student said, “I am El Salvador” and another student, with his head lowered, mumbled, “I am Canadian” and then others chimed in, “Oh yes! So am I.” One boy proudly stated, “I am human.” From there, the students used the plot and the main character of the story to talk about racism and why people are excluded from being part of a nation.

The conversation then turned to a discussion of war. Margaret provided background information on what happened to Japanese-Canadians in Canada during World War II. This led to talking about other instances of war and conflict. One student brought up her knowledge of Anne Frank and said that, like Naomi, Anne Frank was separated from her family by war. Others brought up the war in Iraq, apartheid in South Africa, and slavery in the United States. The students brought up knowledge that they already had and Margaret noted their ability to draw connections.

During this conversation, I observed Ramon, a boy from Ingrid’s class who often had social difficulties in his regular classroom. He was very contemplative with his head tilted and his brow squinted. He appeared deep in thought. He slowly raised his hand and asked, “Has there ever been a time on earth when all countries were at peace?” I sat in my corner, pen in hand, with tears in my eyes. Ramon was reading and thinking critically, and considering what it means to be in this world. Ramon and his group members were engaged and participating in the learning. They were thinking about themselves and making connections to the curriculum. They were asking questions about issues of inclusion and listening to each other.

In an interview, Margaret explained that the best way to foster social inclusion is to respond to students’ knowledge. "Our kids," she says
are exposed to a lot, and they come from, a lot of them, from countries that are exposed to a lot and I think my thing is not to negate that. You can’t put the whole “Canadian like” childhood onto them, so I think it’s obviously being aware that you don’t want anything to get too heavy for them but realizing that if you open it enough, some of the kids will take a very basic level of something, maybe an awareness of a situation in a country whereas other students will take away from it just as adults do. So I think age appropriate is difficult with our kids, you know, what is age appropriate? It’s a very subjective question.

Similar discussions occurred in Ingrid’s classroom during her reading group lesson. While reading *The Skin I’m In* by Flake (1998), a novel about a young Black girl who changes middle schools and experiences bullying and racism, the students expressed their feelings of alienation at school. They wrote reflections connecting their life experiences to the text. After Ingrid read the reflections, she encouraged a group discussion on the key issues that arose. Several students shared their work by reading it to the class. The students admitted to being bullied in the playground and feeling as though they did not have friends. From this, Ingrid initiated a discussion about ways students can help each other feel included.

In another activity, the students wrote letters to the mayor to express their concern about their community. This activity took place at a time of escalated violence in the neighbourhood. The students knew what was happening around them and Ingrid and Margaret described them as stressed and afraid. To spark the letter-writing lesson, Margaret had “circle time” (an activity in both primary and junior classes) where the students sit in a circle and discuss what they are seeing and feeling. Circle time involves a “sacred object”; the student holding the object speaks while the others listen. When the speaker has finished, the object gets passed to the next person. If that student does not wish to share, it gets passed further.
In the circle, some of the students shared their fears about the violence around them. Some were worried about their fathers who worked midnight shifts driving taxis and were being threatened by drug dealers. Others talked about their mothers being attacked in the laundry room of their buildings. Others spoke about drive-by shootings and about cameras getting spray-painted. They decided they wanted to write about what was happening in their community and offer suggestions for change. They suggested hiring people from the community to police the grounds, installing more cameras, increasing police presence, and hiring people to accompany late-night pedestrians to their destinations. The letters were sent and, months later, the mayor personally wrote each student a response. He also came to the school to discuss more about what was happening.

This activity is an example of how socially inclusive pedagogy can engage students in the learning process. First, they shared ideas in a non-threatening environment (circle time) where they had the right to listen to others even if they didn't want to share their thoughts in return. Second, by expressing their ideas to the mayor, they felt included in the wider community. When the mayor came to the school, the students were acknowledged as having a voice and Margaret confirmed that they felt empowered. “I think that is social inclusion because people don’t feel included in the wider community of Toronto and the students here were acknowledged as members of the city.”

The second challenge for fostering social inclusion within content delivery was deciding how to select content that was relevant not only to students’ experiences but also to their learning. The decisions the teachers made in relation to content delivery affected how well their students were able to link the content to their lives. Sheryl, one of the school leaders, also reflected on how to combine student experiences with skills-based instruction:
In teachers’ college and in courses I’ve taken, they tell us as teachers to tell our students to leave their baggage at the door. Well, they can’t do that. And teachers have so much pressure to have their kids reading at level, and now with all the tests, there is so much pressure for teachers. Yes students need to learn how to read in this society, you have to be literate if you want to succeed. Having high standards, absolutely. But you also have to do it skill-based rather than content-based. So if they don’t know what the war of 1812 is . . . whatever . . . I don’t even know what it is; but if they know how to get that information, well, that is important. And, also weaving in all the histories and issues and talking to them about relevant issues like gun violence, well, that’s very much their lives.

Sharon agreed with Sheryl but also felt it was important to teach students about Canadian history and Canadian cultural norms. Sharon believes that teaching this content gives students access to the dominant culture, which leads to a sense of social inclusion. “One of the reasons I teach is to foster a sense of who we are as a nation.” The desire to foster a sense of “who we are as a nation” in relation to the lives of the students at Mark Reginald is a challenging task. Sharon expressed concern about what to teach and the decisions surrounding her choices:

I think there’s this expectation that every bloody thing you do there has to be a political bent. And sometimes you just have to get on with things. So to have a discussion about the Métis may take me off on a tangent way down there . . . and I want to get over here. You can’t take every opportunity that comes up because in the end you wander off all over the place. I think one of the things you’re always doing as a teacher is you’re always making decisions about what you’re doing. I think there are a lot of social inclusion opportunities that are dropped. I don’t think it’s as much dropped as it is a decision to not go there and there are a lot of reasons for those decisions. Some of them are very valid reasons.

In the Grade 3 social studies curriculum, students are expected to learn about urban and rural communities. But many students who live in the inner city have no experience of rural life.
In the following example, Sharon shows how she used students' prior knowledge to teach content that meets Ministry expectations.

With the students seated on the carpet, Sharon began the discussion by asking a broad question that she hoped students would be able to answer by the end of the unit: “What is the difference between a town, city, and village?” There was a long pause followed by some attempts by the students to make sense of the concepts. It became clear that some of the students did not understand the difference between a city and a town. Sharon broke down the concepts and tried to make them relevant by asking the students to think about the city of Toronto. They described buildings and busy roads, a lot of stores, and a lot of people. Then Sharon acknowledged that although many of the students have not yet been to a village or town in Canada, they might be familiar with a community that is different from Toronto. She asked if any of the students remembered another country they had lived in and then asked them to describe it and how it may be different.

The students began to share their ideas and the more they shared about the environments they knew, the more comfortable and willing to participate they appeared. One student shared details about her home in Afghanistan; another talked about his village in Somalia. As the students described their environments, Sharon began classifying the different characteristics. She recorded key phrases on the board and thanked the students for their contributions. For example, one student said, “Where I’m from, there are lots of houses and cars and markets. My family would go to the market and it was very crowded.” Sharon asked: “Well does that sound like a city or a town?” The students replied “city” and Sharon asked, “Okay, why?” and they went on to examine the concept of city. By the end of the discussion, the students were able to share a greater understanding of different communities. One student said, “A city has a lot of buildings,
a town has farms, and a village has less people." Sharon acknowledged the answer was on track and more students raised their hands to share their ideas. Then Sharon introduced the terms ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ and began to refer to Toronto as an urban community. The students were then sent to their tables to work on a worksheet while Sharon sat with a small group of students, providing support on particular skills.

Sharon used the students’ personal lives to help them access the curriculum content while also giving them an opportunity to feel socially included. She honoured their backgrounds and experiences. The students learned from her as well as from each other. They were encouraged to talk about what they knew in order to make sense of new terms and concepts.

**Diversifying Resources**

The teachers in the study noted they had few classroom resources that were helpful for fostering social inclusion. However, with the special funding the school received in the year of the study, changes were slowly made. The school brought in new materials and resources that are socially inclusive. The school librarian gathered relevant and interesting texts that were well displayed in the library. Sheryl renovated the staff room to house literacy resources for teachers. These newer resources enabled teachers to provide learning experiences for their students that fostered social inclusion.

At the same time, Margaret commented that "there are not enough resources that are written for our kids." As she went on to explain:

I’ve gotten into an argument with the Ministry over this. I’ve been trying to get with our publishers to let me write a book on cricket but it’s always about who it can target. . . . So this is a big challenge in social inclusivity. You know, just getting those normal books. It doesn’t always have to be on Malcolm X or Nelson
Mandela but just that show characters that are diverse class backgrounds, ethnicities that are just doing regular things . . . so this is my challenge, how do you get people hooked on reading if there is no personal connection? It doesn’t always have to be the ism (racism, sexism, classism) . . . why can’t it be about an Indian girl going through time travel?

Margaret’s comment that texts for “our kids” (students outside the dominant culture) do not “always have to be the ism” refers to texts about racism and issues of social justice. For example, in her fifth and sixth grade remedial literacy group Margaret used Noami’s Road, by Kogawa (1989) and A Class of her Own, by Lundy (2006), for literacy and social studies. These are historical fictions that show characters of ethnic and racial minority status challenging racism and other forms of exclusion. While the characters in these texts may represent some of the students’ racial backgrounds, and this may be seen as a step toward inclusion, the experiences and stories of these characters are predominantly about exclusion and oppression. If characters that represent inner-city students are consistently portrayed as excluded, then students may see their own lives in the same way.

Too often teachers are left with books that do not represent the social identities of the students in their classes or represent them in ways that do not resonate with the students, or worse, offer negative representations. For instance, I noticed several books on the civil rights movement and slavery. These books, while important, present Black people as an oppressed group. If these are the only texts teachers have in their classrooms, this is the only message conveyed about Black people. At the same time, there were few books that included the lives of contemporary Black characters. To address this challenge and promote more inclusive content resources, Margaret has written and published her own texts. She has written graphic novels and a social studies textbook that are distributed throughout the school board. Margaret also
mentioned that the publication process comes with its own set of challenges. She explained that publishing companies are highly selective in what they publish and that even when a text is accepted, they may edit or alter the ideas or choose images to represent something the author had not intended.

**Using Resources in Meaningful Ways**

In spite of a lack of resources, the teachers in the study were able to use the resources they had in ways that were meaningful to their students. Margaret’s use of graphic novels is an example of how social inclusion is fostered through the use of resources. In one unit, for example, Margaret introduced the students to the elements of graphic novels and gave them instruction on what they should look for to help them make sense of the text (pictures, portrayal of characters, body language, facial expressions, captions, font, varied text style, dialogue). In one of the small group discussions, Margaret asked the students: “What is your schema?” She introduced schema as a way of sharing understanding of what a text might be about based on prior knowledge and experiences. Before the students began reading, they were encouraged to make connections to their own experiences. These connections were drawn upon over the course of the novel study. Small group discussions that centred on elements of the graphic novel were used to spur students’ thinking about their current knowledge and experiences.

During group reading, the students engaged in higher level thinking activities such as making inferences. Margaret prompted the students to think critically about particular moments in the story. At one point in the story, the principal refuses to raise the marks of the young Black student. Students inferred this was due to racism. The discussions moved into issues of race, power, and social justice, and students used the text to support their claims. These discussions represented aspects of multi-literacy and critical literacy. Margaret would often ask the students,
“Have you ever felt that way? What would you do or say to the principal?” The text provided opportunities for discussions that interested the students. The teacher used the text in ways that connected the content to students’ interests.

Part of the novel study program involved use of the Language Lab, which was in Margaret's resource room. Margaret acknowledged that several of her students were working below Ministry standards. She and the instructional leader, Eleanor, explained that this was due to a number of factors, especially life circumstances, and language barriers. The Language Lab contained computers that were used exclusively for literacy support. The computers were programmed with a software application that provides accommodations for improving literacy skills and engaging students in their learning. Students would log onto the computers, click on the Language Lab icon, and instantly have access to literacy support. Using this resource allowed them to engage with the novel in new and meaningful ways. For example, Margaret used two accommodations from this software during the unit on graphic novels to aid in maintaining students’ interest and in supporting their language development—the sound feature and the scanner. The sound feature enabled the students to listen to the words they were typing and helped them to recognize sentence structure, make meaning, and express their ideas coherently. Scanning the students’ work allowed the text to be enlarged, highlighted, and read back to the students for greater comprehension. With the use of technology, the students were able to type, edit, revise, and record their ideas faster. This resource gave students who otherwise were unable to keep up with the class an opportunity to participate.

During this lesson I observed two students sitting together, brainstorming, and working cooperatively. They took turns typing questions and responses to their questions. Now and then, they would stop, point to the screen, re-read the questions, and sound out words together. They
also used earphones to hear their scripts being read back. In a short twenty-minute period, the students accomplished a great deal of work. They were able to work cooperatively and independently with few cues from their teacher. Students working together, exploring skills that extend beyond traditional novel study, and learning through technology and modality support, indicate a level of student engagement that represents a degree of social inclusion. As Margaret explained:

I find with our kids, they have so much more context. I think you can introduce difficult social concepts despite their lack of academic skill, whether it be in literacy or social studies. You have to be creative. I think you can do it; they have so much knowledge. They might not be able to get it down on paper yet, but the more you engage them, the more that’s going come. And the more you engage them, the more they are going to read and the more that’s going to come. To me, that’s the key to it all.

The teachers in the study worked hard to create inclusive environments in their classrooms with the resources they had available.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has explored content-based practices and how these practices relate to fostering social inclusion in classrooms. The findings show that teachers faced challenges in navigating the official curriculum, deciding on the use of sensitive topics, and using the resources they had available. Teachers addressed these challenges, demonstrating diversity and scope in the practices they used. By exploring the challenges and the varying practices teachers use to address those practice, social inclusion was observed to occur when students are able to make connections between the curriculum content and their own experiences, understandings and identities (Ladson-Billings, 2004). When these connections occur, students find greater
relevance in the material they are required to learn and may be more interested in it because of the direct relation to their lives.

Teachers personalized student work in relation to the prescribed curriculum, selected suitable content, created contextual interest in content materials, diversified their content resources, and utilized resources in meaningful ways. Teachers planned specific content for lessons on social inclusion, but were also adept at modifying at their plans spontaneously in response to student needs. They considered both the histories of their students and their current experiences in helping them draw meaningful and interesting connections to the curriculum content. They made creative use of available school and classroom resources to create an inclusive and participatory learning environment. Taken together, these practices show a dynamic and complex set of considerations and actions that foster social inclusion by connecting content to students’ lives.
CHAPTER 6
RELATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING SOCIAL INCLUSION

The social dynamics of the classroom are an important aspect of daily classroom life. Literature on urban education defines social aspects as the interactions and relationships between teachers and students (Gay, 2000; Giles, 2006; Goldstein, 2007; Kincheloe & Hayes, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Olivos & Ochoa, 2006). Comber (2006) defines “relational work” as a form of pedagogical work that makes “a positive difference to children’s learning” (p. 62). This chapter examines the relational strategies the study participants used to foster inclusive classroom environments. As one of the participants observed, “Here it’s all about relationships, and if you don’t have that . . . you’ve got nothing.”

Examining both the planned and spontaneous aspects of classroom life sheds light on practices of social inclusion. In the chapter, I look at how the teachers established the social environment of their classrooms and how the students interacted. I describe the challenges teachers faced in building relationships with their students and how they addressed these challenges. The findings are organized according to specific practices and teaching strategies. Examples from each teacher’s practice are included to illustrate each strategy. The examples are then synthesized to reveal the key relational practices the teachers used to foster inclusive classroom environments. The chapter ends with a discussion of the relational practices used to foster social inclusion.

Challenges

The study revealed that the teachers faced two main challenges in fostering inclusive classroom relations. The first involved balancing social and academic needs. While the
participants recognized the importance of establishing healthy and positive relationships with their students, some were concerned that building social relationships took away from the focus on academic work. The second challenge involved developing a safe and inclusive classroom community where all students felt a sense of belonging.

**Balancing Social and Academic Demands**

An important objective was building positive relationships while also maintaining high academic expectations. Sharon, for example, recognized the importance of developing positive relationships with her students, but was also concerned about losing a sense of academic purpose and responsibility:

I’m really ambivalent around this whole question of the personal relationship with kids because part of it, I think it’s extremely important and I do think you have to have positive personal relationships with kids, but they should not be doing their work because they have a positive personal relationship with you. To me, you get the personal relationship going and then that’s where the negotiation ends. ‘Do your math homework for me please’ whereas it should be, ‘Do your math homework because you need to do your math homework.’

Sharon believes that fostering social inclusion means encouraging students to be self-motivated and work independently. This is challenging when close personal relationships are formed and students become dependent on the teacher for affirmation and attention. She expressed frustration with building relationships in the particular school, community, and classroom environment at Mark Reginald:

Someone once said to me, you can only be 50% responsible for every relationship you have . . . and as a teacher in this school I can only be so much responsible for
a child who will not attend, parents who will not get here, who won’t conform to modified expectations, or who won’t be respectful of the people around her.

Developing mutual understandings and shared responsibilities as a way of balancing social and academic demands is challenging. It becomes even more challenging when the social and cultural expectations of the school community and the local community differ. Given that the teachers in the study came from middle-class backgrounds, they also needed to understand the socio-economic circumstances of their students’ lives.

**Building Community in the Classroom**

Classroom community is a complex concept. McMillan and Chavis (1986) define community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (p. 9). Ravai (2002) asserts that members of strong classroom communities have feelings of connectedness. “Students feel they have duties and obligations to each other and to the school and they possess a shared belief that members' educational needs will be met through their commitment to shared learning goals” (p. 198). McAdam (1982) argues that to have a strong sense of community, “students must do more than merely go through the actions of interpersonal interaction” (as cited in Ravai, 2002, p. 198). They need to develop a strong sense of belonging and believe that their contribution to the community will lead to mutual and personal benefit. Aspects of community (connectedness, belonging, and shared learning) are also aspects of social inclusion.

