

DEMOCRATIC INCLUSIVE EDUCATORS

by

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ABSTRACT

Democratic Inclusive Educators

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Educating for democracy has long been established as a central purpose for schooling in America and continues to be included in the ongoing discourses on educational policy and programs. While educating for democracy has been defined in many ways, it is commonly agreed that it is the knowledge, skills, and experiences that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of a global society. Nested within the context of democratic education, inclusion as advocated by Iris Marion Young provided the framework for this study. Young suggested that inclusive democracy enables the participation and voice for all those affected by problems and their proposed solutions. Within the context of education, democratic inclusive education is established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which multiple perspectives are included in the community-building and decision-making efforts of the classroom.

By using a critical ethnographic design, data were collected over the 2011-2012

school year in the form of electronic postings, interviews, and observations. This study explored the perceptions and experiences of three elementary teachers who incorporated aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice. In analyzing the data with a democratic inclusive lens, one important finding reflected the participants successfully establishing caring classroom communities in their efforts to teach democratic process and content, celebrate student individuality, and model inclusive practices with their students. Additionally, areas for improving their practice were identified in the ways in which the teacher participants incorporated multiple perspectives in their deliberation and decision-making efforts. Finally, as the framework of democratic inclusion is applied to the context of elementary classrooms and schools, future research possibilities abound in exploring the notion of teachers' dedication to inclusion as stemming from their own personal experiences with exclusion, exploring the limiting and supporting factors that teachers experience in their attempts to educate for democracy, exploring notions of student readiness as a limiting and supporting factor, and examining the impact of teacher education programs that engage preservice teachers in the principles and practices of democratic inclusion.

(268 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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Educating for democracy has long been established as a central purpose for schooling in America and continues to be included in the ongoing discourses on educational policy and programs. While educating for democracy has been defined in many ways, it is commonly agreed that it is the knowledge, skills, and experiences that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of a global society. Nested within the context of democratic education, inclusion as advocated by Iris Marion Young provided the framework for this study. Young suggested that inclusive democracy enables the participation and voice for all those affected by problems and their proposed solutions. Within the context of education, democratic inclusive education is established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which multiple perspectives are included in the community building and decision-making efforts of the classroom. This study explored the perceptions and experiences of three elementary teachers that incorporated aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Educating for democracy has long been established as a central purpose for schooling in America (Dewey, 1916; Kliebard, 2004; Popkewitz, 1987; Spring, 2010) and continues to be included in the ongoing discourses on educational policy and programs (Abdi & Richardson, 2008; Apple & Beane, 2007a; Benhabib, 2002; Osler, 2010; Parker, 2009). While educating for democracy has been defined in many ways, it is commonly agreed that it is the knowledge, skills, and experiences that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of a global society (Parker, 2009).

Nested within the context of democratic education, inclusion as advocated by Iris Marion Young (2000a, 2004, 2006) is the framework for this study. Young (2000a) suggested that inclusive democracy enables the participation and voice for all those affected by problems and their proposed solutions and describes the image of inclusion as that of a “heterogeneous public engaged in transforming institutions to make them more effective in solving shared problems justly” (p. 12). Within the context of education, democratic inclusive education is established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which each student is valued and recognized as part of the classroom community and in which multiple perspectives are included in the community building and decision-making efforts of the classroom. Within the context of democratic education, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and practices of teachers dedicated to democratic inclusion.

Background

Nested in the context of deliberative democracy, inclusion is a process that incorporates the practice of deliberation of social problems in which all members of society that are affected by the issue are involved in the deliberation of its causes and solutions (Young, 2000a). In this sense deliberative democracy has two important components; the use of deliberation to expand thinking and to come to agreed-upon solutions, and the incorporation of inclusion that brings legitimacy to the decisions by ensuring that all who are affected by decisions are included in the deliberation of them. Young (2000a) suggested that a number of deliberative democratic theories have appeared in recent years focusing on aspects of reasoning, persuasion, and deliberation (Bohman, 1998; Cohen, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1996; Rawls, 1993). Young further suggested that a deliberative model of democracy conceptualizes democracy to include democratic processes such as promoting cooperation, solving collective problems, and furthering justice. She suggested that through a deliberative model of democracy, participants offer proposals for how to solve problems and present arguments through which they aim to persuade others to accept their proposals.

Democratic process is primarily a discussion of problems, conflicts, and claims of need or interest. Through dialogue, others test and challenge these proposals and arguments. Participants arrive at a decision not by determining what preferences have the greatest numerical support, but by determining which proposals the collective agrees are supported by the best reasons. (Young, 2000b, p. 23)

The emphasis in deliberative democracy is not only grounded in the process of deliberation, but also in the notion that through deliberation, citizens can make decisions and bring conflict and difference into the public to be worked through.

In advocating for a model of deliberative democracy, Young (2000a) suggested that there are four ideal conditions that if met bring democracy closer to its philosophical principles. She suggested that these conditions are categorized as inclusion, political equality, reasonableness, and publicity. Inclusion as one of the four conditions of deliberative democracy is manifest when all members affected by a decision are included in the deliberations of the issue and its potential outcomes. Young described inclusion in political terms as citizens engage in a democratic deliberative process. Many theorists have explored notions of deliberative democracy and reference aspects of inclusion; the notion of inclusion as established by Iris Marion Young provided the framework for this study. Although closely connected with political equality, reasonableness, and publicity, the notion of inclusion is explored as the primary purpose of this study. In this framework, theorists that are cited by Young as well as those that have built upon her work are reviewed as informing the notion of democratic inclusion.

Young (2000a) suggested democratic inclusion occurs on a continuum of possibilities. “Most societies have some democratic practices. Democracy is not an all-or-nothing affair, but a matter of degree; societies can vary in both extent and the intensity of their commitment to democratic practices” (p. 5). She further suggested that throughout the world, even those societies that embrace democracy still reflect many democratic principles in a very thin way. Abdi and Richardson (2008) recognized that no democracy is entirely just because real democracies are situated within contexts of structural inequalities based on wealth, social and economic power, access to knowledge, status, and work expectations.

In the real world some people and groups have significantly greater ability to use democratic process for their own ends while others are excluded or marginalized. Our democratic policy discussions do not occur under conditions free of coercion and threat, and free of the distorting influence of unequal power and control over resources. (Young, 2000b, p. 47)

The framework of inclusion is utilized as a lens to deconstruct the structural inequalities of democratic deliberative democracies as well as provide insights that envision what it can and should be. Inclusion, as a theoretical lens helps deconstruct the structural inequalities inherent in deliberative democracies by suggesting opportunities to widen and deepen democracy beyond the superficial trappings that many societies endorse and enact. Young (2000a) suggested that in incorporating an inclusive lens, we are able to deepen democracy and inclusion for more citizens and in more authentic ways. Inclusion envisions ideal democratic possibilities. In these contexts, Young suggested that inclusion provides a way to deconstruct and address these structural inequalities that would otherwise be dismissed, disguised, or reinforced in democratic processes.

Democratic Inclusion

Essential to the notion of inclusion is the claim to address who is included and to what extent they are included in democratic processes. Historically, marginalized people have been excluded from public deliberations because of race, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and ability. In these ways, traditional democratic decision-making has reflected only the perspectives of the dominant elite. Though enacted in culturally specific ways, that critique remains at the forefront of deliberative democracies today as dominant groups and individuals control the decision-making process in various ways.

Young advised that the calls for inclusion arise from experiences of exclusion.

Young suggests that exclusion can be both external and internal. External exclusion occurs when individuals and groups are left out or kept out of the discussion and decision-making processes thus allowing other individuals and groups' dominative control over what happens. Internal exclusion results from various factors such as privileging various democratic norms (Young, 2000a), privileging various positionalities (Maher & Tetrault, 2001), and privileging various situated ways of knowing (Haraway, 1991). She suggested that even though individuals may have obtained a presence in public discourse, because of the way their claims are made, they are not taken seriously or treated with respect.

Additionally, Young and others (Boler, 2004) advocated that in an effort to include the perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups and individuals' affirmative steps must be taken to counteract the historical exclusion of these perspectives. "In situations of structural inequality, [democratic inclusion] usually requires taking affirmative steps to include and represent socially and economically disadvantaged groups" (Young, 2000b, p. 100). Young suggested that one affirmative step individuals committed to inclusion should incorporate is relinquishing the notion that in order to understand someone, you must be the same as them, or agree with them further suggesting that a theory of democratic inclusion requires a new conception of common good that should be considered when attempting to incorporate multiple perspectives.

Upon suspending the notion of unity and common good in democratic process, Young (2006) and Boler (2004) advocated for affirmative steps by suggesting that all voices do not carry the same weight in a deliberation. Boler suggested that historically,

different voices pay different prices for the words they choose to utter and as such advocates that all voices need to be included equally in deliberations. In an effort to create political equality, she suggests that affirmative steps must be taken that promote free and equal opportunities for speech.

In addressing exclusionary practices, inclusion advocates that “democratic discussions and decision-making processes take special measures to assure that the voices and perspectives of all social segments can have an effective voice in which they express their opinions and judgments from the specificity of their position and experience” (Young, 2004, p. 2). Young further suggested that because of historically exclusionary practices, an ideal model begins with inclusion as a principle that is fundamentally about incorporating multiple perspectives based on democratic norms, positionality, and situated ways of knowing.

Inclusion in the Context of Democratic Education

Democratic education encompasses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of society (Dewey, 1916; Gutmann, 1987). Set in the context of preparing students for their role as citizens of a democratic society, democratic education advocates as its purpose enculturating the norms, values and behaviors of society that are rooted in democracy. (Apple & Beane, 2007a; Dewey, 1916). Current democratic theorists suggest that it is not enough for democratic education to reinforce principles of democracy, but advocate that democratic education should adopt the purpose of transforming society by closing the gap

between the ideals and realities of democracy (Banks, 2002; Giroux, 2004). In their efforts to address societal injustices, democratic educators suggest promote democratic education must first advocate for education for *all* children for citizenship. Theories of democratic inclusion adopt this charge. Young (2006) and others (Abdi & Richardson, 2008; Gutmann, 1987) suggested that principles of democratic inclusion provide the answers and solutions that can enable and empower all students.

Democratic theorists' committed to inclusive education recognize that education like democracy is enacted in the context of structural inequality (Young, 2006). Young and others (Abdi & Richardson, 2008) suggested that part of the role of democratic inclusion is to critique education for the purpose of envisioning ideal possibilities. Young (2006) advocated that democratic inclusion must deconstruct individuals and groups access to schooling, curriculum, quality teachers, and resources. It must further problematize historical and cultural hegemonic practices that enable some individuals while oppressing others in their pursuit of learning (Anyon, 2009; Freire, 1987; Maher & Tetrault, 2001; McLaren & Jaramillo, 2006; Young, 2006). As educators committed to notions of inclusion deconstruct the structures of schooling, they forefront the invisible marginalized perspectives of knowledge into educational frameworks and policies which according to Banks (2002) "contest existing political, economic, and educational practices and call for fundamental change and reform" (p. 22). Young (2004) advocated for inclusion in education by suggesting that members of disadvantaged groups have opportunities to share their experiences, needs, perspectives and opinions in situations where differently situated others can hear.

In order for democratic education to fulfill its purposes for all students, it must recognize and include the perspectives of all of its students just as society must be inclusive of all of its citizens. Additionally, democratic educators committed to notions of inclusion seek to empower marginalized voices through inclusive learning communities and deliberative decision-making opportunities of the classroom (Abdi & Richardson, 2008; Huber-Warring & Warring, 2006; Young, 2000a).

Democratic Inclusive Practices

Many of the principles associated with a democratic inclusive education are established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which each student is valued and recognized as part of the classroom community and in which multiple perspectives are included in the community building and decision-making efforts of the classroom in authentic and meaningful ways. Apple and Beane (2007a), Gutmann (1987), and Young (2000a) asserted that democratic classrooms are the ideal place to invite unique perspectives into classroom community and decision-making in authentic and meaningful ways. Educators committed to democratic inclusion promote classroom communities in which students are engaged in the processes of democracy. When an inclusive lens is applied to the notion of democratic community, Beyer and Liston (1996), Corbett, (1999), and Watkins (2005) suggested that democratic communities become inclusive by incorporating student's perspectives in the community building efforts of the classroom. As such, a democratic inclusive community is first and foremost based upon a heterogeneous public, or a diverse student body in which all perspectives are included in the community. Secondly, a democratic inclusive community is focused

on democratic purpose, content, and pedagogy. In this way, the purposes of democratic education are accomplished as students are prepared with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of democratic citizens. Additionally, democratic inclusive communities are founded upon notions of caring, as teachers and students work to create an environment in which everyone feels included.

In democratic inclusive classrooms, students not only gain experience in addressing issues of concern but also learn to reason and reflect on their actions, think about the consequences of their behavior, and comprehend the impact they have on others. In addition to teacher's community building efforts, democratic inclusion is grounded upon involving students in the decision-making opportunities of the classroom. Nested in the context of the classroom, both community building and decision-making engage students in the authentic application of democracy in transforming their learning environments to be more just and reflect notions of both democracy and inclusion.

A democratic inclusive classroom is established as teachers and students interact with each other and with the curriculum in ways that include all perspectives and voices in the decision-making of the classroom. Teachers of democratic inclusive classrooms view decision-making as an ideal avenue for students to express opinions, and to include multiple perspectives and identities. Integral to democratic inclusive classrooms are decision-making opportunities that involve all stakeholders, including students, in the processes and decisions that affect them (Benhabib, 2002; Gutmann, 1987; Young, 2006). Educators who are committed to democratic inclusion find ways to involve their students in decision-making of the classroom by engaging in deliberations about

curriculum decisions, and classroom decisions. Students are involved in curriculum decision as they make decisions in terms of what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is evaluated. In this way, democratic inclusive teachers reflect notions of participation and decision-making identified in the literature, as students are involved in the processes and decision that affect them. Students participate in classroom decisions as opportunities arise from living and learning together that allow students to deliberate problems and their potential solutions. Whether the decision-making deliberations are focused on curriculum or classroom decisions, students play a vital role in not only deliberating the topic at hand, but also in identifying and bringing forth topics and issues to be discussed and decided upon.

Democratic inclusion occurs as teachers and students engage in the processes of democracy in inclusive ways as advocated by Iris Marion Young (2000a). Occurring in the context of schools, opportunities to deconstruct the structural inequalities of schooling and educational practices provide the ideal place for students to incorporate multiple perspectives and participate in the community building and decision-making of the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the perceptions and experiences of three elementary teachers who incorporated aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice. Aligned with the literature on deliberative democratic inclusion, this dissertation represents an initial effort to fill a gap in the research by applying the theory behind democratic

inclusion (Young, 2000a) to the language and practices of teachers in elementary classrooms. The following questions guided this inquiry.

1. How do teacher participants define democratic inclusion in their teaching?
2. What does democratic inclusion look like in the teaching environments of the participants and how does it align with the literature on deliberative democratic inclusion?
3. How did these teachers come to be democratic educators?
4. How can the teacher participants expand their democratic language and practices to become more inclusive?

In an effort to accomplish the purpose and questions of this study, critical ethnography was chosen as the research design and draws upon data collected in the forms of interviews (Glesne, 2006; Loughran & Northfield, 1998), observations (Creswell, 2005; Spradley, 1980), and internet postings (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006; Hookway, 2008; Madison, 2005; Mann & Stewart, 2000) that explore these questions in the context of the participants teaching environments.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters. Chapter II has three sections and introduces the theoretical framework of democratic inclusion as advocated by Iris Marion Young (2000a, 2004, 2006). Inclusion in the context of education is described as empowering marginalized voices through inclusive learning communities and deliberative decision-making opportunities of the classroom (Abdi & Richardson, 2008;

Huber-Warring & Warring, 2006; Young, 2000b). This framework is explored in terms of principles and practices in both political and educational settings. In this discussion, theorists that are cited by Young as well as those that have built upon her work are reviewed as informing the notion of democratic inclusion.

Chapter III describes the study's research design. This chapter presents an overview of critical ethnography and its characteristics as well as explores how qualitative data were collected for this study to provide a detailed understanding of how teachers perceive and practice democratic inclusive education. For the purposes of this study, critical ethnography situates the researcher in the conversations and practices of the classroom as represented in the data collected.

Chapters IV and V represent the findings and analysis of the data collected on the three teacher participants. Methods and procedures for analyzing the data of the study are based on qualitative research methodology (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). All three data sources (i.e., internet postings, interviews, and observations) were analyzed and coded for each participant. Chapter IV situates the participants in the research by developing a descriptive portrait of the three participants and how they came to be teachers committed to democratic inclusion. This chapter focuses on a description of the participants, their background, and educational experiences that prepared them to engage in the work of democratic inclusion. Chapter V explores the practices of the participants in the context of elementary classrooms. Aligned with the literature, the participant's incorporation of inclusive practices as illustrated in their community-building and decision-making efforts of the classroom

suggests that the participants are actively involving their students in unique ways.

The final chapter presents a review of the study's findings by suggesting both interpretation and implications based on the participant's practices. Using a lens of democratic inclusion, this chapter analyzes the teacher practices in terms of practices that align with the data, practices that can be improved upon in teacher's efforts to push democracy deeper, and areas in the data that represent gaps in the teacher's practices.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to this study, a review of the literature was conducted to support the investigation of the research question. This section begins with a discussion of democratic inclusion, the framework that informs this study's research design. Situated in deliberative democracy, inclusion will be discussed in terms of its purpose, process, and principles in the context of education. This literature review provides the background for how democratic inclusion attends to the experiences and perceptions of teachers educating for democracy in their teaching environments.

Based on the work of Iris Marion Young, democratic inclusion is the framework for this study. Nested within the context of deliberative democracy, inclusion is described in political terms as a "heterogeneous public engaged in transforming institutions to make them more effective in solving problems justly" (Young, 2000a, p. 12). An inclusive pedagogy moves beyond the dominant traditions of schooling and seeks to include multiple voices, perspectives and narratives in the classroom. Many of the principles associated with a democratic inclusive education are established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which each student is valued and recognized as part of the classroom community and in which multiple perspectives are included in the community building and decision-making efforts of the classroom in authentic and meaningful ways.

Two Models of Democracy

In order to have a strong understanding of inclusion, it is necessary to first explore notions of deliberative democracy that provide a historical and practical context for principles of inclusion. In this context, Young (2000a) argued that inclusion and deliberative democracy are essential elements of each other and are connected in theory and practice. For Young, inclusion is a process that incorporates deliberation of social problems in which all members of society that are affected by the issue are involved in the deliberation of its causes and solutions. In this sense deliberative democracy has two important components, the use of deliberation to expand thinking and come to agreed-upon solutions and the incorporation of inclusion that brings legitimacy to the decisions by ensuring that all who are affected by those decisions are included in the deliberation of them. Young suggested that there are two current models of democracy, aggregative and deliberative. In an effort to more fully understand inclusion as nested in a deliberative model of democracy, a brief overview of both models will be explored including a critique that Young suggested can be resolved by employing principles of inclusion.

Although there are many historical and political conceptions of democracy, two current democratic models of aggregative and deliberative will be contrasted as contemporary theories of democracy. Young (2000a) described aggregative democracy as a “competitive process in which political parties and candidates offer their platforms and attempt to satisfy the largest number of people’s preferences” (p. 19). Cohen (1996) further defines aggregative democracy by suggesting that it is about institutionalizing principles that give equal consideration for the interests of each member and is

accomplished through conditions of competition, strategizing, bargaining, and coalition-building as well as by establishing a method of collective choice such as majority or plurality rule. These conditions according to Cohen give “equal weight to the interests of citizens by enabling them to present and advance their interests” (p. 98). In this model, the outcome reflects the strongest or most widely held preference in the population, or the aggregation.

Although classical notions of democracy were established with the citizens of Ancient Greece, Chantal Mouffe (2000), in her review of democracy, suggested that the aggregative model originated from the writing of Joseph Schumpeter’s 1947 publication, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, in which he advocated that the classical model of democracy was no longer adequate. He suggested a new model of democracy in which the emphasis was put on the aggregation of preferences in terms of voting for political leaders. Through this model, citizens can accept or reject leaders by participating in the electoral process. The aggregative model, with a focus on democratic procedures, became the standard of democratic theory as theorists explored notions of self-interest and common good.

With the reduction of democracy to a procedure-based approach that aggregates the self-interests of citizens, new theories of democracy began to emerge. Theorists began to question aspects of legitimacy and the lack of moral dimensions inherent in the aggregative model and argued that democracy need not just be about procedures, but that the outcomes could in fact produce moral consensus among participants. These theorists known as deliberative democrats claimed that through the procedures of deliberation, it

was possible, as Mouffe (2000) suggested, to reach forms of agreement that would satisfy both rationality and democratic legitimacy. Two schools of thought emerged that were greatly influenced by the thinking of John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas. Rawls was focused on issues of justice while Habermas was concerned with legitimacy. Through their works, and the work of those that followed (Benhabib, 2002; Cohen, 1996) notions of self-interest, consensus, and the common-good were explored and questioned. Although they represented two different perspectives, the ideas of Rawls and Habermas converged in many ways. One common notion was their insistence on the importance of communicative action and free public reason, or deliberation.

Deliberative democracy is described by Young (2000a) as “democracy with open discussion and the exchange of views leading to agreed-upon policies” (p. 22). She suggests that a number of deliberative democratic theories have appeared in recent years focusing on aspects of reasoning, persuasion, and deliberation (Bohman, 1998; Cohen, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1996; Rawls, 1993). Young further suggested that a deliberative model of democracy responds to the democratic purposes addressed in the aggregative model but further conceptualizes democracy to include democratic processes such as promoting cooperation, solving collective problems, and furthering justice. She suggested that through a deliberative model of democracy, participants offer proposals for how to solve problems and present arguments through which they aim to persuade others to accept their proposals.

Democratic process is primarily a discussion of problems, conflicts, and claims of need or interest. Through dialogue, others test and challenge these proposals and arguments. Participants arrive at a decision not by determining what preferences have the greatest numerical support, but by determining which proposals the

collective agrees are supported by the best reasons. (Young, 2000b, p. 23)

The emphasis in deliberative democracy is not only grounded in the process of deliberation, but also in the notion that through deliberation, citizens can make decisions and bring conflict and difference into the public to be worked through. Cohen (1996) suggested that deliberative democracy is a public framework providing favorable conditions in which citizens participate in decision-making.

[This framework] facilitates free discussion among equal citizens by providing favorable conditions for participation, association, and expression and ties the authorization to exercise public power to such discussion by establishing a framework ensuring the responsiveness and accountability of political power to it through competitive elections, conditions of publicity, legislative oversight, and so on. (p. 99)

In addition to describing current democratic theories, Young also provides a critique of both the aggregative and deliberative models of democracy. In so doing, she suggests that the notion of inclusion answers the criticism of both theories by bringing democracy closer to its philosophical ideal.

Critique of Aggregative Democracy

Young (2000a) offered four critiques to an aggregative type of democracy. Her first two critiques stem from a lack of participation in political processes in which issues and solutions are discussed. Furthermore, because participants do not deliberate issues, individual preferences are polled and gathered without establishing a means of distinguishing the quality of preferences by content, origin, or motive. The aggregative model values some preferences more than others based on which ones received the most votes, or reflect the greatest value rather than what solution might be best for the most

number of people.

A second critique Young (2000a) offered of the aggregative model of democracy is that through the voting process, citizens are allowed to promote self-interest in a way that does not require them to interact with others whose preferences may differ. “Citizens are never required to leave the realm of their own interest.... There is no account for cooperation or coordination” (p. 20). Furthermore, because individual’s preferences were simply cast, or merely voted upon, they were seen as static and unchanging and did not reflect the democratic demands for citizens to interact with each other or explore multiple perspectives, alternatives, or variations of preference. The citizen casted their vote, and the preference with the most votes was declared the winner.

A third critique Young (2000a) provided of the aggregative model is reflected in the aggregated outcomes that she claimed carry a “thin and individualistic form of rationality.” She suggested that the outcomes can be rational or irrational and that “preference orderings when aggregated may yield a different ordering than those the individuals hold strongly” (p. 21). In this case, citizens miss out on the opportunity to deliberate and cast their preference in the context of solutions and how they are played out in authentic and rational ways. Furthermore, an aggregative model privileges the preferences of dominant members, with little to no involvement of marginalized individuals and groups. Cohen (1996) also reflected this critique in suggesting that in the aggregative model, we superficially involve interests of marginalized perspectives “when deciding what to do, while keeping our fingers crossed that those interests are outweighed” (p. 101).

Because citizens have not been involved in deliberating decisions, Young's (2000a) final critique is that there is little to no legitimacy in the outcomes. Aggregated processes therefore "only offer a weak motivational basis for accepting the outcomes of a democratic process as legitimate" (p. 21). This lack of ownership, Young suggested, leads to exclusion. "There is no reason why those who do not share those [aggregated] preferences ought to abide by the results. They may simply feel that they have no choice but to submit, given that they are the minority" (p. 21). Furthermore, because there is no interaction among citizens, there is no opportunity for transformation of interests, beliefs, and judgments. Citizens remain in their original place of self-interest rather than engaging in deliberations about what is best for the public.

Critique of Deliberative Democracy

In her discussion of democracy, Young (2000a) also offered a critique of deliberative democracy in terms of who is included in the deliberation as well as the topic of the deliberation. In addressing who is included, Young suggested that democratic theory does not often address whether the scope of the membership corresponds to the scope of what the membership ought to be if all members of the decision that are affected by it are included in the deliberation of it. Traditional forms of democracy have typically excluded individuals whose membership reflects marginalized perspectives based on race, class, gender, and other cultural factors. Deliberative democracy still suffers from dominating groups and people discussing issues that not all citizens would find relevant or meaningful. Young advocated that all individuals and groups that affected by a decision be included equally and fairly in the deliberation of the outcome.

Furthermore, Young (2000a) critiqued the topic of discussion in the deliberative model in suggesting that the ideal topic should be contested problems that evolve out of living and working together. “A useful way to conceive of democracy is as a process in which a large collective discusses problems...that they face together, and try to arrive peaceably at solutions in whose implementation everyone will co-operate” (p. 28). Ideally, the problems that are brought forward should arise from the citizens and reflect issues of justice as one individual or group claim they suffer injustice and call on democratic processes to address or eliminate such injustices. Historically, issues demanding social justice are often dismissed as extreme or not rational because they do not reflect the dominant group. Mouffe (2000) reflected this same critique in suggesting that only when the democratic citizen is situated in social and power relations, language, and culture of their community can democratic deliberations begin to reflect and address issues that reflect democratic ideals.

Deliberative Democratic Ideals

In answering the criticisms, and in advocating for a model of deliberative democracy, Young suggested that there are four ideal conditions that if met bring democracy closer to its philosophical principles. She suggested that these conditions are categorized as inclusion, political equality, reasonableness, and publicity. Inclusion as one of the four conditions of deliberative democracy is manifest when all members affected by a decision are included in the deliberations of the issue and its potential outcomes. Although closely connected with political equality, reasonableness, and

publicity, the notion of inclusion will be explored as the primary purpose of this study in terms of how the teacher participants define inclusion, how they incorporate principles of inclusion into their teaching, and how they feel limited and supported in their efforts at establishing democratic inclusive classrooms. Inclusion as a concept of deliberative democracy will be explored in later sections of this chapter, whereas a cursory overview of the other three ideals will be addressed in the sections that follow.

Political Equality

This ideal promotes free and equal opportunity to speak in the deliberative process. Young suggested that political equality does not refer to token measures of counting people in but requires full participation on equal terms.

Not only should all those affected be nominally included in decision-making, but they should be included on equal terms. All ought to have an equal right and effective opportunity to express their interests and concerns. All ought to have equal and effective opportunities to question one another, and to respond to and criticize one another's proposals and arguments. (Young, 2000a, p. 23)

Political equality not only reflects notions of inclusion but also suggests that equal participation must be free from domination. Furthermore, as political equality and inclusion are combined to include historically marginalized perspectives, the outcomes will reflect new ideas and a transformation of ideas that are seen as politically and morally legitimate. Young (2000a) suggested that when inclusion and political equality are combined, "it allows the expression of all interested opinions and criticism, and when it is free from domination, discussion participants can be confident that the results came from good reasons rather than fear or force of false consensus" (p. 24).