The teachers in the study expressed two concerns about developing community. The first related to classroom management strategies and to building mutual levels of trust, understanding,
and appreciation. Ingrid, for example, describes the difficulties she faced in this context in her first month of teaching:

In the beginning they were constantly calling each other names. I’d try to teach a lesson and they were screaming across the room, ‘You have a big head!’, ‘Shut up!’ and just screaming and they were so mean to each other, all the time. I had one of my kids, he flipped out, had a meltdown. I don’t know what happened but he got up and kicked a locker and he stormed out and he started screaming in the hallway. Then I had another girl who was swearing at me and kissing her teeth and I had all these different situations going on and I had to learn to deal with it. Before developing a sense of community, I needed to learn how to manage my class.

Listening to Ingrid describe these challenges was like rereading McLaren’s (1980) book all over again. Issues of classroom management are stressful for many beginning teachers and make it difficult to foster social inclusion.

Sharon experienced a different challenge related to classroom community. In her class, the fourth grade girls did not interact with the other students. They isolated themselves from the rest of the class and excluded others from their group:

I think there’s a time in childhood development and I happen to be teaching during that developmental phase where it’s very much the boys want to be with the boys and the girls want to be with the girls. I’m also sensitive that there are cultural issues for many of the girls in this school around their interactions with the boys. […] We had a crisis earlier this year because one of the girls, there was a rumour going around that she loved one of the boys and it was very serious from that family’s point of view.
Understanding that cultural norms and expectations play a role in the way students relate to one another led Sharon to think more deeply about what social inclusion should be and what it means to build community in the classroom.

**Addressing the Challenges**

Over the course of one school year, I observed Joan, Annette, Sharon, Ingrid and Margaret using various teaching practices to address the challenges of balancing social and academic demands and building community in the classroom. Their practices ranged from group discussions to one–on-one conversations and from explicit lessons on social expectations to informal meetings on understanding diversity.

**Key Features of Teachers’ Relational Strategies for Fostering Social Inclusion**

In the first and second grade classroom, fostering an inclusive social environment meant addressing the whole class as Joan and Annette used class gatherings to build common understandings about social interactions. Their goal was to develop student engagement. These gatherings ranged from spontaneous, informal, and explicit discussions about student behaviour to formal weekly meetings led by students. Annette worked hard to build student autonomy by encouraging students to problem solve their social conflicts before approaching her for help. Annette praised students when they were able to solve their own problems and work cooperatively. This reflects the view of social inclusion she described in her interviews (see Chapter 4).

Joan most often taught social skills to the whole class. Students interacted in pairs, in groups at their tables, and as a whole class on the carpeted area. When issues of social exclusion
arose in the classroom, Joan would use the opportunity to teach a lesson on social expectations. Joan and Annette’s processes for fostering social inclusion are similar because they work with the same students in the same classroom. They needed to be consistent in order to establish clear routines and expectations.

In the third and fourth grade classroom, fostering social inclusion through social interactions meant teaching a variety of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for the purpose of developing productive citizens. Sharon taught students about respect and what it should look like. She felt it was important to use spontaneous and planned lessons to teach appropriate behaviours. She also used drama and humour to interact with her students. Sharon felt these tools lightened issues that may be difficult for some students. She would also use an authoritarian style to tell the students what to do—an approach that was well received by the students. Sharon shared personal stories with her students. Telling them about her family and letting them into her personal life was one way of showing them that she cared. In an interview, Sharon explained that she had invited her students to her house the previous year for an end-of-year field trip. Sharon believed there was a time to share personal stories and a time to be firm about learning. Sharon used both to connect with her students and to create an inclusive classroom.

In the fifth and sixth grade classrooms, fostering social inclusion through daily interactions meant developing close relationships with students. Ingrid spent a lot of time in whole class settings sharing personal stories with her students and hosting class discussions. She worked on developing students’ ability to empathize and often had her students reflect on their work, actions and feelings. Ingrid modelled the social behaviours and actions she wished to see in her classroom and talked about them with her students. In the interviews, Ingrid expressed her desire to foster social inclusion by creating a respectful and safe community in her classroom.
She spoke of the importance of games and drama-based activities and demonstrated these in her practice.

Margaret also formed close relationships with her students but preferred one-on-one discussions. This may have been because she did not have her own class and often worked with small groups of students from the other fifth and sixth grade classes. However, as noted in Chapter 4, Margaret viewed social inclusion as addressing students as individuals rather than as a whole group with common needs. Her views of developing individual relationships matched her teaching practice. Margaret only addressed the group as a whole if the whole class was experiencing social difficulties.

To summarize, fostering social inclusion through the relational interactions of daily classroom life was achieved by the teachers through:

1. whole class discussions and meetings,
2. sharing personal stories,
3. one-on-one conversations with students, and
4. interactive games and activities.

Each of these strategies worked to build mutual understandings between teacher and student and among students.

Socially Inclusive Practices

Examining the teachers' day-to-day classroom practices illustrates the relational practices they used to meet the challenges of building an inclusive classroom environment. These practices included: developing understanding, sharing personal stories, engaging in large group
discussions, making time for one-on-one discussions, teaching social expectations, and developing a sense of community in the classroom.

**Developing Understanding**

Sharon described the importance of understanding the wider socio-economic context of her students' lives in order to establish an inclusive classroom: “You need to have some larger political analysis about what the hell is going on in society in order to teach in [this] particular environment. . . . I don’t actually think the middle class schools have the same political analysis and challenge.” Fostering social inclusion via the development of social connections with the students at Mark Reginald was perceived by the participants as needing more time and energy than in middle-class school communities. Eleanor, one of the school leaders, explained that many of the students at Mark Reginald lacked social awareness of school and community norms and behaved in ways that oppose success and achievement. Eleanor suggests this may be due to a difference between the social norms of the school and those understood and experienced in the daily lives of students. Developing an understanding then would be a necessary practice for fostering social inclusion.

I was in Sharon’s classroom one morning watching a social studies lesson. Kiesha, a girl who often resisted classroom routines, was doodling on her paper and mumbling to herself as Sharon attempted to speak to a group of students. At first, Sharon ignored the disruption. When Sharon asked the students to move from their tables to the carpet for a class discussion, everyone except Kiesha followed the instruction. Kiesha lounged around her table, first sitting then standing behind her chair, nibbling on her fingertips and looking aimlessly about the room. Sharon asked Kiesha several times to join her at the carpet and eventually Kiesha dragged herself over. Once she sat down she began bullying other students: “You, move over there. You move
over here. I want to sit in that spot." At first, Sharon watched patiently but then interrupted Kiesha's stating in a strong and dramatic voice: “Look at you Kiesha—first you don’t come to the carpet, then you come and you think you’re the queen. Well guess what? You’re wrong. I’m the queen. Now, everyone is going to sit where they are, including you and we’re going to get on with learning." Kiesha complied. In fact, she smiled and immediately poised herself to listen and learn. As an observer, I initially took Sharon’s response as mean and harsh, but Kiesha did not. This reflects what Delpit (1995) wrote about students’ views of their teacher: “The student was proud of the teacher’s meanness, an attribute he described as the ability to run the class and pushing and expecting students to learn” (p. 37). Sharon later explained to me how that interaction had worked:

I can do that with her because I know her. And because she knows the game she’s playing and she’s used to that game and no one ever calls her on it. I call her on it, and because I call her on it she has a certain level of respect for me. I have already established trust and care—they know I care, so then I can call them on behaviours that are exclusionary.

Kiesha’s actions were “exclusionary” because she was not engaged or participating in the classroom environment in ways that were inclusive. Instead, she removed herself by interacting with her peers in unfriendly ways. Sharon’s actions demonstrate that she understands the social context of her students. According to Delpit (1995), “Black children expect an authority figure to act with authority. When the teacher instead acts as a ‘chum’, the message sent is that this adult has no authority, and the children react accordingly” (p. 35). In using a firm tone with Kiesha, Sharon also used warm demander pedagogy (Ware, 2006). Sharon and Kiesha’s mutual understanding helped them to form a relationship that fosters inclusion for Kiesha.
Sharon also used humour to develop inclusive relations. Her tone and body language were dramatic and students responded well to her. In another example, she used humour to bring the students together and make them laugh. After giving a spelling dictation, Sharon asked the students to sit on the carpet. A student groaned and mumbled under her breath, “Oh God!” and Sharon replied in a sarcastic tone, “Well, I’m glad you refer to me as God. My kingdom is small but I’m glad someone sees it.” Several students laughed, including the one who was moaning seconds earlier. Everyone was smiling and participating in the social life of the classroom.

Sharing Personal Stories

Another strategy that fostered mutual understanding was the telling of personal stories. In one example, Sharon brought a framed picture of her parents. She sat down with her students and explained that the two people in the photo were her parents and that she had almost lost her father to heart disease. She explained how her father did not exercise and how the arteries around his heart had become clogged. Students listened intently. She then explained why it was important that the students exercise every single day and take care of their hearts. The students asked Sharon some questions about her family and then about exercise. They spoke at length about Sharon’s parents and what they did to improve their own health. The class unanimously agreed that they would work together and encourage one another to improve their hearts and be healthy. Social inclusion for the purpose of student engagement was achieved. First, the students participated in the discussion and agreed to work together and support one another to achieve a common goal. Second, all of the students were able to relate to the story of healthy living and concern for loved ones.

Ingrid also shared personal stories to strengthen her interactions with students and build empathy. For example, Ingrid brought a family album to share with her students and told them
about her family and her history. She shared her stories of growing up. When she introduced new spelling words, some of the students did not understand some of the words and appeared frustrated. Ingrid shared a personal story about how her parents would make her look up words in the dictionary and that as a child she did not like it, but as an adult she now appreciates it. One student shared a similar story of how her parents made her do that too. It was common practice in Ingrid’s classroom for her to share personal stories of her childhood and her family. Ingrid felt this was a way to teach students about her perspective and give them some insight into her background. Ingrid believed that the more she knew about her students and the more they knew about her, the more it would help to foster social inclusion.

*Engaging in Group or Whole Class Discussions About Exclusion*

Joan and Annette hosted discussions in their first and second grade classroom as a way to foster social inclusion. Annette described the challenge of finding time to address issues of exclusion:

> It’s hard to know how many conversations that I should be having that I’m missing. So there’s a whole piece of the missed conversation that I’m missing. I was well aware that with this student here today that there was a conversation that I needed to have with her in terms of how she was talking to another student and I didn’t have it because I couldn’t get to it and it just went on and I thought, ‘I see this happening but I cannot get to it today’. I didn’t miss it . . . I just couldn’t get to it.

In this example, Annette witnessed one student making bad remarks to another which made the student cry. Annette knew a conversation was needed, but because she was busy with a whole class lesson, she chose to not address it and not to have a personal conversation about what happened.
Joan and Annette set time aside for whole class discussions on inclusion. They often gathered the class after an exclusionary incident and discussed the issues in order to develop greater understanding of what happened. For example, it was common for one of the students, Josh, to be removed from the classroom. Josh would scream, yell, and sometimes strike his teacher and classmates. He was often physically dragged out of the room or removed kicking and screaming in the arms of an adult. Students witnessed this behaviour and sometimes responded by misbehaving in order to get attention. Some looked on in fear. Annette described the social interaction process that followed:

I think as much that can be explicit and talked about should be explicit and talked about. I didn’t want him leaving the room for the umpteenth time today and pretending that everything is just great and nothing is wrong. I wouldn’t have the conversation about him with him in the classroom because he can’t hear that, but I think that there is nothing wrong with saying, ‘there’s an elephant in the room’ and to validate for the kids how they are feeling . . . and I thought we need to acknowledge that this is what’s going on and this is what we need to be doing to make it better.

With the students seated on the carpet, Annette shared with them that Josh tries his best but cannot always manage to function in the classroom. Students asked why and Annette explained that sometimes he feels too tired or has other feelings that prevent him from participating. But rather than focus on Josh, Annette spoke to the students about what they as a class should do in such a situation. They suggested notifying the teacher if a student seemed unhappy or unable to get along with others in the class; ignoring behaviours that were not helpful for learning; and being a role model and doing the right thing to help the student get back on track. Annette acknowledged all of these suggestions as good ones for fostering social inclusion and proceeded with her academic lesson. Discussions about incidents, problems, and conflicts
that disrupt or lead to the exclusion of one or more students is one way some teachers foster social inclusion in their classrooms.

**Making Time for One-on-One Conversations**

Having private conversations was another relational practice used by the teachers. Seeking opportunities to speak with students in the classroom or in the hallway about issues of social inclusion were common. While all the teachers used this practice, those teaching the higher grades (Ingrid and Margaret) used it more often than those who taught the younger children.

Margaret believed that speaking to students privately gave students a sense of worth and importance. She believed it not only generated trust and respect, but that it also made students feel valued and showed them that the teacher cared about their personal issues and wanted to understand their life circumstances. She often discovered there was a personal trigger involved, such as an argument with a friend or a problem at home. These issues had little to do with school but affected students' experiences at school. By speaking with them, even for a few minutes, Margaret was often able to get to the root of the issue and offer personalized solutions that would integrate them back into the classroom and refocused on academic achievement. Margaret would suggest that students re-enter the classroom and either work alone, work with her, or join another student for academic support. Speaking with students one-on-one takes a lot of time. Margaret was able to do this in part because she mostly works with smaller groups of students and in part because she teaches older students who may be more capable of working independently.

Sharon also used private conversations as a strategy for communicating with students. There were several times when I observed Sharon dismiss the class and politely ask a student to
stay behind for a quick conversation. In one conversation, Sharon began by saying: “I adore you. I really like having you in the class. . . . This behaviour of yours needs to change. . . . Help me understand what is bothering you and tell me what I can do to help.” The student responded, but I was unable to hear what he said. Later, Sharon shared with me that while she often had one-on-one conversations with students about their feelings of exclusion or behaviours that caused them to be excluded, she felt that at their stage of development, the conversations were of little help because her students were usually unable to express the root of the problem.

**Teaching Social Expectations**

Teaching students how to interact with others was another relational strategy for creating mutual understanding. For example, Joan led a class discussion on being respectful to others. She asked: “How many students have heard the word respectful?” Almost all of the students raised their hands. "Who can tell me what it means?” No one raised their hand at first. After a few seconds and some thought, a few students shared their ideas: “It means being nice”, “I think it means listening to your teacher.” She then asked the students to describe what respect looked like and how someone could tell when it happened. Reviewing words and behaviours that teach particular social norms are one way teachers address differences in social behaviours and attempt to foster social inclusion.

Similarly, Sharon taught a lesson on the word 'rude.' This lesson happened spontaneously when Sharon recognized students behaving rudely in the library. Students were ignoring the librarian, speaking out, and appeared to be disinterested in the book that was being read. On returning from the library, Sharon called the class to attention and asked the students to turn their chairs so they all had a clear view of the front of the class where she was standing. She asked for a volunteer to participate in a role play. One boy volunteered and Sharon had him stand outside
the classroom while she set the scene. Sharon brought her chair to the centre of the carpet and sat down. She asked a student to bring the boy back inside and asked the boy to try to get her attention. He called her name—Sharon ignored him. He waved his hand—Sharon looked the other way. Several attempts were made by the student to get Sharon’s attention but Sharon would roll her eyes, slouch in her chair, look the other way, and yawn. The class looked on in silence.

When the role play was finished, Sharon thanked the volunteer and asked the students to deconstruct what was going on. One student said, “You were ignoring the student” and Sharon asked, “How?” The students began naming some of the ways: “You were yawning . . . you didn’t look at the person . . . your body language was . . .” Sharon then asked, “When I was ignoring him, what was I being?” The first response was “a kid?” and the second was “rude?” Sharon replied “yes” to the second response. She then proceeded to speak more about what it means to be rude—what it looks like (body language) and sounds like (oral language) and she told students that she realized that they may not even know they are being rude. “We’re going to start naming rudeness,” she stated, and she also acknowledged that she too might be rude at times and that if they were to improve their learning and feel included, then they would begin to name when rudeness was happening.

Based on their shared experience, they worked together to construct a common language about a social norm. By approaching the challenge in this way, Sharon created a common understanding in her class and included those students who may not have known which behaviours are considered rude. In this case, the students were neither punished nor penalized for their behaviour; instead, she turned the situation into a lesson on social expectations. Sharon felt that naming behaviours and teaching students about social norms was a way of fostering
inclusion because it offered insights into expectations in Canadian schools and Canadian culture and put everyone on the same level.

Margaret felt differently about ways of addressing social interactions in the classroom:

When you talk about manners, I think that’s such a delicate area. Of course teachers are coming from their own cultural background and their own cultural identity and I always feel that’s something when we think about inclusion in the classroom that there are always boundaries to certain things. But even saying the word ‘appropriate’ is problematic—what’s appropriate to one group may not be to another because there are so many cultures and in such a diverse society and city, that kind of awareness. . . . I stop myself and consider where I’m coming from and where the student is coming from.

Margaret preferred to address each situation and each student individually. She seldom had whole group discussions about behavioural expectations. This was because “each student is different, comes from a different place, and with different experiences. I cannot judge that but I will try to understand it and help.” Margaret’s approach to social interactions was to work with students one on one. If they demonstrated behaviours that appeared exclusionary, Margaret spoke to them in private and tried to understand what the underlying issue was. For example, one day in Margaret’s classroom, a student came to class withdrawn. Margaret found out he had not done his homework. It was hard to tell his mood, but his head was lowered, his eyes were narrowed, and he was frowning. He did not participate in the group discussion or respond to Margaret when she asked him questions. Margaret ignored the behaviour and continued with her lesson, giving instructions for independent work. When the students were working independently, she took the student into the hallway and spoke with him for several minutes. She discovered that this student was experiencing difficulties at home and was not sleeping at night.
She thanked him for sharing his story and stated she understood his circumstances. The child was not penalized for his behaviour or incomplete work. He came back with less of a frown and was able to work. At one point, he leaned over to consult with a classmate about the assignment and eventually became involved in the group activity.

**Promoting Community Through Class Meetings**

As a first year teacher, Ingrid wanted to develop a strong sense of community in her classroom but was challenged by classroom management issues. Although she did not have previous teaching experience, she used her past experiences as a camp counsellor to build community:

I made sure that I knew about their families and we do that with our sharing circle so I learn what they’ve done on the weekend. I just wanted to have a relationship with the kids and I also wanted to make sure they had a relationship with each other so we did a lot of team building activities, a lot of trust games and we always have discussions. If there’s a problem in the classroom, to include everyone, we always discuss the problem. So if someone’s been fighting we always say we’re a team in this room and we put it out on the table and the class decides together how can we solve this.

For Ingrid, building community involved a number of relational practices that moved beyond discussions and conversations. She used the carpet for her meeting place: “It’s more of a family environment, so we sit in a circle and we pass around a stick and whoever has the stick has the right to share or the right to pass” (Gibbs, 1994). The meetings were informal and interactive. After lunch one day, Ingrid called a class meeting. She asked the students to reflect on the previous day and their experience with the substitute teacher. The students spoke in turn and shared how they felt. One student explained, “We were good but not in the hallway” and
Ingrid responded, “Well that’s okay . . . that is something we are still working on and it will improve.” The students were honest about some of their behaviours and their work ethic in the class. One student admitted to looking at his textbook during a test. Ingrid listened, responded with simple comments, and made some approving and disapproving expressions. At the end of the discussion, she asked the class if the substitute teacher was fair and if it was a good idea to call her back. The class replied: “Yes.” The class meetings appeared to give students voice. The students were free to share their thoughts and have a say in what happened in the classroom. Ingrid’s responses reinforced expectations and also showed compassion, empathy, and respect.

One strategy she used was her tone of voice. Ingrid spoke to her students in the same manner she would expect to be spoken to herself. She spoke softly and politely. If a student told a sad story, Ingrid would look sad, pout her lips, and explain that the story made her feel sad. She modelled for students exactly what she expected of them. This seemed to work well for her in her classroom. When I asked her how she maintained her authority, she explained, “I would never yell at them but I think they could see if I was upset just by looking at my face.”

Annette and Joan also hosted class meetings in their first and second grade classroom. These meetings were formal and followed a particular process. Every Friday afternoon students gathered in a circle on the carpet and each week a different student chaired the meeting. The student chairperson was determined by drawing a name out of a box. Names were not replaced until each student had had a turn; therefore, each student had the opportunity to be the chairperson. The student chairing the meeting sat in the teacher’s chair and took control of the environment while the teacher recorded the minutes. At the beginning of each meeting, Joan or Annette went over the rules—being fair, listening to each other, and asking as many students as possible to contribute.
Joan encouraged the students to pick a girl, then a boy, then a girl, then a boy, and to see who is sitting quietly during the meeting. The meetings had the same agenda each week:

1. Appreciations: sharing things students appreciated about their class and classmates
2. Minutes: reviewing last week’s meeting and what needed to get done
3. Improvements: acknowledging improvements in the week and what can be done to further improve the classroom
4. Sorry and Thank You: sharing positive and negative occurrences throughout the week
5. Future plans: selecting two or three items to work on for the following week

I observed three meetings over the course of my fieldwork. Each time I saw the students listening to one another, acknowledging each other, offering solutions for social issues, and working toward inclusion. At one meeting, the students discussed a problem that had occurred outside during recess. The two students involved were able to share their side of the story and resolve the problem with the help of their classmates and teacher. This was socially inclusive practice through developing understanding of the problem, problem solving, and giving students the opportunity to contribute to classroom issues.

The teachers in the study all took part in some form of classroom meeting with their students. The meetings were opportunities for students to share their views and concerns about classroom and school issues, and they also gave teachers opportunities to hear students' concerns and provide direction for making the classroom community inclusive.

**Creating Opportunities for Social Interactions**

Creating opportunities for social interactions involved making time in the classroom for games, activities, centres that were structured but not teacher led. These practices gave students
time to interact in a safe social environment that was focused on social development. Games and open-ended activities also gave the students opportunities to learn more about and understand each other in interactive ways. Most of the teachers in the study provided opportunities for students to engage in games or activities.

In their first and second grade classroom, Joan and Annette had set times for students to explore activities at different centres. For example, students read at the reading centre, played cards on the carpet, or drew pictures at their desks. The students would choose a centre and spend up to twenty minutes there interacting with others. Sometimes, students would select a centre together. During this time, the students would work independently and engage in deep conversation or interactions with their peers, while the teacher spent time with individual students.

Ingrid relied heavily on games as a strategy for fostering social inclusion. She introduced games that she had learned from her days as a camp counsellor. I observed the students laughing and enjoying themselves. I also observed students recognizing each other in positive ways. For example, in one cooperative game, all the students were seated on the carpet. One person was asked to leave the room while the rest selected the name of a famous person (Will Smith, Brad Pitt). The student who left the room then re-entered and sat in a chair in front of the students on the carpet. The students on the carpet raised their hands to ask questions about the famous person so the student in the chair could try to figure it out. One student asked, “Why did your wife adopt a child from Vietnam?” Another asked, “Did you like the movie Tumorator?” And another asked, “Why did you break up with Jennifer Aniston?” The student in the chair was able to guess Brad Pitt. The class was excited and celebrated the answer. Then another student, Susan, was selected to leave the room and guess the person. Susan was a shy, quiet student who seldom
participated in class activities and discussions. When she re-entered the room, the students began to ask: “Can I have a pencil?” “Why are you so quiet?” “Is it true you like to read?” “Your favourite sport is ping pong?” “How did you get to be such a fast runner?” Susan hesitated, smiled, and said, “Is it me?” and the class cheered. It appeared that the class took notice of Susan despite her shy demeanour and also recognized and appreciated her strengths. The game continued and Susan was participating.

Games became such a popular tool in Ingrid’s class that by the end of the year the students were designing their own games for curriculum units. For example, when they learned about probability in mathematics, the students were asked to design their own math games and test them out in class. Seven different stations were set up in the classroom and the students rotated to the different games. Shane, a student who had had some difficulties with inclusion in previous years, was so proud of his game that he stood by his desk and ushered people over to try it. Whenever a student did well, he would do what he called a “happy dance.” There was excitement in the air and a sense of inclusion. When it was time to clean up, Shane called out, “Thank you for playing my game,” to which another student responded by walking over and saying, “I want to shake your hand” and he did precisely that. Then Shane called out, “Congratulations to Omar and Abdul for winning at my game” and the entire class clapped, including Ingrid.

Once the room was tidy, Ingrid had another small meeting with the class to reflect on the games and the lessons learned. Students made several positive reflections about the different games. During this time, Ingrid told the class she was pleased to see how well everyone had worked together and shown respect. She gave examples of ways the students themselves had
fostered an inclusive environment: “I heard a lot of positive comments. I heard a lot of people saying ‘Good job!’ and encouraging others to do their best.”

Social games and activities as pedagogical practice were used to develop social interactions in the classroom. They are a common practice in teaching and, in some grades, are included in the curriculum guidelines. The practice of incorporating games is not new; however, the focus here is on examining games as a strategy of social inclusion and describing how the teachers applied it. Some teachers used this practice to provide an interactive forum where students explored a variety of topics and issues in a social and fun way. Over the course of the study, the students in all grades demonstrated they were able to work together and socialize; however, in some cases, particularly in Sharon’s class, the girls and the boys seldom interacted.

**Identifying Differences**

The girls in Sharon’s fourth grade class typically sat together and away from everyone else. In Sharon’s class there were 9 fourth graders and 17 third graders. Of the fourth graders, there were five girls and four boys. Whenever Sharon asked the students to sit on the carpet, the girls would sit on one side and the boys on the other. Whenever group work was assigned, the girls would always work together. There was seldom any mixing. Sharon was aware of this divide. She was also sensitive to gender issues because several of the parents of her students did not support boy/girl interactions of any kind.

To address the situation, Sharon used humour. In one example, when the students were asked to sit on the carpet, the girls came and huddled together off to the side. Sharon told them to spread out, explaining that they were being exclusionary by sitting away from the rest of the students. One girl responded by saying, “We like it that way” and Susan smirked and said, “Well
you won’t when you're older." Everyone in the class laughed. After the joke, Sharon went on to explain that exclusion was not a good thing and talked about how it made people feel. The girls listened, as did the rest of the students. Sharon then moved into her lesson, respecting the girls' desire to sit apart from the boys. Sharon believed this to be a culture-based issue and not one about sexual heterogeneity. She spoke to some of the parents of the girls in her class. Most stood by their view that it was unnecessary for their daughters to work with boys; others felt it was okay. Sharon explained to me that she respected the views of the families and that, as long as it did not harm or disrespect other students in the class and everyone had space to learn, she was not interested in pursuing the matter. Sharon believed that in terms of developmental stages and cultural considerations, inclusion was being adequately addressed by ensuring that the students were not being disrespected and that cultural considerations were recognized. Sharon believed that inclusion did not require all of the students to be together all the time.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the influence of relational practices on fostering social inclusion in classrooms. The findings show that it was challenging for the teachers to balance the time needed to build the social environment of the classroom with their teaching of academic content. Understanding students’ social lives outside of school and discovering ways of building relationships was time consuming and hard. The teachers had to figure out how to foster mutual understandings despite the time and curriculum pressures they faced. They also had to address the challenge of managing social dynamics and designing practices to build community.

The teachers demonstrated scope and variance in addressing these challenges. Their relational practices included: sharing personal stories, engaging in group or whole class
discussion about exclusion, making time for one-on-one conversations, teaching social expectations, promoting community through class meetings, creating opportunities for structured social interactions, and identifying differences. They engaged in dynamic, spontaneous, and planned social interactions with many students throughout the day. They developed understandings of their students’ lives both in and out of the classroom and they made decisions about the interactions to use with individual students and the whole class.

The study findings reveal that social inclusion occurred when the teacher and students created an environment of mutual understanding. The teachers' relational practices focused on: discussing and acting on social issues relevant to students’ lives, supporting the inclusion of all students in the social life of the classroom, and developing an affirming environment.
CHAPTER 7
PEDAGOGICAL STRUCTURES FOR FOSTERING SOCIAL INCLUSION

This chapter examines how teachers interact with and support the structures of the school and the classroom to foster social inclusion. Pedagogical structures include the policy decisions, visions, community relations, physical layout, student placements and daily routines of the classroom and school. How teachers interact with the structural aspects of schooling shapes how they foster social inclusion. It examines how teachers design their practice in relation to the structures of the school and it also examines how teachers structure their own classroom environments to foster social inclusion.

The chapter is organized in the same way as Chapters 5 and 6. It begins with an overview of the challenges the study participants faced in creating classroom structures that reflected their inclusive teaching strategies. It then outlines the practices the teachers used to address these challenges. In addition, the research findings discussed in this chapter respond to the third sub-question of the study: "How do the norms, structures and priorities of the school facilitate or constrain to socially inclusive practice in the classroom?" The pedagogical dimension of structures provides an opportunity to explore this question in greater detail and offers space for the study to extend beyond the classroom context. The chapter concludes with summary of how these practices come together.

Challenges

Although the teachers in the study faced numerous challenges in creating inclusive classroom structures, three challenges came to the fore. First, they had to decide on the physical layout of the classroom. Sometimes, the layouts they designed did not complement the content
and relational practices they were using to foster social inclusion. Second, they had to support students’ individual needs within a classroom structure designed for 25 or more students. Third, they had to decide how to work effectively in integrated classrooms where the needs of students are diverse. They needed to determine which content and relational practices would most likely foster social inclusion in an integrated learning model.

**Classroom Design**

How teachers set up the physical layout of their classrooms determined to a large extent how students interact and the ways in which they approach learning. Table settings and group settings, for example, often determine the social dynamics in the room. If tables are set up, students will likely work together on content-based tasks. Students seated in individual desks would likely work alone. By extension, if students are expected to collaborate on an inquiry project, they need to have the space for this in the classroom. The structural design of the classroom affects how students’ learn and interact with one another. The decisions teachers make about the physical design of the classroom, for example, how the layout is designed and which posters and pictures to display, also shape the flow of student interaction and influence social inclusion. The teachers in the study had to think about the ways in which they designed their classrooms, arranged the furniture, and set up their program so it suited the content-based and relational practices of fostering social inclusion.

**Organizing Classroom Programs to Address Diverse Needs**

Teachers had to consider how daily routines, schedules, content selection, content delivery, and social expectations complemented the classroom structures they established to address students’ individual needs. Diverse needs, refers to the broad range of students’ needs
based on social circumstances, identities, and academic ability. The diversity of students in the
class challenged the participants to find ways of fostering inclusion while also attending to
individual needs. At Mark Reginald, all of the students were integrated into mainstream
classrooms.

**An Integrated Model: Division Designs**

Significant decisions are made at the school level that influence how social inclusion is
fostered in classrooms. These considerations include how the classes are designed in relation to
the number of students, how students are grouped, student and teacher schedules, and how
classes will function in relation to other classes in the same grade and/or division.

Schools have shifted their focus from segregated classes for students with diverse needs
to integrated classrooms. On the one hand, segregating students with special needs excludes
them physically from their peers. On the other hand, integrating these students, even with
additional support, often leaves them alienated because they have difficulty keeping up with the
pace and expectations of the classroom. This alienation often results in experiences of exclusion.
While the debate on integration is often related to special education, there is reason to consider
how students' social identities are also part of this debate. Most students in special education
classrooms are visible minority students and the disproportionate numbers of male and/or Black
students in these classes is alarming. Social circumstances that may affect children’s academic
performance and/or behaviour include lack of nutrition, proper housing, and stressful home
situations—circumstances often associated with poverty.

Division designs that adhere to an integrated model affect how the relational strategies
and content practices used in classrooms play out. The kinds of social environments teachers
promote and the social dynamics of integrated classrooms become a challenge for socially inclusive teachers who need to address a wide range of academic abilities and social needs.

**Addressing the Challenges**

The following sections illustrate how the teachers and school leaders at Mark Reginald focused on school and classroom structures to address the challenges of creating an inclusive environment. The examples show how the teachers applied their content-based and relational strategies to the structures of the classroom and the school to foster social inclusion. The first section outlines the different ways each of the study participants approached social inclusion in light of the structural decisions they made. The second section pays closer attention to the practices for fostering social inclusion as they related to school and classroom structures, specifically practices that were influenced by school structures.

**Key Features of the Teachers’ Structural Practices**

In Joan and Annette’s class, working within the organization of the school and classroom meant centering much of their time on students with diverse needs and attempting to mainstream them into the broader classroom structure. This was illustrated through their work with Josh, a student who had social and emotional issues caused by personal circumstances and mental health issues. Joan and Annette gave him personalized instruction, modelled inclusive and appropriate social behaviours, sat him close to them during instruction, and provided nutritious food and comfortable accommodations when he was sleep deprived. Josh’s desk was separate from the tables where the rest of the students in the class sat. This appeared exclusionary; however, both Joan and Annette remarked that, most of the time, Josh could not cope with a group of students
in an unsupervised setting. They felt Josh’s needs were beyond their scope as classroom teachers and often felt unsuccessful in creating a socially inclusive space for him.

Joan and Annette used a variety of practices that worked well for the students in their classroom. These practices included designing a centres-based classroom structure where students could select the areas in which they wanted to work. The centres offered students opportunities to work with different people, on different curriculum areas, at their own pace. Over the course of my observation, the students worked cooperatively and showed engagement in their learning. Joan and Annette also established a team-based structure in their classroom that motivated the students to complete tasks.

For Sharon, fostering social inclusion through structures meant addressing students’ needs on an individual basis for the purpose of improving academic achievement. Her approach was based on years of experience as a special education teacher. Her practice prioritized basic skill development and she frequently separated students for academic work. Sharon believed that providing individual programming would improve academic achievement and that this would lead to social inclusion.

Sharon worked closely with another teacher in the school. She and her colleague taught one classroom together as part of an initiative that integrated special needs students into mainstream classes. The special needs students were included in the grade division classroom and kept with their peers. They received support from two classroom teachers. However, Sharon continued to feel unsuccessful in integrating several of her students who had exceptionalities both in academic and social development. Some students in her room were clearly excluded by their peers and often did not participate in the social environment of the classroom. Sharon felt this was mainly due to academic difficulties and, in one case, social and racial marginalization.
In our interview Sharon admitted to feeling frustrated that she did not know what to do to connect Tyrone to the learning and social environment of the classroom.

For Ingrid, fostering social inclusion for the purpose of student engagement was achieved by designing a classroom layout that focused on the carpeted area as the main place for teaching and discussions. She used this area for most of her instructional teaching. Student work areas were set up at tables and students often worked in these areas independently, supporting one another. Ingrid displayed affirmations around the room and pictures of her students engaged in cooperative learning and social activities as a way of building positive relationships. She often spoke to her students about ways of socializing that would develop greater inclusion in the classroom. Ingrid would also work quietly with students one on one, mainly to support social needs. For academic learning needs, students would go to Margaret’s classroom.

For Margaret, fostering social inclusion meant designing an environment where small group work and independent learning were central. The classroom was structured to accommodate learning at different stations such as, small tables, large tables, computer labs, reading nooks, and floor space. Students could choose stations unique to their learning needs. Small groups, large groups, and individual learners worked independently all at once. It was hard to be excluded as there were multiple settings for multiple purposes that created an open space for all students to learn.

In summary, socially inclusive classroom structures were demonstrated by the teachers in various ways. Joan and Annette created spaces in their room for students to explore cooperative centres. Ingrid grouped desks together to create spaces for group work and collaboration; she also used the carpeted area for most of her instruction and to build community. Margaret and Sharon structured their classrooms to promote small group interactions and individual work.
These different classroom structures supported the teachers’ pedagogical visions for fostering social inclusion.