Reasonableness

A third condition of an ideal deliberative democracy is reasonableness, which refers to the dispositions of the individuals participating in the process. A reasonable participant is one who enters deliberative discussions to solve problems with the aim of reaching agreement and consensus. Young (2000a) suggested that being reasonable also refers to characteristics such as having an open mind, a disposition to listen to others, to treat others with respect, to make an effort to understand them by asking questions, and to not judge too quickly. Reasonableness also reflects non-violence and being willing to engage with others who may express competing ideas to one's own. Young suggested that unreasonable individuals are "people who think they know more or are better than others and are sometimes too quick to label the assertions of others as irrational, and thereby try to avoid having to engage with them" (p. 24). Reasonableness therefore also embodies the ability to express disagreement while being willing to listen to others who want to explain to them why their ideas are incorrect or inappropriate. When individuals deliberate issues in a reasonable way, they are willing to change their opinions or preferences and recognize that dissent often produces new insights and challenges through the deliberation process.

Publicity

This fourth deliberative ideal refers to decision-making in which people hold one another accountable by keeping democratic processes transparent and public. Young (2000a) reminded us that in addition to collective problem solving, a fundamental premise of democracy is keeping rulers in check. The notion of publicity also suggests

that individuals express themselves in ways that are accountable to all plural others.

Young suggested that publicity requires individuals to learn to communicate in transparent and public ways.

They must try to explain their particular background experiences, interests, or proposals in ways that others can understand, and they must express reasons for their claims in ways that others recognize could be accepted, even if in fact they disagree with the claims and reasons. (p. 25)

When participants know that third parties might be listening, their comments and opinions are kept in check. In addition to communicating in public ways, this characteristic of ideal deliberative democracy refers to the kinds of public hearings and deliberations that are made public for individuals to participate in. Transparency suggests that not only are the individuals invited to participate in public deliberations, but that the meetings are scheduled at a time, location, and format in which citizens have access to them.

In addressing both the critique and ideals of current democratic models, Young (2000a) suggested that both the aggregative and deliberative model rely on the actual experiences of democracy. However, she suggested that the deliberative model is more “aligned to the set of commitments that bring us to value democratic practice” (p. 26). She suggested that these commitments to democracy protect against tyranny, promote cooperation, solve collective problems, and further justice. She also advocated that the interactive component to the deliberative model moves individuals from self-regard towards a public oriented perspective. Only the deliberative model incorporates discussion and decision-making in a way that allows individuals to express their opinions as well as transforms the preferences, interests, beliefs, and judgments of participants.

When the four components of inclusion, political equality, reasonableness, and publicity are incorporated into decision-making efforts, the deliberative model brings democratic processes closer to the democratic ideal. Democratic inclusion as an ideal condition of deliberative democracy will be explored in this study.

Democratic Inclusion

Although many theorists have explored notions of deliberative democracy and reference aspects of inclusion, the notion of inclusion as established by Iris Marion Young provided the framework for this study. In this discussion, theorists that are cited by Young as well as those that have built upon her work will be reviewed as informing the notion of democratic inclusion. Young (2000a) described inclusion in political terms as citizens engage in a democratic deliberative process. Young creates an image of inclusion as that of a “heterogeneous public engaged in transforming institutions to make them more effective in solving problems justly” (p. 12). In addition to understanding inclusion in a political context, it is important to understand how inclusion is nested in a larger context of structural inequality of society.

Young (2000a) further suggested democratic inclusion occurs on a continuum of possibilities. “Most societies have some democratic practices. Democracy is not an all-or-nothing affair, but a matter of degree; societies can vary in both extent and the intensity of their commitment to democratic practices” (p. 5). She further suggested that throughout the world, even those societies that embrace democracy still reflect many democratic principles in a very thin way. The framework of inclusion can be used to

identify and deconstruct the use of deliberative democracy as well as provide insights that envision what it can and should be. Because the notion of inclusion is grounded in critical theory, inclusion plays the important role of problematizing and revealing the deficiencies of democracy and envisioning transformative possibilities. Young suggested that in incorporating an inclusive lens, we are able to deepen democracy for more citizens and in more authentic ways. “To identify ideals of inclusive democracy I reflect on the experiences of actually existing democracy, looking for possibilities glimmering in it but which we nevertheless feel lacking” (p. 10). Young and others (Abdi & Richardson, 2008) recognized that no democracy is entirely just because real democracies are situated within contexts of structural inequalities based on wealth, social and economic power, access to knowledge, status, and work expectations.

In the real world some people and groups have significantly greater ability to use democratic process for their own ends while others are excluded or marginalized. Our democratic policy discussions do not occur under conditions free of coercion and threat, and free of the distorting influence of unequal power and control over resources. (Young, 2000b, p. 47)

Inclusion envisions ideal democratic possibilities. In these contexts, Young suggested that inclusion provides a way to deconstruct and address these structural inequalities that would otherwise be dismissed, disguised, or reinforced in democratic processes.

Exclusion

Historically, marginalized people have been excluded from public deliberations because of race, gender, SES, and ability. In these ways, traditional democratic decision-making has reflected only the perspectives of the dominant elite. Though enacted in

culturally specific ways, that critique remains at the forefront of deliberative democracies today as dominant groups and individuals control the decision-making process in various ways.

Many criticize actually existing democracies for being dominated by groups or elites that have unequal influence over decisions, while others are excluded or marginalized from any significant influence over the policy-making process and its outcomes. Strong and normatively legitimate democracy includes all equally in the process that leads to decisions [by] all those who will be affected by them. (Young, 2000a, p. 11)

One critique of deliberative democracy stems from the exclusionary practices of traditional democracy. Young (2000a) suggested that the calls for inclusion arise from experiences of exclusion. “Some of the most powerful and successful social movements of this century have mobilized around demands for oppressed and marginalized people to be included as full and equal citizens in their polities” (p. 6). Young suggested that exclusion can be both external and internal. External exclusion occurs when individuals and groups are left out or kept out of the discussion and decision-making process thus allowing other individuals and groups’ dominative control over what happens. Back door brokering, formal public discussions that are difficult to access, political domination, inaccessibility to resources and procedures are all examples of external exclusion. “One task of democratic civil society is to expose and criticize exclusions such as these, and in doing so sometimes effectively challenge the legitimacy of institutional rules and their decisions” (Young, 2000a, p. 55). Young suggested that internal exclusion results from various factors such as privileging various democratic norms, privileging various positionalities, and privileging various situated ways of knowing. These three forms of exclusion will be explored in the sections that follow.

Exclusionary Norms

Young (2000a) suggested that historically, argument constitutes the primary form of communication in democratic deliberations. In this way, individuals are internally excluded is when discussions focus on or favor norms of argument which create a norm of “articulateness” and “dispassionateness.”

[These norms] devalues the speech of those who make claims and give reasons, but not in a linear fashion that makes logical connections explicit. A norm of dispassionateness dismisses and devalues embodied forms of expression, emotion, and figurative expression. People’s contributions to a discussion tend to be excluded from serious consideration not because of what is said, but how it is said. (p. 55)

Young suggested that “norms are seen as a way of discrediting or excluding modes of political communication that seem disorderly or disruptive” (p. 47). She suggested that even though individuals may have obtained a presence in public discourse, because of the way their claims are made, they are not taken seriously or treated with respect.

Furthermore, an inclusive theory of communication requires expanded notions of communication in an effort to reach understanding. She suggested alternative forms of communication would include greeting, rhetoric, and narrative that she suggested would not only provide a solution to exclusionary tendencies, but that would more positively include individuals and groups in a way that fosters respect and trust, increases understanding across structural and cultural difference, and motivates acceptance and action.

Positionalities

Another way exclusion plays out in democratic process is by privileging various

positionalities. Maher and Tetrault (2001) referred to positionality as characteristics of class, ethnicity, and race that are used to locate individuals in larger socially constructed contexts. Positionality has historically been used as an exclusionary characteristic rather than one to consider when incorporating multiple perspectives. In this way, positionalities have been used as a way to exclude individuals who in any given context reflect the minority. An important characteristic to note about positionalities is that they change depending on context; they are influenced by others, and are socially constructed. In this way, an individual or group may be excluded because of language in one setting, whereas in another setting, language would be seen as a strength to be incorporated. Lang (2011) suggested:

The interplay of these ways of being situated combines in each of us to produce a unique and dynamic locus of situated knowledges that moves and shifts according to multiple inputs and foci. Knowers are situated such that in any given moment the knowledges they construct will be different from what they would have produced in another moment. Our knowledges can change as we age, engage with the world, and learn new ways of expressing ourselves and of listening to and interacting with others. We cannot escape being situated, and our construction of knowledges will always bear the marks unique to ourselves. (p. 89)

Additionally, as identities are situated and changing, the notions of positional borderlands are explored as various categories overlap and blend together (Smith & Barr, 2008). As individuals negotiate borderlands, they bring different forms of identity into relation to each other.

Showing, for example how gendered experiences, far from being ‘natural,’ are constructed by class, ethnicity, and race, and vice versa, each factor contextualizing and specifying the circumstances under which the others are experienced. We all inhabit networks of relationship, which themselves can be analyzed, and changed, as long as people understand that they are not simply individuals, but differently placed members of an unequal social order. (Maher & Tetrault, 2001, p. 83)

As individuals engaged in inclusive democratic processes deconstruct and explore notions of positionality, they develop cultural fluency in which they recognize and deconstruct their own positionality in relation to the differently situated others involved in the process.

Situated Ways of Knowing

Norms of inclusion also suggest that expanded conceptions of perception and knowing are also required. Building upon the work of Haraway (1991), Young (2004) referred to the situated knowledge that is fundamental in deliberations. “In socially differentiated societies, individuals have particular knowledge that arises from experience in their social positions, and those social positionings also influence the interests and assumptions they bring to inquiry” (2004, p. 7). Additionally, in discussing the unique backgrounds and knowledge participants bring to deliberations, Cohen (1996) suggested we have to consider the backgrounds that people bring with them to democratic processes in order to bring content and substance to the choices being deliberated. Without background we are left with nothing other than procedures and agreement on how to make the procedures fairer. “Deliberative conception requires more than that the interests of others be given equal consideration: it demands too, that we find politically acceptable reasons- reasons that are acceptable to others, given a background of difference of conscientious conviction” (p. 102).

Young (2004) has reminded us that in our attempts to involve all individuals in deliberative processes, “democratic discussions and decision-making processes ought to take special measures to assure that the voices and perspectives of all social segments can

have an effective voice in which they express their opinions and judgments from the specificity of their position and experience” (p. 2). Young further suggested that because of these historically exclusionary practices, an ideal model begins with inclusion as a principle that is fundamentally about incorporating multiple perspectives.

Incorporating Multiple Perspectives

Essential to the notion of inclusion is the claim to address who is included and to what extent they are included in democratic processes. In the context of structural inequality, notions of inclusion demand that questions such as who is affected by the decision, how they are affected, and in what ways they are affected be addressed. Young (2000a) suggested that *affected* means that the “decisions and policies significantly condition a person’s options for action” (p. 23). In answering this critique, Young suggested that inclusion is about involving *all* individuals affected by a decision regardless of race, class, gender or other characteristics that have traditionally marginalized and excluded them from the deliberation process. In examining those who have historically been excluded from democratic processes, Benhabib (2002) reminded us that the voices of women, children, and minorities have often been silenced, and misinterpreted in the charge for democracy and must be considered in inclusive efforts. They specifically advocate that inclusion must first ensure that members of relatively disadvantaged groups have opportunities to be involved by “expressing their experiences, needs, and opinions in situations where differently situated others can hear” (Young, 2006, p. 100).

Deconstruct and Contextualize Positionality

In addition to recognizing and including marginalized individuals and groups, Young and others (e.g., Boler, 2004; Maher & Tetrault, 2001; Smith & Barr, 2008) suggested that in pushing democracy deeper, citizens involved in democratic deliberations should also deconstruct and contextualize the power relations that exist because of positionality. Maher and Tetrault suggested that in deconstructing democratic possibilities, it is about more than just including multiple positionalities; rather individuals must be invited to contextualize and deconstruct the power relations that exist because of positionality and culturally situated ways of knowing. Democratic inclusion reflects the incorporation of multiple perspectives and is a process in which differentiated positionalities and situated knowledge should attend to the particular situation of others and be willing to work out just solutions to their conflicts and collective problems from across their situated positions.

Affirmative Steps

Additionally, Young and others (e.g., Boler, 2004) further advocate that in an effort to include the perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups and individuals' affirmative steps must be taken to counteract the historical exclusion of these perspectives. "In situations of structural inequality, [democratic inclusion] usually requires taking affirmative steps to include and represent socially and economically disadvantaged groups" (Young, 2000b, p. 100). Young suggested that one affirmative step individuals committed to inclusion should incorporate is relinquishing the notion that in order to understand someone, you must be the same as them, or agree with them.

“Differently situated persons can understand one another. To do so, however, they often need to suspend the assumption that they are like one another, or that understanding another person means identifying with them” (2000, p. 100). This idea is contrary to classical notions of democracy that imply through traditional meanings of consensus that differently situated people cannot work together to come to agreement on common issues and problems. Furthermore, notions of common good often exclude participants when the deliberative process fails to deliver its democratic ideals.

Definitions of common good are likely to express the interests and perspectives of the dominant groups in generalized terms. This makes it difficult to expose how privilege dominates the agenda. Furthermore this idea of common good narrows the possible agenda for deliberation and thereby silences some points of view. This also makes it difficult when the realities of deliberating in a democracy result in conflict and disagreement, which those working under the auspices of this notion of common good are frightened away from democratic practice consensus isn't arrived at quickly and smoothly. (Young, 2000b, p. 43)

A theory of democratic inclusion requires a new conception of common good that should be considered when attempting to incorporate multiple perspectives.

Upon suspending the notion of unity in democratic process, Young (2006) and Boler (2004) advocated for an affirmative action pedagogy in which she suggested “consciously privileges the insurrectionary and dissenting voices, sometimes at the minor cost of silencing those voices that have been permitted dominant status for the past centuries” (Boler, 2004, p. 13). Boler suggested that all voices do not carry the same weight in a deliberation and historically different voices pay different prices for the words they choose to utter. Not only does she recognize that deliberations occur in the context of structural inequality but also advocated that all voices need to be included equally in deliberations. In an effort to create political equality, she suggested that

affirmative steps must be taken that promote free and equal opportunities for speech.

While we may desire a principle of equality that applies in exactly the same way to every citizen, in a society where equality is not guaranteed, we require historically sensitive principles that may appear to contradict the ideal of “equality.” (Boler, 2004, p. 3)

Boler further recommends that until all voices are recognized equally, we must operate within a context of historicized ethics.

Participation in Democratic Process

In addition to taking affirmative steps, Young (2006) suggested that citizens involved in democratic inclusive processes must learn how to engage in democratic struggles. “Good citizens should not merely know the rules, cast informed votes, and try to hold their elected leaders accountable. They also ought to be ready to bring conflict and difference into public and work through them” (p. 101). Inherent in participating actively in political process is an assumption of knowledge and engagement in democratic process. In her work *Inclusion and Democracy*, Young (2000a) shared several examples of an educated public participating in the deliberation process addressing a police action force, human rights and other political issues.

In her examples, she suggests that central to inclusive democracy is a process of how individuals should be included in the deliberation and decision-making. In her example of citizens deliberating a community referendum, she illustrated how a democratic process occurs in the context of structural inequalities as a problem arises from the community partly from the social group differences and the prejudices, privileges, and misunderstandings that accompany them. When the issue first emerges,

those not experiencing it directly did not recognize the urgency or importance of the issue. However, by employing democratic processes, however active members of the community participated in a deliberation about the issue. As members had an opportunity to learn more about the issue, they engaged in a deliberation about the potential causes and solutions. A series of events involving struggle among various community members and parties with different points of view and perceived interests took place over what Young referred to as “discursive terrains.” The deliberation was transparent and fair. The process took time, and arriving at a decision required give and take, and compromise. In the examples Young shared, she not only illustrated the process of democratic inclusion but also described that they were engaged freely and equally. The notion of participating freely and equally reflects how ideal democracies founded upon principles of inclusion have the potential to function. Benhabib (2002) described free and equal participation in the following way.

Organizing the collective and public exercise of power in the major institutions of a society on the basis of the principle that decision-making affecting the well-being of a collectivity can be viewed as the outcome of a procedure of free and reasoned deliberation among individuals considered as moral and political equals. (p. 105)

By incorporating multiple perspectives in the deliberation and decision-making, democratic inclusion aims to address the critiques of democracy. This not only means recognizing and inviting marginalized individuals and groups but also suggests that in and through democratic processes, privilege and positionality are deconstructed and problematized. Additionally, Young suggested that incorporating multiple perspectives means taking affirmative steps and reflects democratic processes as citizens’ work

together to solve problems justly. Young further suggested that several benefits are a result of this democratic ideal such as correcting social biases, transforming perspectives from self to other, creating opportunities for social justice, and legitimizing outcomes and decisions.

Inclusive Outcomes

An important result of incorporating inclusive principles in the process of deliberation is maximizing the social knowledge available to the democratic public and thus correcting biases and perspectives. As participants consider the various backgrounds of the individuals engaged in the deliberation, the social knowledge about the individuals and the issues they face are brought to the forefront. Through this increased knowledge, empathy and the ability to engage in deliberations that address issues in meaningful ways emerge. Furthermore, as citizens engage in the process of deliberation, transformation of thinking and correcting social biases are the results of this democratic process. A second result of democratic inclusion is the shift of individual claims from self-regard to appeals of justice for others.

Deliberation facilitates the transformation of the desires and opinions of citizens from an initial, partial, narrow, or self-regarding understanding of issues and problems, to a more comprehensive understanding that takes the needs and interests of others more thoroughly into account. (Young, 2004, p. 24)

This modification of thinking results in good judgment as participants move from expressing opinions of self to enlarging their thinking to include the perspectives and needs of others. Young (2000a) suggested that in addition to correcting social bias and transforming thinking, a third result is that conditions of injustice are brought forward

and opportunities for social justice emerge.

Democratic process is the best means for changing conditions of injustice and promoting justice. Individuals and social movements frequently appeal to governments and their fellow citizens that they suffer injustice or that some proposals would produce injustice or fail to challenge injustice, and they expect democratic publics and governments to redress injustices. (p. 17)

Because individuals participating in deliberation listen to multiple perspectives about issues arising from multiple individuals, there is an expectation that through the listening, and deliberating of issues, individuals will take in the perspectives of others in a reasonable way and engage in dialogue about solutions that address social justice issues. Young (2000a) suggested a fourth result of inclusive democracy is that the deliberated outcomes can be considered legitimate and binding. “The normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making process and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes” (pp. 5-6). Thus as all individuals participate in the decision-making process, legitimacy suggests that the outcomes reflect what the individuals promote as being best. Furthermore, legitimacy lends to citizens that feel bound by the results of the decision.

None of the above-mentioned results can occur in an aggregative model of democracy in which citizens cast a preference on various issues. By engaging in inclusive democracy, we take democracy deeper by not only making a space for heterogeneous individuals to vote on issues, but we also create a space for them to participate in the deliberation of the issue and its potential solutions in authentic and meaningful ways. In doing so, not only are multiple perspectives shared, but new ideas emerge, and participants create a sense of ownership in the political process and outcomes that bind

them to the solutions and democratic ideals. Exploring democratic inclusion in the context of education is the focus of this study in terms of how the participants define inclusion, how they incorporate principles of inclusion into their teaching and how they feel limited and supported in their efforts at establishing democratic inclusive classrooms. Using a democratic framework as established by Young (2000a, 2004, 2006), the notion of inclusion will be expanded and applied to the context of democratic education.

Democratic Education

Democratic education encompasses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of society (Dewey, 1916; Gutmann, 1987). The research regarding democratic education has deep historical roots and represents ongoing and evolving conversations that are increasingly more complex as educators think in more nuanced ways about what it means to educate for democracy. These ongoing conversations about democratic education, purposes, and principles are nested in universal conversations about the public purposes of education that reflect social, cultural, political, and economic trends (Franklin, 2000; Kliebard, 2004; Popkewitz, 1987; Spring, 2010).

Set in the context of preparing students for their role as citizens of a democratic society, democratic education advocates as its purpose enculturating the norms, values and behaviors of society that are rooted in democracy (Apple & Beane, 2007a; Dewey, 1916). Current democratic theorists suggested that it is not enough for democratic education to reinforce principles of democracy, but advocate that democratic education

should adopt the purpose of transforming society, and closing the gap between the ideals and realities of democracy (Banks, 1997; Giroux, 2004). Democratic educators recognized that schools are not neutral spaces but rather produce and reify in systematic ways various identities and abilities (Anyon, 2009; Freire, 1987; Maher & Tetrault, 2001; McLaren & Jaramillo, 2006). With this focus, Giroux (2004) suggested that democratic education must provide students with the “skills, knowledge, and authority they need to fight deeply rooted injustices in a society and world founded on systemic economic, racial, and gendered inequalities” (p. 35). He further suggested that democratic education can become a moral and political practice premised on the assumption that learning can be a part of a “more expansive struggle for individual rights and social justice” (p. 34).

In their efforts to address societal injustices, democratic educators suggest that democratic education must first advocate education for *all* children for citizenship. Theories of democratic inclusion adopt this charge. Young (2006) and others (Abdi & Richardson, 2008; Gutmann, 1987) suggested that principles of democratic inclusion provide the answers and solutions that can enable and empower all students. Democratic inclusion reflects the incorporation of multiple perspectives and is a process in which differentiated positionalities and situated knowledge should attend to the particular situation of others and be willing to work out just solutions to their conflicts and collective problems from across their situated positions. In this charge, Abdi and Richardson (2008) advocated that a central goal of democratic education is to establish learning possibilities for all segments of society.

If democracy is aspirationally about the inclusion of all in the governance of their societies, then democratic education aims to give voice to those whose ideas,

histories, cultures and current understanding of the world is not highlighted in the dominant relationships of schooling, thus selectively undemocratizing the lives and by extension, the futures of these people. (p. 3)

Gutmann (1987) suggested that in our efforts to educate all students for democratic citizenship, we must recognize the contributions of all people in democratic processes and respect them as free and equal citizens.

Exclusion in Education

In spite of democratic educators' commitment to educate all students, they recognize that education like democracy is enacted in the context of structural inequality (Young, 2006). Young and others (Abdi & Richardson, 2008) suggested that part of the role of democratic inclusion is to critique education for the purpose of envisioning ideal possibilities.

Education, as other general categories of life, may sometimes have an air of innocence about it, and without some notions of criticism to enhance both its philosophical and structural categories, could become a petrified societal block that does not disturb the clustered realities of inequity and marginalization that crisscross our existentialities. (Abdi & Richardson, 2008, p. 1)

In recognizing the structural inequities of schooling, Young suggested that inclusive efforts must raise issues of justice and deconstruct individuals and groups access to schooling, curriculum, quality teachers, and resources. Young suggested that structural inequalities that are manifest in education are the result of distributive justice, hierarchical division of labor, and normalizing forms of exclusion. A cursory overview will of distributive justice and hierarchical division of labor is provided. Whereas because it is more aligned with the purpose of this study, a more in depth review of normalizing

forms of exclusion will be reviewed.

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice is reflected in the underfunding of education in terms of the amount and quality of education a child receives and are based on class, race, gender, and ability. Many democratic educators (Beyer & Liston, 1996; Young, 2006) critique American schooling because of its inadequate and unequal distribution of resources that further impacts minority children and the communities in which they live. They suggested a persistent pattern of unequal funding of public school in which the best resources including highly trained teachers and administrators went to White, middle class, suburban schools with far less resources going to urban and rural schools. Young suggests that in most societies, a child's quality of education is largely determined by parent's level of wealth and income. Furthermore, she suggested that in addition to class and race, gender difference is still a prominent issue of distributive injustice occurring in education. "Where education is relatively costly, and girls are socialized primarily for duties in the home, it seems rational to many to spend scarce resources first on the education of boys and men" (Young, 2006, p. 94). The message to those alienated by issues of distribution is discouraging, disempowering, and in direct opposition to the promises of public education that promote the notion that schools will enable and prepare all students to participate equally in democracy.

Hierarchical Division of Labor

A second area of structural inequality in schooling is reflected in what Young

referred to as hierarchical division of labor in society in which the most desirable employment positions are relatively scarce and are given to those that represent dominant interpretations of ideal race, class, gender, and ability. With these desirable positions come income, job stability, high status, workplace autonomy, significant decision-making power, opportunities for recognition, and opportunities for developing and using expertise or creativity. Young (2006) suggested that schools play a role in reproducing and legitimating unjust and hegemonic divisions of labor in society.

The educational system of most advanced industrial societies functions as much to produce losers as winners. Educational systems are not forgiving and supportive enough of students who for one reason or another do not easily fit into the disciplines and routines that mimic the professional life those who succeed are destined for- children with physical or mental disabilities, poor children, children whose parents are unable to monitor and help with homework, children who poorly know the language of instruction, children who face racist or ethnocentric prejudice from teachers, other children, and neighbors. (p. 95)

Furthermore, she reflected that most people in society do not consider this notion of hierarchical division of labor as unjust even though it entails inequalities of all kinds. She suggested that democratic inclusion demands that these exclusionary practices be addressed in order to counter the tendencies for social difference to become learning disadvantages.

Normalizing Practices

A third theme Young identified as a structural inequality occurring in education is what Young (2006) referred to as normalization that “construct experience and capacities of some social segments into standards against which all are measured and some found wanting, or deviant” (p. 96). In her description of the normalizing practices of education,

Young focused on how children spend time in schools which act as a social structure in which students are positioned in relation to one another in ways that tend to privilege some and disadvantage others.

Unfair normalization occurs when institutions and practices expect individuals to exhibit certain kinds of attributes and/or behavior that are assumed as the norm, but which some individuals are unable to exhibit, or can only exhibit at an unfair cost to themselves, because they are different. (p. 96)

She further suggested that processes of normalization produce stigmatization and disadvantage by elevating some standards against which all people are measured. In this way, definitions of “normal” as exhibited by the majority as considered best. Furthermore she suggested that no one should be disadvantaged because of characteristics and traits that have been socially constructed as not fitting into the dominant perspective of normal. Young referred to normalizing attitudes of society in terms of ability, race and ethnicity, language and speech, gender and sexuality.

Normalization concerns the way that the physical and mental capacities, cultural styles, or ways of living typical of particular social segments are held as a standard according to which everyone’s attributes or behavior are evaluated. What is “normal” in the sense of typical of a majority of persons, or typical of a dominant group, shifts into a standard of what is good or right (Young, 2006, p. 99)

Society and schooling define students who did not fit definitions of “normal” as outliers and treat them as though they are not eligible to the same rights of the majority. In this way, schools serve to reify existing powers and structures that dominate and marginalize people and promote the status quo. Abdi and Richardson (2008) advocated the democratic inclusion must challenge these normalizing perceptions.

To challenge the “normalized” but problematic structure of democratic education, critical theorists of schooling should point out how the built-in persistence of the

inequities of education must be tackled. With schools positioned as the main agents in the reproduction of the dominant perceptions and practices of life, the societal hierarchies created and sustained by education must be viewed as overwhelmingly counter-democratic; and therefore must be considered as deserving of any deconstructive and reconstructive possibilities that can be undertaken. (p. 4)

The work of democratic inclusive educators suggests that schools, as structures of inequality must be addressed.

One way that normative practices exclude students is that they teach different dispositions and values to different school populations. For those who are categorized into the normal class, gender, or race, schools serve the purpose of empowering and preparing students for their future roles as leaders in their communities. For others, such as immigrants, schools are places to help them assimilate into their societal roles and to rid them of any diversity or heritage that might potentially rock the cultural conformity of the community. For members alienated by class, race, gender or intellect, normative practices of schools serve the purpose of generating and preserving inequalities as well as preparing these members for their future diminished and limited roles. Young (2006) suggested that until normalizing structures and processes are addressed, society will not be considered democratic or socially just.

The justice of society ought to be judged according to how well it can respond to the needs of everyone, whatever their physical or mental capacities, without stigma or humiliation, and without they or their care givers sacrificing opportunities for developing skills and participating meaningfully in social and economic life. (p. 97)

Democratic education theorists from Dewey (1916) to the present have been focused on the possibilities of democratic education for all students as well as advocating that structural inequalities of society be addressed. Young referred to theorists such as Paulo

Freire that examine traditional structures and relationships in schooling. In his critique, educational attitudes and practices reify the oppressive behavior of society by engaging students only in the act of receiving rather than empowering them to act or become transformers of their world. Freire suggested that this kind of education “attempts to control thinking and action, leads men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power” (1987, p. 64). Furthermore, Freire called for a different model that he defined as “The action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it” (p. 66). Schooling defined in this way empowers students as co-investigators who are committed to solving the problems of society.