**Socially Inclusive Practices**

The different forms of classroom organization shown in the section on key features of teachers’ structural practices highlight the ways the teachers addressed the challenges of establishing inclusion in their classrooms. This section examines the phenomena of socially inclusive practices between the participants and brings to light a dynamic system of possibilities for addressing the structural challenges described above. What are discussed are practices related to: creating social spaces; creating equitable structures; and, adapting to the school’s integrated model.

**Creating Social Spaces**

The classroom layout influenced the ways students interacted with one another and their teacher. Spaces were made throughout the classrooms observed in the study for students to work both together and independently. Aesthetic displays of student work and motivational posters lined classroom walls and served as motivation and reminders of effective inclusive actions. I noted several similarities among the various classes and grades observed.

Most of the classrooms had a carpeted area that was used frequently. As previously mentioned (Chapter 4), Ingrid’s vision of inclusive teaching relied heavily on fostering a sense of community and whole class activities. Ingrid used the large carpeted area in the back corner of her classroom several times a day to engage students in variety of learning experiences including teacher-directed instruction, discussions, and creative social experiences. Sharon, Annette and Joan did much of their teaching on the carpeted area as well. In Sharon’s room, students were
invited to bring their chairs to the carpet; I often saw the whole group sitting together. The carpet in her room was in front of the chalkboard and she used the space for small group lessons, guided reading activities, whole class lessons, and storytelling. In Annette and Joan’s room, the large carpet was in the centre of the classroom. Both Annette and Joan read stories to the students, held class meetings, and conducted lessons in this space while the students sat facing them. The students were also often seated in a circle on the carpet to share ideas and listen to one another. They were brought together to share ideas about the curriculum content or about relational issues in the classroom. The physical structure of the carpeted allowed the teachers to develop the relational practices needed to foster social inclusion. It provided a structured space that was safe and where students were encouraged to share their ideas and questions.

All of the classrooms had separate work spaces. While some of these spaces were centres, there were also cubicles in the corners that allowed for quiet study. These work spaces fostered inclusion as they catered to the different learning and social needs of the students.

Margaret’s room was the resource classroom for the fifth and sixth grade students in the school. The room was divided in half by a computer lab. A row of computers lined the centre of the room. On one side of the lab were tables where students worked independently or in groups. This was where Margaret conducted most of her lessons. On the other side of the lab was a round table and small open area that Margaret used for showing films or having discussions. Occasionally, teachers sent students to Margaret’s classroom to use a computer or work independently. The room was designed to offer students spaces for different learning needs; for example, an independent workspace if they felt like working alone and a group space if they felt like working with others. The room was also structured according to various subject areas including technology, arts, social studies, science, math and literacy. Socially inclusive practice
was evident in the design because the students knew there was a space for them in this classroom to engage meaningfully with the content they were learning and with a supportive social environment.

Annette and Joan created social space that required students to work together on the carpet and at tables, often on group and cooperative tasks. The students at each table were made into a team and together each table came up with a team name. The teams were encouraged to work together to earn points for rewards and recognition. This system appeared to foster inclusion for the students and motivated them to work collaboratively. For example, during an art activity Annette had the students use chalk on construction paper to create a scene from a picture book on snow. During the art activity, the students worked at their tables or on the carpet. They were in groups but working independently. I heard one boy tell his classmate, “I really like your picture. You have footprints in yours. Can I add that to mine?” and his classmate replied, “Sure, I can show you how I made them” and they continued to work together. This is inclusive practice because students worked together, were able to support one another’s work, and were engaged in the classroom community. At another table students were talking about events that had occurred at recess and working through what appeared to be a social problem between their friends. While on the carpet students shared their resources but were focused on their work. Annette spent her time rotating to the different groups of students offering feedback and praise for students’ work and effort. The environment was inclusive because the teacher used relational practices that gave the students opportunities to choose the social environment they wanted to be a part of. All of the students were engaged in the content and process that was required of them. Those who needed assistance used their own relational strategies in supportive and affirmative ways to interact with their peers.
When Annette and Joan assigned independent tasks like art activities or journal writing, they adjusted the work to students’ individual skill levels and encouraged the students to help each other. The physical layout of the room (carpet, grouped tables) supported this content-based approach. The classroom space was cooperative and group oriented.

*Creating Equitable Program Structures*

Sharon argued that in order to foster social inclusion, it was important to separate students to address their individual needs. The students in Sharon’s class had access to different spaces in the classroom—group tables, individual desks, and a private cubicle for independent work. Sharon also had many individualized programs operating at the same time. For example, she modified the program for Tyrone, a student with academic and social challenges, by “presenting instructions in many modes, speaking very clearly to him, keeping the language simple, allowing him time to process, not demanding quick responses from him because he needs time to process, and giving extra time and support alone after school.” When Sharon read to the class, she had extra copies of the book and had students read along with her. Tyrone often received one of the books. Sharon tried to give all her students individualized attention and separated them to address their academic needs:

> We still separate the kids with the literacy issues in order to intensely work with them. It’s what they need and I think there’s this attitude around inclusion meaning that you gotta be with everyone all the time and I don’t think that’s how it works. These kids need to be taken aside. They need to be taught really basic stuff.

The structures Sharon established in her class—different learning centres and working with students individually—supported her content-based practices. She felt that content knowledge
and skills were best achieved through individualized instruction, particularly for students who were experiencing exclusion.

While this study investigates social inclusion through a broad lens and focuses on diversity in relation to social identity, issues surrounding the inclusion of special education learners and learners with exceptionalities are still very much a part of the definition of social inclusion and influence the organization of classrooms. In the two examples below, exceptionality (special education, mental health) and social identity are interwoven and illustrate the difficulties students have in being socially included. Teachers work hard to design their classroom structures in ways that support their content-based and relational practices for fostering social inclusion. In some instances they are successful and in others they are not.

Josh is 5 years old and in first grade. He has short blonde spiked hair and blue eyes. He is the eldest of four siblings and has a new and young stepmother. His father works night shifts and his stepmother stays at home. He comes to school late almost every day. By the time he arrives, the rest of the students are already settled into their routine. Josh enters the classroom, hangs up his coat and school bag, and immediately whines and cries out that he is hungry. He does not settle down until the teacher calls him to the back of the room to have something to eat. He is given a breakfast of milk and cereal, a banana, and juice at the back table by the sink. As he eats, he mumbles a tune, looks around the room and swings his legs back and forth as they do not yet reach the floor. He now appears content but his peacefulness does not last for long. Josh is identified as coming from a very low socio-economic background with difficult circumstances at home. His teachers also suspect he has mental health disorders.

One of his teachers, Annette, has the students sitting on the carpet in a circle. She too sits cross-legged on the carpet with the children. Her hands rest on her knees and she leans forward
as she quickly scans the circle. “Rashina, sit on your bottom. Thank you, Joey, for being ready. I like how Tania is sitting; her legs are crossed, her back is up tall and her eyes are on me. Thank you.” Annette uses praise and affirmations to indicate to students the kinds of behaviour that she expects. The students sit up tall and place their hands in their lap. Josh is still eating breakfast and is not yet in the circle. Annette acknowledges his absence and asks him to join the circle when he is ready. Then she begins a conversation on mathematics and explains the concept of solids. A couple of minutes into the talk, Josh joins the circle.

Josh sits next to Annette and Annette welcomes him to the group, “Thank you for joining us Josh. It is so nice to have you as part of our circle.” Josh bows his head and smiles. He sits quietly for a couple of minutes but then is unable to focus. He squirms on the carpet, leans back on his arms, tilts his neck, and looks up at the ceiling. The other students listen to Annette as she explains what they are to do at the tables. “You have done a wonderful job listening on the carpet. Next, you are going to go to your math group and do the following . . .” As Annette speaks, Josh begins making noises, rolls over and begins to do push ups. Annette tells Josh what she expects him to do, “Josh, sit up and focus, just a few more minutes.” She gently places her hand on his shoulder and this reconnects him to the group. Annette completes her lesson and assigns group activities at the tables. Annette's use of praise, recognition of positive behaviours, close attention to Josh’s conduct, and physical connection (keeping him close to her and touching his shoulder) provide the relational practices need to foster inclusion.

When the class splits into groups to make their own solids from nets, Josh reluctantly joins a group. He drags his feet and sluggishlly moves to the table with a sad face and mumbles, “I don’t wanna make a solid.” He sits down at a table with four other students, slouched over and silent. An adult volunteer sits next to Josh and picks up a sheet of paper. “Let’s do this together
Josh. He makes a quick attempt to create the solid from the net, but is immediately frustrated and gives up. He leaves the group and goes over to the hamster and guinea pig cages to talk to the animals.

On another day, Josh comes to school late and attempts to settle into the classroom routine. The rest of the class is seated on the carpet and Joan is reading a book on kites as part of a unit on flight and migration. Joan asks Josh to sit on the carpet next to an adult volunteer. He complies. Joan continues to read the picture book to the class. Moments later, Josh begins to holler, “I’m tired! I’m tired” and seems unable to control himself. He gets up from the carpet and walks across the classroom to the reading centre where he flops face down onto the couch. Joan notes the behaviour but ignores it and continues reading to the class. She assigns poetry writing to the students, who then go back to their tables to work. Josh sleeps on the couch for the remainder of the morning.

Josh often does not participate in classroom activities. Although he receives the greatest amount of time and attention from the teachers and volunteers, he still has difficulties with the social and academic routines of the classroom. His work is seldom complete and he misses many of the teacher's instructions. The classroom structures, whole class instruction, small group activities, and centres-based tables, are designed to foster social inclusion by supporting the relational practices used in the classroom (students socializing at their tables, students working together on content-based tasks, independent work). Although these structures in themselves do not facilitate Josh’s inclusion, the structure of the classroom does allow time and space for the teachers to address his individual needs through one-on-one interactions. The educational assistant and the community volunteer also support Josh’s individual needs and provide a structure for his inclusion in the classroom.
In Sharon’s class, fourth grader Tyrone is also often excluded from daily classroom life. Tyrone is Black and comes from a family living with poverty and other social circumstances that are undisclosed to the teachers. Tyrone also has some learning difficulties. During class discussions or whole class lessons, he often moves away from the group. He sits on the periphery of the carpet and is disengaged at his table. He seldom makes eye contact with his teacher and rarely raises his hand to participate in the lesson. Sharon noted that he seldom completed homework and, when encouraged to come for support after school, he rarely showed up. However, when he was involved in independent work at his desk, he appeared focused, and when Sharon read a novel to the class, he would read along in his own copy. Sharon noted that Tyrone is behind academically and struggles with basic literacy and math concepts. She is concerned about his development:

Tyrone comes from a cultural tradition that is very different from the others. He is not particularly articulate. He has more trouble expressing his ideas. He comes from a family where there are . . . no one will ever share with me what the difficulties are but I’ve simply been told by others who know the family, that there are significant difficulties in that family and that there is poverty and a lot, really a lot of stress on that family. I think there are some learning issues for him. There certainly are literacy issues for him.

Sharon often feels helpless and does not know what more to do:

I don’t think inclusion is happening. I think Tyrone is being left out. Part of it is he is leaving himself out but not just that. That is too simplistic. I wonder if that’s just a response to something else . . . I’m watching this stereotype unfold before my eyes. I’m feeling absolutely powerless. I don’t know what to do about it.

Sharon is referring to the stereotype that Black children, particularly boys, tend to have difficulties succeeding in school. In Tyrone's case, race, gender, ability, and social class come
together in complex ways. Her feelings of powerlessness have to do with feeling unable to adapt the structures in her classroom to support Tyrone’s inclusion.

Social inclusion refers to the inclusion of all students in a safe and equitable learning environment. It values teaching practices that enable students to have a voice and participate in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them. In the case of Mark Reginald, it includes working individually with students in mainstream classrooms and also bringing students together to learn collaboratively. These examples demonstrate how fostering social inclusion can be challenging when the structures of the classroom do not support students with personal or learning difficulties. The challenges of addressing the needs of individual students who function outside the structures of the classroom left the participants of this study frustrated and uncertain about their ability to foster inclusion.

**Designing Practices That Support the School’s Integrated Model**

Mark Reginald Public School developed division-wide structures that aim to socially integrate all learners. Based on my observations, much of the decision making on inclusion at the school is based on academic and social/ behavioural considerations. That is, the focus is on students with identified social and academic exceptionalities. Below I describe the primary/junior division structure (Grades 3 and 4) and the junior division structure (Grades 5 and 6). The divisions are designed differently but each provides a pedagogical structure that fosters social inclusion. The teachers’ socially inclusive practices work with and are supported by the division-wide structures.
Primary / Junior Division

The primary/junior division has four combined grade classes and five full-time teachers. Sharon's previously segregated special education class was integrated into a regular classroom with two full-time teachers, one of whom is a special education teacher and the other, a regular classroom teacher. This classroom has a large number of students. Some have learning disabilities, some are working at or above grade level, and some are waiting for formal assessment. The three other primary/junior classes in the division have slightly fewer students and one full-time teacher per class, although these classes also have identified special education students. The division has three part-time educational assistants and one special needs assistant. The assistants work in all the classrooms on a rotational basis.

Sharon and her partner plan together, sometimes teach together, and sometimes divide the students into groups. Each teacher has her own classroom. The classrooms are beside each other. The students gather in Sharon’s classroom each morning and then divide into groups for the rest of the day. Sharon teaches language and social studies with a focus on literacy development and her partner teaches mathematics and sciences. While Sharon teaches literacy to the junior level students (Grade 4), her colleague teaches math to the primary students (Grade 3), and while Sharon teaches social studies to the primary students, her colleague teaches math to the juniors. They work together on subjects related to arts and technology. This classroom structure, according to Sharon, "has been really successful":

We’ve enjoyed working with each other. Two brains are better than one. We’ve been lucky because we have very similar attitudes around program, curriculum, priorities, management. From the standpoint of the children, while one of my frustrations is that it’s hard for me to deliver the program I want to deliver,
especially with the special needs kids—that would be an issue no matter where I was—but I would say for the children, it’s been really successful as well.

As Sharon notes here, having two teachers for one classroom promoted the inclusion of students with special needs. It enabled Sharon and her colleague to create varied groupings where students could work in two classrooms, each with a qualified teacher and an educational assistant, on different tasks and at different levels. The structural design allowed the students to work independently in smaller class settings, enabled the teachers to focus on specific students and content, and also provided for teaching small, heterogeneous groups, in two classroom spaces. Having two teachers made the content-based and relational practices of inclusion more effective. As Sharon observed

It’s one of the ironies of inclusion and integration . . . integration doesn’t mean that the special needs kid who can’t read is with everyone all the time. Integration means that sometimes you are with everybody and sometimes you’re not. Inclusion is the same thing.

Sharon’s explanation of what social inclusion looks like in practice provides insight into the cases of Josh and Tyrone. Providing space and time for students to work alone and accommodating differences in the classroom are part of socially inclusive practice. Designing individualized content-based programs within the larger frame of the classroom proved helpful not only for students’ academic development but also for their social inclusion in the learning environment. This classroom structure was a sophisticated way to foster social inclusion and, as Sharon commented further:

I think there’s this attitude around inclusion meaning that you gotta be with everyone all the time in the model and I don’t think that’s how it works. These kids need to be taken aside, they need to be taught really basic stuff and it would
be embarrassing for them to be taught with kids who were more adept . . . so a fine balance is required.

Sharon explained that several factors created "this fine balance": two teachers working together with common understandings and goals, an integrated model, and a unique classroom structure that gives students the support of two full-time teachers, one of whom is a special education teacher. The teachers had to negotiate and structure their use of time and space, as well as their classroom organization to create an inclusive environment. Because Sharon believed literacy was key to academic achievement, she structured her day to include literacy content at the start of every morning. She structured this time in a variety of ways—small group instruction, independent work, whole class activities, and quizzes. Her focus on literacy as both an instructional method and content-based priority was maximized in this school model. She and her colleague could not only share the content load, but also group the students in a variety of ways.

**Junior Division**

The junior division at Mark Reginald also had an integrated model that contributed to teachers' practices of social inclusion. As in the primary/junior division, there were four combined grade classes and five full-time teachers. In this model, the fifth teacher, the special education teacher (Margaret), had her own classroom but not her own group of students. Instead, the classroom was used as a resource room where all of the students were welcome to work. Margaret supported all of the students in the division.

Students from all four classes came to her room to form a new class based on assigned activities. Margaret worked mainly with students who were experiencing exclusion as a result of
social, behavioural, or academic issues. Some of the students had difficulty concentrating or showed signs of depression. One boy was dealing with abandonment because his mother had left and he was living alone with his teenage brother. Another student had recently immigrated from Afghanistan and was socially withdrawn. Another student had anger issues but the reasons were not shared with me. Two students had recently moved from El Salvador and spoke little English. Some students were identified as having learning disabilities. There was usually an even division of boys and girls in Margaret’s groups, though sometimes the boys outnumbered the girls. The majority of the students were students of colour. Although the groupings were often based on ability, they were not noticeable. The rotation system kept all of the students moving to different classes and groups throughout the division.

What I try to do is not take individual kids as we did with the traditional special education program. I try to recreate whole classes in my room. The kids don’t really see my room as the special education room. I don’t think the kids really know what I do except that I don’t have a regular class this year. I think they just see mine as another classroom to go to if they need a quiet space to do social studies or reading groups.

In this comment, Margaret refers to special education as the main issue driving inclusive practice at the school. However, a closer look at the classroom level revealed that the teachers took more into account than special education in deciding where to place students. Not only were the teachers able to work within the structures of the school, but they also made decisions together that affected these structures. For instance, when it was time for literacy instruction, all of the students in the division travelled to one of the four designated fifth and sixth grade classrooms where they were placed in groups according to reading level. The reading groups varied in size according to the needs of the group. Margaret’s group usually consisted of six
students. There was also a full time volunteer in the class who took a reading group of up to 15 students from the regular program. The school day was divided into periods and the junior teachers had coordinated schedules. This meant they could synchronize the design of their content-based programs. Literacy instruction took place at the same time across the division as did social studies and science. Teachers met regularly to discuss the structures of their classrooms and talk about how students are doing – questions surrounding academic achievement, behaviour and social inclusion were talked about.