As educators committed to notions of inclusion deconstruct the structures of schooling, they forefront the invisible marginalized perspectives of knowledge into educational frameworks and policies, which, according to Banks (2002) “Contest existing political, economic, and educational practices and call for fundamental change and reform” (p. 22). Furthering the charge to deconstruct and problematize schooling are the works of Foley (1995), Marx (2006), and Valenzuela (1999). Although not exhaustive, these examples reflect the discourse, policies and programs that engage in the inclusive act of problematizing power within the context of education, while simultaneously pushing inclusive practices into the schools and classrooms of American youth. Abdi and Richardson (2008) suggested that the work of educators dedicated to principles of democratic inclusion challenge the status quo of schooling by focusing on the “inequitable power relations in education and society, and extend their analysis and observations to the important categories of empowerment and disempowerment as these

are also located in the contours and the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression” (p. 6). Inclusive educational efforts push beyond identifying and problematizing society based hierarchies towards reforming historical and cultural hegemonic education structures with the societies that support them.

Incorporating Multiple Perspectives

An inclusive pedagogy moves beyond the dominant traditions of society and seeks to include multiple voices, perspectives and narratives in the classroom. Young (2000a) and others (e.g., Apple & Beane, 2007a; Gutmann, 1987) asserted that democratic classrooms can become an ideal place to identify, recognize, and invite unique perspectives into classroom deliberations and decision-making in authentic and meaningful ways. They claim that inclusion can become empowering for students to fully engage in “the ways in which citizens are or should be empowered to influence the education that in turn shapes the political values, attitudes, and modes of behavior of future citizens” (Gutmann, 1987, p. 14). As such, educators whose work is informed by notions of democratic inclusion advocate for and attempt to create learning environments in which typically excluded and silenced opinions and perspectives are included in the curriculum of schooling.

Affirmative Action Pedagogy

Young (2004) encouraged inclusion by ensuring that members of disadvantaged groups have opportunities to share their experiences, needs, perspectives and opinions in situations where differently situated others can hear and refers to the work of Megan

Boler, who advocated for an affirmative action pedagogy in which teachers bear witness to marginalized voices in the classroom by taking an affirmative steps in silencing dominant voices. Boler (2004) suggested that teachers need to “create an educational climate that does not replicate the social inequalities of the ‘real’ world” (p. 5) and recommends several ways that an affirmative action pedagogy can be incorporated to create inclusive teaching environments such as creating an environment in which anything can be said, and all comments are welcome; and establishing a pedagogy that deconstructs and analyzes all comments while creating accountability and historical perspectives around viewpoints.

Until all voices are recognized equally, we must operate within a context of historicized ethics which consciously privileges the insurrectionary and dissenting voices, sometimes at the minor cost of silencing those voices that have been permitted dominant status for the past centuries. (p. 13)

Examining and Deconstructing Positionality

Building upon Boler’s notions of affirmative action pedagogy, Maher and Tetrault (2001) reflected that early on in their teaching, they thought including multiple perspectives in the classroom meant ensuring that all students had an opportunity to participate in the classroom discussion. Now, however, they have come to realize that incorporating multiple perspectives means examining various positionalities in deconstructing historical marginalization of individuals and groups. They have gone from a pedagogy directed towards “including everyone’s experience” to articulating the importance of positionality. They referred to positionality as characteristics of class, ethnicity, and race that are used to locate individuals in larger socially constructed

contexts. Positionality has historically been used as an exclusionary characteristic rather than one to consider when incorporating multiple perspectives. As they facilitated the exploration of positionality, they and their students examine the role of privilege in determining the ways different perspectives are not just included, but developed, interpreted, and managed by teachers and students.

I now push them to articulate how their own positions were differently implicated in the power relations described. How do our identities change in different contexts, particularly in the power relations inherent in them? A wider critical stance helps them see how they have been located, and may now, up to a point, relocate themselves in cultural discourses. (Maher & Tetrault, 2001 p. 6)

As students and teachers explore notions of positionality, they realize that they occupy various borderlands of identity that are often conflicting and overlapping. Smith and Barr (2008) suggested that exploring and deconstructing borderlands is a crucial way to incorporate multiple perspectives.

Where borders delineate not just lines on a map, but social, cultural, and psychological divisions, then “borderlands” represent those areas that reside at the margins of experience existing between opposing identities, perspectives and commitments. Developing the ability to negotiate borderlands, to be culturally fluent and able to embrace one’s own culture while understanding its relationship to others, lies at the heart of what some educators have come to refer to as “border/critical pedagogy.” Border pedagogy and exposure to border crossing ideas and practices are crucial for educational inclusion in a contested society. (p. 412)

A pedagogy focused on incorporating multiple perspectives, exploring diverse positionality, and traversing complex borderlands is concerned with generating ways of talking, writing or otherwise representing and simultaneously challenging existing traditions of understanding. Smith and Barr (2008) suggested that “the task of the educator becomes one of supporting students to both locate themselves in their particular

histories and simultaneously confront the limits of their own perspectives as part of a broader engagement with democratic public life” (p. 412). In order for democratic education to fulfill its inclusive purposes for all students, it must recognize and include the perspectives of all of its students just as society must be inclusive of all of its citizens. Additionally, democratic educators committed to notions of inclusion seek to empower marginalized voices through inclusive learning communities and deliberative decision-making opportunities of the classroom (Abdi & Richardson, 2008; Huber-Warring & Warring, 2006; Young, 2000a).

Democratic Inclusive Communities

Many of the principles associated with a democratic inclusive education are established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which each student is valued and recognized as part of the classroom community and in which multiple perspectives are included in the community building efforts of the classroom. Apple and Beane (2007a), Gutmann (1987), and Young (2000a) asserted that democratic classrooms are the ideal place to invite unique perspectives into classroom community in authentic and meaningful ways. Educators committed to democratic education have long advocated for classroom communities in which students are engaged in the processes of democracy. However, when an inclusive lens is applied to the notion of democratic community, Beyer and Liston (1996), Corbett (1999), and Watkins (2005) suggested that democratic communities become inclusive by incorporating student’s perspectives in the community building efforts of the classroom. For the purpose of this study, community is referred to

as the interdependent relationships in the classroom that work in tandem and within the context of principles of democratic inclusion. Young (2000a) defined community as a “heterogeneous public engaged in transforming institutions to make them more effective in solving problems justly” (p. 12). Interpreted in the context of education an inclusive community is a diverse classroom of students and teachers engaged in transforming classroom and school to make them more effective in educating students to solve problems justly.

As such, a democratic inclusive community is first and foremost based upon a heterogeneous public, or a diverse student body in which all perspectives are included in the community. Second, a democratic-inclusive community is focused on democratic purpose, content, and pedagogy. In this way, the purposes of democratic education are accomplished as students are prepared with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of democratic citizens. Additionally, democratic inclusive communities are founded on notions of caring, as teachers and students work to create an environment in which everyone feels included. These elements of community building will be explored in the sections that follow.

Democratic Purpose, Curriculum, and Pedagogy

Democratic inclusive education is fundamentally connected to a democratic purpose of education (Dewey, 1916; Gutmann, 1987). Dewey articulated that the central purpose of public schooling was to promote democratic values and prepare children for full participation in a social and political democracy. Building upon Dewey’s purposes of

democratic education, Apple and Beane (2007a) suggested that schools are the primary institution in which to accomplish democratic educational purposes and have an obligation to “bring the democratic way of life to the culture and curriculum of school” (p. 8). Applying principles of inclusion to a democratic purpose of schooling suggests that bringing democracy to life for students is not enough, but that democratic education must push the purposes of education deeper to include all individuals in the democratic processes of the classroom and do so in a way in which issues of social justice are acknowledged and addressed (Young, 2000a). Historically, democratic education has been about preparing only those students who represent the dominant culture for their role in society. Inclusion however, demands that democratic education widen its scope to include educating *all* students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to participate actively in reforming society (Abdi & Richardson, 2008). In this context, schools are an ideal setting to incorporate principles of inclusion to ensure that all individuals have an opportunity to participate in democratic content and processes of the classroom.

In addition to accomplishing a democratic purpose for all students in the classroom, a democratic inclusive curriculum encompasses the knowledge, skills and experiences that should be explicitly taught, modeled and reinforced in the activities and context of the classroom environment. The content of a democratic inclusive curriculum includes a knowledge of democracy that is most associated with the social studies subject areas such as history, political science, geography, and economics. Throughout the various content areas of the curriculum, notions of democracy are explored from multiple

perspectives in an effort to deconstruct the often-conflicting nuances, perceptions, and experiences of a democratic society. In addition to teaching about the history and events of democracy, teachers committed to inclusion organize the content around major social problems and issues that teach young people to critically analyze issues and events, and problematize dominant interpretations and teachings (Apple & Beane, 2007a; Evans & Saxe, 1996; Ochoa-Becker, 2007). Furthermore, to be truly inclusive, a democratic curriculum explores complex notions of democracy while at the same time problematizes historical uses of democracy. A democratic curriculum also includes experiences and activities that help students internalize the skills required of democratic citizens.

Gutmann (1987) suggested that democratic skills build upon other skills such as literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking, as well as contextual knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of other people's perspectives. Bixby and Pace (2008) suggested that democratic skills include the abilities students need to "address the complex problems facing society with an ultimate purpose to prepare citizens who will actively and thoughtfully participate in the social and political arena" (p. 7). In a classroom focused on democracy and inclusion, students are prepared with the skills to engage in democratic process in which the systematic structures of schooling can be challenged and critiqued.

In addition to teaching democratic content and skills, democratic inclusive educators incorporate pedagogical approaches that reflect the principles of democracy that utilize multiple points of view, discussion techniques and controversial issues to make connections for all students. Evans and Saxe (1996) and Ochoa-Becker (2007) advocate for an issues-centered curriculum in which students research, analyze, and

discuss controversial public issues, and engage in simulations, debates, and decision-making. These pedagogical approaches are organized around major social issues that teach young people to engage in democratic processes in which the systematic structures of schooling can be challenged and critiqued. In addition to incorporating pedagogies that fulfill a democratic purpose, and teach the knowledge and skills of democracy, educators committed to democratic inclusion incorporate notions of caring in their community building efforts.

Notions of Caring

Democratic educator's attempts to create a sense of community address what Beyer and Liston (1996) call the "three C's of care, concern, and connection" (p. 122). In this way, they are building upon the work advocated by Noddings (1992) in which she suggested that the notion of caring is critical to inclusive classroom communities because of the relational interactions associated with school. Noddings supported democratic inclusive principles by stating that education needs to produce people who can contribute effectively to democratic communities by teaching students to care for one another.

Our society does not need to make its children first in the world of mathematics and science. It needs to care for its children- to reduce violence, to respect honest work of every kind, to reward excellence at every level, to ensure a place for every child and emerging adult in the economic and social world, to produce people who can care competently for their own families and contribute effectively to their communities. (1992, p. 94)

Watkins (2005) spoke to this notion of caring communities in suggesting that where there is a focus on the personal-social dimensions of schooling, a sense of community incorporates a range of behaviors and capacities as learners and is therefore more

inclusive. “In classrooms where a sense of community is built, diverse contributions are embraced, differences are de-emphasized and inclusion is promoted” (electronic copy, Ch. 10).

Additionally, teachers dedicated to principles of democratic inclusion work to create caring, ethical relationships with and among their students by sharing personal stories, artifacts, and current events from their own lives as well as creating a class identity that unites them in their purpose and approach to learning (Passe, 2006; Triplett & Hunter, 2005). These relationships are established as teachers learn student’s names, and begin to care and inquire about their students’ thoughts and experiences inside and outside of class. Corbett (1999) advocated that in their community building efforts, teachers make connections between young people’s experiences within and outside school; connecting learning to everyday life; connecting with the social-emotional dimensions of learning; connecting with multiple ways of knowing; connecting with support systems and students’ own views on effective learning.

Teachers dedicated to democratic inclusion also establish a sense of caring in their communities as they incorporate inclusive practices such as class meetings in which students initiate discussions about topics and issues that are important to them and create class traditions in which to celebrate the various individuals of the classroom. Styles (2001) suggested that class meetings are important locations of inclusion because students develop a better sense of responsibility when given a chance to make meaningful contributions to the learning environment around them, and build a climate of trust and respect between teacher and students. Furthermore, class meetings help students learn to

associate their successes with their own efforts and abilities, as well as help them celebrate the success of their classmates. By deliberating issues that are important to them, students feel a more positive attachment to school and are more motivated to learn, have more ownership in the solutions, and develop greater empathy for their peers. Furthermore, class meetings align with principles of democratic inclusion because they mirror the processes of democracy of local communities and society.

These miniature communities reflect the ideal that Dewey (1916) advocated for in his description of democratic education. In an authentic way, students not only gain experience in addressing issues of concern but also learn to reason and reflect on their actions, think about the consequences of their behavior, and comprehend the impact they have on others. Principles of democratic inclusion are incorporated teacher's efforts to identify, include, and celebrate the various individuals in the community building efforts. In addition to teacher's community building efforts, democratic inclusion is grounded upon involving students in the decision-making opportunities of the classroom. Nested in the context of the classroom, both community building and decision-making engage students in the authentic application of democracy in transforming their learning environments to be more just and reflect notions of both democracy and inclusion.

Democratic Decision-making

In the context of education, a democratic inclusive classroom is established as teachers and students interact with each other and with the curriculum in ways that include all perspectives and voices in the decision-making of the classroom. Teachers of

democratic inclusive classrooms view decision-making as an ideal avenue for students to express opinions, to include multiple perspectives and identities, and to incorporate democratic practices into their classroom community. Integral to democratic inclusive classrooms are decision-making opportunities that involve all stakeholders, including students, in the processes and decisions that affect them (Benhabib, 2002; Gutmann, 1987; Young, 2006).

While incorporating democratic practices, inclusive educators recognize and understand their authoritative role in the education processes of the classroom and foreground, deconstruct and problematize these relationships with their students. Freire (1987) described this shared ownership in the learning process as one that is based on learning together as “co-investigators.” He suggested that learning together in authentic ways creates ownership and commitment to critical thinking and learning processes. These principles are aligned with Young’s (2000a) concept of decisions being legitimate and binding. Such environments prepare future citizens educated to participate in shaping the society of which they are apart.

Deliberation and Discussion

Educators, who are committed to democratic inclusion, find ways to involve their students in decision-making of the classroom through deliberations and discussion. Deliberations are central to democratic inclusive classrooms because they serve as a catalyst to involve students in the decision-making that occurs in the classroom. Deliberations take many forms and can occur as formal, planned learning activities or can take place spontaneously as issues arise. Teacher-directed discussions typically happen in

the forum of class meetings or as class discussions on a teacher-selected topic. As teachers identify opportunities for student participation, these discussions are usually initiated by and facilitated by the teacher. Student-directed discussions usually take place as students bring issues to the forefront that need to be addressed. These are addressed both as small groups, large class discussions, or both as they ebb-and-flow based on student involvement.

Whether the discussion is directed at curriculum or classroom decisions, students play a vital role in not only deliberating the topic at hand, but also in identifying and bringing forth topics and issues to be discussed and decided upon. As students bring discussion topics forward they present problems or questions that evolve naturally from learning and working together and are therefore authentic and apply to the “real-life” happenings of the classroom reflecting democratic inclusive processes described by Young (2000a, 2006). Regardless of format, the purpose of the discussion is aimed at gathering student feedback and including students in the decision-making and problem solving of the classroom thus accomplishing not only inclusive aims but also accomplishing democratic aims as well. These decision-making opportunities of the classroom are divided into two categories of curriculum decisions, classroom decisions and will be explored in the sections that follow.

Curriculum Decisions

Students are involved in curriculum decisions as they make decisions in terms of what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is evaluated. In this way, democratic inclusive teachers reflect notions of participation and decision-making identified in the literature as

students are involved in the processes and decisions that affect them (Benhabib, 2002; Gutmann, 1987; Young, 2006). Based on federal, state, and district guidelines, the curriculum standards act as a perimeter in curriculum decision-making as students deliberate how the curriculum is taught and experienced in the classroom.

One way students are involved in curriculum decisions of the classrooms is establishing both short-term and long-term educational goals (Garrison, 2008; Greer, Greer, & Hawkins, 2003; Gross, 2006; Metzger, 2004). Osler (2010) suggested, “children and young people have the right to engage in school decision-making about their educational futures and as such should also have the right to decline or opt out of different educational programs and extra-curricular activities” (p. 37). Students also engage in curricular decisions by being invited to participate in student-parent-teacher conferences, student councils, and school community councils. Furthermore, making curricular decisions reflects a way that the teacher participants pushed democracy deeper by including the perspectives of students who have historically been excluded in deciding what was taught, how it was taught, or assessed (Osler, 2010). In addition to making decisions about the curriculum, democratic inclusive educators also create opportunities to engage their students in making classroom decisions. Most often, classroom decisions evolve out of living and learning together and reflect classroom policies, jobs, and issues.

Classroom Decisions

Students participate in classroom decisions as opportunities arise from living and learning together that allow students to deliberate problems and their potential solutions. Initiated by students and teachers, classroom decisions gave students a context in which

to apply democratic skills and processes and participate in inclusive acts. This practice is advocated by democratic educators envisioning spaces for students to be involved as a stakeholder in the policies that affect them (Gutmann, 1987; Osler, 2010; Parker, 2008). Furthermore, as students engage in making decisions, Young (2000a) suggested that the outcomes are seen as legitimate and binding. In addition to curriculum and classroom decisions, democratic inclusion advocates that there are opportunities to push democracy and inclusion deeper by opening up spaces for students to examine how marginalized individuals and groups have been denied decision-making opportunities. Furthermore, as students engage in decision-making that extends beyond their own classroom experience, students begin to examine perspectives, issues, and experiences that are different from their own. In this way, Young suggested that involving students in decision-making processes can be a means of promoting socially just outcomes.

Democratic inclusion occurs as teachers and students engage in processes of democracy in inclusive ways as advocated by Iris Marion Young (2000a). Occurring in the context of schools, opportunities to deconstruct the structural inequalities of schooling provide the ideal place for students to incorporate multiple perspectives, and participate in the community building and decision-making of the classroom.

Conclusion

As teachers attempt to educate for democracy while incorporating the claims inclusion, they do so in unique and a variety of ways. Exploring teachers' experiences and perceptions as they attempt to educate for democratic inclusion is the purpose of this

study. Situated in deliberative democracy, notions of inclusion have been explored in terms of purpose, process, and principles and specifically how they apply to the context of education. This literature review provides the background for how democratic inclusion attends to the experiences and perceptions of teachers educating for democracy in their teaching environments and serves to scaffold the research questions, methodology, and analysis that are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study explored the perceptions and experiences of three elementary teachers that incorporate aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice. Aligned with the literature on deliberative democratic inclusion, this dissertation represents an initial effort to fill a gap in the research by applying the theory behind democratic inclusion (Young, 2000a) to the practices of teachers in elementary classrooms. The following questions guided this inquiry:

1. How do teacher participants define democratic inclusion in their teaching?
2. What does democratic inclusion look like in the teaching environments of the participants and how does it align with the literature on deliberative democratic inclusion?
3. How did these teachers come to be democratic educators?
4. How can the teacher participants expand their democratic language and practices to become more inclusive?

In an effort to accomplish the purpose and questions of this study, critical ethnography was chosen as the research design. The sections that follow include a discussion of critical ethnography and its characteristics, followed by the procedures and steps that were followed in conducting this qualitative research.

Design

The theoretical framework for this study was based upon the tenants of

deliberative democratic education and more specifically the notion of inclusion as established by Iris Marion Young (2000a). Deliberative democracy in a political context is based upon members of a community engaged in deliberation with an aim towards decision-making (Benhabib, 2002; Cohen, 1996; Gutmann, 1987; Habermas, 1996; Rawls, 1993; Young, 2000a). According to Young, deliberative democracy is a means of promoting justice based on open discussion and exchange of views, leading to agreed-upon policies.

Participants in the democratic process offer proposals for how best to solve problems or meet legitimate needs...and they present arguments through which they aim to persuade others to accept their proposals. Democratic process is primarily a discussion of problems, conflicts, and claims of need or interest. (p. 22)

Young further suggested that deliberative democracy is based on the four characteristics of inclusion, political equality, reasonableness, and publicity. When all four of these characteristics are in place, the deliberative dialogue that occurs will meet the demands of legitimacy and will be able to accomplish the overarching aims of social justice. Within the context of deliberative democracy, the characteristic of inclusion is the focus of this study.

In order to more fully understand inclusion, it is important to understand it in the context of both politics and education. Inclusion, in the context of politics brings legitimacy to democratic decisions by including all those affected by a decision in the making of the decision. Young (2000a) suggested that “inclusive democracy enables participation and voice for all those affected by problems and their proposed solutions” (p. 10). In the context of education, inclusion incorporates multiple perspectives in

inviting all students to participate in the community building and decision-making of the classroom. Furthermore, as multiple perspectives (Benhabib, 2002; Camicia, 2009; Haraway, 1991; Maher & Tetrault, 2001; Young, 2000a) are included in the learning activities of the classroom, teachers committed to democratic inclusion push democracy deeper by deconstructing how privilege associated with class, race, and gender create structural inequalities in schools. This study looked at inclusion in the context of elementary education as the inclusive practices of democratic inclusive teachers are explored using a critical ethnography design.

In developing critical ethnography as the research methodology for this study, references on qualitative research as well as critical ethnography were examined to further understand the relevant purposes, characteristics, and steps involved in conducting critical ethnographic research. Critical ethnography is a blending of ethnography and critical theory. Creswell (2005) suggested that ethnography has roots in cultural anthropology dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries as “primitive” cultures were explored, categorized, and documented. Ethnography suggests research procedures that describe, analyze, and interpret participants’ behavior, beliefs, and language in the context in which they occur (Creswell, 2005). Critical ethnography finds its history in ethnography and its theory in the critical. Critical theory is grounded in theories that trace, unveil, and deconstruct the beliefs and practices that support power and limit human freedom, justice, and democracy (Glesne, 2006). Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested that “critical ethnography is grounded in theories assuming that society is structured by class and status as well as by race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation

to maintain the oppression of marginalized groups” (p. 26). Critical ethnography adopts the charge for advocacy in identifying and revealing the unexamined structural inequalities of society. This aim of advocacy is about more than just identifying and describing the structural inequalities of society but is used as a means of revealing unexamined assumptions and the ways in which the dominant cultural group serves to oppress those without power.

In the context of education, critical ethnography developed as researchers engaged in deconstructing traditional teaching practices. As educational researchers adopted ethnography as a research lens, classrooms and schools were examined as cultural studies in which curriculum design, educational decision-making, and teaching became their focus. In his outline of critical ethnography in education, Carspecken (1996) suggested that critical ethnographic research began with works such as Willis’ (1977) *Learning to Labor* in which he deconstructed schooling practices that taught different curriculums to children of different social classes. Through his research, he examined various tracking systems employed by schools that segregate students. Building upon his work, others that followed took on the charge of problematizing the marginalizing practices of schooling based on race, class, and gender.

Using a critical ethnographic design, this study explores the experiences of teachers engaged in the work of democratic inclusion in schools. As a design aligned with the tenants of inclusion, the practices of the participants are further examined in an effort to propose how the teacher participants can become more inclusive in their teaching environments as advocated in the literature. The sections that follow include a

description of the characteristics of critical ethnography, the steps in conducting critical ethnographic research, and suggest how the data were analyzed in this study.

Characteristics of Critical Ethnography

Although critical ethnography does not follow a set of procedural steps, or methods, Creswell (2005) suggested that critical ethnography does however include several characteristics including a value-laden orientation, a concern about power and control, and a purpose to challenge the status quo through specific procedural characteristics. The sections that follow describe each of these characteristics, provide an illustrative example of the characteristic from educational research, and further suggest how these characteristics are incorporated into the present study.

Value-Laden Orientation

A value-laden orientation suggests that the researcher as well as the participants is positioned in the text by identifying their biases and values (Creswell, 2005; Madison, 2005). Maher (2008) referred to the biases and values as positionalities and further suggests that positional approaches to research bring different forms of identity into relation with each other showing how they are constructed and connected. “We all inhabit networks of relationship, which themselves can be analyzed, and changed, as long as people understand that they are not simply individuals, but differently placed members of an unequal social order” (p. 6). Recognizing and situating positionality in critical ethnography is important not only as the researcher locates his or her identities in the research, but it also opens up a space for the participants to also situate themselves in

shifting categories of identity that are shaped by background and contextual experience. In addition to situating participants in the research, Madison further suggested that in critical ethnography, the researcher also contextualizes their own positionality, thereby making it “accessible, transparent, and vulnerable to judgment and evaluation” (2005, p. 8). In this way, the researcher takes responsibility for their own values and biases to open up spaces to examine socially constructed notions of identity. Glesne (2006) suggested that in deconstructing the positionality of the researcher and the participant, the research itself becomes political because it not only relies on values systems, but it is then in a position to challenge and influence value systems.

Positionality is also deeply connected to theories of inclusion. Inclusion is not only about involving marginalized individuals and groups to participate in decision-making, but it furthers the cause by examining how positional privilege and marginalization are relational and associated. Young (2000a) illustrated this connection between positionality and inclusion by suggesting that inclusive democratic participation assumes that all participants bring biases, prejudices, blind spots, and stereotypes to the conflict and in so doing have something to teach the public about the society in which they dwell together and its problems. When these perspectives and positionalities are included in democratic processes, the deliberations reflect more legitimate concerns and solutions because they represent the diverse perspectives of the individuals that are affected by them. Inclusion as a theme in educational research reflects a willingness of researchers, teachers, and students to acknowledge their positionalities and deconstruct the role they play in curriculum and instruction.

An example of research that is informed by notions of positionality and inclusion is the work of Camicia and Miner (2010) that examines how the positionality of the teacher influences what is taught and how it is taught to the students. Using a duo-ethnography design, the researchers examined their positionalities as course designers and how they established the curriculum and selected readings tied to concepts of power and knowledge, how they established classroom norms, and how they designed instruction based upon democratic epistemologies. By situating their positionalities upfront with their students, the researchers found more opportunities to explore how power circulates not only in the design of their course, but also in the instruction and application of the course objectives and curriculum. The researchers found, that by situating themselves in the curriculum, students were more open and trusting in sharing their own stories of identity and were more willing to explore and deconstruct structural systems of power that influence education, research, and society. The researchers further advocate that future research should examine the role of positionality in democratic education curriculum. Their findings influence the current study by suggesting that the values and positionality of teachers greatly influences the curriculum and community of the classroom as well as directly connecting the present study to research that examines positionality in democratic education, namely inclusion.

For the purposes of this study, my positionality as the researcher is defined as one that is interested in democratic education and in exploring teacher's perceptions and practices. I further describe myself as a White, female, graduate student, and teacher. My experiences in these identities and in the borderlands in which they intersect influence my

theoretical lens, as well as the questions that I pursued in this study. My identities overlap as both a teacher and student, and as a White female representing the dominant culture in the community in which I currently live. My interest in empowering marginalized groups, and in identifying teachers and students as marginalized groups all reflect my commitments and biases based on my own experiences in the roles of student, teacher, and teacher educator.

In traditional research, the researcher describes the participants, as well as interprets the data presented by the participants. In an effort to situate the participants in the research and to bring voice to those that are typically excluded, I invited the participants of this study to situate their values and biases by describing their own positionalities. In this way, I hoped to bring voice to my participants by involving them in the research but also wanted to deconstruct with them how their positionalities influence their democratic inclusive teaching practices. A value-laden orientation that situates both the researcher and the participants in the text, align with notions of inclusion as well as with the methodology of critical ethnography. This coupled with a concern about power and control connects ethnography to critical theory as power is deconstructed and analyzed.

Concern about Power and Control

A second characteristic of critical ethnography is concern about power and control. Critical ethnographers seek to raise consciousness and reveal unexamined assumptions inherent in the research topic as well as the research process as they advocate for change to help transform society. Madison (2005) suggested that critical

ethnography contributes to social justice by addressing processes of unfairness and injustice. “The critical ethnographer takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control” (p. 5). Examining power and control as a predominant theme in democratic inclusive research is directly aligned with the purposes and procedures of critical ethnography design.

In the context of deliberative democratic inclusion, a concern about power and control is reflected in Young’s (2006) symposium response addressing the structural injustice of education. She suggested that unexamined inequalities are reproduced and legitimized in schools such as distribution of resources, reinforcing aspects of hierarchical division of labor, and normalizing practices that exclude marginalized perspectives from discussions, decision-making, and classroom community. Young suggested that democratic inclusion addresses these structural inequalities. “A democratic process must first ensure that members of relatively disadvantaged groups have opportunities to express their experiences, needs, and opinions in situations where differently situated others can hear” (p. 100). She further suggested that efforts concerned about power and control in education, must take affirmative steps to include and represent socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Further advocating that socialization for participation in public processes of a democratic state needs to be one of the main tasks of education. This focus on power and control not only facilitates critical ethnographers in deconstructing inequalities inherent in classrooms, but further suggests how teachers committed to deliberative democracy can incorporate a pedagogy aligned

with the principles of inclusion.