During the transition times between periods, Margaret would stand in the hallway outside her door greeting students. Margaret saw each student as her own and the students responded to her as their classroom teacher. This was a relational strategy that connected her content practices with the inclusive structures of the resource room and the school:

When they say I don’t have my own classroom, I say, well, you are all part of my classroom. You do see some students come to my classroom more than others but I do see all of them at some point. It’s a great place to come to when they need space and the door is always open—even when I have a prep. I have one student who comes here every time there is science rotary, and that’s okay. See, it’s not that he’s not successful. The structure provides another means for him to be successful and included.

These strategies and division structures demonstrate how students benefit from integrated settings. They also signal a shift in thinking about inclusion. For example, integrating students into mainstream classes while at the same time organizing them into different group rotations enabled the teachers to address students' individual needs. Having multiple teachers for each rotation also enhanced attention to student needs and encouraged teachers to work
collaboratively to design classroom structures and relational practices that responded to the diversity of the students.

**Summary**

This chapter explores pedagogical structures that foster social inclusion at both the school and classroom level. The findings reveal that the teachers worked hard to decide how best to design their class routines and the physical layout of the classroom to support their content-based and relational practices for fostering social inclusion. They had to organize classroom schedules and programs to address the diverse needs of the students in their classes. They had to work out how to integrate students with special learning needs into the classroom environment. They made decisions about adapting their classroom practices to the integrated model of the school. They had to schedule their time to work collaboratively with colleagues to adapt and coordinate their classroom structures to the school’s division-wide structures of integration.

The teachers addressed these challenges by designing structural practices that reflected their content-based and relational practices for fostering social inclusion. At the same time, the structures of the school supported the teachers' classroom work. This two-way process between teachers’ work and school organization offers interesting insights for socially inclusive practices. The teachers created spaces in their classrooms in a variety of ways—from individual work spaces to desks organized in groups to large carpeted areas. They created equitable program structures that addressed the diverse needs of their students while also maintain equity within the group. They made decisions about what content to teach, at what time of the day, and how to set up the social environment in the classroom so they could attend to students’ individual needs while also supporting and encouraging a community environment. Taken together, these
organizational practices suggest that social inclusion is fostered when the school and teachers design structures to support relational and content-based strategies that respond to student diversity.
CHAPTER 8
PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

This study set out to understand how teachers in one inner-city school respond to a diverse student population and how they meet the challenges of fostering social inclusion in their classrooms. Over the year of the study, I discovered that a range of inclusive practices were used and that these practices demonstrate different theoretical orientations, different purposes, and the complexity of social inclusion. The context of the school, the scope and intensity of the teachers' decisions in meeting the challenges they encountered, and the different approaches used in each classroom illustrate this complexity. The findings reveal that fostering social inclusion is a dynamic and interactive process and that teachers vary their practice in order to create inclusive environments. This chapter analyzes the findings of the study in relation to the literature and discusses implications for socially inclusive pedagogy.

Researchers concerned with social inclusion have taken different directions in their work, resulting in divergent conceptions of theory and practice (Hornby, 2001; Topping & Maloney, 2005). As shown in Chapter 2, pedagogies based on citizenship, culture, race, and anti-oppression each propose different practices and principles of social inclusion. Topping and Maloney (2005) argue that “this plethora of conceptions has led to considerable semantic confusion. . . . Small wonder that teachers . . . can become confused” (p. 4). Ainscow et al. (2006) add that “inclusion remains a complex and controversial issue, and the development of inclusive practices in schools is not well understood” (p. 5). Through classroom observations and interviews with teachers over an extended period of time, this study provides examples of inclusive practice in four inner-city classrooms and illustrates how these examples compare to aspects of the literature on social inclusion.
This chapter consists of three sections. The first section presents two key principles of social inclusion that emerge from findings. Within the discussion of each principle, the three dimensions of pedagogy investigated in the study—content practices, relational practices, and structural practices—are compared to the literature in Chapter 2. The second section of the chapter presents the study’s significance and implications. The third section suggests areas for further research.

Two Principles for Fostering Social Inclusion

The depth and breadth of the classroom practices presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 point to two core principles for fostering social inclusion:

1. connecting content to students' lives, and
2. creating mutually supportive social spaces

These principles are discussed in detail below. Although they are interrelated, the first principle, connecting content to students’ lives, is analyzed in reference to content-based practice while the second principle, creating mutually supportive social spaces, is connected to relational and structural practice. In the discussion that follows, the practices that support these two principles are compared to the literature on social inclusion.

Connecting Content to Students’ Lives

In making content meaningful for their students, the teachers in the study used a range of inclusive practices. These practices were explored in depth in Chapter 5 and organized into five categories: personalizing student work, choosing suitable topics, creating contextual interest, diversifying resources, and using resources in meaningful ways. In this chapter, they have been refined into three categories:
- personalizing student work
- selecting suitable content
- utilizing relevant teaching materials.

*Diversifying resources* and *using resources in meaningful ways* were removed as categories because they both relate to the wider practice of *using relevant teaching materials* and differ only in how they create relevance (i.e., through diversification or meaningful application). The category *creating contextual interest* was also removed because it overlapped with *personalizing student work* and *selecting suitable content*. For example, in using literary texts as a way of creating contextual interest, the teachers made the discussions personally relevant to their students. Similarly, in personalizing student work, the teachers had to decide which content resources to use. They also needed to be mindful about teaching sensitive topics, particularly when the topics were close to their students' lives.

Drawing on the literature review, the scholars who had the most to say about linking content to students’ lives were Banks (1990), Kosnik and Beck (2009), Dei (1996a), Kumashiro (2000, 2002), Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995), and Osborne (2005). In terms of personalizing student work, the practices used by the teachers in the study shared some basic conceptual similarities with practices suggested by race-based pedagogy and anti-oppression pedagogy. This being said, their practices did not go far enough in addressing systemic inequities and the relationship between these inequities and social identities as expressed by Dei (1996a) and Kumashiro (2000, 2002). In terms of diversifying content and making it relevant to students' lives, the teachers' practices were closely related to the work of Kosnik and Beck (2009) and Ladson-Billing (1994, 1995). The same can be said for practices of selecting suitable content, which also shared similarities with Osborne’s work on active learning and choosing material
related to students’ current knowledge. Finally, in terms of utilizing relevant materials, most of the teachers' practices resembled those outlined by Kosnik and Beck (2009), Ladson-Billings (1995), and scholars advocating citizenship-based pedagogies. In addition, Margaret’s use of relevant materials reflected Dei's principles of anti-racist education. These comparisons are discussed in further depth in the following sections.

**Personalizing Student Work**

The principle of connecting content to students’ lives suggests that the curriculum is centred on students’ experiences. This principle is important in fostering social inclusion as research shows that students are more engaged in the classroom when the academic content relates to their experiences, understandings, and prior knowledge. Kumashiro (2002), for example, argues that “educators should incorporate the students’ home cultures into their classrooms and pedagogies” (p. 28). This supports two of his principles for anti-oppressive education: *educating about the other* and *education that is critical of privileging and othering* (Kumashiro, 2000). The related practices call on teachers to ensure that the content represents the social identities of students who are excluded, particularly queer students and students who are marginalized by their gender identity. "Educators need to affirm differences and tailor their teaching to the specifics of their student population” (p. 29). Additional practices involve expanding the curriculum to include specific units on “the other” or those who are marginalized (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 41). He provides examples such as curricular units on labour history and resistance, feminist scholarship, literature by and/or about queers, and various topics in Asian studies (p. 41). He also recommends integrating topics related to “the other”. For example, “educators might teach about queer resistance movements in class discussions of the civil rights movements of the 1960s” (p. 41). Kumashiro’s practices for personalizing student work are
centred on social identity and the identification of oppression. His work calls for an explicit address and redress of practices and attitudes that harm not only queer students but all students who experience marginalization.

Ladson-Billings (1995) discusses ways of personalizing student work through culturally relevant pedagogy:

Culturally relevant teachers utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning. Patricia Hilliard’s love of poetry was shared with her students through their own love of rap music. . . . Hilliard was familiar with the music that permeates African American youth culture. Instead of railing against the supposed evils of rap music, Hilliard allowed her second grade students to bring in samples of lyrics from what both she and the students determined to be non-offensive rap songs. Students were encouraged to perform the songs and the teacher reproduced them on an overhead so that they could discuss the literal and figurative meanings as well as technical aspects of poetry such as rhyme scheme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. (p. 161)

Whereas Kumashiro is concerned with addressing the exclusion, marginalization, and oppression of particular groups, the teacher in the preceding quotation uses students’ culture as a tool for learning and developing content. Although Ladson-Billings' work reflects the experiences of Black students, particularly African American students, she extends her work to include students of all marginalized cultural backgrounds.

In my study, all of the teachers drew on students’ experiences as a way of personalizing classroom work, albeit through different approaches. Their practices ranged from using content generated by students’ lives and interest to ensuring diverse representation and integrating explicit content on exclusion. The teachers used students’ personal information as content for teaching about “the other” and for affirming the identities of each student. For example, formal content-based activities like journal writing, All About Me books, and letter writing encouraged students to share information about their lives. These practices involved students sharing
information about their families, their social circumstances outside of school, and to some extent their experiences of racial and social class exclusion. Informal daily discussions with students also enabled the teachers to understand their students' social lives outside of school and to use this understanding to select relevant content. As they became more familiar with their students’ lives, they were better able to personalize the content and address students’ interests and needs. As in Kumashiro’s (2000) work, the teachers recognized that students’ identities and backgrounds have a bearing on how they engage with school. In so doing, the teachers acknowledged “the realities of day-to-day life that can hinder one’s ability to learn” (p. 29).

However, Kumashiro (2000) also points out that “there is always a space between . . . who the teachers think the students are and who they actually are, or between what the teacher teaches and what the students learn” (p. 31). To address this space, the teachers in the study worked to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). For example, 2 of the 5 participants, Sharon and Margaret, discussed the importance of seeing their student’s individual circumstances in a wider social context. In their interviews, they spoke about understanding the social and political issues that influence students’ lives and shape the structure of the school and the classroom. This awareness led them to question their own beliefs and assumptions about particular groups of people, rethink notions of privilege, and understand intersecting forms of oppression in ways that are similar to practices endorsed by Dei and Kumashiro. Dei (1996a) suggests that “dealing with our social, economic, cultural, sexuality, and class differences is the key to inclusive schooling and education” (p. 78). Kumashiro recommends “doing homework”, that is, teachers should think about how socio-political circumstances affect their students' lives and then reflect on their own understandings and practice.
Margaret’s work shared similarities with Dei’s recommendation of discussing social differences with students and the implications these differences have. She often raised social issues with her students; an example was the discussion she generated on the text Naomi’s Road. Sharon’s practices, however, took a different turn. Her understanding of social inequities and exclusion made her reluctant to raise these issues in her class. She preferred to focus her practices on building knowledge about current social norms. Although she situated her thinking about content in a broader frame, her classroom practices were different from Kumashiro's and Dei's ideas of examining inequity explicitly and directly. For Sharon, focusing on issues of social justice and poverty with her students was "not respectful or inclusive of anything." Instead, she felt that her students would benefit more from being aware of Canadian society and history, and exploring topics that extended beyond their individual circumstances.

In terms of practice, Dei (1996a) suggests that “instructional practices... [should] respond to the social construction and structuralization of difference within the school system and the wider society” (p. 78). These practices for fostering inclusion require “opening spaces for alternative and sometimes oppositional paradigms to flourish in schools.” This involves ensuring the representation of diverse populations in the school and developing a broad-based curriculum and diverse teaching strategies (p. 79). Although Sharon and Margaret's practices did not meet these overall recommendations, Margaret did make concerted efforts to put Dei’s vision of social inclusion into practice. She used historical novels and graphic novels to draw out students' personal experiences and to help them connect their experiences both to school issues of bullying and to wider social issues of racism, war, and other forms of oppression. Margaret felt that many of her students "come from countries that are exposed to a lot" and that her priority was "not to negate that by putting the whole 'Canadian like' childhood onto them."
Instead, Margaret raised social issues as a way of demonstrating the realities of social exclusion throughout the world. This form of practice is also similar to Kumashiro’s (2000) recommendation of integrating content about groups that are often excluded in the curriculum through texts, reading projects, science research projects, and discussions of historical understandings (Loutzenheiser, 1997, as cited in Kumashiro, 2000, p. 33). Yet although she recognized homophobia as a problem at the school, I did not observe Margaret address this with her class.

Margaret’s practices did, however, closely resemble the practices of teachers described in Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) work. These teachers developed content that promoted the study of diverse cultures and explicit discussion of prejudice and discrimination. In their study, one of the participants is described as "promot[ing] inclusion in part through the books he uses in his literacy program. He reads aloud to his students every day, often from books that address issues of equity and diversity” (p. 89). Margaret also used this practice and extended it by encouraging students to relate the issues back to their own lives and experiences.

In research done by Au and Jordan (1981), Sears and Hughes (2002), and Piquemal and Nickels (2005), teachers found ways to connect the prescribed curriculum to the cultural understandings of their students. Similarly, Annette used current films and videos featuring students similar in age to the students in her class. Her use of "The Peace Tree" with her primary students fit with the Grade 2 Social Studies curriculum on Traditions and Celebrations (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). In another example of culture-based pedagogy, the teachers used literature on Canadian history that paralleled the life experiences of many of their students. Margaret used a fictional text about a Japanese-Canadian family during World War II. In response to the text, students whose families were recent immigrants from Afghanistan made
reference to their experiences of war while other students drew from their knowledge of other wars including the war in Iraq. From there, the teachers drew comparisons between what students knew and the curriculum content.

In some cases the teachers shaped or restructured the curriculum to focus on issues relevant to their students. In other cases they drew parallels between the curriculum and the knowledge that students already had. Some activities, like journal writing, were personalized by allowing students to write about themselves. These practices most closely reflected Ladson-Billings’ (1995) suggestions for personalizing students’ work through content. Ladson-Billings maintains that students should be encouraged to apply their skills and knowledge to their classroom learning and should also extend their learning by adding new and unfamiliar, though related, content (p. 161).

**Selecting Suitable Content**

The teachers in the study felt that selecting suitable content was important but difficult to do. Suitable content involved two aspects of decision making: the first was deciding what content was interesting and relevant to students’ lives, and the second was addressing sensitive topics about the present or the past. The participants in Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) study faced the same challenges. One of their participants explained:

> School has to connect to their real world, even if it is violent. Our students are jaded in a way, they are immature but they’re also worldly too. I find I need things that are real-world, high-interest. But it’s hard to find those things because a lot are not appropriate for school, or not deemed appropriate. (p. 85)

In my study, all of the participants expressed the same belief. As well, their decisions about content selection became more difficult as they came to understand the diversity among
In his recommendations for social inclusion, Dei (1996a) suggests arriving at a “balanced curriculum”:

The idea of a balance is predicated on arriving at some centrality in terms of how students situate themselves and their cultures, histories and experiences in the learning process. In other words, centrality is a matter of locating students within the context of their own frame of reference so that they can relate socially, politically, ideologically, spiritually, and emotionally to the learning process. (p. 83)

Dei’s concept of “balance” focuses on “the marginalized moving from the margins to the centre, and not simply being grafted into the existing order” (p. 82). It is about redefining power structures and not simply inserting race-based content into the curriculum. For Dei (1996a), “centrality” is a matter of locating students within the context of their own cultural frame of reference so they can relate to the learning process (p. 83). This came close to Joan and Annette’s work in the primary grades in their emphasis on students exploring learning through their own interests. However, it is not clear if the purpose of their practice was the same as Dei’s; Joan and Annette’s work of fostering social inclusion was structured so that the “centrality” Dei refers to was aimed at addressing student interests. This is different from explicitly directing the content to the identities of excluded groups of students.

Joan and Annette created activity centres that provided spaces for students to choose different types of content at various points in the day. The activities themselves (visual arts, dramatic play, journal writing) were often open ended, offering students possibilities to explore and create meaning relevant to their interests (e.g., write a story of their choice, read a book of their choice, design a piece of art of their choice). These kinds of practices do not go as far as Dei’s vision of shifting power imbalances. They did however reflect the principles Osborne (2005) outlines in his analysis of fostering inclusion through citizenship-based pedagogy. He
asserts that connecting material with students’ knowledge and experience through active learning is important. By extension, Joan and Annette encouraged students to choose content and activities that were relevant to their lives or caught their interest. They did not, however, intervene to ensure that such choices were central to their identities, as recommended by Dei. Teachers in the higher grades, though, demonstrated socially inclusive practices related to this goal. For example, Margaret extended the content to explore current community concerns by having her students write letters to the mayor. The students could address issues they were experiencing in their community and make requests for social change. These content practices encouraged the students to draw on their interests and share aspects of their lives that were important to them.

**Using Relevant Materials**

The lack of resources and teaching materials relevant to socially inclusive content added to the complexity of content planning. Manning (1994) showed that the teachers in his study had difficulty finding culturally diverse resources that connected to students’ lives. Kumashiro (2000) describes the classroom conditions and insufficient instructional resources at many urban schools as “shocking, shameful, and substandard” (p. 27). Banks (1990) found a lack of worthwhile resources to be a common occurrence in schools where students’ cultural identities varied.