The work of Bixby and Pace (2008) provided an example of critical ethnography in which the researchers are focused on power and control and how students are being educated in time in which there are troubling political, educational, and sociological problems confronting society. In their research, they cited the problems that must be addressed through education that represent “ongoing inequalities and discrimination in and outside of schools create significant impediments to the development of civic identity and engagement among low-income and minority youth” (p. 5). Throughout their research, the researchers explored the role of power as the challenges and limitations of schools, and specifically teacher practices are deconstructed. They further suggested that because schools operate under many constraints that inhibit educational experiences, it is important to explore alternate approaches and settings that do not represent the norm in terms of course, student population, and curriculum. As a collection, the book investigated the diversity of purposes of citizenship education, meanings of citizenship held by participants, and approaches to teaching and learning as the narratives and practices of teacher participants are analyzed. From their work came a review of deliberative pedagogies that they describe as “issues centered curriculum in which students research, analyze, and discuss controversial public issues, and engage in simulations, debates, and decision-making” (p. 7) with a ultimate purpose to prepare citizens who will actively and thoughtfully participate in the social and political arena. This study informed the current study in the research questions and methodology by suggesting that teacher’s practices can and should be examined with a lens aimed at

social justice. Additionally, the present study takes on a similar charge to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences in educating for democracy in the context of classrooms.

Power and control are central themes examined in this study in several ways. First, the theme of power and control was used in situating the participants in the research from their own descriptions of positionality rather than relying of the descriptions by me as the researcher. Additionally, as I created composite narratives of their positionality and situated experience, I invited the participants to review, edit, and add to their descriptions. Another way that power was explored throughout this study was as a theme examined in the relationships and interactions between teacher and students that was manifested in how they incorporated various perspectives and positionalities of their students, and in their efforts to share power with their students in community building decision-making opportunities of the classroom. In addition to examining control and power as a theme in democratic inclusion, the current study focused on power and control throughout the research process.

Challenging the Status Quo

The third characteristic of critical ethnography is an aim to challenge the status quo. Rather than being concerned with traditional quantitative research threats of validity, reliability, and objectivity, Creswell (2005) suggested that qualitative critical ethnographers are concerned with how the research reflects the “participants lives, historical and cultural influences, and the interactive forces of race, gender, and class” (p. 437). Research focused on deliberative democratic inclusion is aligned with a purpose of

challenging the status quo as researchers identify and examine traditional practices associated with schooling and then challenge those practices to make them more inclusive and participatory for all. Young (2000a) suggested that “where there are structural inequalities of wealth and power, formally democratic procedures are likely to reinforce them, because privileged people are able to marginalize the voices and issues of those less privileged” (p. 34). Her work on inclusion and democracy challenges the status quo by articulating deficiencies in contemporary democratic societies while at the same time envisioning transformative possibilities in those societies.

An illustrative example of research challenging the status quo is Marx’s (2006) book, *Revealing the Invisible: Confronting Passive Racism in Teacher Education*. As a critical race theorist, Marx worked with her teacher participants to create opportunities for them to reflect on their own racist thinking, as well to deconstruct the historical narratives of their past that perpetuate these racially based hierarchies in schools.

I listened to them talk about students of color and I observed their interactions with students of color. As I did so, I heard comments and witnessed actions that were infused with subtle and obvious racism. I then brought my observations to their attention. My intention was to help these educators gauge the weight of their own words and thoughts, critically reflect on the racism underlying them, and ponder how racism might affect their future work with schoolchildren. (p. 3)

Additionally, Marx (2006) challenged the status quo by helping her teacher participants address their reifying of deficit models of schooling and deconstruct their teaching practices that reinforce white superiority narratives in their interactions with students. She refers to recognizing racism as a form of empowerment to change and suggests that once her participants saw their own racism, they wanted desperately to change.

Teachers who know how to talk about race and racism; teachers who are

confident enough in their own racial, cultural, and language backgrounds to value the racial, cultural, and language backgrounds of all their students; and teachers who truly love children and are able to help them all succeed. (p. 174)

As she challenged the status quo with her teacher participants, they were empowered to be the kind of teachers that can challenge those practices to make them more inclusive and participatory for all. This work informs the present study by providing an example of how educational research challenges the status quo. Her research questions, design, and analysis all inform the current study as well as inform the analysis by suggesting how research addressing historical marginalizing practices can be examined in ways that advance the aims of inclusion.

Marx's research also demonstrates ways that a researcher committed to the tenants of critical ethnography can incorporate data from observations and interviews that challenge the status quo in ways that empower participants through narrative and involvement throughout the research process. Creswell (2005) suggested challenging the status quo is reflected in critical ethnography because it not only reflects a researcher that is concerned with how participants are situated in society but also is concerned with how participants are situated within the research. As such, throughout the research process critical ethnographers serve to do more than just represent the perspectives of the participants but additionally seek to make sure that the research process does not further marginalize the individuals being studied (Creswell, 2005; Thomas, 1993). Employing member-checking opportunities throughout the research process establishes this through data collection methods that maintain the narratives of the teachers in the forefront of the research.

The current study also reflects a research purpose that is focused on the perspectives of teachers and that aligns with literature on deliberative democratic inclusion. Furthermore, by incorporating interviews and observations that addressed the teacher's experiences and practices, this research was a forefront for teachers in the research process by incorporating their narratives into the descriptions and analysis. Throughout the research process, participants were included in member checking opportunities as observation notes were shared and discussed. Each interview served the purpose in following up with participants to check observations, to get clarification on intent, purpose, and motivations in an effort to keep the participants actively involved in the research process. Finally, the researcher member checked and collaborated with participants to include them in new questions and ideas that emerged from the data.

Although critical ethnography does not follow any particular set of methods, the characteristics of value-laden orientation, concern about power and control, and challenging the status quo direct the researcher in establishing purpose and process. Qualitative researchers remind us that critical ethnographic research is a "messy, multi-level, multi-method approach to inquiry, full of contradictions, imponderables, and tensions" (Creswell, 2005, p. 441). Recognizing this complexity, critical ethnographers do not enter a research site haphazardly, but rather seek to inquire about a specific cultural theme that challenges the status quo. Creswell suggested that a cultural theme in ethnography is a "general position, declared or implied, that is openly approved or promoted in a society or group" (p. 442). For the purposes of this study, the cultural theme of deliberative democratic inclusion in the context of elementary classrooms was

studied and served as a broad lens to guide the researcher.

Procedures

As researchers apply the characteristics of critical ethnography into the design, data collection and analysis of the data, many ethnographers suggest developmental research sequences (Fetterman, 1998; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Madison, 2005; Spradley, 1980; Wolcott, 1999). The sections that follow describe the research sequences and procedures for the current study including participant and site selection, data sources and collection, as well as data analysis.

Participants and Site Selection

Consistent with the purpose of critical ethnography, this study explored the lived experiences of teachers and focused on the shared and unique perceptions, experiences, and practices of teacher participants attempting to incorporate the principles of deliberative democratic inclusion. The participants of this study were purposefully nominated based on their reputations as democratic inclusive educators. I am currently teaching methods courses at two universities in the state and as such am acquainted with many of the teachers in neighboring public schools. In an effort to locate teachers that are engaged in democratic inclusive practices, I invited my previous and current students to nominate teachers in the public schools that they had worked with in their practicum experiences that reflect these practices. I also invited my previous students to participate in the study. The criteria to nominate teachers included teachers that were currently teaching elementary grades 3-6, and teachers who were currently engaged in the practices

associated with democratic inclusive education.

Thirty teachers were nominated from five school districts to participate in the study. Upon receiving university and district IRB approval, I contacted the respective principals and potential participants by phone and invited them to participate in the study. Initially, eight teachers agreed to participate in the study but then three quickly declined because of other commitments associated with their responsibilities at school. Five teachers were remaining, four of who were my previous students. Within the first weeks of data collection, two of the nominated teachers pulled out of the study indicating lack of confidence in their abilities to manage their regular teaching responsibilities and take on the task of engaging in outside research. Three teachers participated throughout the entire data collection process.

In spite of soliciting participants that were unknown to me as the researcher, the three participants that agreed to participate in the study all had previous connections with me. Two of the participants were former students of mine at a neighboring university, the other participant taught at a local school where I do a significant amount of volunteering. Although I had built some rapport with all of the participants, I tried to ameliorate the power I held as their former instructor, as a parent volunteer in their school, and as a researcher studying their practice. I did this by having the participants dictate the place and time for our meetings as well as my observations. I also tried to accomplish this by speaking casually, and by being consistently receptive to the participant's thoughts, ideas, and stories that they were sharing. I also tried to share examples from my own teaching and research that illustrated how I, like them, am still navigating the complex notions of

what it means to be a democratic inclusive educator.

Study Context

This study was conducted in a western state in the United States where a large percentage of the population represents a homogenous conservative culture. Approximately 80% of the population lives in suburbs surrounding the state capital and major cities, leaving much of the state uninhabited and used for recreation and wildlife. The state is a center of transportation, information technology and research, government services, mining, and a major tourist destination for outdoor recreation and is considered one of the fastest growing states in the United States. The population is 80.4% non-Hispanic White with Asian and American Indian as the next largest groups in the population. In 2011, there were 600,000 students enrolled in public schools in kindergarten through 12th grade. The schools, for the dollars spent, were exceptionally productive. The United States Chamber of Commerce ranked this state's schools number one among the 50 states for return on public education investment. High school graduation rate was near 90%, and the states students ranked in the top 10 for ACT results. All three participants taught in schools located in small, rural communities with populations ranging from 11,000 residents to 26,000 residents.

Blythe teaches at a private k-12 school with 400 students in grades kindergarten through six and an average class size of 23. Blythe has been teaching for two years, both in fourth grade, although the first year was at a neighboring public school. Blythe describes her school as focused on academics through a research, reason, relate, and record teaching methodology. Due to the private nature of the school, 0% of students are

on free and reduced lunch.

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Tom was a sixth-grade teacher at a public school with just under 600 students in grades kindergarten through six and an average class size of 21. Tom had been a sixth-grade teacher for 5 years and fifth-grade teacher for 1 year. This was Tom's first year at his current school and described the school culture as being highly affluent with less than 15% of the students on free and reduced lunch. He illustrated the affluence at his school by describing his students as being exposed to a variety of places, cultures, and events.

This study focused on the perceptions and experiences of these teacher participants as they attempt to educate for deliberative democratic inclusion in their respective classrooms. Data were collected throughout the 2011-2012 school year and provided rich descriptions of their teaching practice as well as insights about how they came to be educators committed to democratic inclusion.

Data Sources and Collection

Glesne (2006) warned that qualitative researchers must be mindful of their theoretical perspectives as they influence the descriptions of what is looked for and what is found. To avoid this pitfall, the research questions, data collection methods, and coding

were grounded in a deliberative democratic inclusion framework as identified in the literature as well as in the qualitative research design of critical ethnography. Recognized data collection methods and multiple data sources were used to increase trustworthiness and triangulation and to create rich and detailed descriptions.

Triangulation is accomplished by incorporating more than one data source as evidence of particular points or themes. Data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research in question that strengthens the study. Glesne (2006) suggested that researchers look for ways to increase trustworthiness throughout the research process and suggests that triangulation is one way to do that. “This practice of relying on multiple methods is commonly called triangulation, a term taken from surveying and navigation. The purpose for methods of triangulation is not the simple combination of different kinds of data, but the attempt to related them so as to counteract the threats of validity” (p. 36). By incorporating various forms of triangulation, researchers can maintain confidence in the research process. Researchers focused on triangulation and trustworthiness often employ methods advocated by Guba and Lincoln (2005) in which they suggest that researchers accommodate multiple forms of triangulation such as using multiple recording devises, and multiple observers, using a flexible observation schedule, practice prolonged engagement by returning to the field frequently and spending a lot of time there, using low-inference vocabulary, peer-debriefing, and member checking. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested the triangulation is about making sure that the research interpretations are credible and that the data reflects the participants’ real views and authentic behavior in this ways “the

researcher devises a way to ask the participants whether he 'got it right.' Most often he gives summaries before writing up his study and asks for reactions, corrections, and further insights" (p. 221).

In an attempt to increase the trustworthiness of this study, I employed various member-checking opportunities throughout the research process. One significant opportunity occurred after creating composite descriptions of each of the participants in which they described their positionality in terms of background and teaching motivations. I created summaries of each participant and asked each of them to comment, augment, or delete aspects of their positionality that in context did not reflect their intentions or perceptions. All three participants were surprised and reacted positively to being involved in the way they were portrayed. Two of the participants reflected on never seeing themselves described in print before. All three of the participants made changes to their descriptions, resulting not only in richer images of each participant, but also gave me more confidence as a researcher throughout the research process.

Internet posts. Internet based research tools have become an invaluable resource for many ethnographers (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006; Hookway, 2008; Madison, 2005; Mann & Stewart, 2000). The value of online data collection such as internet postings creates a space in which participants can respond to posted questions in real time, rather than waiting for interviewing, transcribing, and re-interviewing to take place. Hookway (2008) outlined how Internet posts allow for practicality that sheds light on "social processes across space and time, together with their insight into everyday life" (p. 93). As a method of data collection, allowing participants to write down their responses also

leads to inclusion because it supports an alternative form of communications in ways that support the timing and location of the participants. The participants of this study responded to four Internet posts over the space of several months to create context and dialogue around the language and practices that would be gathered later through follow-up observations and interviews. The Internet postings were based on the following question prompts.

- Post #1: Introduce yourself and describe your school community. Please feel free to include gender, race, education experience, hobbies/interests, why you chose to become a teacher, and what it means for you teach democratically.
- Post #2: What is your approach to democratic teaching and what do you hope to accomplish in your efforts at democratic education?
- Post #3: Please share examples, non-examples, and missed opportunities of democratic education in your own classroom and your impressions. What was your rationale, how did you feel about it, and what did you learn?
- Post #4: When you think about teaching for democracy, what are the supporting and limiting factors in your efforts to do so? What is the biggest barrier to implementing democratic teaching practices into your teaching? What is the greatest support?

The Internet postings allowed the participants to respond on their own time without creating additional meeting times for interviews or follow up questions. After collecting data through Internet postings, the researcher set up a time to conduct a follow-up interview with each participant.

Interviews. Several interviews (Glesne, 2006; Loughran & Northfield, 1998), 1 hour in length, were conducted with the participants to gain increased understanding of their knowledge, beliefs, and experiences in promoting deliberative democratic teaching practices, as well as, to create member-checking opportunities during the analysis phase of the research project. The participants determined the interview location and time. The questions used to guide the interviews were grounded in the current literature on democratic inclusive education as well as questions that emerged from the data including the Internet posts. These interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Observations. Two observations (Creswell, 2005; Spradley, 1980) were conducted of the participant while they were teaching their classes with the intent of identifying the use of democratic strategies and to provide a context in which these practices are used. The participants determined the appropriate time and location of the observation. The observations were audio recorded and transcribed in addition to the researcher taking extensive field notes of the observation as a basis for follow-up interview questions with the participant. Data collected from observations enhanced and enriched the participant's descriptions of the teaching event and their perceptions of it.

After the data were collected it was coded using Atlas Ti qualitative coding methods. Qualitative researchers Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that coding is achieved as data is filtered through the theoretical lens of the study as a priori themes. The a priori themes for this study reflected the definitions, descriptions, intentions, and practices of democratic inclusion. Wolcott (1994) further suggested that the coding process examines any descriptive account from the data that can be related through the

eyes of different participants and reflects their perceptions and positionality. The researcher first coded the data by participant and then coded the data a second time based on the themes of inclusion as identified in the literature. These themes were then cross-coded to find sub-themes and patterns in terms of language and practice regarding deliberative democratic inclusion. Aligned with the literature on deliberative democratic inclusion, many themes emerged from the data that were then analyzed.

Data Analysis

Methods and procedures for analyzing the data of this study were based on qualitative research methodology and critical ethnography (Lieblich et al., 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). After a coding of the data, rich descriptions and narratives were created for each participant. Wolcott suggested that analysis plays an important role in the research by expanding and extending beyond pure description that proceeds in a careful, systematic way in identifying key factors and relationships among data. In establishing patterns in the data, I recognized that insights were hidden in the patterns and reflected what Wolcott described as “magical moments [that] occur during brief bursts of insight or pattern recognition” (p. 24). He further advocated that the analysis must include an identification of essential features, patterns and the systematic description of interrelationships among data and that it rests ultimately, on agreed-upon knowledge and the recognition of mutually recognized properties or standards as identified in the literature. Aligned with these processes, the researcher cycled back to the purposes and practices of democratic inclusion outlined in the literature to explain, make connections, and draw conclusions based on the discourse and practice of the research

participants. The chapters that follow examine the findings from data collected through the narratives of the participants and explores how those findings suggest how democratic inclusion can be applied to elementary classrooms.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS: DEMOCRATIC INCLUSIVE TEACHERS

In analyzing and interpreting qualitative data, Creswell (2005) suggested that the analysis phase of the research begins by the researcher describing findings and exploring themes that emerge from the data. He suggested that this process involves examining the data in detail to describe what is learned and then developing themes or broad categories of ideas from the data. Wolcott (1994) described the analysis process as representing an effort of the researcher to describe data in meaningful ways and includes description, analysis, and interpretation. He further advocated that describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming in depth understandings of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the participants in the research by developing a descriptive portrait of the three participants and how they came to be teachers committed to democratic inclusion. Aligned with the purposes of the study, I analyzed the data focusing on particular research questions. This chapter focuses on the description of the participants, their background, and educational experiences that prepared them to engage in the work of democratic inclusion. In the descriptions that emerged from the data, the participants are positioned in the research as individuals with unique experiences with inclusion in their background and educational experiences and as teachers that were exposed to principles of democratic inclusion in their teacher education programs.

In this study, I explored the perceptions and experiences of teacher educators in their attempts to educate for democratic inclusion. In an effort to situate the participants in the research and to conduct research that reflects principles of inclusion, I invited the participants to describe themselves, and their positionality, using their own words. In this research, I am using Maher and Tetrault's (2001) definition of positionality as a lens. They describe the concept of positionality as characteristics such as class, ethnicity, and race that are used to locate individuals in larger socially constructed contexts. Examining positionalities is helpful in revealing the ways "in which people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed" (p. 164). They cite for example the characteristic of "woman" in terms of the constantly shifting contexts in which gender, relationships, and roles interact. These interactions not only locate, but also result in new relationships among themselves. As we begin to see ourselves in relation to positionalities we recognize the need to constantly realign ourselves to shifting contexts, "gradually abandoning our own universalizing of gender, race, culture, and class for more fluid appraisals of their dynamics in different contexts" (p. 165). In the context of education, positionality has historically been used as an exclusionary characteristic rather than one to consider when incorporating multiple perspectives. As they facilitate the exploration of positionality, teachers that are committed to democratic inclusion, examine the role of positional privilege in determining the ways different perspectives are not just included, but developed, interpreted, and managed by teachers and students. It is important to note, that these descriptions of positionality reflect the participants chosen descriptions in their

own words, unaltered by the researcher. With this purpose in place, the following sections serve to introduce the reader to the teacher participants as situated in their own positionalities as teachers and within the contexts of their teaching environments.

Democratic Teacher Participants

The participants of this study were purposefully nominated based on their reputations as democratic educators. I am currently teaching methods courses at two universities in the state and as such am acquainted with many of the teachers in neighboring public schools. In an effort to locate teachers that are engaged in democratic inclusive practices, I invited my previous and current students to nominate teachers in the public schools that they had worked with in their practicum experiences that reflect these practices. I also invited my previous students to participate in the study. The criteria to nominate teachers included teachers that were currently teaching elementary grades 3-6, and teachers that were currently engaged in the discourse and practices associated with democratic inclusive education.

The three participants of this study are Blythe, Sydnee, and Tom. All three are elementary teachers. Blythe and Sydnee both taught fourth grade and Tom taught sixth grade. Blythe and Sydnee both described themselves as White females and Tom as a Korean American male. All three of the participants represented the dominant religion of their teaching communities and spoke English as their primary language. Sydnee and Tom had both lived in communities outside of the United States and all three of the participants were fluent in other languages including Korean, Spanish, and American

Sign Language. All three participants studied at universities and gained their teaching licensure through traditional teacher education and certification programs.

Throughout the 2011-2012 school year, data were collected through Internet postings, interviews, and observations. These opportunities to meet with and observe the participants provided rich descriptions of not only how they were engaged in democratic practices, but also provided insight about their background and upbringing and how it influenced their beliefs and practices in unique ways. The best way to convey the individuality of Blythe, Sydnee, and Tom is to give a brief description of each that reveals something of their background and personality. These short character sketches are meant to give readers a glimpse into the uniqueness of each participant. They are introduced below in alphabetical order by the pseudonym and description they each chose for themselves.

Blythe

My hope is that as I incorporate democratic strategies into my classroom my students will see the power of community that will extend beyond the classroom. I want students to grow up and be able to participate, not just complain about the process of democracy. I want them to have a sense of the purpose of education- to help others and to help themselves. (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Sept. 30, 2011)

Blythe described herself as a 26-year-old, married, White, female born and raised in a conservative family of six children. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom and her father worked as a mechanical engineer on various government projects that moved the family coast to coast. Blythe attended public school while occasionally one or two of the family members were schooled at home by her mother, who has a degree in elementary education. Education was important to Blythe, and even as a young girl, she spent her

playtime reenacting the procedures and lessons she had learned at school. As she grew older, playtime transitioned into babysitting for neighbors and friends. Because she was so good with their children, many of the parents she babysat for acknowledged her abilities with children and asked if she was going to be a teacher.

I loved the feel of teaching in church, as well as lots and lots of time babysitting. As a 10 year old I started babysitting for a family of 5. When I was 16 I became a nanny for a family and I wouldn't just babysit. I always brought some activity to do and really loved teaching them. They were probably my first students. (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Sept. 30, 2011)

In spite of her recognized abilities and experience working with children, she enrolled in college intending to be a music performance major.

On being a teacher. When Blythe got to college, health circumstances prevented her from studying music performance so she vacillated on other majors including deaf education and home and family science. Her plans were going well until her senior year when she could not shake the impression that she should become a teacher.

The reoccurring idea came to study elementary education. I had been teaching special education at a nearby school the past two years and I knew I loved teaching. Luck was on my side and I was accepted into the teaching program without having completed any prerequisite courses. (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Sept. 30, 2011)

She enrolled in the teacher education program and upon graduation was hired to teach fourth grade.

Blythe has been teaching for 2 years, both in fourth grade. In spite of being offered a position at her first school, she chose to move to a new school, which is a private, religious-based school. She suggested that most of the students came from two-parent families who are very involved in the schooling of their children. Blythe suggested

that because of the private nature of the school, homework was always done and that when she communicated something in her newsletter, the parents read it, and the children came prepared. In our ongoing conversations, Blythe and I talked about the differences in teaching at a private religious school contrasted to the public school she taught at last year. She suggested that the main difference was an attitude and sense of responsibility. Rather than taking attendance at the school for granted, many of the parents at the school were making great sacrifices so that their children could attend. “There are some in my class that come from very, very wealthy families. I have parents who work custodial at the school at night so that their children can attend” (Blythe, Interview, March 2, 2012). This sense of sacrifice and responsibility translates into involved parents, and children that are willing to engage in the behavior and learning expectations of the school. Blythe reflects that she did not have nearly the behavioral or classroom management issues at the private school as she did last year teaching in the public school and described her students as well-behaved, obedient students who want to please. “They have a desire to learn, do right, and be good” (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012)

Blythe’s classroom was decorated simply. Along the main wall was a timeline of the state’s history interspersed with the history of the religious people who founded the school. The student’s desks were arranged in orderly rows. Her classroom was very organized both in appearance and in procedure. The schedule for the day was posted on the whiteboard in the front of the room, and the class rules and procedures were visible for the students to see. There was a strong sense of high expectations. Students answered questions in complete sentences and responded respectfully to the teacher and each other.

As Blythe described her students and school, she also reflected on the challenges associated with learning and mastering a new private school curriculum and pedagogy.

The school has a distinct methodology that I am still learning. The need to be a living textbook is wonderful but it comes with its own limitations. It is difficult to have the flexibility that has to fit within the existing structure and culture of the school. At times I feel like the expectations for what to teach are so broad that I spend much of my time trying to decide what to teach from all the content while skimming it all and then the how to teach it ends up being left behind. (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012)

The school's curriculum did not reflect the local state core in terms of objectives or assessments. Furthermore, the approved pedagogy of the school did not reflect many of the methods and strategies that she was introduced to in her teacher education training, and in some cases were in direct conflict with how she was trained. For these reasons, and in spite of it being her second year of teaching, the new school curriculum and culture resulted in Blythe dedicating the majority of her time establishing a curriculum rather than improving a curriculum. Blythe considered this to be a huge barrier to her attempts to incorporate democratic inclusion in her classroom.

Becoming a teacher engaged in democratic inclusion. When Blythe described how she became a teacher committed to democratic inclusion, she reflected on several experiences growing up as well as a methods course she took in her teacher preparation program. Introducing her to the tenants of inclusion, she gave her father credit for teaching her to accept and include people who might be different from herself by the way he treated others.

My dad would visit people every Sunday. He reached out to people of different backgrounds. He was always loving people. He would go to the prisons. He would give strangers money in airports. He was careful not to excuse their behavior, he would recognize the choices people had made and leave the

ownership for their life and the consequence with them. (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012)

Blythe reflects that she learned how to reach out to people and learned to love them after watching her dad interact with them and seeing how their lives change as a result of being loved and cared for. Blythe also referred to a summer job she had in high school working at a cabinet factory in Southern Virginia in which she witnessed the structural inequalities of society based on race, disability, and socio-economic status as being an important learning experience for her. The biggest factor she saw was the lack of literacy and education. “A lot of the people I worked with were high school drop outs. I asked one of them to help me read something and he couldn’t follow along. The literacy was lacking” (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012). In spite of the differences, Blythe applied what she had learned from her father and reached out to befriend and engage with those around her. Over the summer, she found opportunities to serve her co-workers and slowly became their friends.

When Blythe returned to college, she enrolled in a teacher education course in which the teacher incorporated principles of democratic inclusion into the curriculum and procedures of the course.

[I was inspired] as examples were shared by the professor of children whom she had taught who had been given those opportunities to really choose to reach their potential. Rather than being in some sense limited by a scope and sequence, they were allowed to expand as little or as much as they liked. As is evidenced in human development, the children usually chose to expand that knowledge. The idea of this really hit home with my personal belief of wise use of agency being the defining characteristic of good learners and eventually successful people. The skills are developed that way that will enhance, rather than impose on liberty. (Blythe, Electronic Posting, April 24, 2012)

Blythe suggested that this class and professor inspired her to think about the kind of

teacher she wanted to become.

I really hoped to be that inspiring, amazing teacher. I wanted to be one that students remembered caring about them and hopefully give them an example of love and service. I knew that many children weren't raised in circumstances as helpful as my own, yet I truly believe that EVERY child can be great and successful if they know how and are encouraged along the path. (Blythe, Electronic Posting, April 24, 2012)

As she graduated and became a teacher of her own students, she incorporated aspects of democracy into her classroom. For Blythe, democratic classrooms were about community and seeing how unity is more powerful than individuals. "Democratic teaching allows the individual to help the community. My hope is that as I incorporate democratic strategies into my classroom my students will see the power of community that will extend beyond the classroom" (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Sept. 30, 2011).

Democratic practices in Blythe's classroom directly tied to the curriculum being taught. She looked for opportunities to study history, and culture, and community.

I believe every subject can contain elements of democracy but history and geography lend themselves more to it because of the cultural ideas embedded in the subjects. When we study people and their lives, we can hope to make a difference in our own lives thus impacting our cultures and communities. (Blythe, Interview, Oct. 7, 2011)

Blythe incorporated aspects from history in helping her students create classroom rules and procedures in the name of a class constitution. She applied community as she engaged students in discussions about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and as she (with her students) addressed the needs that emerged out their classroom community.

Experience with exclusion. As part of her description of how she became a teacher dedicated specifically to inclusion, Blythe reflected on experiences in her own life in which she was excluded because of her religious beliefs and how her fourth-grade

teacher intervened to help her understand her worth.