The teachers I observed often purchased their own resources. These included images and books that represented the ethnic and racial diversity in their classrooms, materials that Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1994) maintain are essential for inclusion. They also purchased posters that affirmed the importance of social inclusion and group belonging. The posters included images of children sharing, helping one another, and respecting others. These are
examples of resources advocated by researchers who foreground citizenship pedagogies 
(Haydon, 2003; Osler & Starky, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1994; Winton, 2008; Wylie, 2004). One of 
the teachers, Margaret, began publishing books on social inclusion. Her publications included 
graphic novels on issues of racism, gender, and other forms of inequity geared to students in the 
junior grades who have reading difficulties. She used her publications in her class and designed 
the discussions to centre on inclusion. Margaret's publications show two aspects of socially 
inclusive practice. The first is the resource itself. The graphic novel genre is geared to students 
who have difficulties with literacy, both English language learners and students with learning 
disabilities (Booth & Lundy, 2006). One of the teachers in Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) study also 
found that graphic novels "help[ed] make text accessible to his students‖ (p. 89). The second 
aspect is the content Margaret chose to write about. Her novel focused on racism in South Africa. 
She used stories of Black history to help students in her class talk about their experiences of 
exclusion. Dei’s research (1996b) argues that such content supports activist work. Margaret 
wrote her novel to bring Afro-centric concerns on racism and exclusion to the fore.

Summary: Connecting Content to Students’ Lives

The findings for the first principle of inclusive pedagogy—connecting content to 
students' lives—are consistent with the literature on social inclusion in the broad sense that the 
teachers in the study had to find ways to learn about their students, address diversity, integrate 
sensitive content, and find appropriate resources. They had to consider how the content related to 
their students’ past and present lives. They had to decide if and to what extent they should 
expand on or diverge from the official curriculum. They had to consider the age level and 
appropriateness of inclusive materials. They had to address important questions: Was the 
material too intense? Was it beyond the scope of some students’ understanding? Was it too
graphic? Too personal? However, the findings of the study did not match the literature that calls on teachers to actively engage with students’ social identities and transform school and classroom structures.

Several of the teachers' practices reflected practices described in Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) study for personalizing student work. The teachers used similar materials (literary texts, computers, media) to draw connections to students’ lives, maintain student interest, and raise issues relevant to students’ backgrounds. Ladson-Billings' (1995) work is also evident in the teachers' efforts to develop cultural competence—the ability to interact with and relate to different cultural contexts. The teachers' use of culturally diverse texts and promotion of student choice through activity centres also brought their practices in line with citizenship-based and culture-based approaches. The practices fostered student engagement and were aimed at academic achievement but did not go as far as creating critical citizens or attempts to change social structures.

While all the teachers, to varying degrees, discussed social inequities and critical citizenship in their interviews, their practices seldom reflected the pedagogical approaches advocated by Dei (1996a) and Kumashiro (2000). Their work did not focus on explicit discussions of social identity, building critical citizenship, changing social structures, or challenging relations of power related to exclusion, with the exception of Margaret. Margaret showed aspects of these principles in her work, mainly in her choice of literary texts and the discussions she prompted on these texts. Margaret demonstrated her activism by publishing books for students on equity and inclusion. She worked hard to foster critical discussions in her classroom and encourage her students to take part. Overall, the findings reveal that, in the
context of the study, citizenship and culture-based practices were the most commonly used approaches to fostering social inclusion in terms of content.

Creating Mutually Supportive Social Spaces

The findings on teachers' relational and structural practices revealed that building a mutually supportive classroom environment is a second key principle of socially inclusive pedagogy. Described in detail in Chapters 6 and 7, relational and structural practices are brought together in this chapter to show that building a strong sense of community and positive social relations are important in responding to exclusion. Probing structural practices—the learning spaces created—led to an understanding of teachers' relational aspirations for social inclusion. Probing relational practices—the social interactions the teachers encouraged—led to an understanding of the school and classroom structures that foster social inclusion.

Teachers in this study used a range of structurally informed relational practices for fostering social inclusion. In Chapters 6 and 7, I include a list of practices for each dimension of pedagogy. In Chapter 6, I include: developing understanding, sharing personal stories, engaging in group and whole class discussions about exclusion, making time for one-on-one conversations, teaching social expectations, building community through class meetings, creating opportunities for social interactions, and identifying differences. In the examination of structures in Chapter 7, I include: creating social spaces, creating equitable spaces, and designing practices that support the school’s integrated model. The more detailed categories of practice used in Chapters 6 and 7 have been grouped in this chapter into three main areas:

- developing an affirming environment
- working effectively in groups
- building interpersonal relationships

Developing an affirming environment in the classroom refers to whole class settings and building community. Supporting inclusion through effective group work refers to creating opportunities for learning experiences and social interactions that support social inclusion. Building interpersonal relationships refers to fostering the relations of trust, affirmation, and safety that allow for diverse social needs and mutual understandings to be addressed in the classroom.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 offers a range of ideas on building mutually supportive social spaces. These include Lickona’s (1991) work on moral education and community development, Banks’ (1994) work on multicultural education, Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) principles of inclusive education, Ladson-Billings (1994) principles for culturally responsive teaching, and, Kumashiro’s (2000) recommendations for creating safe spaces. In terms of the study, their practices were closer to Lickona’s strategies for developing community and to Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) principles for understanding and affirming diversity than they were to Kumashiro’s (2000) ideas on challenging oppression. In creating cooperative group work, their practices reflected Banks’ (1990) instructional methods for student collaboration and in some cases contradicted Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) advice on avoiding ability groups. In building interpersonal relationships, their practices varied. Sharon’s work, for example, demonstrated strategies from race-based pedagogies (Ware, 2006) while Margaret's work showed similarities to Kumari'sho’s (2000) principles of reflexive thinking. These findings are explored further in the following sections.
Developing an Affirming Community

Developing an affirming community in the classroom involves several elements of practices that were described in chapters 6 and 7. To discuss this practice in relation to the literature I have combined the following practices described separately in chapter 6: developing understanding, sharing personal stories, engaging in group and whole class discussions about exclusion, teaching social expectations, and promoting community through classroom meetings. Elements of creating mutually supportive social spaces from chapter 7 are also included to help explain the structural considerations teachers have to make in order to develop an affirming community.

The findings of the study revealed that, across the grade levels, class meetings were the most common practice of community building. In the primary grades, these were formal meetings that occurred every Friday. They had a set agenda, were led by the students in different capacities, and were supported by the teacher. The meetings were held in a circle on the carpeted area and the students voiced their opinions on events in the classroom, the school, and the schoolyard. Together with the teacher, they came up with strategies to improve the social life of the classroom. These practices match Lickona’s guidelines for character development and community building:

1. a meeting of the whole class, emphasizing interactive discussion among class members
2. led by the teacher, a student, or a teacher and a student together
3. whenever possible, conducted in a circle to allow eye contact among participants
4. held at regularly scheduled times
5. usually 10 to 30 minutes long. (1991, p. 139)
According to Lickona, class meetings lead to social inclusion by helping students to develop “the attitudes and skills needed to take part in democratic group decision-making and become participating citizens of a democracy” (p. 139).

In the older grades, specifically in Ingrid’s and Margaret’s fifth and sixth grade classes, the meetings were informal, conversational, and focused on social issues related both to the students’ personal lives and to wider socio-cultural issues (e.g., how children in other countries live). Issues were discussed as they arose in the classroom and the meetings were most often led by the teacher.

Other practices for developing an affirming environment such as building the character traits, behaviours, and social skills that foster inclusion were also evident. The teachers’ practices reflected Lickona’s emphasis on teaching moral values. "Respect and responsibility," Lickona (1991) argues, "are the two foundational moral values that schools should teach” (p. 45). Most of the teachers in the study believed that explicit discussions about ways of relating would help students to socialize better and be more readily included in the classroom by their peers. For example, teaching students what being respectful means was demonstrated in one classroom and naming rudeness, what it looks like, and ways of addressing it was discussed in another. In both cases, the teachers spent time defining and demonstrating what these character traits looked like and how students should interact with others. The teaching of social expectations reflected principles recommended by Lickona (1991) and also corroborated Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) study in which some of the teachers taught their students about respect as a way of creating an affirming community (p. 95). Kumashiro (2000) however cautions against teaching such norms. He argues that “teaching about what society defines as normal [the way things generally are] and
what is normative [the way things ought to be]” may lead to further exclusion of students who do not act or respond in traditionally *normal* ways (p. 31).

In other examples, the teachers’ encouraged an affirming environment by speaking explicitly with the whole class about what inclusion means and how to be inclusive. Different from Lickona's work on teaching character traits, the focus was on understanding and appreciating social differences. This is different from teaching character traits as teachers foster inclusion by learning to affirm (students’ developing a strong like and appreciation) of their classmates’ cultures and social identities instead of teaching particular traits for being inclusive. For example, Joan and Annette spoke with their students about the importance of learning about cultures different from their own. They modelled learning about others by having students bring items from home that represented something significant about their lives. One student brought a favourite family song from her home country, India. The teacher wrote out the words phonetically in English and the students sang along to the song. Afterwards, she had the student explain the meaning of the song and praised her for sharing the song with the class. The song was about loving one’s country and Joan asked the class if they could relate to loving a country. Joan modeled what it meant to have affirming views of the “other”, in this case, of a different language and Indian culture. Students regularly brought items to share with the class. This practice is similar to Kumashiro’s (2002) principle of *educating about the other* as a way of developing affirming communities: "By increasing students’ knowledge of the Other, and perhaps helping students see similarities between the groups, this approach challenges oppression by aiming to develop in students an empathy for the Other” (p. 42).

Although this practice of teaching community appears similar to Kumashiro’s (2002) suggestion, a closer look shows a different purpose for fostering social inclusion. I did not, for
example, observe the teachers extend the discussions to the social issue most prominent for Kumashiro—queer and gender identity. The teachers in this study focused on culture. Their practices were closer to a comment made by one of the participants in Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) study on inclusive practices: “Creating community [is important] because the biggest issue is getting the children to understand that their uniquenesses are fabulous” (p. 95).

An affirming environment is one that respects and appreciates all students’ social identities, is open to change, and strives to alter social norms that exclude students because of their social identity (Goldstein, personal communication, 2009). For Kumashiro (2000) "affirming spaces" are safe and welcoming spaces where "normalcy" is not presumed and differences are embraced (p. 28). Placing pink triangles on classroom doors is one way of indicating a safe social space (Kenway & Willis, 1998, as cited in Kumashiro, 2000, p. 28).

Although Lickona (1991) and Kumashiro (2000) both discuss the importance of mutual affirmations in the classroom, their conceptualizations differ. On the one hand, Kumashiro (2000) focuses on questions of social identity and on students who experience oppression in schools. Lickona (1991), on the other hand, sees affirmation as a way of developing moral community (p. 99). His examples include: setting time aside for children to express their appreciation for one another, recognizing students who do good deeds in the classroom, representing good deeds visually in the classroom, and teaching and encouraging the use of positive words in the classroom (pp. 99-100). Kumashiro (2000) looks more closely at social identities and the systemic power inequities in classrooms and in the community that prevent students from experiencing inclusion. He suggests revamping the ways in which students think about certain identities by teaching about differences (p. 28). He also argues that schools should provide resources and spaces where students can “receive advocacy” (p. 28). However, the
teachers in the study built affirming communities through practices more closely related to Lickona's work on citizenship-based pedagogy. They facilitated class discussions on building empathy, recognizing that everyone is unique, understanding that everyone has different experiences, and learning positive ways of responding to one another.

**Working Effectively in Groups**

Encouraging students to work together in groups draws on a combination of relational and structural practices. From the relations dimension I brought together practices from: developing understanding with creating opportunities for social interactions, and identifying differences. They were combined with the structural practices of creating equitable spaces and addressing the school’s integrated model. The teachers in the study designed social spaces and designing practices in the classroom that supported the school’s integrated model. They also encouraged social interactions among the students that required classroom structures in terms of layout, routines, and schedules.

The teachers designed their classrooms to support rich and varied group interactions. For example, all of the classrooms had seating arrangements that supported both independent and group activities. Each classroom had desks or tables for groups of children to sit together. During seated work time, students had collaborative tasks to complete or independent tasks that encouraged them to share ideas with others. All of the classrooms had a carpeted area that was used for group and whole class meetings, direct instruction, and discussions. Sharon and Ingrid used their carpeted area daily for small group activities. Joan and Annette based their room design on activity centres where groups of students could work together on areas of interest to them. These spaces supported the teachers’ social practices by providing a variety of forums in
the classroom for developing interpersonal relationships. They also resembled the findings from Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) study on inclusive teaching practices:

Some students choose to read independently while others read with a partner. Some sit at their desks, others on the sofa, and one student who is known to like to read on his own without being disturbed sits apart in one of the easy chairs. It is interesting to observe the students because the more able ones help those struggling. (p. 90)

Banks’ (1993) third dimension of multicultural equity pedagogy refers to the use of thoughtful instructional methods as relational practices for fostering social inclusion. He maintains that inclusive techniques like cooperative groups, simulations, role-playing, and discovery support the diversity of students’ social and academic needs:

An equity pedagogy exists when teachers use techniques and teaching methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial and ethnic groups from all social classes. Using teaching techniques that cater to the learning and cultural styles of diverse groups and using the techniques of cooperative learning are some of the ways that the teachers have found effective with students from diverse racial, ethnic, and language groups. (p. 27)

Equity pedagogy recommends teachers create opportunities for students to work with each other in different situations. This may or may not encourage interactions that foster inclusion. For example, Sharon acknowledged the divide between girls and boys in her class. But rather than design spaces to promote their integration, she chose to respect the cultural and developmental choices of the girls. She believed this was being respectful of her students and the religious faiths of their families.

Mark Reginald's inclusive model provided a structure of integration for each grade division. The teachers had to collaborate with their colleagues, negotiate schedules, and design work spaces that carefully considered both the school’s integrated model and their own classroom practices for creating mutually supportive social spaces. The primary/junior division
had four classes and five teachers. Three classes had one teacher each and the fourth class had two full-time teachers. Sharon worked in the fourth classroom with another full-time teacher. The class had several students with identified challenges and difficulties due to social circumstances. The two teachers worked together in adjacent classrooms to design a program and environment that suited the needs of their students. Groupings were designed according to subject, grade level, and ability.

The junior division had four classrooms plus one resource classroom that supported all of the students in the division. Formerly, the resource room was designed to serve special education students. However, the study revealed that the teachers believed the students did not think of the resource room as a special education room, but rather as a desirable place to learn. Students were placed in groups from all four classrooms and assigned to one of the five classrooms for learning math or reading. The teachers believed that separating students into ability groups across the division assisted academic development, which in turn fostered social inclusion. While ability groupings were used, these were embedded within an integrated, inclusive model. The ability groups were fluid and changed based on subject area. Ability groups are in direct contrast to Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) recommendation of creating heterogeneous groups as a means of fostering social inclusion:

Small groups used in teaching often form along ethnic, racial, gender or class lines, especially if ability grouping is involved; this in turn reinforces labeling and stereotyping . . . Many of the new teachers saw the need to vary the groups and, in particular, avoid ability grouping as much as possible. [One participant] reported: “My small groups are heterogeneous . . . because I want everyone to realize that they can learn from others and that everyone has something of value to share.” (p. 96)

At the same time, the structure of Mark Reginald School reflected Banks’ (1990) principles of school structure. Banks recommends that segregated classes with a disproportionate number of
low-income and Black students be dismantled and that all students be included in mainstream classes (Oakes, 1985). He also argues that the beliefs underlying school structures be rethought: “A norm will have to be institutionalized in the school that states that all students can and will learn, regardless of their home situations, race, social class, or ethnic group” (p. 54). Grouping practices that occur within classrooms are based on the school’s approach to integration.

Indeed, Mark Reginald had a sophisticated school model that includes all students in mainstream classroom settings while at the same time ensures that groupings are also responsive to other forms of exclusion. The teachers worked collaboratively to address and respond to the needs of all students in their grade divisions. They worked within a learning structure that required careful attention to organizing teacher and student timetables. They adjusted their practices to the school's integrated model by collaborating with colleagues, understanding their colleagues' work styles and practices, listening to and acquiring knowledge about students outside the classroom, and giving careful consideration to inclusive classroom practices. Decisions on developing a balanced academic program and meeting the physical and social needs of all students are part of the considerations for fostering social inclusion.

When the teachers in the study set up their classrooms, they considered how to create opportunities for students to work together, to get to know each other, support one another, problem solve, build and sustain a productive learning environment, and create mutual understanding. They also considered how to work effectively within an integrated model that had combined classes and required teachers to work collaboratively. They had to have a clear understanding of their colleagues’ practices and of students’ social and academic needs in order to create groups that would foster social inclusion. They designed their classrooms to reflect their content delivery and decided on the best use of time, space, and resources. The school's model of
integration at each division level promoted and supported the socially inclusive work of teachers in their classrooms. In turn, the teachers used practices that worked within and supported the school model.

**Building Interpersonal Relationships**

The teachers in the study believed that building personal relationships with students promoted inclusive practice by fostering trust, respect, and a sense of community. As Joan commented, “Here it’s all about relationships, and if you don’t have that . . . you’ve got nothing.”

To discuss the findings of this study in regards to building interpersonal relationships, I combined two practices from Chapter 6, making time for one-on-one conversations and sharing personal stories and one practice from chapter 7, creating equitable program structures. Each of these practices point to the effects interpersonal relationships have on creating mutually supportive social spaces in the classroom. Ladson-Billings (1995), Kumashiro (2000), Likona, (1991), and Kosnik and Beck (2009) also discuss the importance of interpersonal relations.

Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) emphasizes the need for a strong sense of community. Kumashiro (2000) focuses on safe spaces and building relationships that encourage students to think about and respond to commonly excluded groups. Kosnik and Beck (2009) believe that interpersonal relationships between teacher and student help students to feel safe, welcomed and “at home” (p. 96). In my study, these principles were demonstrated to varying degrees.

Kosnik and Beck (2009) suggest that “teachers have to set the tone, showing that they respect all the students equally and are genuinely interested in getting to know them all” (p. 96). They describe one of their study participants in the following way:

Believing that teaching is a relational act, Paul spends time getting to know his students: what is going on in their lives, their interests, anxieties, and strengths.
“Teaching is a social skill; not just the performance aspect, but actually having relationships with people and developing those relationships.” (p. 82)

The teachers in my study used a number of practices that supported Kosnik and Beck’s suggestions: establishing a classroom tone that fostered interpersonal relationships between teacher and students, showing concern for inclusion, and getting to know all the students in the class.

Setting the tone in the classroom meant different things to the teachers in the study. As shown in Chapter 6, Sharon set a tone that she felt was congruent with her students’ lives outside the school. Her approach reflected warm demander pedagogy (Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2006) and the belief that her students responded best to an authoritarian approach (Delpit, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995), however, recommends an approach from race-based pedagogy that is different from Sharon’s practice:

The teachers kept the relationships between themselves and their students fluid and equitable. They encouraged the students to act as teachers, and they themselves, often functioned as learners in the classroom. . . . The teachers attempted to create a bond with all of the students, rather than the idiosyncratic, individualistic connection that might foster an unhealthy competitiveness. This bond was nurtured by the teachers’ insistence on creating a community of learners as a priority. They encouraged the students to learn collaboratively, teach each other, and be responsible for each other’s learning. (p. 163)

For Ladson-Billings, interpersonal relationships are based on developing a community of learners—a community where teachers and students are simultaneously leaders and learners. Ingrid’s practice came very close to this goal. She created a collaborative and equitable tone in the classroom and her relationships with her students were based on trust and respect. At the same time, this inclusive environment was not always evident among the students.

All of the teachers in the study showed concern for students who experienced exclusion. In some cases they took these students aside individually to talk with them about their
behaviours and what they needed to feel socially included in the classroom. Sometimes the topics were personal and social; sometimes they were about academic support. These discussions took place when the rest of the class was engaged in independent or group work or during transitional times in the classroom. The teachers also made space available in the classroom to work one-on-one with a student. All of the classrooms had private workspaces. This was either a desk in a quiet part of the room or a cubicle at the back of the room sometimes enclosed by a curtain. This physical structure provided spaces for individual work, small group work, and large group work. It also meant that students with different social needs—for independent work time, discussion, or collaboration with others—were included in the learning environment.

Margaret preferred to speak with students individually and to develop relationships with individual students. This was part of her practice of social inclusion. Margaret spent time with students in one-on-one settings, listening to their stories and circumstances. She demonstrated an understanding of students’ social needs by treating every student in the classroom as an individual and providing different learning spaces: physical space in the classroom, time to be alone, time to work with others. Listening to students’ stories and being self-reflexive is what Kumashiro (2002) refers to as “doing homework.” All of the teachers in the study worked hard to create ways of fostering inclusion based on students’ life circumstances, especially poverty.

In most cases where exclusion was caused by name calling, stereotyping or bullying, the teachers were able to address the concerns with their students, resolve the immediate issues, and foster a sense of inclusion. However, despite the benefits of one-on-one discussion and building interpersonal relationships, some of the teachers in the study found it difficult to connect with certain students. This was the case with Josh who was unable to participate in most of the
planned activities. It was also the case with Tyrone whose teacher explained in an interview, “I’m feeling absolutely powerless. I don’t know what to do about [his situation]."

Summary: Creating Mutually Supportive Social Spaces

Creating mutually supportive social spaces required the teachers to make numerous decisions. They had to have a clear sense of timing and good planning to move between whole class discussions and individual conversations. They had to decide how to develop community, when to have particular discussions, and what tone to use with their students. They had to decide what effective groupings would consist of and when to set up these groupings.

The practices of the participants showed similarities to some of the practices outlined in the literature. In terms of building affirming communities, some of the teachers’ practices were closely aligned with Lickona’s (1991) work. Joan and Annette’s weekly class meetings were directly connected to Lickona’s recommendations for building moral community through class meetings. Joan and Sharon’s teaching about respect reflected Lickona and Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) principles of inclusive practice. All of the teachers were dedicated to affirming their students; however, my analysis shows different priorities and purposes. For example, Joan and Annette were explicit about affirming their students’ cultural identities and led discussions on the uniqueness of cultural traditions (e.g., songs, traditions). Ingrid focused on affirming students’ behaviours and actions. However, her focus was more on affirming interactions than on social identities. Although her practices sometimes suggest some commitment to race-based pedagogy, (Dei, 1996a; Kumashiro, 2000), especially in facilitating discussions on racism or oppression, they arose only when inequity or bullying occurred among the students. Ingrid’s main goal was to build an inclusive community. By putting cooperative games and class meetings at the centre of her teaching, she demonstrated practices from citizenship-based pedagogies.
Creating mutually supportive social spaces was also fostered in group settings. These practices were similar to Kosnik and Beck (2009) and Banks’ (1990) recommendations of using instructional methods that promote collaborative and inter-relational work. Joan and Annette established centres in their classroom, Ingrid and Sharon often assigned group projects, and Margaret had students work in pairs. All of the teachers designed group spaces in their classrooms (tables, desks pulled together, carpet area) to enable students to work together. They saw collaborative student work and inter-relational activities as inclusive practice.

Interpersonal relationships were fostered in various ways. Practices such as asking questions, inquiring about students’ lives outside of school, and listening to students’ stories are reflected in the literature by Kosnik and Beck (2009). A race-based pedagogy was illustrated in Sharon’s high academic expectations for her students and her tone in the classroom. Margaret’s practices suggest some affiliation with Kumashiro’s (2000) practices of self-reflexive thinking about the link between students’ social circumstances and social inclusion.

Some practices differed from those suggested in the literature. Kumashiro’s principle that teachers should challenge “normalcy” was not taken up by the teachers in this study. Margaret did engage her students in discussions on critical media literacy (e.g., analyzing Dove ads and stereotypes of beauty) yet in terms of classroom community, the idea of inclusion was centred on constructive interpersonal relationships rather than on engaging the many dimensions of social identity. Strategies for grouping students also differed from the literature. Although Kosnik and Beck (2009) advise against creating ability groups, the teachers used this practice as a way to address the school’s integrated model. Teachers also did not group students with the aim of fostering social inclusion based on social identities, as Kumashiro (2000) suggests. In fact Sharon chose to keep the student groups in her class homogeneous in terms of gender. Building
interpersonal relationships also differed from Ladson-Billings' (1995) principle of creating a community of learners. While all teachers demonstrated efforts to achieve mutually respectful interactions with their students, these interactions were not similar to Ladson-Billings' vision of reciprocal learning and leadership.

For the most part, the literature does not focus on specific practices of creating mutually supportive social spaces. With the exception of Lickona (1991), whose work is detailed and grounded in practice, other researchers provide a few examples from research and some ideas from ideological standpoints. This being said, the participants in this study did build affirming classroom communities through interpersonal relationships. They focused on building relations with each student and on creating opportunities for students to work with each other in different learning situations. The literature tends not to investigate these daily interactions. The descriptions of practice, especially in Chapters 6 and 7, reveal the sustained engagement needed to build mutually supportive social spaces from the ground up.

**Significance of the Study:**

**Understanding Socially Inclusive Practices**

This study is about how teachers foster social inclusion. It examines socially inclusive classroom practices and offers an in-depth, rich, and detailed description of teachers’ work in fostering social inclusion over the course of 1 school year. It reveals the complexity of socially inclusive practices through the nuances, layers, variability, and scope of teachers’ work. The two principles for fostering socially inclusive pedagogy, *connecting content to students’ lives* and *creating mutually supportive social spaces* reflect and confirm a number of practices discussed in the literature review and offer a way of thinking about how structures contribute to creating mutually supportive social spaces for fostering social inclusion.
Delpit (1995) argues, “I believe that the actual practice of good teachers of all colors typically incorporates a range of pedagogical orientations” (p. 47). At first glance the findings of the study would seem to suggest that teachers’ practices match most of the practices recommended in the literature review across the pedagogical; however, how teachers enact these practices can be better portrayed through the course of a longitudinal study that explores teachers’ work in greater detail. The findings in the study corroborate the recommendations of other scholars. In relation to content-based practices, the teachers worked hard to connect the curriculum to students’ lives. This practice is reflected mainly in the literature on pedagogies foregrounding culture (Au & Jordan, 1981; Banks, 1990; Piqumal & Nickels, 2005). Also included in content-based practices were strategies connected to race-based and anti-oppressive pedagogies. For example, teachers worked hard to include content that centred not only on students’ lives and interests but also on their social identities. Typically, with the exception of Margaret, their practices did not investigate current social systems that oppress particular groups nor did they discuss what was needed to change current systems—two significant strategies outlined by Dei (1996a,b) and Kumashiro (2000, 2002). In respect to social relations and structural practices, the teachers developed mutual support and understanding among class members as a way of fostering inclusion. The principle of creating mutually supportive social spaces offers insights into how structural practices interrelate with relational practices to foster social inclusion. This was achieved mainly through pedagogies that foreground citizenship and included explicit instruction in social norms and behaviour complemented and enhanced by various community building approaches. Strategies of community building recommended by Lickona (1991) were evident in the teachers’ work observed in the study. Like Baloche (1998) and Lickona (1991) who recommend class meetings and community-based activities, the
teachers in the study designed the physical layout and routines of their classrooms in ways that promoted a variety of settings and opportunities for inclusion. Certain race-based practices were observed in Sharon’s style of building interpersonal relationship while the remaining teachers showed practices similar to Kosnik and Beck’s (2009) recommendations of getting to know students and fostering positive relationships.

This study contributes to the literature on socially inclusive practice by offering more detailed and nuanced portraits of practices associated with the two principles of fostering social inclusion. The nuances and subtleties in the teachers' practices illustrate how they experience the daily occurrences of classroom life and how they respond in ways that foster social inclusion. Teachers made significant decisions day by day and moment by moment as specific incidents arose and as students reacted to the classroom environment in sometimes unanticipated ways.

What distinguishes this study from many others is not so much the principles but the detailed portrayal of the many challenges and the varied actions and considerations that define and shape the use of these principles. The portraits offer greater and more explicit elaboration of how teachers create socially inclusive classroom environments, particularly mutually supportive social spaces. The dynamic complexity of fostering social inclusion is significant. It is fraught with numerous tensions, dilemmas, layers of meaning, and applications. The work of creating and sustaining socially inclusive environments requires much thought and skill on the part of the teacher.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study describe the complexity of fostering social inclusion and illustrate two principles of socially inclusive pedagogy. For teachers, the study offers insight into
classroom practices from a range of orientations. At the school level, the study suggests that school administrators and lead teachers should continue to support teachers, students, and the community with information and opportunities for fostering inclusion. For teacher educators, the findings imply that socially inclusive practices could be thought about through multiple lenses. In addition, teacher educators should address the understandings of social inclusion that their students already have and consider how to build up from these understandings through different approaches to inclusive practice. Such an approach to pre-service would most clearly represent the actual practices of teachers’ daily work.

Teachers should deepen their thinking about the complexities of social inclusion and what it means in their own practice. The teachers in the study, for example, approached inclusive practice from a variety of sources (personal experience, beliefs, professional understandings, teaching experiences). Although they felt their approaches usually worked well, there were also times when they felt "powerless" to make the changes they wanted. In other words, they recognized the limits of their approach to social inclusion, but could not see how to do it differently. Being able to see their practices in a wider social and theoretical context of debates on social inclusion would help to broaden their understanding of the complexities they face in their daily practice. Having the time, resources, community, and educational support to "do homework" on their beliefs and practices as Kumashiro suggests, would also provide a context for them to consider alternative approaches. This can be achieved through more professional development opportunities designed to explore a range of pedagogical approaches to inclusive practice—particularly those that are less familiar—and through sharing research such as provided in this study.
The research showed teachers engaged in collaborative practices that contributed to social inclusion. Teachers should continue to build partnerships with colleagues as a way to improve their socially inclusive practices. Building partnerships not only requires the support of school administration and school structures, but also providing time for teachers to talk, collaborate, and share ideas. Collaborative practice among teachers is a suggestion that moves in the corridors (Thiessen & Anderson, 1999).

Although the study did not intend to make recommendations at the school level, it does suggest some things for school administrators and lead teachers to consider. Mark Reginald's integrated model is a good example of how social inclusion can be promoted at the school level. The model includes adequate and careful staffing as well as ongoing support for teachers in adapting socially inclusive practices to an integrated structure of learning.

Referring back to the narratives in the introductory chapter and how this study emerged leads me to discuss how pre-service and beginning teachers can benefit from the findings. Teacher educators should consider embedding a multiple lens approach to social inclusion in their courses. This is because teacher candidates should be exposed to the range of practices and orientations that can be and are used for fostering social inclusion. These practices from different orientations should be accompanied by a consideration of the implications of each practice. By sharing with candidates the broad range of perspectives and practices, through detailed portraits of daily practices, teacher candidates can look at and explore their own practices to see how their ideas, understandings and practices are being described. As a result, teacher candidates might better understand the possibilities and limitations of their own pedagogical ideas for fostering social inclusion.
Limitations of the Study

The strength of this research study lies in the description it offers of applied classroom practice, especially in a context where few studies have been done on the variety of ways teachers foster social inclusion. While the study offers insight into teachers' day-to-day practices of inclusion over the course of a full school year, there are still limitations to what could be reported or claimed.

The study focused on 1 school, 5 principal participants, and 4 secondary participants. This limited the scope of the study’s comparative analysis. When I analyzed the data, I had to be careful not to draw conclusions that implied generalizations. The findings were specific to the school and the teachers in the study, making the scope both a strength and a limitation of the research.

The study was limited to examining three dimensions of pedagogy. There would be more to consider if, for example, classroom management practices, particular curriculum areas, and teachers’ planning processes had also been studied. While defining dimensions of pedagogy helped to keep the study focused and manageable, further studies of a similar nature concentrating on different dimensions of pedagogy would extend this research.

As shown in the framing concepts of the study, the findings from the study relate to classroom practice. This focus suited the nature and size of the study; however, it limited opportunities to understand how factors beyond the classroom influence teachers’ inclusive practices. Extending the study to a more detailed consideration of the impact of the corridors (the school) and the community (Thiessen & Anderson, 1999) on teachers' work and decision making would have added more insight into classroom practices.
The study reviewed literature on socially inclusive practice from a range of pedagogical orientations. However, I did not explore these orientations in detail during data collection or analysis. Hence the study is limited in its insight into the correlation of teachers' practices with particular orientations and the extent to which teachers can authentically engage in practices based in more than one orientation.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

This study has opened avenues for exploration and future research. Doing a similar study at another school to discover if and how social inclusion is fostered differently would be an extension of the research. Examining additional dimensions of pedagogy would open important opportunities for comparative analysis.

Although the study did not seek to analyze why teachers’ practices of social inclusion varied, the findings did present insight into teachers’ pedagogical perspectives and beliefs. Extending the study to an examination of the reasons for different approaches and further understanding why teachers approach social inclusion in the ways they do would offer additional ways for understanding the complexity of socially inclusive pedagogy and offer possibilities for thinking about how teachers connect to the concept.

Investigating other contexts would also open new avenues of research. The study looked closely at the classroom practices of teachers. An exploration of how the school context ("the corridors") and the community influence classroom practices would contribute to add to the understanding inclusive practices.

The findings also suggest the need to understand pre-service candidates' ideas about social inclusion. By extension, exploring how teacher education can better prepare candidates to
use inclusive practices in their future classrooms would be an important extension of the research in this study.

In this study, the participants ranged in years of teaching experience and in their views of social inclusion. The study did not explore how the differing trajectories influenced their understandings of fostering social inclusion. Tracing how fostering social inclusion develops and changes at different points in a teaching career would also add to the literature on socially inclusive pedagogy.

**Concluding Remarks**

Fostering social inclusion is a complex process that needs to be better understood in practice. The complexity lies in the many challenges teachers face in a diverse inner-city school and the daily decisions they need to make. The challenges relate to students’ grade levels, social circumstances, and individual needs as well as to curriculum expectations and teachers’ beliefs about inclusive practices. The teachers in the study took different approaches to fostering social inclusion. Ranging in scope and orientation, and often intersecting, their practices reveal a dynamic and complex understanding of social inclusion. These practices show some connections to the principles that already exist in the literature and they also show differences.

The findings of the study lead me to return to the experiences that first inspired the research. Looking back at my early days of teaching, I realize I would now approach things differently. I would use several of the same strategies for fostering social inclusion—community building, talking with parents and students, using multicultural texts—but I would have access to more practices from a range of perspectives in order to further student engagement, academic achievement, and developing creative citizens. I would draw more on what the students bring to
the classroom to develop curriculum content. I would think more critically and broadly about why students experience exclusion and about my own assumptions about difference. I would have a wider repertoire of inclusive practices to draw on for content selection and planning, for building mutual understanding in the classroom, and for designing my classroom to reflect my teaching practices and the diversity of my students. I would think about how I could change students’ understanding of what is “normal” in terms of identity and I would work towards “de-normalizing” classroom norms and structures to ensure all students were included.

“The big question for teacher education remains. How do we educate teachers to work in complex situations of diversity?” (Phillion & Connelly, 2004, p. 463). From this research, as a teacher educator, I also intend to approach my practices differently. I want to take the time to better understand my students and where they are in their thinking about social inclusion. I want to lay a foundation that is similar to the frame of this study; that is, defining social inclusion in a broad sense and being explicit that it includes all students. I want to be sure to take into account students who experience challenging and difficult social circumstances because of the ways their social identities and backgrounds are addressed in schools and society. I want to establish the awareness that there are multiple ways of approaching social inclusion, that each approach has its own set of purposes, and that the approaches are interrelated.

I aim to use the portraits of the participants in this study as examples of teachers’ daily work, the challenges teachers face, and the ways they address those challenges through their chosen practices. I want to discuss how practices differ and how their differences lead to different goals for inclusion. I will encourage students to understand and articulate their views of social inclusion and to think about what practices they currently use and would like to use for fostering social inclusion. I would like teacher candidates to find their own “entry point” for
socially inclusive practice (Goldstein, 2010, personal communication) by thinking about their own experiences, understandings, and contexts for teaching.