I had friends that told me they couldn't be my friends because of my religion. I remember being spit on and having rocks thrown at me because of my religion. I definitely have my heart go out to students. I remember the teachers who would talk to me when I was on the playground swinging, and they would ask me how things were going. (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012)

In addition to caring teachers, Blythe had experiences during this time in which her teacher took the students into the community to visit elderly people at care centers. In the midst of being excluded from her friends, she was able to find friendship in the service learning opportunities of the classroom. Now as a teacher, she worked hard to extend a caring hand to students who might feel excluded. She shared the experience of getting a new student mid-year who had been homeschooled his entire life. He cried for 2 days straight when he came to school because he did not feel like he was a part of the school culture. She immediately engaged the students in meaningful activities and games to make him feel welcome and worked with him after school to help him succeed academically.

Because of her experiences growing up and in schools, Blythe was a teacher who is committed to democratic inclusion. Through her efforts, she hoped to create a classroom environment in which her students were able to participate in the processes of democracy in order to help others and the communities they live in. Blythe's commitment to democratic inclusion is translated into practices that reflect the purposes and practices of democratic inclusive classrooms as established in the literature, namely in her efforts at establishing community and in creating decision-making opportunities for her students. These themes and practices will be further explored in Chapter V.

Sydnee

There is a certain feel of democracy. There is something that occurs when we discuss something that we are united about, that everyone is focused on, there is energy in the room and they all pull together. Everybody is passionate and focused and united. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

Sydnee described herself as 24-year-old, White, single, female. She is the fifth of six children and was raised in a family with two teachers. She grew up in California and attended public schools with highly motivated teachers. She had studied and lived abroad, which she gives credit to opening up her mind and heart to other cultures. She described herself as outgoing, confident, happy, and adventurous. She was a goal setter and a planner and reflected having a practical mind and an idealist heart with those two sides of her personality constantly balancing each other.

On being a teacher. Sydnee chose to become a teacher while still enrolled in high school after exploring other careers. She considered everything except for teaching including statistics, interior design, finance, and even cooking school.

None of those felt right and I didn't think they could hold my interest for more than a few years. Teaching has so much variety and so much room for continued learning and growth. Teaching felt right, and I have a knack for it. I really enjoy teaching, no matter the subject or the age of the students. (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Sept. 15, 2011)

During her junior year in college, Sydnee had an "internship" experience in which she went back to her fourth-grade teacher's class as a volunteer teacher. "I was highly complimented on my natural ability both in that setting and also when I'd go and help in my mom's first grade classroom. My mom would comment that I was a natural. That influenced me" (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012). Sydnee had been teaching for 2 years in public schools, first as a fifth-grade teacher, and at the time of this study as a

fourth-grade teacher. Her first year of teaching she described teaching the core curriculum as her job, but teaching other things along with the core was what made it meaningful to her. The other meaningful things Sydnee referred to as the following:

[I teach] respect and responsibility about current events, and [how to] be a citizen of the world. I empower students with skills to solve their interpersonal conflicts. I teach communication and listening skills. I teach values and character. That is what matters to me. (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Sept. 15, 2011)

She described her students as coming from upper-middle class backgrounds who are predominantly White with very few minority students. She taught at a school that was 8 years old with a new principal. This is important in her description of the school because it has resulted in a faculty that was somewhat divided. She described the parents at her school as being very active in school community council and in the parent teacher association.

Sydnee's classroom was brightly decorated with student work as well as instructional materials. She had organized her class around the Harry Potter movie that is a favorite among her students. The class reward systems, transitions, and rules all reflected this movie theme. Sydnee had very high expectations for her students' learning and behavior and yet she was able to interact with her students in very playful ways. She approached classroom management from a positive perspective inviting and encouraging students to "go the extra mile" and support each other through the sharing of compliments.

I encourage my students to be respectful, kind, and responsible. I use positive reinforcement much more than negative. Expectations are very clear, everyone knows what to do, and things run smoothly. I play basketball with my kids at recess. We have sort of inside jokes and handshakes that bond us together. It's a tight knit community. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

Sydnee was very open with her students and shared important aspects of her life with them and invited them to share with her. There was a genuine feeling of love and trust in the classroom.

Becoming a teacher engaged in democratic inclusion. Sydnee became a democratic teacher because it “made sense to her.” She gave credit to experiences she had in college with two courses that were taught democratically. In both courses the students were encouraged to determine the curriculum and were involved in the decision-making of the course. One of the courses taught this way was an undergraduate biology course in which the students were given the opportunity to decide what was taught based on a student directed research model. She reflected how she felt about learning in that way.

It was the most amazing learning experience because it was empowering. I learned that I could learn on my own. It was things that I really cared about. I got to choose which questions I would research...it was so empowering. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

Later, Sydnee was again exposed to democratic inclusion in a teacher education course in which the professor invited the students to decide the procedures, assignments, and assessments of the course. Her reaction to the course was that it made sense to her and made her feel valued.

It made me valued, like an integral part of a community. I am an opinionated person, so naturally when my opinion is valued, I feel important and loved. The important part of the experience was having ownership over our class and its material, which increased “buy in.” (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

Sydnee suggested that these experiences were important in establishing the foundation and commitment to democratic inclusion as she became a teacher.

As Sydnee transitioned into her role as a full-time teacher, she was excited to apply what she had learned in her teacher education class with her students. Sydnee believed that democratic education is about giving students voice and choice through decision-making opportunities in the classroom. She began incorporating aspects of democratic inclusion at the beginning of the year by inviting her students to help her establish the class rules and procedures. She reflected that even though she was willing to turn the decision-making over to the students, her students were not necessarily ready for it. Few students knew how to actively participate in the decision-making process. “They are still very much in the mindset that adults are the authority figures that tell you what to do, so it’s hard for them to take control when it is given to them” (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Sept. 15, 2011). As the year progressed, and as her students gained more experience, she gradually involved them in more of the decision-making of the classroom. “It’s hard to know how to establish the right environment. It’s hard until everyone knows and is comfortable in their roles (teacher, student). It was hard to figure out procedures, policies, and teaching strategies” (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012). As she and her students gained more confidence in democratic principles, Sydnee gave her students opportunities to have a voice in various classroom decisions. They discussed and voted on everything from attention signals, cheers for different subject areas, procedures, and class jobs. When asked about why she engages in democratic inclusion, Sydnee’s intentions and motivations were reflected in giving students a sense of ownership and responsibility of their learning and behavior.

I hope that through my democratic approach, students will feel ownership of our class. They will feel like co-contributors and creators. I want them to be people,

who act, and not acted upon. I want them to think critically and not let me do all the thinking. I also hope that this will result in a positive, safe, and caring atmosphere. (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Sept. 15, 2011)

As Sydnee involved her students in the decision-making opportunities of the classroom, they gained a sense of ownership and responsibility to direct their own learning.

Experience with exclusion. An important theme that emerged from Sydnee's description of self was experiences of being excluded because of cultural background. As part of her description of how she became the kind of teacher she is today, Sydnee referred to herself as being very self-confident growing up because of her great support system at home. However, and in contrast to the support she felt at home, she also had experiences in her life in which she felt less confident and "excluded." As a young adult, Sydnee lived in South America. In moving there she felt like she had left her identity and confidence behind.

All of the things that had given me a sense of accomplishment meant nothing. My smarts, my academic ability, was more of a hindrance than a help. All of my opportunities and great things I was doing, if I ever talked about it would make me seem like some stuck up, rich, White, daddy's girl, from America. Nothing that I had worked for helped me in what I was trying to accomplish. I was criticized and I felt powerless. I felt like I couldn't succeed, I didn't know who I was anymore. I didn't know how to act, all of my strengths were gone and I was only left with my weaknesses. I died inside. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

In her description, Sydnee suggested that she was excluded because of her cultural upbringing. She also attributed language and religion as barriers to her feeling a part of the community. She later reflected that these experiences with exclusion helped her become more aware and sensitive to creating inclusive opportunities in her own classroom teaching and environment.

This gives me greater compassion for individual students. It helps me be sensitive.

It definitely gave me empathy for [my new English language student] coming into my class, and I was able to explain to my students a little of what she would be going through because I had had similar experiences. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

Because of her experiences growing up and in schools, Sydnee was a teacher who was committed to democratic inclusion. Through her efforts, she hoped to create a classroom environment in which her students felt happy, safe, and supported. Sydnee's commitment to democratic inclusion was translated into practices that reflected the purposes and practices of democratic inclusive classrooms as established in the literature, namely in her efforts at establishing community and in creating decision-making opportunities for her students. These themes and practices will be further explored in Chapter V.

Tom

A good teacher is one that can read their students well and deliver what they need mingled with what the research says is good teaching practice. (Tom, Interview, Sept. 28, 2011)

Tom described himself as a 32-year-old, Korean American, married, male. He was raised as an only child, in a multicultural home with his mother who was full Korean and his father who was White American. Tom lived with his parents in Korea until he was 6 years old, when they decided to move to the United States so that he could learn to speak English and be educated in American schools. His parents were separated when he was 9 and he lived with his mother. This meant that every summer he would return to Korea for 3 to 4 months to attend Korean school and be close to his Korean cousins and friends. Tom reflected that "it was interesting trying to navigate both worlds" (Tom, Interview, Sept. 28, 2011).

Because of his Korean heritage, Tom felt a lot of pressure to succeed in school. He referred to the Korean culture and the impact that schooling exams had on determining future role and career in that society. He also reflected on Korean friends who had taken their own life because they had not done well on those same exams. This context influenced the way he felt about his own efforts and success in school. Additionally, because of their limited education, both of Tom's parents heavily stressed education and supported Tom in his schooling. His mother graduated with a sixth-grade education and his father with a high school education. Tom described that he was the first person on both sides of his family to have a master's degree and the first on his dad's side to have a college degree. "I love to learn because both of my parents were invested in my learning."

On being a teacher. When Tom entered college, he never imagined himself as a teacher. In fact, he received his nursing degree and worked in the medical profession for some time before becoming a teacher. He went into medicine because he loved to learn and wanted to make a difference in the community. After the encouragement of loved ones, and reflecting on the positive role models of his previous teachers, he decided to make a career change to the teaching profession. He chose elementary education because he liked all of the subjects and wanted to be able to teach them.

I have been very happy with my decision to be a teacher and I enjoy knowing that I have had the opportunity to influence a person's life. I am in it for the students and I think I will remain in the profession as long as I know I can help improve or better the lives of students. (Tom, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011)

Tom had been teaching for 6 years with 1-year experience as a fifth-grade teacher and 5 years teaching sixth grade. This was his first year at his current school. Tom described his

students as eager to learn and his school community as a highly affluent.

Most of the students that attend this school have been fortunate enough to have been exposed to a variety of places, cultures, and events that have shaped personal beliefs and expectations in life. These experiences have defined the way some of the students look at life- full of excitement and intrigue. (Tom, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011)

Tom's classroom was decorated with student work and was organized around a local college sports team that many of the students supported as fans. Tom had very high expectations for his student's learning and behavior and yet he was able to interact with his students in very lighthearted ways.

We laugh a ton in class. We clap for each other all the time. Whenever a student shares anything we clap for them and tell them one positive thing about what they just did. I allow the students to learn what is going on in my life and we form connections through our likes and dislikes. These connections are built on trust, laughter, and honesty. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012)

Tom's students interacted in both large- and small-group settings and the physical set up of the classroom reflected those transitions. Tom shared important events from his life with his students including stories and photographs of his family and children. He also encouraged his students to share their important happenings. Tom made connections with his students both inside and outside of the classroom and was often seen at a soccer game or performance of his students.

An important part of Tom's description of himself as a teacher was the challenge of being a male in a female profession. He talked openly about how his gender affected his interactions with his female counterparts and how it affected the gender ratios in his classroom. "I learned right away that female teachers don't like you to jump right to answers or solutions. You listen, you validate, and sometimes you just shut up. If you

address the problem too quickly, you aren't going to go anywhere" (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012). An important observation of his class ratios this year is that two thirds of his students were boys. The principal told him that she placed the boys in his class so that he could influence them. This was just one example of how he felt like his gender as a male in a female profession was seen as different or was used to make decisions. Another way he felt that his gender has influenced his interactions in the profession was through stereotyping. He referred to several occasions in which he had received stereotyped criticism such as "it's a guy thing" and "it's guys like you that don't care about order" (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012) that made him wonder about what kind of guy he was and how he could deconstruct the meanings associated with being a minority male in a typically female profession.

Becoming a teacher engaged in democratic inclusion. When Tom described how he became a democratic teacher, he reflected on several examples of democratic teaching from his own education in which he was exposed to democratic practices. One example was a history teacher who gave the students choices in terms of attendance.

She helped us see how choices lead to certain consequences. She would never take attendance. If we were in class, it was our choice. But she had us understand what it would mean if we weren't there. I was there all the time because I never wanted to lose her trust. I felt like she was entrusting me with something extremely important. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012)

Tom also reflected on an Algebra 2 teacher he had in high school that made special accommodations for a student who was failing the class. This was an important marker for him because it was the first time he had seen a teacher create an inclusive environment for all students, even if that meant creating an exception for those that might

be failing. “I was shocked that a teacher could do something like that, but then I liked that teacher more because in my opinion she was throwing a life line out to the kid” (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012).

As Tom transitioned from a teacher candidate to a full-time teacher, he credited a professor in his teacher education program who observed his teaching and then later helped him identify how his teaching practice was democratic. He was teaching a literacy lesson and was giving students a choice in how they identified and highlighted a word to be used later in writing. During the debriefing time, the professor commented on how she liked the opportunity he had established for student choice.

For me, this was the first time I ever consciously thought about giving choice to students.... It changed my teaching and thinking. It was the trigger for me to become more democratic because before then I was so worried about content and how to teach it. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012)

This teacher helped Tom to become more reflective in his practice and how he could provide opportunities for his students to participate in decision-making.

As Tom became more aware of choice for his students, he began to think about what it meant to be a democratic teacher. Tom believed that democratic inclusion was about allowing students to have a say in what happens in the classroom and in working together to establish the procedures of the class.

My approach to democratic teaching is not formal in nature but is the way that I interact with my students and establish my procedures that are democratic in nature. I allow my students to express their opinion and I freely express mine to them and we begin to understand one another by making concessions, and attempting to understand each of our perspectives. (Tom, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011)

For Tom this was more than just establishing classroom rules and procedures but extends

to what is taught and how it is taught. Tom began involving his students in classroom decision-making by giving students choices of how to highlight words in a literacy lesson. He then looked for opportunities to involve students in making decisions about what books they could read given several options. This then evolved to giving students guidelines of book genres and letting his students choose literature within the broad categories that interested them. Now with several years of experience, Tom invited his students to participate in curricular decisions, classroom decisions, and decisions extending beyond the classroom.

At the start of the year, I ask students what they want to learn within the scope of the sixth grade curriculum and I try to adapt my teaching to match what the students want to learn. I also get student input with grading expectations and individual grades. (Tom, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011)

When asked about why he engaged in democratic inclusion, Tom reflected that it was helping students reach their full potential.

As a teacher, I know I have the ability to lift someone up and help him or her reach their potential or pull them down and prevent them from developing all of their talents. This power has led me to develop and refine my teaching style to become more democratic in nature. (Tom, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011)

As Tom became more reflective in his own practice, he found numerous opportunities to engage his students in community and decision-making efforts of the classroom.

Experience with exclusion. Similar to Blythe and Sydnee, Tom attributed his personal commitment to inclusion to previous experiences with exclusion. As part of his description of how he became a teacher dedicated to democratic inclusion, Tom described growing up on the “outside” in terms of culture and language. When he moved to the United States, Tom often felt excluded from the social and learning experiences of

the classroom because he did not speak English fluently.

I was embarrassed by my English. I would stay outside of the circle because I couldn't talk to anyone. And when I tried to engage in a conversation I just couldn't get what they were saying, it was just echoing over my head. I just really honestly couldn't get it. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012)

In his struggle to learn a new language and to fit into a new culture, Tom remembered an important day when his school principal invited him to visit with her. During their meeting, she congratulated him on how well he was doing in school and encouraged him not to compare his learning with anyone else. This was important to Tom because he felt like she showed him his success and what he could do and represented a genuine effort to acknowledge him and invite him into the school community.

Because of his experiences growing up and in schools, Tom was a teacher who was committed to democratic inclusion. "Growing up multiculturally molded who I am now. When I see English language learners coming through I understand. I feel their pain. I have empathy for them" (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012). Tom reflected openly about how culture, language, and religion often excluded him and how those experiences created empathy in him, and motivated him to create a different learning environment for his own students. Tom's commitment to democratic inclusion is translated in practices that reflect the purposes and practices of democratic inclusive classrooms as established in the literature, namely in his efforts at establishing community and in creating decision-making opportunities for his students. These themes and practices will be further explored in Chapter V.

My Own Story

I knew from personal experience that when students have ownership in their learning, they are more motivated to learn and are more engaged in the curriculum.

As a researcher, I describe myself as a White, married, female. I was raised in a large conservative family. Both of my parents were educators. My mother was certified as a second-grade teacher, and my father was a professor of education at a private university in the community in which we lived. Although never spoken outright, there was definitely an expectation to do well in school and to work hard. As one of the youngest in the family, patterns were already clearly established by my older siblings for respecting teachers, turning in assignments on time, and doing well academically and in extracurricular activities. I loved school and I did well in school because I loved my teachers and felt encouraged by them. I remember an important interaction with my third-grade teacher in which she expressed confidence in me as a student and established the expectation that I could succeed in school, that I could do my best, and that I should never turn in an assignment that was late or that did not represent my best effort. This interaction was a defining moment for me as I envisioned myself as a successful student.

Another important schooling experience for me occurred when in sixth grade I was invited to participate with a small group of students in a state-sponsored “problem-solving bowl.” Over the period of several months, the students were given various global and local issues to research. Our task was to research the issue as well as deliberate potential solutions that would then be presented to a panel of judges from the community. The judges were not particularly interested in our solutions as much as they were focused

on our abilities to articulate our arguments, defend our premises, and deliberate our solutions. This experience stands out for me because I was alive with learning, I felt important as a student, and I was engaged in something that seemed to really matter. I remember having conversations with my parents and teachers suggesting that all of our time in schools should be spent this way, and secretly wishing that this experience would never end.

On being a teacher. Like the participants of the study, I entered college with no intention of becoming a teacher. I dabbled in majors including architecture design, business, and communications. Throughout this experimenting, my parents consistently encouraged me to take education classes to see if it was not something that resonated with who I wanted to become. My junior year I finally succumbed and enrolled in an introduction to education class in which I was given the opportunity to volunteer at a local elementary school. Upon entering the classroom and in my first interactions with the students, I felt like I was finally where I belonged and made the decision to become a teacher. During my teacher education program, I had several university professors that mentored me in various teaching styles. Those that resonated with me were participatory, inquiry-based approaches that engaged students in hands-on learning opportunities. One mentor that was particularly important was a professor that focused on authentic experiences that motivated students to direct their own learning based on intrinsic rewards and cooperative learning. As a master teacher with decades of experience, he shared stories and examples from his own classroom experience that illustrated how his students became empowered, motivated, and directed their own learning.

Becoming a teacher engaged in democratic inclusion. As a full-time teacher working with third- and sixth-grade students, I stumbled upon democratic teaching practices as an extension of what made sense for me and my students in the classroom. As we journeyed together throughout the curriculum and calendar year, my students gradually asked for and accepted more responsibility to direct their own learning. As I learned to trust them more, I was willing to relinquish control and give them opportunities to direct their own learning and participate in the decision-making of the class. This began gradually as I allowed my students to choose which book to read. Students then began to make decisions about when and where they wanted to learn various subjects. My decision to teach in this way was motivated by my desire to create authentic experiences and make connections for my students both inside and outside of the classroom. As the year progressed, my role as the teacher evolved into a facilitator of decision-making with my students directing most of the decisions around what was taught, how it was taught, and how it was evaluated. Not until I returned to school for my master's degree was I able to put a label and theory to the practices I had been experiencing in the classroom.

As a graduate student I learned about various theories of education and found myself drawn to principles of democracy that focused on student participation, empowerment, ownership, and inclusion. Principles of democracy resonated with my own teaching style and aligned with what I personally knew to be true with my own students. I knew from personal teaching experience and my experience as a student that students who have ownership in their learning are more motivated to learn and are more

engaged in the curriculum. I knew from my own students that problems naturally arise out of our learning and living together, and that as a teacher, opportunities consistently present themselves for students to engage in the difficult work of solving problems collectively. My teaching experiences motivated me to learn more about the theories that support these principles and practices. My research led me to the literature of democratic inclusive education.

Now as a teacher educator, I am constantly reflecting on how I can make my courses replicate democratic inclusion in terms of the curriculum taught and in the learning environment I create with my students. Several weeks of the courses I teach are dedicated to principles of democratic inclusion as we deconstruct teaching strategies within the context of social studies methods. Additionally throughout the semester we have several class meetings in which my students deliberate assignments, assessments, and specific issues that evolve out of our learning together. My motivation to teach in this way not only reflects my experiences working with children in public schools, but also reflects a strong commitment to prepare my teacher candidates for their own classrooms by empowering them with personal experiences with democratic inclusion. My hope is that once they have experienced aspects of student ownership and responsibility in directing their own learning, that they will in turn be more motivated to incorporate these principles with their own students.

Experience with exclusion. Finally, when I asked the participants of this study to describe how they became teachers dedicated to democratic inclusion, both of them referred to experiences in their life in which they had felt excluded. For Sydnee it was

when she lived abroad and was excluded because of language and cultural barriers. For Tom it was growing up as a Korean American that struggled to learn the English language and fit into American schools. In an effort to ameliorate the power imbalances between me as a researcher and the participants of the study, I also attempted to reflect on times in my own life in which I felt excluded or marginalized in some way. This was difficult, because as I reflected on my own experiences growing up and in schools, I could not identify any times in my life in which I personally felt marginalized or excluded. However, in my reflecting I was able to identify where my commitment to democratic inclusion began.

As a college student, I attended Brigham Young University, a private, conservative, religious university in which student leadership opportunities were typically only afforded to male students. I wanted to make a difference on campus and quickly became involved in the student government programs and organization. During my senior year, several of my friends encouraged me to run for student-body president. I was hesitant because there had never been a female student-body president in the history of the school. After much deliberation, a lot of work, and with a great support system of family and friends, I ran for president and won.

The declared winner, I was ready to make a difference. However, I was immediately confronted with many barriers because of the historical religious culture of the university. Because I was a female in a traditionally male role, men approached me and immediately asked about my feminist viewpoints. Many women shied away from me and assumed that I had a liberal agenda, and the predominantly male school

administrators had to be convinced that I had a role to play, and that I was capable of doing it well. Although it was an uphill battle, I spent much of my time as student-body president deliberating issues that I had not imagined being involved in when I ran for the position. Although not a driving force in my decision to run for office, my gender opened up a space for both students and administrators to identify, recognize, and deliberate gender-related issues that had previously been ignored or dismissed. As a result of this awareness, women's issues rose to the forefront of university discussions and policies, which in turn led to the university establishing and dedicating a women's center dedicated to researching and solving women's issues and issues of abuse.

In addition to changing the university culture, I became changed as well. Even though I had not personally experienced challenges related to the gender issues being exposed and deliberated around me, I gained a sense of empathy and responsibility for those who had experienced them and who were being marginalized because of them. This sense of responsibility and commitment to helping marginalized individuals continued to be reinforced with life experience. This awareness of marginalized people coupled with my own experience opened the space for me to explore ways that I could personally make a difference, could create safe places for those who do feel excluded and marginalized to be included, and work to incorporate practices that empower others to do the same. As a graduate student, much of my learning has been in the context of critical theory and how it applies to education. Students, teachers, classrooms, and schools became my context and democratic inclusion became my cause.

My commitment to democratic inclusion translates to my teaching and research

purposes. Through my work I hope to create a space in which teachers recognize that they can create democratic inclusive spaces for their own students and as such more fully prepare them to change the communities and society in which they live. One teacher at a time, one classroom at a time, my hope is to deconstruct the barriers that lead to exclusion in terms of policy and practice and work to establish classroom communities that reflect the principles of democratic inclusion.

Conclusion

Aligned with the purpose and process of analysis in qualitative research (Creswell, 2005; Wolcott, 1994), the descriptive findings of this chapter serve to situate the participants in the research by describing their unique background and educational experiences and how they became teachers dedicated to democratic inclusion. Through the process of purposefully nominating participants for the study, three participants were selected that were teaching in elementary schools grade four and six. The participants were selected because they were engaged in the discourse and practice of democratic inclusion. Through their descriptions of self, background, and educational experiences, multiple themes aligned with the literature of democratic inclusion emerged. These themes were organized in terms of their positionality, decision to become a teacher, motivation to become a teacher engaged in democratic inclusion, and experiences with exclusion that influenced their commitment and teaching practices.

In terms of description of self, the participants described their positionality in terms of age, race, and gender. Blythe described herself as a 26-year-old, White, female.

Sydnee described herself as a 24-year-old, White, female. Tom described himself as a 32-year-old, Korean American, male. All three participants spent the majority of their school experience in American public schools and were raised by parents who were committed to education. Blythe's parents were committed to education in their efforts at providing schooling for them no matter where they lived. "We went to public schools while occasionally one or two of us were taught at home by my mother who has a degree in elementary education" (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Sept. 30, 2011) Sydnee's parents were committed to education as trained, professional teachers. "Having both of my parents as teachers made me value education. I valued getting good grades and I valued learning" (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Sept. 15, 2011). Whereas Tom attributed his parents' lack of education that motivated them to be both supportive and committed to Tom's education. "I love to learn and I think that is because both of my parents were invested in my learning" (Tom, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011). All three participants were encouraged by friends and family to become teachers. Although they became teachers for different reasons, the participants reflect enjoying being teachers. Sydnee reflected, "I really enjoy teaching no matter the subject of the age of the students." Tom correspondingly reflected, "I have been happy with my decision to be a teacher and enjoy knowing that I have had the opportunity to influence a person's life." The participants identified student ownership and success as being motivating factors in terms of what they hoped to accomplish through their democratic approach to teaching.

Additionally, all three participants reflected experiences with previous teachers that exposed them to democratic inclusion in some form. Choice, voice, empowerment,

inclusion, and decision-making were all themes that emerged from the participant's descriptions of their own education. For Blythe it was growing up in diverse communities in which she learned to love and care about those who were different from herself. For Sydnee it was experiences in an undergraduate biology course and teacher education course in which she as the student was encouraged to direct her own learning. For Tom it was experiences in schooling with a history and math teacher that reached out to students and recognized, validated, and supported them in ways in which they could be successful. Furthermore, all three participants reflect having some experience during their teacher training that helped them identify, articulate, and become more aware of how to incorporate democratic inclusion into their teaching practices.

As an important theme that emerged from the participants descriptions of self were previous experiences with exclusion because of religion, gender, culture, and language. Blythe experienced exclusion because of her religious beliefs. "I had friends that told me they could not be my friends because of my religion. I remember being spit on and having rocks thrown at me because of my religion" (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Nov. 24, 2011). Sydnee experienced exclusion when living abroad as a religious missionary for her church. "Nothing I had worked for helped me in what I was trying to accomplish. I didn't know how to act, all of my strengths were gone and I was only left with my weaknesses" (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012). Tom experienced aspects of exclusion when he moved to America as a second grader and enrolled in American public schools not knowing the language or the culture. "I was embarrassed by my English. I would stay outside of the circle because I couldn't talk to anyone" (Tom, Interview, Feb.

28, 2012). Although not stated outright as a reason to engage in inclusive practices, the participants reflect being changed, and made more sensitive to others who might be excluded as a result of their experiences.

Finally, the participants of this study are incorporating democratic inclusion in their dialogue and practice in elementary classrooms. All three participants describe their practice as being contextual and evolving throughout the school year. Aligned with the literature on democratic inclusion, the participants are actively involving their students in unique ways in the community efforts and decision-making of the classroom. Furthermore, the participants are successfully incorporating inclusive practices in the midst of limitations inherent in the school systems in which they teach. Their practices as descriptive themes will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS: DEMOCRATIC INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of the three elementary teacher participants as they incorporated aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice. Data were collected over the 2011-2012 school year from teacher participants in the form of electronic posts, interviews, and classroom observations. The purpose of this chapter is to explore what democratic inclusion looks like in the teaching environments of the participants. The participants each teach in unique classroom settings, and incorporated democratic inclusion in a variety of ways. As data were collected from the participants, the democratically inclusive practices that emerged were categorized into two over-arching themes: classroom community and decision-making. These themes directly align with the themes outlined in the literature and will be explored further in the sections that follow.

The participants of this study define and describe democratic inclusive classrooms based on principles of democratic education combined with principles of inclusion. Dewey (1916) suggested that the purpose of democratic education was to promote democratic values and prepare children for full participation in a social and political democracy. With this purpose in mind, democratic education encompasses more than knowledge of democracy, its history, ideals and principles. A democratic approach to education encompasses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of society.