Understanding how to foster social inclusion is at the heart of this study. This research shows how teachers engage with the concept of social inclusion and how they enact the practices for fostering social inclusion on a day-to-day basis. The participant’s practices have similarities to the literature and yet they also vary. Teachers and their practices cannot be categorized and compartmentalized into orientations, as their practices are dependent on many variables that shift and change. Pedagogical practices can however be explored in relation to what is already known in the literature and, in using the literature, teachers can make informed decisions about their socially inclusive work.
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Appendix A

School Visits and Classroom Observation Schedule

Schedule:

October: Oct. 23rd school observations

November:
- Nov. 6th – classroom 1
- Nov. 13th – classroom 2
- Nov. 20th – classroom 3
- Nov. 27th – classroom 4

December: Open for school observations

Interviews

Involvement/observations of holiday festival organization

January:
- Jan. 1st - classroom 1
- Jan. 8th – classroom 2
- Jan. 15th – classroom 3
- Jan. 22nd – classroom 4
- Jan. 29th – school observations

February:
- Feb. 5th - classroom 1
- Feb. 12th – classroom 2
- Feb. 19th – classroom 3
- Feb. 26th - classroom 4
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Appendix B

Introductory Letter to School Leaders

This study is set in the context of an inner city school environment. It concerns understanding the classroom practices of a group of elementary school teachers who are actively involved in issues of social inclusion. Social inclusion refers to the sense of belonging and equitable learning environment teachers create in their classrooms through their daily routines and practices. Classroom pedagogy, with a focus on social inclusion, is at the heart of the study. Through observations of classroom practices and daily school life, and interviews with teachers and other school community members, I aim to discover the socially inclusive pedagogical practices in one inner city school.

Studying pedagogical practices and the school as a community is significant because teachers and educators working towards goals of social inclusion, whether from diverse or homogenous environments, have something to learn from those who have a history of teaching and working well in such circumstances. The data generated in these classrooms and from teachers working and living in Toronto offer a rich sample of what it is like teaching in diverse and multicultural urban settings. The information gathered on pedagogical practices will give school boards, school communities, teachers, teacher candidates, some insight into the experiences, beliefs and practices of school communities and the teachers using inclusive approaches in their classroom.

In Toronto, The Toronto District School Board acknowledges “that certain groups in our society are treated inequitably because of individual and systemic biases related to race, colour, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, faith, sex, gender, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status” (Toronto District School Board, 1999). Students in inequitable environments may experience learning in less than optimal ways and the Toronto School Board states, “this inequitable treatment limits their future success and prevents them from making a full contribution to society.” (Toronto District School Board, 1999). However, there are teachers who actively seek social inclusion in their classrooms and there are schools that work towards a community where this type of pedagogy can develop. Some teachers and some schools in Toronto have been recognized for their inclusive work.

A model inner city school is an ideal setting for this research. A model school is an ideal setting because the school community and practices reflect the vision laid out by the Model Schools For Inner City Task Force and include “achieving fairness and equity” and an “inclusive culture”. It is this type of school community and group of teachers that I would like to study in order to learn about socially inclusive pedagogy.
The main question in this study is:

How do teachers in an urban inner city school foster social inclusion in their classroom?

The sub-questions are:

What kind of socially inclusive practices are preferred? Why? (curriculum, classroom interaction/management, assessment/evaluation, classroom environment/culture, etc.)

What issues/challenges do teachers face? How do they address those issues/challenges?

How do the norms, structures and priorities of the school affect socially inclusive practices in the classroom?

To answer these questions, I plan to conduct interviews with teachers and members of the school community and to conduct extensive observations of daily classroom and school life at one inner city school. Participants include a group of 4 classroom teachers (preferably a team within one grade) who are known for their interest and work in the area of socially inclusive pedagogy and other school community members including the model school coordinator and administration.

Beginning in October 2006 I will observe and interview 4 classroom teachers. The time commitment will consist of one, one-week visit in each classroom, every five weeks. During each one-week visit, I will spend 3 out of 5 days in the classroom observing the daily routines and specific classroom lessons and activities. Classroom set up and daily routines, resources, lesson designs, conversations about social inclusion are examples of things I will be observing and noting. Also during the one-week visit, I will conduct an interview with the classroom teacher that will be no more than one hour in length. Questions during the interviews will mainly discuss issues of teaching, learning, classroom practices and understandings and experiences surrounding social inclusion. The weekly visits will occur once every five weeks and will happen a total of five times bringing the data collection to a close by the end of May 2007.

Since I will study four teachers and their classrooms, classroom visits will occur for four weeks and the fifth week will be used to observe daily school life, school programming (such as concerts and events) and to speak with other school community members such as the models school coordinator, resource staff and administration to further understand how the community supports socially inclusive practices. Participants will be asked to participate in interviews and be required to share their stories and experiences of teaching and being part of the school community.

As a researcher who is also an elementary school teacher, I understand the demands of teaching and will make every effort to contribute in positive ways to the school environment and each classroom that I will be observing. I look forward to the possibility of working in your school this coming school year.
Appendix C
Introductory Meeting for Potential Participants

The intent is to inform the potential participants of the structure of the study and the kinds of things I will be looking for and will discuss during the observations and interviews. I will provide the potential participants with the opportunity to ask for clarification of any research related matters of interest to her/him. I will go over the purpose of the study, areas of focus ad the content of the consent letter.

For example:

“Thank you for considering to take part in the study. Prior to getting started, it is important for me to go over the purpose of the study, definition of social inclusion, the different areas we will discuss, explain the consent form (distribute a copy to each potential participant) and to provide a chance for you to ask any questions before signing the consent”

Purpose:

To understand socially inclusive pedagogy from teachers who have been recognized as fostering social inclusion in their classroom
To add to the literature that currently addresses issues surrounding social inclusion in the classroom
To explore the nuances that occur in daily practice that influence social inclusion in the classroom

Social Inclusion:

We will talk about what this terms means and how it will be used throughout the study. I will refer back to the information form sent out earlier to school leaders (appendix B) that provides some description of socially inclusive pedagogy.
Different Areas that will be discussed during the study:

- Broad issues related to classroom life: relational, curriculum, language/communication, teaching approach, working with school norms
- Specific issues related to classroom life: responses to lessons, student actions, events, incidences
- Teaching Knowledge and development: how one came to understand and care about socially inclusive pedagogy (childhood experience, schooling experience, profession PD)
- Reflections on research process

Review of Consent Letter

- Review timelines
- Interview process
- What to expect during observational periods
- Matters of confidentiality and privacy
- Rights of participant
Appendix D
Information and Consent Letter to Primary Participants

[OISE/UT letterhead]

Date:

Dear Participant:

As researcher and doctoral student, I invite you to participate as a primary participant in a study entitled: Socially Inclusive Pedagogy: Socially Inclusive Schools. This study is supported through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and is supervised by Professor Dennis Thiessen, Professor and Chair of the department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning.

This study concerns understanding the classroom practices of a group of elementary school teachers who are actively involved in issues of social inclusion. Social inclusion refers to the sense of belonging and equitable learning environment teachers create in their classrooms through their daily routines and practices. Classroom pedagogy, with a focus on social inclusion, is at the heart of the study. Through observations of classroom practices and daily school life, and interviews with teachers and other school community members, I aim to discover the socially inclusive pedagogical practices in one inner city school. It is anticipated that the research will generate teacher-relevant understandings of classroom practice writing the context of a Toronto school.

**How were you identified as a possible participant?**

The school you work in has been selected because it is one of Toronto’s first model inner city schools. You were identified as a possible participant through a nomination from your model school coordinator, ____________________.

**What will you be asked to do?**

The data collection will occur from October 2006 – May 2007. During that time, I am inviting you to do the following:

A. Allow me, the researcher, to observe your teaching practices and your classroom. I will be looking specifically for socially inclusive teaching practices and this will be attained through the broad observations of daily classroom life and specific lessons and happenings. I will be a non-participant observer in your classroom. I will visit your class for three days a week, every five weeks.
B. Participate in three interviews. The first will take place in November shortly after the first set of observations, the second in February and the third will be closer to the end of the data collection, in May. Each interview will be no longer than 2 hours in length. The interviews will have two foci: (1) Interviews related directly classroom pedagogy and structure – to gain insight and clarifications of the actual events I observed in the classroom. (2) Interviews related to teachers’ understandings and experiences that connect specifically to socially inclusive pedagogy – to gain a greater understanding of how the teacher developed the socially inclusive pedagogy in the classroom.

The time and location for these interviews will be established at times convenient to you. With your permission, the interviews will be audio-taped and later transcribed. Until the completion of the study in 2007, the transcripts will be stored electronically under a password known only by and accessible to my research team and myself. The audiotapes will be destroyed at the completion of the study. I will catalogue and retain other materials gathered to support the continuing study of socially inclusive pedagogy in Toronto.

As a participant, you should know that:

All research information provided by you will be used only for academic purposes
Your name will be disguised by a pseudonym of your choice
Your school will be disguised by a pseudonym
You have the right to not answer a question during any interview or conversation
You have the right to withdraw your participation from the research project at any time, without explanation and without penalty
My three committee members will have access to the data during my advisory meetings
Transcripts of your interviews and the completed study will be made available to you
I intend to use the data from this study for conference presentations and papers for journals
You will receive a copy of this information and consent letter for your records

What are the benefits and risks of participating in this study?

There would be no direct benefits to you if you choose to participate in the study. Your story however will likely benefit others who want to understand and improve their own socially inclusive pedagogical practices. Your input will also be part of the research that will contribute to the existing literature on issues surrounding socially inclusive pedagogy.

There are no risks if you choose to participate in the study. The questions in the interview focus on your teaching practices and focus on professional topics which could very come up in everyday conversation.
Thank you very much for considering this request to participate in the study. Your contribution is highly valued.

If you are willing to participate, please complete and sign both copies of the consent form that are attached. Please retain one copy of the letter and signed form for your records. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my thesis supervisor at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Yiola Cleovoulou

Thesis Supervisor
Dennis Thiessen, Professor and Chair
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West, 11th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6

-----------------------------------------------

I have read Yiola Cleovoulou’s information letter and understand the intent, conditions and safeguards of the study entitled: Socially Inclusive Pedagogy: Socially Inclusive Schools. Have read and understood the above information, I, the undersigned, agree to participate in this research:

Name: ____________________________________________

Signature: _________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________________
Appendix E

Information and Consent Letter to Secondary participants

[OISE/UT letterhead]

Date:

Dear Participant:

As researcher and doctoral student, I invite you to participate as a secondary participant in a study entitled: Socially Inclusive Pedagogy: Socially Inclusive Schools. This study is supported through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and is supervised by Professor Dennis Thiessen, Professor and Chair of the department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning.

This study concerns understanding the classroom practices of a group of elementary school teachers who are actively involved in issues of social inclusion. Social inclusion refers to the sense of belonging and equitable learning environment teachers create in their classrooms through their daily routines and practices. Classroom pedagogy, with a focus on social inclusion, is at the heart of the study. Through observations of classroom practices and daily school life, and interviews with teachers and other school community members, I aim to discover the socially inclusive pedagogical practices in one inner city school. It is anticipated that the research will generate teacher-relevant understandings of classroom practice writing the context of a Toronto school.

How were you identified as a possible participant?

The school you work in has been selected because it is one of Toronto’s first model inner city schools. You were identified as a possible participant due to your role in the school as __________________________ [principal, resource teacher, models school coordinator]

What will you be asked to do?

The data collection will occur from October 2006 – May 2007. During that time, I am inviting you to do the following:

A. Participate in one interview. The first will take place at a time and place convenient to you sometime between December and March. The interview will
be no longer than one hour in length and will focus on school wide policies, initiatives and stories that help influence and shape socially inclusive pedagogy in the school.

B. As a school representative, I may from time to time engage in informal conversation with you on issues surrounding school wide socially inclusive initiatives. These would also occur only at your convenience.

With your permission, the interviews will be audio-taped and later transcribed. Until the completion of the study in 2007, the transcripts will be stored electronically under a password known only by and accessible to my research team and myself. The audiotapes will be destroyed at the completion of the study. I will catalogue and retain other materials gathered to support the continuing study of socially inclusive pedagogy in Toronto.

As a participant, you should know that:

All research information provided by you will be used only for academic purposes
Your name will be disguised by a pseudonym of your choice
Your school will be disguised by a pseudonym
You have the right to not answer a question during any interview or conversation
You have the right to withdraw your participation from the research project at any time, without explanation and without penalty
My three committee members will have access to the data during my advisory meetings
Transcripts of your interviews and the completed study will be made available to you
I intend to use the data from this study for conference presentations and papers for journals
Your will receive a copy of this information and consent letter for your records

What are the benefits and risks of participating in this study?

There would be no direct benefits to you if you choose to participate in the study. Your story however will likely benefit others who want to understand and improve their own socially inclusive pedagogical practices. Your input will also be part of the research that will contribute to the existing literature on issues surrounding socially inclusive pedagogy.

There are no risks if you choose to participate in the study. The questions in the interview focus on your teaching practices and focus on professional topics which could very come up in everyday conversation.

Thank you very much for considering this request to participate in the study. Your contribution is highly valued.

If you are willing to participate, please complete and sign both copies of the consent form that are attached. Please retain one copy of the letter and signed form for your records. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my thesis supervisor at any time.
Yours sincerely,

Yiola Cleovoulou

Thesis Supervisor
Dennis Thiessen, Professor and Chair
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West, 11th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6

I have read Yiola Cleovoulou’s information letter and understand the intent, conditions and safeguards of the study entitled: Socially Inclusive Pedagogy: Socially Inclusive Schools.

Have read and understood the above information, I, the undersigned, agree to participate in this research:

Name: ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Dear Parents,

My name is Yiola Cleovoulou and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. I am also a former teacher with the Toronto District School Board. I will be conducting a research study in your child’s classroom that is entitled: Socially Inclusive Pedagogy: Socially Inclusive Schools. Your child’s classroom was selected because the teacher has been recognized as someone who encourages and fosters a socially inclusive environment; that is, a place where students feel welcomed and included.

Throughout the year, I will be observing the teaching practices of the teacher in the classroom. I will visit your child’s class a total of five weeks between October 2006 and May 2007 and will spend three of the five school days in the classroom. I will be sitting back and making notes of what I observe in order to better understand how teachers create social inclusion in the classroom. Your child will not be interviewed. I may from time to time participate as a volunteer in the classroom upon the teacher’s request and that may involve informal conversations with the students. I may write about specific events or incidents that were observed but will not refer to any student in particular. No real names are used in the study and no photos that can identify children will be taken.

I look forward to spending time in your child’s class. If you have any further questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Yiola Cleovoulou
### Appendix G

**Observation Checklist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations in the classroom</th>
<th>Things to Observe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visuals</strong></td>
<td>Visual displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions</strong></td>
<td>Student to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher to student (whole class, small group, one on one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom management (behaviour, teaching approach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lessons</strong></td>
<td>Focus / topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structure of lesson (beginning, middle, end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materials used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching strategies / methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discourse</strong></td>
<td>Language used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Style (timing, organization of discursive practices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Approach</strong></td>
<td>Interpretive/ teacher centred / collaborative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Things to Observe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations outside the classroom</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visuals</td>
<td>Posters and displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical organization of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>School initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrations of policies in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rules, Motto and Code of Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>School wide programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assemblies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>Support staff and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H
Interview Questions for Primary Participants

There are three formal, semi-structured interviews. Below is a structure for each interview:

**Interview #1** – This interview is to take place shortly after the first set of observations in the classroom. The information gathered here will include: further clarifications about the study, discussion of what has been initially observed, introduction of teacher, background and their understanding of their teaching.

Clarifications – as we begin the interview the participant will have the opportunity to share thoughts, concerns, questions about the study
- Do you have any questions about the study?
- Is there something specific you are hoping to get from this study?
- How did you feel about my presence in your classroom the first week of observations?

Introduction of teacher
- Tell me about yourself? (leave this open and allow participant to pull information he/she feels is relevant)
  - What is your educational background?
  - What (if any) experiences brought you to think about social inclusion in the classroom?
  - How do you go about planning for social inclusion?
  - How do you situate yourself within this particular learning community? School?
  - What do you feel are some of the issues surrounding SIP you face as a teacher in this particular classroom setting?

Initial Observations – talking about what stuck out in my observations
- Why did you organize the physical layout in this way?
- Tell me about the students in your classroom / in your school
- Describe your intent and design of this lesson.
- I observed this…. tell me more about it…..
- Describe the ways in which social inclusion were included in this lesson
- What did you think of the outcome of the lesson?
**Interview #2** – focus more on the practices I have observed over the course of weeks

Tell me about this particular lesson…
Describe your intentions… describe what happened… Describe the outcome… next steps…

I noticed this happened in the lesson (describe from notes), explain your understanding of what happened.
What were some of the challenges on this day?
How did you address those challenges?
What were some of the successes?
Provide stories of how the lessons on this day unfolded…

How do particular students contribute to the fostering of SIP?

Describe your relationship with the students in your classroom… broadly… specifically

Describe the ways you approach teaching, and understanding your students and their learning needs.

**Interview #3** – further discussion of practices, reflection of SIP, reflection of research process

Now we’re into Spring – what can you say about SIP and the way its evolved in your classroom since the Fall?
What does it look like to you?
Let’s discuss the event that occurred on this day… what were the challenges? How were they addressed?
How has SIP been fostered in your room? How can we talk about the evidence of it now in relation to what it was in the Fall?

What are the things you want to continue working on in order to continue its development?

How was the research process for you?
What did you learn?
What would you like to see done differently?
What can we add to the process to make it more enriching for you?
Appendix I

Interview Questions for Secondary Participants

This is a one-time interview and will only be 1 hour long. Questions will revolve around the school and its policies and initiatives that support socially inclusive pedagogy in classrooms.

Describe your role in the school
Tell me about your school
Tell me about your school as its situated in the broader context of Toronto

What are some of the policies in place that support teachers when it comes to issues of SIP and equity in your school?
What are some of the school initiatives that foster SIP?

What are some of the challenges the school faces when dealing with issues of social inclusion?
How does the school as a community address those issues?
Provide examples of how you have seen SIP in your school.

How do you contribute to SIP in the school? Provide examples.