Inclusion (Young, 2000a) nested in the context of democratic education is about

involving students in community and decision-making. The purpose of involving students is not only to bring legitimacy to the community and decision-making efforts of the classroom, but also prepares students with the skills and experiences of democracy. As teachers incorporate principles of democracy with principles of inclusion, students are able to direct their own learning while at the same time apply democratic purpose and processes to the decision-making of the classroom. Notions of inclusion are important to democratic classroom community and decision-making because they bring legitimacy to classroom decisions by including teachers and students in the processes that affect them. Democratic inclusion therefore accomplishes the purposes of democratic education by creating opportunities for students to direct their own learning by participating in classroom community and decision-making in ways that prepare students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to participate in democratic processes of society.

The themes of democratic inclusion that emerged from the data are based on the literature reviewed in chapter two as well as the questions that guided this inquiry. Using Atlas ti, I coded the data by identifying key words and phrases. Then, using the a priori themes established in the literature, I coded the data a second time. I organized the data around two broad themes of democratic inclusive community and decision-making. Several subthemes were also identified. I then sorted and organized the codes in terms of frequency and relevance for each participant. Several codes were combined and reordered based on the context and meaning as established by the participants. I then coded the data a third time to ensure that code frequency and relevance reflected the most current

context and meaning of the codes. Table 1 reflects the themes and subthemes from the data. All three participants reflect aspects of the subcategories but implement democratic inclusion in unique ways.

The descriptions that follow provide a brief overview of the categories as well as provide illustrative examples of how these themes are enacted in the participants' classrooms. Through their descriptions, the participants illustrate how they specifically incorporate principles of democratic inclusion by involving students in the community building and decision-making efforts of the classroom.

Table 1

Democratic Inclusive Themes

Inclusion category	Theme	Subtheme
Democratic inclusive classroom community	Democratic process and content	Knowledge, skills, and dispositions of democracy Processes of democracy
	Celebrate student individuality	Sharing Celebrating success
	Incorporate multiple perspectives	Positionality Multiple perspectives Participating freely and equally
	Modeling inclusive behaviors	Including individuals traditionally and historically excluded Controversial discussions
Democratic inclusive decision-making	Curriculum decisions	What taught How taught How evaluated
	Classroom decisions	Classroom rules & norms Problems evolving out of learning together
	Decisions extending beyond the classroom	School Local and global community

Democratic Inclusive Classroom Communities

One important theme that emerged from the data was the notion of preparing their students to engage in democratic processes as democratic classroom communities. The participant's classrooms were organized around the content and principles of democracy and were inclusive in nature. Democratic inclusive classroom communities were established and referenced by the participants in four ways. The first way the participants described community was in preparing students with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and dispositions that prepare them to engage in the processes of democracy. The second way the participants' established democratic community was by recognizing, validating, and celebrating the unique individualities of the classroom. The third way participants established community was by seeking student opinion and incorporating multiple perspectives in their community building efforts. The final way participants established community was to create opportunities for students to be more inclusive with one another. The descriptions that follow describe each theme as well as provide illustrative examples from the participants teaching practice that support these descriptions.

Democratic Process and Content

The participants of this study established democratic inclusive classrooms by preparing their students to engage in democratic inclusive processes. Gutmann (1987) suggested that educating for a democratic purpose included providing students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of a global society. All three of the participants found ways to

incorporate aspects of democracy into their teaching. Blythe focused on democratic content she identified in the fourth grade curriculum, while both Sydnee and Tom found opportunities for their students to participate in the processes of democracy through deliberation and decision-making. Teaching democratic skills and providing students with opportunities to experience democratic processes was a driving force for the participants in their motivation to accomplish a democratic purpose. All three participants used language that reflected a democratic purpose and referred to democratic skills and experiences they incorporated into their community building in an effort to prepare their students for active participation in democracy.

Blythe's attempts to incorporate democratic inclusion were directly influenced by the school culture in which she teaches. Blythe's focus on democratic inclusion was about teaching her students notions of community and the rights and responsibilities associated with being a member of a community.

Democratic education is about engaged and active participants, community, and culture. My hope is that I can incorporate democratic strategies into my classroom so that the students will see the power of community that extends beyond the classroom. (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Sept. 20, 2011)

In her democratic purpose, Blythe did not refer to specific democratic skills or processes but focused on democratic notions such as the role of community and individuality as taught through the content of the social studies curriculum.

Blythe and her students explored the content of democracy throughout the fourth grade social studies curriculum that she suggested is replete with opportunities to make connections between democratic content and notions of community.

I believe that every subject can contain elements of democracy but history and

geography probably lend themselves more to that because of the cultural ideas embedded in the subjects. For instance, it seems more natural to implement democratic teaching practices when talking about checks and balances rather than long division. However, the latter is not impossible. (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Oct. 25, 2011)

For Blythe, democratic teaching was about applying principles of democracy to community such as exploring how unity of the group is more powerful than the individual. She identified opportunities throughout the curriculum to highlight both historical and current applications of democracy. One way she introduced her students to democratic notions was in learning about democratic government and by examining various historical documents such as the United States constitution and the Bill of Rights. Through their examination, Blythe and her students explored notions of rights and responsibilities.

Blythe incorporated the principles of democracy by giving students an opportunity to apply democratic concepts to their own lives. One of the observations I conducted of Blythe was of her teaching her students about the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a community. To activate student's prior knowledge she gave her students a common text and had them read and discuss it with their parents as a homework assignment. Their task was to explore the notion of rights and responsibilities as they applied to their families, at home. The next day, she invited her students to share what they had learned about rights and responsibilities. The following represents part of their discussion.

Blythe: What rights did you identify?

Sam: Freedom of speech

Blythe: What responsibility is associated with that right?

Sam: To not gossip or use bad language, or say unkind words. I need to speak respectfully towards my parents and brothers and sisters.

Jake: I have the right to choose what sports I play, to go to a nice school, and to play my own games.

Blythe: What responsibility is associated with that right?

Jake: To follow the rules in the game or sport.

Camilla: To be fed, clothed, and a place to live.

Blythe: What responsibility is associated with that right?

Camilla: I need to eat my food with a grateful heart, treat my clothes well, and take care of where I live.

Blythe then explored the concept of rights and responsibilities in more complex ways by discussing with students what happens when two rights are in conflict with each other.

Tom: We have the right to religion.

Zoie: My dad and I were talking about the freedom of religion and he said that as long as freedom of religion doesn't affect anyone else that you are allowed to do it. But my dad was telling me about people in France where they say it was their religion and they were bombing and hurting people.

Blythe: What right were they not respecting?

Zoie: The right to live. (Blythe, Observation, Oct. 7, 2011)

Blythe then engaged her students in small group discussions about various rights outlined in the Bill of Rights and had them apply those rights to situations in school, community, and nation.

We are talking about rights and how we give up some of our rights so that we can be governed. As we talk about it, the students realize 'oh there is compromise that happens, and that is a good thing. That is not a bad thing. (Blythe, Interview, Oct. 7, 2011)

After the discussions in small groups, the students came back together and taught each other about how various rights are applied in context. Some of the students drew pictures

of their concept. Others acted out skits to illustrate examples and non-examples of their rights. All of the students then participated in a discussion about rights and what responsibilities citizens have in terms of their rights.

In addition to teaching her students about rights and responsibilities, Blythe and her students explored complex notions of democracy such as individual vs. common good, and compromise in various settings, in authentic ways. By exploring these complex notions of democracy, Blythe was opening up a space for her students to transform their thinking from self to others (Young, 2000a) as well as to participate in acts of deconstructing historical narratives, which, according to Maher and Tetrault (2001) and Young (2000a), was an important part of democratic inclusion. Furthermore, in examining various democratic events, concepts, and artifacts with her students, Blythe had an opportunity to deconstruct notions of inclusion and problematizing how various individuals have been included or excluded from democracy in the name of “community.” However the data did not reflect Blythe and her students’ exploring these notions by incorporating multiple perspectives (Young, 2000a) or by deconstructing how individuals and groups have been excluded historically or in contemporary societies from participating in democratic processes because of race, class, or gender.

Sydnee reflected a democratic purpose in her preparing students to become participating citizens in democracy. In the description below, she also referred to the democratic skills and experiences she hoped to convey to her students.

I teach the ideal of being a citizen of the world. I teach respect and responsibility. I teach values and character. I empower students with the skills to solve their interpersonal conflicts. I feel that by letting students practice making democratic decisions as a group; it not only helps them with decision-making skills but also

prepares them to participate in a democracy. (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Sept. 15, 2011)

Sydnee's reference to democratic skills such as respect and responsibility, values, and character reflected her commitment to provide her students with the opportunities to learn and experience principles of democracy that replicate authentic processes of democratic communities.

Sydnee and her students explored the content of democracy by making connections in the curriculum to what they were experiencing in their classroom community. For example, last year as they were studying the history and organization of the United States government, Sydnee invited her fifth graders to write a class constitution. As part of their class government, they established and incorporated class jobs into three branches of government based upon democratic principles. "In our constitution we had all three branches of government. We decided that for the judiciary branch, instead of deciding the constitutionality of rules, they would actually mitigate social clashes" (Sydnee, Interview, Sept. 29, 2011). As issues and problems arose, they referred to democratic principles and processes to help them establish rules and address issues and problems.

Sydnee incorporated democratic skills and processes as she invited her students to deliberate and vote on classroom issues. She further suggested that deliberating and voting are the most important democratic processes that she incorporates in her establishment of democratic inclusive community.

Several students suggested different desk arrangements, and then we voted. First we voted to get the top picks, and then we voted again between the top two. The vote was one student different (10-11) so I told the non-voters (kids who didn't

have a strong opinion either way) to vote so that we could have a clear winner. We ended up with a 14-10 majority, so that arrangement “won.” (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Oct. 7, 2011)

As Sydnee and her students voted on various issues in the classroom, the process tended to reflect a more aggregative democratic model (Young, 2000a) in which students stated their preference on various issues rather than exploring issues in terms of what would be best for the most number of people. An opportunity for Sydnee to push democracy deeper in her class would be to incorporate student initiated proposals that require deliberation and a transformation of ideas as students leave their position of self-interest to consider various perspectives, alternatives, or variations of preference.

In addition to giving students opportunities to participate in voting as a democratic process, Sydnee used class deliberations as a way to explore complex notions of democracy such as majority and consensus. I observed several occasions in which Sydnee discussed with her class the concept of majority and what it would look like in their classroom community. In the desk arrangement example previously shared Sydnee reported that at the conclusion of the vote, several students from the “other side” were upset at the outcome. Sydnee used this as an opportunity to discuss with her students the concept of democratic majority. Another example from Sydnee’s classroom occurred when her students were voting on a new classroom management plan. They were voting on a day in which several students were absent and so the final vote came to down to 11 to 10. Sydnee talked to the students and asked them if this was a large enough majority to change a rule that affected everyone in the class.

[I asked them], “Do we change everything in our class because this option won by one vote?” Then I explained to them about what congress does when they are

deciding laws for our whole country. They need to have a 2/3 majority so that it is not just a little bit more, but that it is actually a good size majority. "Do you think we should establish a majority in order to vote?" The students agreed that yes, we should establish it. We decided that a majority must have at least three people more. And we looked back at what we had just done. We didn't have three people more; we had 11/10 so that law couldn't pass. We discussed what should we do. They decided that we should vote again when we had more people there. So the next day, when no one was absent we voted again and the final vote was 14/11 and we changed the rule. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

At the end of the discussion, she asked her students if it was better to let them decide, even if things did not always go their way. All of the students agreed that they liked it better when they had a say in the process. Because Sydnee as committed to principles of inclusion, she made sure that she explored various issues with an emphasis on respect and consideration for the minority perspective as well as making sure that all students had a chance to participate freely and equally in the discussion (Benhabib, 2002; Mouffe, 2000; Young, 2000a). However, it is important to note that the minority perspectives in Sydnee's class were those students whose proposal did not win. These individuals did not necessarily represent the perspectives of the students who occupied a marginalized position in the classroom. Given the homogenous nature of Sydnee's classroom, multiple perspectives could still have been explored if Sydnee would have used experiences like the ones described to examine why the students who lost felt that their proposal was best and used this opportunity for students to interact and transform their thinking to create a proposal that represented the perspectives of all of the individuals in the class.

One example, however, that I did observe of Sydnee incorporating deliberation as a democratic process was when her class was working on writing a fourth-grade motto and were struggling to come up with exact phrases that everyone could agree on. After

taking several students' suggestions, and deliberating on the best way to represent their ideas, Sydnee and her students discussed how difficult it was to come up with something that would make everyone happy. Sydnee's response exemplified how she helped her students navigate the often difficult and abstract notion of consensus in democracy.

Your opinion got noted even if it doesn't end up the exact way you want it. We have to do it in a way that pleases the most people in fourth grade. We can't find something that is exactly perfect for everyone so we find something that is mostly good for most people and has our same goals even if it is not saying it the way we want it said. (Sydnee, Observation, Sept. 29, 2011)

In this way, she helped her students work through the process, while at the same time helped them recognize how difficult it can be to make sure every perspective is included. Young refers to the complexity that incorporating multiple perspectives creates (Young, 2006). Sydnee successfully helped her students experience this complexity while at the same time helping her students' gain greater understanding of notions such as consensus in democratic deliberations. In her efforts to invite all of her students to participate in the discussion, I did not observe Sydnee taking any affirmative steps (Benhabib, 2002; Boler, 2004; Maher & Tetrault, 2001; Young, 2000a) to include the perspectives of minorities or marginalized students in her classroom or to create opportunities for differently situated students to understand each other as they worked through the process. Tom's approach to establishing a community focused on democratic purpose and process as not stated as one of his objectives, but was reflected in the interactions of his classroom between himself and his students. Tom incorporated the content of democracy into his teaching as a way to help students make connections between what they were learning and what they were experiencing in real life. One

example of this was a lesson Tom taught his sixth graders about government in Ancient Greece. As part of the lesson, his students compared government in Ancient Greece with government in the United States today. Tom reflected on this discussion.

I love the conversations we are having about tying Ancient Greek government to our current US government. The kids are making great connections between the two and they want to learn more about our current government. To supplement this lesson, I am bringing in a city council member to talk about our government and how she handles public discourse and how it is different from what they did in Ancient Greece. (Tom, Electronic Posting, Feb. 21, 2012)

Not only did Tom create an opportunity to discuss democratic history, but he also incorporated democratic notions such as deliberation and public discourse into the discussion to give students an opportunity to learn more about and directly experience democracy in context.

When applying an inclusive lens to this example from Tom's classroom, the conversations Tom had with his students were a good starting place to potentially push democracy deeper to explore various aspects of inclusion as demonstrated in the government of Ancient Greece and the United States government today. Although the data did not reflect Tom and his students' reflecting on democracy in this way, the curriculum and discussion certainly reflected several potential inclusive opportunities. This example opened the door for Tom and his students to contrast democracy in terms of who was invited to participate in democratic processes in traditional versus inclusive approaches to democracy (Benhabib, 2002; Young, 2000a). This example also had a potential for Tom and his students to engage the guest speaker in questions about how she incorporates marginalized perspectives in public discourse and further examine future possibilities to invite historically excluded individuals into democratic processes.

Tom described the democratic skills and experiences that he hoped his students would gain as a result of being in his class as the following: expressing an opinion, knowing how to have a debate, defending and changing perspectives, coming to an agreement on options, and following through with what was agreed upon. In addition to providing his students with democratic skills, Tom suggested that his fundamental focus was on teaching social skills that students needed to know in order to interact with each other and participate in democratic processes.

The learning objective is social skills. Students need to know how to give and take and be open to ideas. (Tom, Interview, Nov. 9, 2011)

Sometimes I wish we could say “here is what I want this child to be able to do when they are interacting with others” because when they get into real life that is all there is. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012)

An important aspect of Tom’s efforts to teach students democratic skills was providing students with a safe environment to “try out” and sometimes fail in their interactions with each other while he is there to provide a safety net for them.

I want them to have the practice now. And if they fail at it now and they make mistakes at it now I am there as a safety net to help them build students back up so that when they leave my classroom they can try it again. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012)

One specific way that Tom gave his students an opportunity to experience democratic principles and processes was through his focus on group work—both large and small. By incorporating group work, Tom returned to his democratic purpose of teaching his students how to interact and how to navigate social situations in a positive way. Tom often had to intervene and help his groups as they gained experience and confidence in democracy and so he scaffolded and worked closely with students to help them work

through the interactions. While working with various groups, I observed Tom teach and encourage students by saying things such as the following.

This is your group; you have to help them out. This is what citizens do. This is what we do as individuals. If you see someone struggling you have to step forward. You are not going to get in trouble for helping them. Maybe what you do doesn't work but at least you put forth the effort. (Tom, Observation, Oct. 26, 2011)

As he worked with various students in different group settings, Tom facilitated discussions to provide his students with opportunities to interact in democratic ways. Tom's commitment to engaging his students in social and democratic skills were directly aligned with the skills Gutmann (1997) suggested were necessary for preparing students to become citizens of democracy. Participation, voice, transformation of thinking, and creating opportunities for social justice reflect the experiences that Tom's students have when engaged in democratic discussions.

One example of this was an observation I conducted of Tom facilitating a discussion to establish the criteria for a culminating unit project. In creating the rubric, Tom realized that the ideas that would be expressed would be diverse and reflective of the unique individuals in the class. I wondered how he would be able to include everyone's perspectives and still maintain some sense of majority while keeping the discussion moving forward. Tom facilitated the discussion seamlessly by moving between small group and whole group discussions. Not only did he do this to keep students engaged and participating, but he also used groups to give everyone a chance to share their opinion and to have their voice heard. He sought student input as a whole group, and then had students discuss options in small groups. He then brought everyone

back to the whole group to deliberate, vote, and come to consensus. In the course of one discussion, taking place over 45 minutes, he moved between large and small groups four or five times. When I asked him about it following the observation, he reflected wanting to make sure that all students had a chance to participate and interact with each other. These motivations not only reflect democratic purpose and process but are also directly linked to notions of inclusion as he incorporated multiple perspectives in the discussion (Young, 2004).

Tom created opportunities for his students to experience democracy by incorporating democratic processes such as deliberation and voting into his classroom deliberations. He did this in both formal and informal ways as he engaged his students in various community-building discussions.

At times I allow my students to “vote” on what we do after we gather several thoughts and opinions on a certain matter. Even though we do not use all of the ideas that were presented to the class I want to make sure that all of the ideas were heard and that the person was validated. In the end we narrow down our options and come to a consensus. Then we execute the decision that we made as a class. (Tom, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011)

Tom informally worked deliberation and voting into classroom decision-making with a quick “thumbs up/thumbs down” practice that gave him a sense of student opinion. During one of my observations of Tom, he incorporated aspects of voting by putting check marks next to student ideas that were repeated to denote emphasis and value. In this way, students were able to vote on ideas and Tom was able to evaluate what the majority of the class wanted. Although this practice is more reflective of an aggregative model of democracy, Tom used it as a way to include his students in the issues that were important to them, which is an important aspect of inclusion (Young, 2000a).

The focus on democratic purpose and process is reflected in the data as being important and central to the participant's community building efforts. All three of the participants focused on democratic purpose and processes in their establishment of classroom community. Through these direct experiences with democracy, their students had opportunities to apply democratic skills within the context of the classroom. These experiences not only engaged students in community and decision-making opportunities of the classroom but also accomplished the larger democratic purposes of education in preparing their students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to participate in democratic communities in the future.

Celebrate Student Individuality

A second area of community building that the participants referred to was celebrating student individuality and success. At first glance, this may not seem connected to aspects of inclusion; however, the participants in this study used community-building opportunities to invite and include individuals that may have otherwise been excluded in classroom in the following ways. Democratic inclusive classrooms are established as teachers and students care for one another and create opportunities to share and celebrate each other's success (Beyer & Liston, 1996; Noddings, 1984). Often described as creating a sense of family in the classroom, teachers establish this community through their ongoing and deliberate efforts to recognize and celebrate the various cultures and successes of both teacher and students in the classroom. Aligned with inclusive literature, celebrating student individuality represents a deliberate inclusive act in which the participants of this study are working to balance the structural

inequalities of the classroom by recognizing and including all classroom members in community building efforts. Furthermore, because of their commitments to democratic inclusion, these teachers worked to ensure that their classroom community efforts included all individuals of the class regardless of positionality (Maher & Tetrault, 2001). In this way, these teachers were creating opportunities as Young (2004) suggested for situated others to learn about and learn from each other based on their culture and experience

The participants in this study celebrated student individuality by creating opportunities to connect with student's lives both inside and outside of the classroom, by evaluating and celebrating individual and class successes, and by establishing practices that invite and validate multiple perspectives in the classroom. A final way the participants in this study revealed efforts at inclusion was to discuss and model behaviors that teach students how to be more inclusive with each other. Through these efforts, the participants engaged their students in inclusive community-building acts. These practices will be illustrated in the sections that follow.

Blythe established classroom community as an extension of teaching her students about democratic communities and how citizens care for and take care of each other. She introduced notions of community by celebrating positive behaviors in her class. One way she does this is through bucket fillers. Once a week she chose students to celebrate by sharing examples of service and kindness they were demonstrating for others.

"Sometimes I have a student say, 'I see Lexi deserves a bucket filler because she did...'
It is just nice to be rewarded and to feel like you did something well" (Blythe, Interview,

Oct.7, 2011). Another way that Blythe invited her students to share their lives with each other was through a game they played called give-get-pass.

We go around the room and the students say “give a compliment” or they say “get a compliment” and all the hands shoot up and they give or get a compliment. We do that when there have been hurt feelings. (Blythe, Interview, Oct.7, 2011)

One time Blythe had a new student who had been homeschooled and it was his first time being in public schools. He had been crying for 2 days in a row because he did not feel like he was a part of the community. The class decided it was time to play the game and this new student received compliments from many of the students in the class. The immediate result was that he felt like he was part of the classroom community. This example reflected a deliberate inclusive act for Blythe to include a student who felt excluded because of his previous schooling experience. Rather than allowing this student to remain on the “outside” of the learning experiences of the classroom (Young, 2006), Blythe invited him to participate in her community-building efforts as she reached out to this student in inclusive ways.

As a teacher committed to establishing a democratic inclusive community, Sydnee incorporated practices that enabled her to connect with her student’s lives both inside and outside of school. Each week, Sydnee had a class meeting in which they conducted the business of the class. At the end of the class meeting, she and her students participated in a class share in which everyone was invited to “share” important thoughts, events, and happenings and in which she was creating caring relationships with and among her students (Corbett, 1999; Noddings, 1984). Sydnee introduced this time by saying to the students, “If you have something from your life that is exciting or sad, or

happy or nervous raise your hand. We will share it together” (Sydnee, Observation, Sept. 29, 2011). The class then shared everything from getting a new puppy, to having older siblings return home from college. Taken from one class meeting, the following represents the kind of sharing that was encouraged and that occurred in Sydnee’s classroom.

Sara: I had to find pet sitters for all of my animals.

Sydnee: And you have a lot. Did you get your new saddle?

Matt: I went to the Taylor Swift concert last night.

Sydnee: So fun! How was it?

Rachel: I am sad because my wrist won’t heal for two months.

Sydnee: Two whole months! Are you going to become ambidextrous and learn to write with your left hand?

Lauren: My uncle died.

Sydnee: I am so sorry.

Bryce: Today I am going to get a new motorized bike.

Sydnee: Wow. That sounds exciting. Maybe we should write an addition problem about you and all the stuff you are buying.

Scott: Last night me and my mom stayed up really late trying to make fun of everything we could think of.

Sydnee: Really. And was it funny? (Sydnee, Observation, Sept. 29, 2011).

Sydnee also participated by sharing important things from her own life because she wanted to set the precedence of sharing with each other and wanted to create a safe environment for her students.

When I have something to share I raise my hand and they call on me—it is funny. I recently put my first song on iTunes and I was telling them how I wanted to do a program over summer in Nazareth doing youth mentoring and I got into that

program. They were all excited for me. (Sydnee, Interview, Sept. 29, 2011)

Another reason Sydnee incorporated aspects of sharing into her practice was that it served as a way to recognize and invite all students to be a part of the classroom community regardless of race, class, gender, or ability (Young, 2000a). Smith and Bar (2008) suggested that this focus on the personal-social dimension of learning created an inclusive community that incorporated a range of inclusive behaviors and capacities as learners. Sydnee used this as a way to create a safe environment that was inclusive and based upon student interests and lives.

In addition to weekly share, Sydnee also incorporated bucket fillers into her classroom as a way to celebrate the good things that are happening as a learning community. She invited her students to look for the positives in each other and when they saw it, they celebrated it by writing down compliments and good deeds to be shared with the entire class during their class meeting. Whenever Sydnee or her students saw someone doing something good, they filled out a bucket filler slip of paper and put it in the bucket. Sydnee introduced the concept of bucket fillers to her students in the following way.

Bucket fillers are a wonderful thing that will help us to feel like our classroom is united and that everyone is working together as a team and that we can be kind to each other. You know we want to have a classroom that is kind, where there is service going on. That is what bucket fillers help us with. (Sydnee, Observation, Sept. 29, 2011)

Students wrote down everything from someone sharing a pencil to giving them a compliment. The following are some examples of bucket fillers students wrote. “Tori filled my bucket when she said my hair was cute, from Missy.” “Nathan let me use his

pencil, from Paige.” “Ben filled my bucket when he played tag with me, from Naomi” and “Abby helped me with my homework, from Max” (Sydnee, Observation, Nov. 9, 2011). Sydnee also used bucket fillers as a measurement indicator for classroom unity. The following is a conversation Sydnee had with her students as they were evaluating their efforts at classroom unity.

[Bucket fillers are] a tangible measure of how we're doing. [This week] we only have two-bucket fillers, are we really only being that kind to each other? So it kind of gets us to a point where we can reflect as a class on how we're doing at creating the environment and achieving our goals. Let's make it a goal that we actually write those bucket fillers. I know some times compliments slip our minds. Let's make sure we recognize these kind things that are going on so that next week we will have everybody represented and not just a few people because everyone wants to have a bucket filler written about them don't they? (Sydnee, Observation, Nov. 9, 2011)

She reinforced the use of bucket fillers by sharing examples of how people filled her bucket so that she can model for her students the kinds of things to look for and celebrate with each other. In this way, Sydnee also helped her students learn to recognize and find ways to celebrate each other's success. Additionally, the use of bucket fillers was a way that Sydnee taught her students how to focus on various individuals of the classroom, and not just the students that were excelling academically, or those students that represented the dominant group in her class (Young, 2006). In this way, she signaled a commitment to creating an inclusive environment as well as gave her students an authentic opportunity to recognize and celebrate the diverse success in her classroom. Although she did not mention it specifically in the data, Sydnee's use of bucket fillers created an opportunity for her to incorporate affirmative steps (Boler, 2004; Young, 2006) to purposefully celebrate those students who might have been historically excluded.

One way that Tom incorporated practices that enabled him to connect with his student's lives both inside and outside of school is through a class Facebook page in which students shared and updated their interests and happenings for each other.

We use this as a means of sharing our thoughts and ideas. I usually allow my students to write about whatever and then comment on each other's status pages. I like to think that it helps to build a sense of community and unity within our class, and in a way that is part of a democratic classroom. These posts allowed the rest of the class to know what was going on in our lives and we could celebrate our achievements, feel empathy when someone lost a game, or cheered on when we succeeded in something. This was a good way for me to know what was going on in their lives and I tried to modify what I said or did based on their comments. (Tom, Electronic Posting, May 29, 2012)

In addition to their class Facebook, Tom also invited his students to share things they were reading and writing about.

Every day I have the students write in their journals. At the end of journal writing I call on a few students to share and we talk about what they wrote. Every Friday is a free choice topic and students write about whatever they choose and they always love to share. This allows the class to get to know each other better and we all became interested in what we were all doing. (Tom, Electronic Posting, May 29, 2012)

Frequently Tom gathered his students to talk about what books they were reading and why students liked or did not like them. Tom suggests that these book talks helped the class gain a deeper understanding of each other.

It was through book talks that we learned that Jared liked modern warfare-fiction because he likes to learn about current events and not ancient events. I also learned that Hannah loved drama and thrived on those types of books. I learned that McKenzie like to read fantasy books and just finished writing her own novel. (Tom, Electronic Posting, May 29, 2012)

These opportunities not only allowed Tom to create a community of learners, but also a community that was centered on sharing and celebrating significant events in each other's lives.

Tom also celebrated his student's success by attending and participating in various extracurricular events of his students. He was often seen with his family at a student's soccer game, at a dance recital, or awards ceremony. Recently he attended a local art competition in which one of his students was receiving an award. He was the first to congratulate this student and present him with a hand written note celebrating his success. He also invited his own children to attend important events at the school, helping his students make connections between school and home, and helping create a sense of community support for one another. Tom's efforts of creating an inclusive classroom community reflect in many ways opportunities to include all students in the learning and community activities (Young, 2000a). His efforts directly align with what Beyer and Liston (1996) and Noddings (1984) referred to in establishing classrooms built on care, concern, and connection. Tom however did not suggest in the data that he used these opportunities in affirmative ways to identify or include individuals that were feeling excluded.

Tom also created a celebratory community by involving his students in planning events that focused on student achievement. At the end of their study of Ancient Greece, Tom and his students planned an Ancient Greek festival and invited school, parents, and community members to come participate in their culminating projects. Guests learned from presentations, dramatic productions, games, and other cultural experiences that the students had prepared. Although this experience provided his students opportunities for participation and choice in the learning outcomes of the classroom, Tom did not reflect in the data that this experience was used as a way to celebrate marginalized perspectives of

his students. This type of event had the potential to include and exclude students in various ways. Using the lens of democratic inclusion, this event could be considered very inclusive because it created an opportunity to showcase student's situated knowledge and experience in ways that are typically not incorporated in the classroom (Haraway, 1991). Students were able to demonstrate their learning through culminating projects of their choice that reflected their culture, ability, and interests.

Incorporating Multiple Perspectives

In addition to making connections with student's personal lives, another way the participants established community is by inviting and validating multiple perspectives in the classroom. The participants established an inclusive classroom environment by thinking about those students who were not participating, or who might need some formal encouragement and intervention from them as the teacher to create opportunities for participation. This practice is directly aligned with the work of Young (2004) and Boler (2004) as described as affirmative steps at inclusion. This is usually accomplished as teachers take formal measures to include all students, including those who might be shy, reserved, or not feel like their opinion is valued.

Because Blythe was committed to the tenants of inclusion, she actively found ways to invite and incorporate all the perspectives of the classroom. One way she accomplished this was by using a roaming microphone so that all students can be heard. Whenever students had a comment, they were given the microphone. Not only did this reflect how members of a community spoke and listened to each other, but it signaled that all students had something to say and that their comments were valid and worth hearing.

There were several occasions that I observed students making comments and others would get the microphone and hand it to them so that they could be heard. Although subtle, it suggested to students, and especially those who may be shy or quiet, that what they had to say was important.

Another example of Blythe's attempts to include multiple perspectives of the classroom was illustrated in her efforts to work with students who were struggling in the classroom. "When I see them raise their hand I make sure to make an extra effort to call on them or give them time." Furthermore, Blythe kept track of who was participating and who was not so that she could invite all to participate and not just those who raised their hands. "I try to be observant. I know the ones who are constantly answering and paying attention." This practice reflected an affirmative act (Boler, 2004) to not always call on the dominant students but find ways to recognize and invite marginalized students. In addition to making efforts to include students in classroom discussions and activities, Blythe also incorporated inclusion by working outside of school to ensure that all of her students could be successful. One example she shared was of a student who was not doing well in school and consistently went home discouraged.

I was doing what I could in class and he was still struggling. I had his parents come after school with him and I tutored him. After that there was a total shift. Now, he will joke and talk in class. Before he was quiet and shut down. When his parents saw me love him and interact with him and take the time for him and make those accommodations for him, they knew he was really cared for. (Blythe, Interview, March 11, 2012)

As Blythe accommodated students who were struggling, she demonstrated that everyone was important in the classroom and that she was committed to helping them succeed.

Through her efforts, she signaled a commitment to including students who might

otherwise remain on the outside because of the normative practices of schooling (Young, 2006).

One example of Sydnee's efforts to include all perspectives of the classroom was reflected in a discussion in which the students were deciding on changing their attention signals. One student raised his hand and suggested that they change the way they count down from English to Portuguese because they had been learning Portuguese together as a class. Sydnee worked it into the discussion and the class agreed upon the suggestion. Sydnee later reflected on why his suggestion was particularly important.

I felt especially good about this suggestion because it came from a student I am more worried about emotionally. I think it was good for him to see his suggestion valued and incorporated. I was predisposed to accept his suggestion simply because it came from him, and I wanted him to see that his opinion was valued. (Blythe, Interview, March, 11, 2012)

Both Sydnee and Tom worked to include all students' perspectives by teaching their students important listening and communication skills so that students could respond respectfully to each other. Sydnee wanted her students to feel like if they have an idea that it would be received with respect even if it did not represent the thinking of the majority. She worked hard in her class deliberations to make sure that everyone listened to and considers all perspectives, including those who did not represent the majority.

We show respect to each person, so when one person speaks we make sure no one else is speaking, we listen to each other, and support each other, and I try to call on a variety of students so that we're not just hearing from the same ones. I see a student raise their hand that doesn't always raise their hand I make a point to call on them. (Sydnee, Interview, Sept. 29, 2011)

Sydnee's predisposition to include students who did not normally participate, or who had been historically excluded, directly aligned with practices that both Young (2004) and

Boler (2004) advocated in democratic inclusive classrooms.

Tom incorporated similar practices by making sure that all students were invited to participate. When facilitating a class discussion, he made sure that everyone had a chance to share their opinion by having his students discuss in both large and small groups. He suggested that this “ebbing and flowing” allowed all students to share and listen to ideas in a very natural way. “Even though we do not use all of the ideas that were presented to the class, I want to make sure that all of the ideas were heard and that each person was validated.” Throughout the discussion, Tom engaged his students in questions such as “Have you had a chance to share your thoughts and opinions? Do you feel like you have had a voice in this?” “If you see something that has not been included, let’s talk about it” (Tom, Observation, Oct. 26, 2011). The following represents an example of such a conversation.

Now I want to ensure that I am hearing from everyone because I have noticed that we have kind of ping ponged between several students. I didn’t hear from all of you, which kind of worries me. I want you to talk as a group to discuss the ideas. Table captains this is your job to make sure that everyone at your table has a chance to share. (Tom, Observation, Oct. 26, 2011)

He then monitored each group to make sure that even his more quiet or what he called his “low-flier” students were feeling empowered to share.

I do that in the sense that if I know someone hasn’t been talking a lot I will call on them or I will invite them to write down their thoughts and let them know I am coming by to read them. I usually go to my low fliers or I will put them in a group setting so that I know that their thoughts will be heard even if it doesn’t come to the whole class discussion. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012)

After one such discussion, I observed Tom asking a quiet student what he thought of the discussion. The sixth grader responded that this discussion was the first time in all of his

school experience that someone in school had listened to him. By creating opportunities for all students to contribute, the participants signal commitments to inclusion in their community building efforts.

Modeling Inclusive Behaviors

A final way the teachers in this study revealed efforts at inclusion was to model and incorporate behaviors that taught students how to be more inclusive with each other. All three participants believed that inclusion was something that must be taught, and that their role was to be the bridge to help students think about various issues and behaviors in a new way. Furthermore, the participants used naturally occurring issues in their classroom and schools to open up the space to discuss notions of inclusion with their students so that students had an authentic context in which to practice and apply these notions to their fellow class and school members.

One way that Blythe incorporated inclusion into her classroom was by bringing in multiple perspectives into the curriculum. As her students were studying about the Mormon pioneers and their trek to Utah, Blythe made sure that she incorporated primary-source documents that portrayed the perspectives of not only the pioneers but also the perspectives of the American Indians who inhabited the Utah valley before the pioneers arrived.

I found film clips about Native Americans, in which they talked about how the Mormons coming to Utah was a bad thing. They took away the Native American's land and were very hurt by it. I got approval to show it, and it was thrilling. We had a great class discussion on how there are different perspectives and viewpoints. (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012)

Blythe hoped to incorporate aspects of inclusion by including the perspectives of the

Native Americans in their own words. In this way, she brought in marginalized perspectives that were normally not included in the social studies curriculum. Although Blythe incorporated the marginalized perspectives of the past, there was no evidence of incorporating contemporary controversial perspectives into her classroom discussions. Furthermore, Young (2004) recommended that when engaging students in controversial discussions, it was important to make sure that we incorporate many multiple perspectives and not just one or two that might be in direct conflict with each other. In this way we are able to situate the controversy in ways that more accurately reflects the unique ways of knowing (Haraway, 1991) and experiencing various events and issues.

Sydnee modeled inclusive behaviors by discussing with her class ideas that help all students feel a part of the classroom community. An example from Sydnee's teaching that reflected this idea of teaching students how to become more inclusive was addressed in a discussion she recently had with her class about a fellow student with severe emotional disorders. Because of his struggles, he frequently reacted violently in class, leaving the other students unsure of how to react or respond. Sydnee felt that his ongoing behavior needed to be addressed and that it provided an opportunity to discuss solutions together as a class. Sydnee described the conversation in this way.

There was one time when he was talking with the counselor because he had just had an explosion. I sat down with the rest of the students and said we need to talk about this student and I just explained that things are hard for him inside and because of the things that he deals with, he reacts differently than we would in the same situations. He might have more difficulty controlling his emotions and he might hurt or offend you. [We discussed] that we still need to show him support and show him love and things like that. So then I asked the students to share strategies have they have found that work with this student and then we talked about it. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

Later and in subsequent weeks and months, Sydnee observed students cheering him on when he accomplished something great and writing bucket fillers for him to encourage him to keep trying. As Sydnee incorporated her own rewards systems for him, none of the students complained that he was being rewarded differently; rather they celebrated with him and owned his success as part of their own. In this way, the students were invited to share in the community efforts of the classroom, and as a result were able to include a student who might otherwise be ostracized or excluded from learning activities (Young, 2006).

One way that Tom taught his students how to be more inclusive was by incorporating topics such as “bullying” as a focus in his class discussions. He did this not only to create a space in which to address non-inclusive behaviors, but he also did it in a way in which students felt safe and were willing to share. On one occasion, Tom was talking to his sixth graders about a bullying issue on the playground at their school. He organized his class into teams to discuss what bullying looked like at their school and to research the potential problems and pitfalls. At first his students suggested that there was not a bullying issue at their school and that this was an isolated event. They recommended that if a student came upon a bully, they just needed to ignore it and walk away. Over and over he heard the same response and yet he continued to encourage his students to think about the issue in different ways.

Throughout the discussions, Tom provided statistics and examples of how many students were bullied each day nationwide, in their district, and at their school. Most of his students were shocked at first but began to understand that even if it was not reflective

of their personal experience, they could recognize that it was an issue; they could choose to care about it, and become part of the solution. After the discussion, a student approached Tom and shared multiple experiences in which he had been bullied at the school. The student was scared and unsure of what to do. Tom reassured him that this was the right time to talk about it, and that they would come up with solutions together. As an extension to this conversation, Tom invited a local police officer to come and teach his students how to become more inclusive, how to communicate with each other, and how to stand up for themselves in appropriate ways while working through these kinds of issues.

Sydnee and Tom also identified opportunities for inclusive acts within the school community. Sydnee reflected on one such opportunity when she was notified that she was getting a new student from Honduras who spoke no English. In an effort to create an inclusive community, Sydnee presented the news to her students and asked them to help her brainstorm ways that they could help their new student feel welcome and successful. In the discussion, Sydnee shared how she felt when she moved to a new country and did not speak the language bringing in her own situated experience (Haraway, 1991; Smith & Barr, 2008) to create empathy and to problematize how this new student might be feeling. After deliberating many potential ideas, the students decided to make flashcards and label everything in the class to help their new classmate learn English. They also established a buddy system so that this new student would feel a part of the classroom. When she arrived at school, the students were excited to welcome her and included her in their community. They felt ownership in making sure that she succeeded and celebrated

together when they knew it was working.

The result is that everyone in the class is super excited for her to come, and everyone feels a desire to teach her English. I think some kids would have reacted this way, but most would not. Many students wrote in their journals about it, and two students independently picked out Spanish-English children's dictionaries for their library books. I think our new student has a great environment to come into, with all of the other children feeling ownership of helping and teaching her. I feel very good about how it went. I learned that giving kids' responsibility for each other helps them love each other. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

In this effort, Sydnee not only became the bridge to help her students have ownership in welcoming a new student, but she also modeled principles of inclusion by creating an environment in which the student would feel welcome. Furthermore, this example represented a curriculum decision in which Sydnee and her students were empowering a new student with background, cultural, and language experience that differed from the majority of the students in the class (Young, 2006). Furthermore, this example of inclusion involved more than just "giving" marginalized students a voice, but rather empowering this new student with the skills to share her voice.

Tom found similar opportunities for inclusion through his efforts at mainstreaming the special education students assigned to his classroom. Tom taught at a school that mainstreamed mildly to severely handicapped students into his homeroom class at various times throughout the day. Tom viewed this as an opportunity for inclusion and worked closely with the special education team to collaborate on the learning objectives and activities he could provide for all of his students. Additionally, Tom asked the special education team to educate his homeroom students about the new students that would be joining them. The presentation addressed the abilities and challenges of the special education students so that his homeroom students would know

how to interact with them. “I need my students to catch the vision. Then they will want to help. Then they will want to interact. I don’t think you can force a child to like someone.”

After the presentation, Tom described his students as being very motivated about the students who were mainstreamed into his class.

My students want to interact. They ask “Can we go get them now?” “Can they sit by me?” During recess they have a dance group with the special education girls. I needed to help my students understand what they were doing by excluding out the special education population, the relationships they lose. If I can show them the benefits of it, then will want to go there. It goes back to individual choice. I am not making the kids dance together outside. I am not making them remind me to go get them, or making them sit by them. I reinforce it by being positive about it. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 28, 2012)

Through his efforts, Tom’s students built a unique and caring relationship with the special education population at the school. Rather than making fun of them, or excluding them, Tom’s class referred to them as the “cool kids” and they worked individually and as a class to include them in the learning and living of the classroom. Through this example, Tom created an opportunity to include students that are “normatively” excluded from the classroom because of their disabilities. Young (2006) suggested that students with disabilities were traditionally excluded from the learning activities and opportunities that were offered to those who fell into definitions of “normal.” However, this example also represented a missed opportunity in which Tom could have engaged his students in conversations about how schools and society discriminate against people with disabilities. Furthermore, because Tom’s students had created emotional and social connections with the special education students, they were in more of a position to deconstruct and problematize how these students were excluded in the learning spaces of schooling. The data, however, do not reflect Tom taking advantage of this potential

teaching moment.

Democratic inclusive classroom communities are based on democratic principles and the tenants of inclusion. Throughout the data, there was evidence that the teachers in this study were working towards recognizing and including all class members in their community-building efforts. These efforts not only signaled a commitment to inclusion but also illustrated ways in which the goals of democratic inclusion can be accomplished. The participants of this study established democratic inclusive classroom communities that were grounded in the purposes and processes of democracy while preparing students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to participate in democratic community and society. The participants in this study celebrated student individuality by creating opportunities to connect with student's lives both inside and outside of the classroom through class sharing activities and by incorporating celebratory events throughout the year. Because of their commitment to democratic inclusion, the participants of this study revealed efforts to not only incorporate democratic content and process, but also demonstrated efforts to recognize and celebrate multiple individualities in their community-building efforts that taught students how to be more inclusive with each other and that promoted democratic inclusive behaviors (Young, 2006).

In addition to community-building efforts, teachers dedicated to democratic inclusion established practices that engaged students in decision-making opportunities. Involving students in the decisions that affected them was not only a fundamental principle of inclusion, but also this practice also provided students with authentic experiences in which to apply democratic practices and processes in the classroom.

Democratic Inclusive Decision-making

In addition to their community-building efforts, teachers established democratic inclusive classrooms by engaging their students in decision-making opportunities. These opportunities were divided into three categories of curriculum decisions, classroom decisions, and decisions extending beyond the classroom. Students were engaged in curriculum decisions when they directed their own learning by deliberating what was taught, how it was taught, and how it was evaluated. Students participated in classroom decisions as opportunities arose from living and learning together that allowed students to deliberate problems and their potential solutions. Initiated by students and teachers, these classroom decisions gave students a context in which to apply democratic skills and processes and participate in inclusive acts. Finally, the teachers in this study suggest that there were opportunities to push democracy deeper as they engaged their students in decision-making that extended beyond the classroom as students' deliberated local and global issues and how they could be engaged in their solutions. Apple and Beane (2007a) suggested that curriculum decisions were democratic when organized around major social problems and sought to include students in the participatory act of deconstructing and analyzing educational structures. The sections that follow explore how the participants in this study engaged their students in these decision-making opportunities.

In the context of education, a democratic inclusive classroom is established as teachers and students interact with each other and with the curriculum in ways that include all perspectives and voices in the decision-making of the classroom. Teachers of democratic inclusive classrooms view decision-making as an ideal avenue for students to

express opinions, to include multiple perspectives and identities, and to incorporate democratic practices into their classroom community. As students engage in the decision-making opportunities of the classroom, legitimacy and student ownership is a central outcome (Young, 2000a). Student ownership is described as a central outcome in the participant's purpose and approach to student decision-making. Furthermore, student ownership was the principle that the participants of this study referred to most often in terms of what they are hoping to accomplish. Inclusion in decision-making opportunities student ownership for the participants of this study is about student participation in expressing opinions, initiating discussions, and in deliberating potential outcomes for students to direct their own learning. These opportunities for decision-making directly align with democratic inclusive processes as outlined by Young in which she suggested that decision were legitimate and binding when stakeholders (students) had an opportunity to influence outcomes. Furthermore, involving students in this way also reflected Freire's (1987) notions of students as co-creators of learning in which he advocated for a model of student learning that engaged students in ways to transform their communities. Sydnee made connections between student ownership and decision-making in the following ways.

I feel that by letting my students practice making democratic decisions as a group; it helps them with decision-making skills as well as prepares them to participate in a democracy. I hope through my democratic approach, students will feel ownership of our class. They will feel like co-contributors and creators. (Sydnee, Electronic Posting Sept. 15, 2011)

Student ownership was also directly linked to student responsibility as Sydnee described.

To me democratic teaching is giving children a say in their learning environment. So many children feel like life is "done" to them instead of being created by them.

They don't see themselves as having much control over what happens to them. I want them to feel like they have a little control over their lives. They feel like they can decide if they are going to be a better student and they can decide kind of where they want to be and who they want to be and what they want to do. I want them to take responsibility for themselves and not just wait for other forces to make sure they are doing their work or make sure that they are succeeding, but that they take responsibility for themselves for how they are doing. (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Sept. 15, 2011)

Important in decision-making was teaching students how to initiate discussions, express opinions, deliberate solutions, and come to a consensus or agreement of how to proceed.

In teaching students how to express their opinions, Sydnee worked to establish an environment in which students felt safe in sharing their thoughts and opinions as described previously in her community-building efforts. Sydnee wanted her students to feel like if they had an idea that it would be received with respect even if it was not the common opinion. "They have a voice and that they can voice it whenever they want to. I want them to feel like they have control over their lives." She reported that as her students gained more experience in expressing opinions, they were catching on to the idea that they can bring things up, that she would listen, and that they could discuss issues as a class. Tom was also committed to soliciting and incorporating student opinion. "I allow my students to express their opinion and I freely express mine and we begin to understand one another by making concessions, and attempting to understand each of our perspectives." As both Sydnee and Tom involved their students in expressing opinions, they created an environment for students to participate in the decision-making of the classroom. These decision-making opportunities were categorized as curriculum decisions, classroom decisions, and decisions extending beyond the classroom that directly reflected democratic inclusive opportunities existing in the larger democratic

community (Young, 2000a). The sections that follow will describe how Blythe, Sydnee, and Tom incorporated decision-making in their efforts to incorporate democratic inclusion.

Curriculum Decisions

Students were involved in curriculum decisions as they made decisions in terms of what was taught, how it was taught, and how it was evaluated. In this way, democratic inclusive teachers reflected notions of participation and decision-making identified in the literature as students were involved in the processes and decisions that affected them (Benhabib, 2002; Gutmann, 1987; Young, 2006). Based on federal, state, and district guidelines, the curriculum standards act was a perimeter in curriculum decision-making as students deliberated how the curriculum was taught and experienced in the classroom. Blythe engaged her students in curriculum decisions by having them describe and teach various mini lessons for the class. Sydnee involved her students in curriculum decisions by giving them choices in terms of resources and materials and in various learning activities. Tom incorporated student decision-making by allowing students to determine what they wanted to learn in terms of the suggested curriculum, how they wanted to learn based on what methods and strategies worked best for them, and in creating assessment and evaluation methods. Furthermore, all three participants used discussions as a means to gather student feedback and deliberate various options and curriculum strategies.

Blythe invited her students to participate in decision-making by deliberating various aspects of the curriculum. For example, in her school, each teacher began the day with a morning devotional in which they sang religious hymns and studied various

scriptures. At the beginning of the year, Blythe facilitated and taught those devotionals. However, in an effort to give her students ownership over devotionals, she decided to involve her students in teaching the devotionals. They addressed the topic during a class meeting in which she asked her students if they wanted to be in charge of the devotionals. They unanimously decided that they did. Together as a class, they defined what devotionals would look like in moving forward.

We had a class meeting to decide how they wanted devotionals to be. We talked about what requirements we had for devotionals and then as a class came up with the way they should be handled rather than me making assignments in a dictator type role. They decided they wanted to work in partners. I gave them a list of topic options and let them decide what would be taught and how it would be taught. (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012)

The students loved being in charge of devotionals and worked very hard to incorporate the parameters that the class had established. Blythe later described how the students were doing.

It is fun to see them step up and be the teacher. They take ownership and know that I will support it. It's great to watch them interact. Because it is not a grade and there aren't any points for it, the sky is the limit. Some have it scripted out, some have costumes, some have pictures, and others have charts that they put pictures on. They are outstanding. (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012)

Turning devotionals over to her students was a way to involve them in the decision-making of the classroom and resulted in her students incorporating their situated knowledge (Haraway, 1991), interests, and abilities.

Sydnee involved her students in curricular decisions by giving them choices about resources and materials. For example, rather than dictating what art project students completed, she gave them several options to choose from. During literacy instruction, she gave them several book choices for guided reading. "I let my kids choose from several

books that I pick as their next guided reading book. No other teacher I know gives students that choice.” Another way she gave them choice was by allowing them to make decisions regarding various learning activities. Recently, she and her students were trying to make a decision on how they wanted to celebrate Dr. Seuss’s birthday. The class discussed several ideas and decided on a read-a-thon. They continued their discussion by deciding what activities would be allowed and not allowed during the read-a-thon. Sydnee turned the decision over to the students. She began the conversation by expressing her concerns and then allowed her students to deliberate about what would work for them, while at the same time alleviating her concerns.

Here is what I am worried about. I am worried that if you come in your pajamas, then you won't focus during science and math in the morning. I am worried that if you bring blankets and pillows, then in the afternoon you are just going to want to build forts on your desks with them and you aren't actually going to be reading. Tell me what you guys think. (Sydnee, Observation, March 1, 2012)

The students discussed several options and finally came up with a decision that they would only bring what they could personally handle. In this way, Sydnee and her class engaged in inclusive decision-making by inviting everyone to participate in the deliberation of proposed solutions (Benhabib, 2002; Young, 2006). She validated their decision by reaffirming her trust in them and their ability to be responsible for their own behavior during the activity.

Tom engaged his students in curriculum decision-making because he believed that in order to have students feel invested in their learning, they needed to have ownership in what was taught, how it was taught, and how it was assessed, which directly reflected notions of legitimacy and participation as outlined by Young (2000a). For Tom, decisions

were deliberated in the form of discussions. Although Tom did not have a set time or location in his classroom for discussions, he incorporated them as needs or issues arose that would benefit from gathering student opinions, deliberation, and student driven solutions. Tom described the process as beginning slowly with little decisions that gradually involved students in more ownership and choice in larger aspects of their learning.

I look for little opportunities to give choice and it starts off small. “You can choose what color you want.” From there it branched out to the types of books I would let my students choose, level bound. Now I let them choose what books they want within genres. (Tom, Interview, Feb. 29, 2012)

In an effort to involve his students in curricular decisions, Tom asked his students what they wanted to learn about and then worked their suggestions into the already established curriculum core.

I believe a teacher needs to allow the students to have a say in what happens in the classroom. It is common for teachers to allow students to help establish the classroom rules at the start of the year, but I think a teacher should allow them to determine what is taught in the classroom. For instance, at the start of the year I ask students what they want to learn within the scope of the 6th grade curriculum and I try to adapt my teaching to match what the students want to learn. (Tom, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011)

One example of this was illustrated when Tom was planning a science unit on light. In an effort to involve his students in curricular decisions, he presented the science standards and objectives to his students and had the students come up with the concepts that needed to be taught in the form of various experiments. The students worked in groups to establish the concept and to formulate the experiment. They then taught the concepts to the class. At the end of the unit, Tom reported that not only were all of the standards taught, but that the students reported greater satisfaction with what they were learning.

In addition to involving students in what was taught, Blythe and Tom also involved their students in making decisions about how it was taught. Blythe gave her students choices about how the curriculum is taught whenever she could. She believes that even scripted curriculum like spelling can be adapted to incorporate student opinion.

As long as we cover what we need to, you can decide. How do you want to do this? I try to give them options here and there. Give them as much agency as possible and have it be less teacher driven and more student driven. (Blythe, Interview, March 13, 2012)

Tom believed that teaching had two layers to it—content and pedagogy. Content was reflected in what was taught while pedagogy was reflected in how it was taught. Tom was committed to a pedagogy based on student needs and on authentic application. “As long as your pedagogy is grounded in real life then the content comes to it.” By basing his instruction on student needs he was more able to engage students in making decisions about their own learning. “I believe that a good teacher is one that can read their students and deliver what they need mingled with what research says is good teaching practice.” An example of this was related through the following experience with his math instruction.

Tom entered the teaching profession when math was taught using an inquiry-based approach. As the math movement changed, he felt pressure from parents and administrators to adopt a more direct teaching approach. He took this dilemma to his students and asked them how they wanted to be taught math. The students discussed several options, as well as what they felt would help them be most successful. Their final decision was that they wanted him to teach using a balance of both direct and inquiry-based approaches. Tom reflected, “My students help me refine my instruction. It was

literally my students.” Through this example, one sees how Tom incorporated student feedback into the decision-making of how the curriculum was taught, creating an approach to math instruction that not only reflected current research, but also incorporated his student’s opinion. In this way, Tom not only involved his students in decision-making, but he incorporated student opinion in the processes that affect them directly reflecting what Gutmann (1987) and Young (2006) suggested were important aspects of inclusion. Furthermore, through this process, Tom reflected notions advocated by Freire (1987) in establishing his students as co-investigators of learning.

Another way that the teachers of this study invited students to direct their own learning was to allow them to make choices about how the learning in the classroom was evaluated. Based on principles of assessment, teachers involved students by providing multiple and varied kinds of assessment opportunities, thus creating an inclusive environment in terms of how students best demonstrated their knowledge. Teachers who provided diverse opportunities for assessment created an inclusive environment because they were allowing all students to have opportunities of success (Lotan, 2006). Furthermore, teachers who included their students in the creation of assessment materials, opened up the space for students to think about learning in new ways, and provided ownership in not only what was learned but also how it was assessed.

Tom incorporated student participation in creating assessment rubrics with his class. One example I observed from Tom’s classroom was when they were creating a rubric for a culminating project. Tom believed, “If I want my students to feel like they own the project and feel invested in it, then from day one I need them to feel invested in

how they are going to be graded.” Tom did this by soliciting student input with grading expectations, in creating assessment rubrics, and with individual student grades. In their study of Ancient Greece, the students were previously given a list of projects they could choose from. They also decided whether or not they wanted to complete the project working alone or as a group. Tom introduced the discussion by suggesting that the purpose of the discussion was to come up with grading criteria for their various projects. Throughout the discussion, he asked students to suggest important issues as well as grading characteristics for the rubric. After much deliberation as a whole class and as smaller groups, the students created a rubric with various categories that represented the consensus of the class. Part of the rubric included a self-reflection in which students evaluated their own work as a portion of their final grade. The process of deliberating a grading rubric reflected democratic inclusive processes in which citizens discuss and deliberate decisions (Young, 2000a).

Students had opportunities to direct their own learning as they engaged in curriculum decisions in terms of what was taught, how it was taught, and how it was evaluated. These decision-making opportunities were central to all the participants’ classrooms, although done in unique ways and to varying degrees. By involving students in the curricular decisions, the participants found greater student satisfaction, greater student success, and greater student engagement, which reflected what Young (2000a) described as legitimacy as citizens participated in decision-making. Furthermore, making curricular decisions reflected a way that the teacher participants pushed democracy deeper as students had not historically been involved in deciding what was taught, how it

was taught, or assessed (Osler, 2010). In addition to making decisions about the curriculum, the participants found opportunities to engage their students in making classroom decisions. Most often, classroom decisions evolved out of living and learning together and reflected classroom policies, jobs, and issues.

Classroom Decisions

Classroom decisions emerged out of teacher and students living and learning together and address issues of the classroom that evolve out of classroom interactions. These decisions could be teacher- or student-initiated and evolved as teachers and students demonstrated readiness to engage in deeper applications of decision-making. This practice was advocated by democratic educators envisioning spaces for students to be involved as stakeholder in policies that affect them (Gutmann, 1987; Osler, 2010; Parker, 2008). For example, at the beginning of the year, teachers engaged their students in simple choices or decisions regarding classroom rules and consequences by allowing students to vote on which rules they want when given several options to choose from. As the students gained experience in decision-making, the teacher allowed them to create their own rules and consequences. As the year progressed, and as teachers and students gained more experience in decision-making together, the decisions became more complex, had far-reaching consequences, and pushed notions of democracy deeper into complex conversations about class goals and how they are progressing as a class. Additionally, as students gained more skills and confidence in the decision-making processes of the classroom, they brought up their own issues, initiated solutions, and demonstrated ownership in the decisions.

Whether the discussion is directed at curriculum or classroom decisions, students play a vital role in not only deliberating the topic at hand, but also in identifying and bringing forth topics and issues to be discussed and decided upon. As students brought discussion topics forward, they presented problems or questions that evolved naturally from learning and working together and were, therefore, authentic and applied to the “real-life” happenings of the classroom reflecting democratic inclusive processes described by Young (2000a, 2006). Regardless of format, the purpose of the discussion was aimed at gathering student feedback and including students in the decision-making and problem solving of the classroom; thus, accomplishing not only inclusive aims but also accomplishing democratic aims as well. Central to these decision-making opportunities are opportunities for students to vote, explore notions of majority and consensus, and propose solutions that meet the needs of the class. Bixby and Pace (2008) suggested that as students engaged in deliberations, they would demonstrate a willingness and confidence to deliberate about mutually binding matters and reason together with mutual respect.

At the beginning of the year, Blythe engaged her students in decision-making by having her students decide what the class rules and procedures were going to be. She made connections to the curriculum by organizing those rules around the content of the United States constitution. In the classroom when students were talking about rights of citizens in the country, they were also applying their knowledge to discussions about rights and responsibilities in the classroom. “Rather than me giving them procedures and rules, we came up with a class constitution that the students signed. Now when things

happen we talk about the constitution” (Blythe, Electronic Posting, Sept. 30, 2011). In addition to coming up with class rules, they also established consequences for the rules that directly reflect the classroom community.

As the year progressed, Blythe involved her students in classroom decision-making as problems emerged out of learning together. Throughout the year, they discussed everything from homework policies to class jobs, bathroom passes, and seating arrangements. Mostly student initiated, Blythe viewed decision-making as a gradual release of control and worked towards student ownership whenever possible. “Usually a student will come to me and say there is a problem and I’ll ask if they think the whole class would be interested in forming a solution. Students crave the democratic strategies” (Blythe, Interview, Oct. 7, 2011).

Sydnee incorporated discussions as problems evolved out of learning together and in the form of class meetings. These discussions were based on issues that reflected the happenings of the classroom. The issues were authentic and inclusive because they were based on the interests, needs, and problems as perceived by those who were directly experiencing them. Sydnee recognized that for many students, her class might be the first time in which they have experienced aspects of control over their own lives and works to scaffold that responsibility with varied opportunities in the classroom. She began to give students influence by inviting them to participate in class meetings in which she created the agenda. She scaffolds participation by creating expectations for how opinions are shared, and how they are received. She kept class meetings to 20 minutes in length and scheduled them the same time each week for consistency and continuity.

Sydnee turned the responsibility over to her students slowly recognizing that they had to “grow into democracy.” This was an important concept for Sydnee as she recognized her slow release of control as students directed more of the processes that affected them. She referred to classroom rules and procedures as the decision-making opportunity most utilized in her classroom. At the beginning of the year, she involved her students in creating the rules and consequences of the classroom. She described this first experience with democracy in the following way.

It was their first taste of democracy. Day one they say “What? We get to make the rules?” They don’t really understand or feel comfortable with it. I felt like they were saying “I don’t really know you. I don’t understand that you are giving me control right now.” I felt kind of weird about democracy at the beginning of the year because they weren’t contributing like I expected them to, but they are growing into it. (Sydnee, Interview, Sept. 29, 2011)

After experiencing several discussions and decision-making opportunities, Sydnee described her students’ mid-year as participating more in the discussions and in creating the classroom community. Students at this point were making decisions about classroom procedures such as bathroom use, pencil sharpening, class jobs, and seating arrangements.

We are still growing into democracy. We are still overcoming the idea that life is just something that adults do to you and so it is still a lot of teacher driven efforts but they are definitely catching on to the idea that they can bring things up and that I will listen and we will discuss them as a class. It feels better. It feels more comfortable than it did at the beginning of the year. It feels more united, more congealed. It is not a perfect class, but it is to a point where I feel good about it. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

As Sydnee and her students grew into democracy, their decision-making resulted in a more united community as both teacher and students were working together in thoughtful and inclusive ways. Tom also engaged his students in establishing classroom rules and

procedures as a way to increase student participation and decision-making.

I believe a democratic classroom has established norms, procedures, and expectations. There needs to be consistency and continuity in what you say and do and what you expect from each other. I think a discussion must occur with the students and allow them to help determine what sort of consequences should follow. Usually when students have a “say” in the matter they tend to be more invested and will try to improve their behavior. (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Nov. 4, 2011)

Tom incorporated student opinion upfront with his students by discussing how they would work together as a team and by establishing a class constitution that represented agreed upon rules and consequences.

Both Sydnee and Tom suggested that because students were more able to express their opinions and direct their own behavior that classroom management issues decreased and that students were more engaged in learning. Sydnee reflected, “Students are more satisfied with their classroom experience because procedures they don't like, they can change. Students feel more ownership because they have a part in creating these things” (Sydnee, Interview, Sept. 29, 2011)

In addition to making decisions about classroom rules and procedures, both Sydnee and Tom engaged their students in discussions addressing issues that evolved out of living and learning together. These discussions were based on student issues and were aimed at problem solving and inclusion. One example of this from Sydnee’s teaching was when she brought up the issue of seating arrangements.

A student in my class had been hinting that it was time to change seats, and a different student even drafted up a desk arrangement that he thought would be better. I brought up the question to the class. Several students suggested different desk arrangements, and then we voted. My rationale was that the students would feel better about their new seats if they had a say. (Sydnee, Electronic Posting, Oct. 17, 2011)

Another issue that was brought up by the students' midyear was class jobs. Several students suggested that the current class jobs did not reflect what needed to be done in the classroom and recommended eliminating several jobs and adding several new ones. During this same discussion, a few of the students brought up the fact that the same person had been chosen as class president more than once. They suggested that it made them feel bad because they also wanted to be president. Several other students agreed and Sydnee realized that she needed to do a better job of keeping track of delegating class jobs. Sydnee referenced this example and described her students as being bolder now.

At the beginning of the year, they would be too timid to ask for something. Now the kids are seeing more issues and bringing up more of their own issues, instead of me proposing to the class different things. They are asserting their rights more; they are more bold and demanding democracy and wanting it. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

Students exercised their decision-making abilities throughout the year as issues arose and as opportunities for involvement presented themselves.

Tom conducted discussions aimed at problem solving as either he or his students bring up issues affecting them. Tom described his role in these discussions as a facilitator.

I will let the class start to talk about something (usually it starts off teacher directed and something related to the students) and I serve as the facilitator for the discussion. I try to keep track of thoughts/ideas and help the group synthesize the information. (Tom, Interview, Nov. 9, 2011)

He also suggested that sometimes he would pose a problem or issue to the class. Some of the issues that his class discussed were playground use, recess policies, bullying, and various rules and procedures of the class. After much deliberation and gathering of student opinion, they made a decision resulting in action for the class.

At the end of the year, the participant's excitement for decision-making and how their class was experiencing it as abundant. They talk about how their class had evolved from being teacher-directed to more student-directed. They described their students taking more ownership by instigating more complex democratic opportunities on their own. Although the participants engaged their students in curricular and classroom decisions, democratic inclusion would suggest that there were opportunities by involving students in decision-making to push democracy and inclusion deeper. Young (2006) advocated that decision-making opportunities should not only engage students in decisions that affect them, but that they potentially opened up spaces for students to reflect on historically marginalized individuals and groups who have been denied decision-making opportunities; thus, deconstructing the structural inequalities of schooling and society. These problem-solving and decision-based discussions were often focused on issues that arose in the classroom and school or could be broader and based on larger community or global issues.

Decisions Extending Beyond the Classroom

When directed outside of the classroom and school, decision-making discussions often resulted in community involvement and service learning. Oftentimes, controversial topics were the focus of these discussions as teachers embraced and included marginalized voices and perspectives. Most of the decision-making opportunities that evolved for the participant's classes in dealing with issues larger than the classroom were related to school-wide issues or policies. Although most of the participant's discussions were focused on issues arising from within the classroom and school, the data also

reflected the participants pushing democracy deeper by giving students an opportunity to apply their skills to the larger community. Problems that the principal or other teachers in the school identified were discussed, deliberated, and voted upon such as bathroom use and recess policies. Additionally, Sydnee and Tom extended decision-making by researching community and global issues that resulted in service learning activities for their students.

At the end of the year, Sydnee felt like both she and her students were ready to engage in a discussion about global issues. They explored several issues and conducted research on the various organizations that are working towards solutions. The students decided on a service learning opportunity that purified water for Africa and then discussed several ways that they could raise funds to help this cause. After much deliberation, they decided to hold a talent show, charge admission, and donate all proceeds to the charity. Because the students were so excited and engaged, many of them took on extra chores at home and in their neighborhood to raise money. Additionally, Sydnee integrated this service learning opportunity with her persuasive writing unit by having the students write persuasive letters to local businesses for donations. She described this discussion in the following way. “Last class they were exploding with ideas of how they were going to make money and everything they wanted to do. They are excited because they can actually make a difference and they see that there is a real need” (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

As Sydnee moved her discussions from class-centric issues to community involvement in global issues, she signaled a commitment to democratic inclusion in

which her students played an active role in decision-making, while applying the processes of democracy to the larger community. However, in spite of extending democracy for her own class, the service-learning opportunity presented several missed opportunities for students to engage in democratic inclusion. In this example, students could have incorporated multiple perspectives in examining the issue of water purification in Africa by exploring who was affected by water purification issues. Were all Africans equally affected, was it only an issue for individuals of a certain race, class, or gender? Furthermore, as students engaged in researching the problem of water purification, they had a potential to examine proposed solutions through an inclusive lens in identifying which perspectives were presented in the solutions. Students could examine democratic processes by evaluating how African citizens were involved in deliberating the problem and the solution. Although engaged in a wonderful service learning activity that extending student learning outside of the classroom, this experience missed several potential democratic inclusive opportunities.

Tom also engaged his students in issues beyond the classroom as issues arose in the school or as he found areas in the curriculum that link to service learning opportunities in the community. Tom referred to a school-wide incident on the playground in which the principal made the decision to eliminate all football and soccer at recess. Tom's students were upset and so Tom felt like this was the perfect opportunity to push democracy into the larger context of the school and to discuss potential causes and solutions. After gathering student opinions, and deliberating potential solutions, the students chose two of their peers to represent them in meeting with the principal. After

their meeting, the students returned with the principal's decision to allow Tom's class, and only his class full access to the playground, which included playing football and soccer. The principal had realized how irrational he had been in his decision and was willing to use Tom's class as a pilot to see if the other students would be able to handle it in the future. Tom reflected the incident as being important to the learning of his students, even though it did not reflect the curriculum objectives of the day. "I didn't get to my science lesson and I didn't get to my history lesson. I threw them out the window and I allowed the students to discuss the issue because it was a real issue for them" (Tom, Interview Feb. 29, 2012). It was a curricular compromise but because of Tom's commitment to students being involved in issues that were authentic and important to them, he made the decision to allocate time to discuss their concerns.

Tom also created space for students to deliberate issues outside of the classroom as he identified connections to service learning in the core curriculum standards. For example, one of the sixth-grade social studies standards suggested that students explore local and global issues and research what was being done to solve them. When a favorite teacher at the school was diagnosed with cancer, the students decided to learn more about medical issues worldwide and participate in a service-learning activity to raise awareness and funds for their favorite teacher. The students each chose a global region and researched the demographics, medical issues, and what was being done in that region to help solve the issues. Additionally, the students engaged in a school-wide penny war and raised \$3,000 to help this teacher pay some of her medical bills. The students presented the money to her and presented their knowledge about global medical issues in a school-

wide global issues fair at the end of the year. By extending student decision-making to the larger community beyond the classroom, Tom not only engaged his students in democratic inclusion but also prepared them with authentic ways to be contributing members of society.

As the participants of this study engaged their students in decision-making opportunities reflecting curriculum, classroom, and issues beyond the classroom, they signal a commitment to democratic inclusive education. Students gained a sense of ownership and responsibility over their own learning as they participated in democratic processes that incorporated student feedback, multiple perspectives and diverse solutions to problems that evolved out of living and learning together. Through their use of discussions, and throughout various areas of the curriculum, the participants actively incorporated decision-making as part of their commitment to and incorporation of democratic inclusion. As described and illustrated through examples from the participant's practices, the teachers in this study were highly engaged in democratic inclusive practices.

Conclusion

The participants of this study defined and described democratic inclusive classrooms based on principles of democratic education combined with principles of inclusion. As they did so, their efforts were aimed at involving their students in both community-building and decision-making efforts in inclusive ways. The participants referred to their community-building efforts based on democratic purposes and processes,

celebrating student individuality and success, and by inviting all students to participate in their inclusion efforts. All three participants reflected democratic purposes and processes throughout the content areas of the curriculum. Furthermore, all three participants incorporated democratic processes such as deliberation as they involved their students in discussing various issues that evolved from the classroom and as they explored complex notions of democracy.

The participants in this study also established inclusive classroom communities as they created opportunities for students to care for one another and to share and celebrate each other's success. Both Blythe and Sydnee did this through activities such as bucket fillers in which they and their students recognized when students were doing good things for each other and the class community. Tom established an environment for his students as they shared important happenings from their life through class Facebook and discussions about what they were reading and writing. In addition to making connections with their students' personal lives, the participants in this study celebrated student individuality and success by evaluating and celebrating individual and class progress. They did this as they involved students in preparing for parent conferences and as they re-evaluated class goals throughout the year. Finally, all three participants worked to incorporate multiple perspectives into their community efforts by taking formal measures to include all students as well as teaching their students how to be inclusive of each other. These efforts not only signaled a commitment to inclusion but also illustrated ways in which the goals of democratic inclusion could be accomplished.

In addition to their community-building efforts, teachers in this study also

established democratic inclusive classrooms by engaging their students in decision-making opportunities around curriculum, classroom, and issues extending beyond the classroom. Students were engaged in curriculum decisions when they directed their own learning in terms of what was taught, how it was taught, and how it was evaluated. Students' deliberated classroom decisions as issues and problems evolved out of living and learning together. Finally, students engaged in decision-making that extended beyond the classroom as they deliberated local and global issues and how they could be involved in their solutions. Blythe and Sydnee involved their students in curriculum decisions by giving students choices and slowly turning the responsibility over to the students in various mini lessons and classroom activities. Tom engaged his students in all aspects of curriculum decision-making by allowing his students to direct what was taught, how it was taught, and how it was evaluated based on student needs and interests. All three participants involved their students in classroom decisions that would benefit from student ownership, incorporating multiple perspectives, or student-initiated solutions. Both Sydnee and Tom involved their students in decision-making outside of the classroom as they deliberated issues both in the school and community. Their efforts were to engage students in community beyond the classroom and to give students authentic ways in which to apply democratic purposes and processes to their lives.

As the teacher participant's practices were analyzed through the lens of democratic inclusion, the data revealed several missed opportunities for the participants to extend their practices in incorporating democratic inclusion. Young (2000a) suggested that deep democracy resulted in discussions about widening democracy to include those

who had been traditionally and historically excluded. Young further suggested that these democratic inclusion occasions must be aimed at problem solving and issues addressing social justice. The missed opportunities revealed in the data also reflected this same theme as teachers were invited to envision democratic inclusion that moved beyond community and decision-making of the classroom and expanded their deliberations to issues of the larger community and society. Furthermore, as teachers expanded their conceptions of what it meant to educate for democratic inclusion, educational theorists advocated that the teachers identify more opportunities in the curriculum in which they can deconstruct and problematize the inequitable structures of schooling. In adopting the charge to align their practices with the literature, teachers should incorporate affirmative steps to include multiple and marginalized perspectives in both classroom and curriculum opportunities. These themes and their implications will be explored in Chapter VII and are represented as potential opportunities to deepen democratic inclusion.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETATION

Democratic education encompasses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of society (Dewey, 1916; Gutmann, 1987). Set in the context of preparing students for their role as citizens of a democratic society, democratic education advocates as its purpose enculturating the norms, values, and behaviors of society that are rooted in democracy (Apple & Beane, 2007a; Dewey, 1916). Current democratic theorists suggested that it is not enough for democratic education to reinforce principles of democracy, but advocate that democratic education should adopt the purpose of transforming society, and closing the gap between the ideals and realities of democracy by addressing societal injustices (Banks, 1997; Giroux, 2004; Gutmann, 1987; Young, 2000a).

In their efforts to address societal injustices, democratic educators suggested that democratic education must first advocate for an education in which *all* children are educated for their role as citizens. Theories of democratic inclusion adopt this charge. Young (2006) and others (Abdi & Richardson, 2008; Gutmann, 1987) suggested that principles of democratic inclusion provide the answers and solutions that can enable and empower all students. Young (2000a) created an image of inclusion as that of a “heterogeneous public engaged in transforming institutions to make them more effective in solving problems justly” (p. 12). Many of the principles associated with a democratic inclusion in the context of education are established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which each student is valued and recognized as part of the classroom

community and in which multiple perspectives are included in the community building and decision-making efforts of the classroom. Furthermore, Apple and Beane (2007a), Gutmann, and Young asserted that democratic classrooms were the ideal place to invite unique perspectives into classroom community and decision-making in authentic and meaningful ways in working towards an ideal of a democratic education for all students.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of three elementary teachers that incorporate aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice. Aligned with the literature on deliberative democratic inclusion, this dissertation represents an initial effort to fill a gap in the research by applying the theory behind deliberative inclusion (Young, 2000a) to the language and practice of teachers in elementary classrooms. In this way, the framework of democratic inclusion was used to analyze and interpret the data in two ways. The first way the data were analyzed was in examining how the participant's practices aligned with the literature on democratic inclusion. Many of the practices described by the participants illustrate inclusive acts, but also reflect ways that educators committed to notions of inclusion can push their practices deeper, or widen their use of democracy; therefore, a second way the data were analyzed was in adopting the charge to push democracy deeper. The recommendations of this chapter suggest what is needed as a next step in incorporating democratic inclusive practices and suggest further opportunities for teachers committed to democratic inclusive education to expand their practice. In envisioning the ideal possibilities of democratic inclusive classrooms, these recommendations illuminate spaces in which future research as well as teacher practice can strive in their quest to accomplish a

democratic inclusive aim. In this way, the interpretations of the data also suggest implications for further research and suggest how future research on teacher practices can be conducted.

Practices Aligned with Democratic Inclusion Literature

Many of the principles associated with a democratic inclusive education are established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which each student is valued and recognized as part of the classroom community. Within the notion of community building are practices that establish classrooms based on principles of caring. When I examined the data looking for alignment with the literature, establishing caring communities was an area in which all three participants successfully aligned their practice with what democratic inclusion advocates for.

Caring Classroom Communities

Educators committed to democratic education have long advocated for classroom communities in which students are engaged in the processes of democracy. However, when an inclusive lens is applied to the notion of democratic community, Beyer and Liston (1996), Corbett (1999), and Watkins (2005) suggested that democratic communities become inclusive by incorporating student's perspectives in the community building efforts of the classroom as well. "In classrooms where a sense of community is built, diverse contributions are embraced, differences are de-emphasized and inclusion is promoted" (Watkins, 2005, chapter 10, electronic version). Democratic inclusive communities are founded on notions of caring, as teachers and students work to create an

environment in which everyone feels included. Democratic educator's attempts to create a sense of community address what Beyer and Liston (1996) call the "three C's of care, concern, and connection" (p. 122). In this way, they are building upon the work advocated by Noddings (1984, 1992) in which she suggested that the notion of caring is critical to inclusive classroom communities by producing individuals who can contribute effectively to democratic communities because they care for one another.

Teachers dedicated to principles of democratic inclusion work to create caring, ethical relationships with and among their students by sharing personal stories, artifacts, and current events from their own lives as well as creating a class identity that unites them in their purpose and approach to learning (Passe, 2006; Triplett & Hunter, 2005). The classroom communities advocated by the literature are based upon the connections between student's experiences within and outside of school; connecting learning to everyday life; connecting with the social-emotional dimensions of learning; connecting with multiple ways of knowing; connecting with support systems and students' own views on effective learning (Corbett, 1999).

Democratic inclusive teachers also establish a sense of caring in their communities as they incorporate inclusive practices such as class meetings (Styles, 2001) in which students initiated discussions about topics and issues that were important to them and had opportunities to talk about and share the important events, thoughts, and happenings of their lives. These opportunities are important locations of inclusion because students develop a better sense of responsibility when given a chance to make meaningful contributions to the learning environment around them, and build a climate of

trust and respect between teacher and students during class meetings. In an authentic way, students not only gain experience in addressing issues of concern but also learn to reason and reflect on their actions, think about the consequences of their behavior, and comprehend the impact they have on others. Principles of democratic inclusion are incorporated in teacher's efforts to identify, include, and celebrate the various individuals in the community building efforts.

Overview of Participants Practices

Aligned with the literature reviewed in previous chapters, all three participants of this study successfully incorporated aspects of caring into their classroom communities. Often described as creating a sense of family in the classroom, teachers establish community through their ongoing and deliberate efforts to recognize and celebrate the diverse individuals in the classroom. In this way, teachers focused on the personal-social dimensions of learning and incorporated strategies that created opportunities to share and celebrate individuality of the classroom. In this way, they strive to balance the structural inequalities of the classroom by recognizing and including all classroom members in community building efforts. Both Blythe and Sydnee accomplished this goal as they incorporated use of bucket fillers to celebrate student's accomplishments and achievements. Sydnee and Tom promoted a caring community by organizing opportunities for students to share important thoughts, events, and happenings through class meetings and Face book sharing times. Additionally, Tom established a sense of caring by attending events and special occasions of his students outside of class. These acts established caring relationships with and among their students and directly aligned

with what the literature suggests (Beyer & Liston, 1996; Noddings, 1984; Watkins, 2005).

Examples From Each Classroom

Furthermore, each participant provided specific examples in which the class as a whole participated in inclusive acts to create caring classroom communities and include individuals that according to Young (2006) would “normatively” be excluded from the learning of the classroom. Blythe’s class had an opportunity to become a caring community when they welcomed a new student into their class that had previously been homeschooled. Upon entering the classroom, this new student felt anxious about his new learning environment. Blythe and her students engaged him in getting to know you games, and in sharing and celebratory activities to make him feel welcomed.

Additionally, upon realizing that this student was behind academically, Blythe met with the student and his parents to create outside of class learning opportunities for him to catch up on academic principles he had missed. This example reflects a deliberative inclusive act in which Blythe and her students included a student that felt excluded because of his previous schooling experience and because of his academic ability. Through her efforts, Blythe signaled a commitment to including students who might otherwise remain on the outside because of previous experience and ability.

Sydnee and her students identified an opportunity to create a caring community when they were notified that a new student was moving into their class from Honduras who spoke no English. In an effort to create an inclusive community, Sydnee and her students’ brainstormed ways that they could help their new student feel welcome and

successful. When she arrived at school, the students were excited to welcome her and include her in their community. They felt ownership in making sure that she succeeded, and celebrated together when they knew it was working. In this effort, Sydnee not only became the bridge to help her students have ownership in welcoming a new student, but she also modeled principles of inclusion by creating an environment in which a student that would normatively be excluded from the learning because of language and cultural barriers, was empowered to succeed.

Tom found similar opportunities for inclusion through his efforts at mainstreaming the special education students assigned to his classroom. Tom viewed this as an opportunity for inclusion and worked closely with the special education team to collaborate on the learning objectives and activities he could provide for all of his students. Rather than making fun of them, or excluding them, Tom's class refers to them as the "cool kids" and they work individually and as a class to include them in the learning and living of the classroom. Through his efforts, Tom's students built a unique and caring relationship with the special education population at the school. Through this example, Tom created an opportunity to include students that are "normatively" excluded from the classroom because of their disabilities.

Young (2006) referred to this exclusion in schools as normalization that "construct experience and capacities of some social segments into standards against which all are measured and some found wanting, or deviant" (Young, 2006, p. 96). In her description of the normalizing practices of schools Young focused on how children spend time in classrooms which act as a social structure in which students are positioned in

relation to one another in ways that tend to privilege some and disadvantage others. She further suggests that processes of normalization produce stigmatization and disadvantage by elevating some standards against which all people are measured. In this way, definitions of 'normal' as exhibited by the majority are considered best. Furthermore she suggests that no one should be disadvantaged because of characteristics and traits that have been socially constructed as not fitting into the dominant perspective of normal. Young refers to normalizing attitudes of society in terms of ability, race and ethnicity, language and speech, gender and sexuality.

Normalization concerns the way that the physical and mental capacities, cultural styles, or ways of living typical of particular social segments are held as a standard according to which everyone's attributes or behavior are evaluated. What is "normal" in the sense of typical of a majority of persons, or typical of a dominant group, shifts into a standard of what is good or right. (Young, 2006, p. 99)

Although at first glance, caring communities may not seem connected to aspects of inclusion, however the participants in this study used community-building opportunities to invite and include individuals that might have otherwise been excluded.

Recommendations

The examples illustrated by the participants of this study signal a commitment to inclusion by creating community building opportunities for students that would historically and traditionally be excluded based on ability, situated experience, ethnicity, and language (Young, 2006). In examining the data, there are several important recommendations in sustaining teacher's efforts at community. Closely tied to preparing and supporting teachers dedicated to inclusion, the two recommendations are modeling

caring communities in teacher education classes as well as providing mandatory pre-service training for teachers working with diverse and special needs students.

Model a caring teacher education classroom community that encourages inclusion. This recommendation suggests that as a result of their exposure to principles of community in their formal training programs, the participants in this study had a foundation from which they could incorporate these principles into their teaching practices. It is important to note, that although all three participants had specific training on creating caring classroom communities, none of the participants were exposed to these principles as advocated for within the context of democratic inclusion. An implication for teacher educators therefore is not only suggesting that these caring community building practices continue to be taught and modeled in teacher education programs, but that they are modeled in inclusive ways and be nested within the context of democratic inclusion in an effort to build upon practices of inclusion within the context of imagining equitable learning environments for all children at school.

All three participants referred to their teacher certification training that emphasized practical implementations of classroom communities built on relationships of caring and trust. One of the most important things a teacher education instructor can do is model the kind of teaching and classroom environment she is encouraging her students to adopt. I want my own students to create the kind of classroom communities that are advocated for in the democratic inclusive literature and that are reflected in the teacher practices of this study, so I model that kind of classroom through my community building efforts of my university methods course. Throughout the semester, there are

many opportunities to reflect notions of caring with my pre-service teacher candidates. The sense of family we create through our ongoing efforts increase in our interactions and learning experiences as we have opportunities to share and celebrate the individuals of the classroom.

Require all teacher education students to take classes in second language acquisition and special education. Although the examples shared by the participants reflected positive examples of including students with diverse cultural, language, and abilities, the challenge remains to find ways to accommodate diverse students in inclusive ways. This recommendation suggests that all teacher candidates must be trained with the skills and accommodation strategies that empower them to incorporate the multiple perspectives, positionalities, and situated knowledge that students bring with them to the classroom. When my students (and the participants of the study) encountered students who did not represent the typical student (as defined by dominant class, race, and gender), their first inclination is to brainstorm ways that bridge the gap. However, most of the solutions they incorporate still demand marginalized students to adjust to the dominant identities of the classroom. In the example from Sydnee's class, the new student from Honduras, although welcomed with kind and loving classmates, was put in a position in which she had to adapt to her English-speaking peers. Furthermore, the students did a great job of labeling and sharing the dominant culture with her, but were remiss in providing opportunities for her to share her situated knowledge and experience as a contribution to the class learning. To meet the demands of inclusion, Sydnee and her students needed to find ways to bring in the culture, knowledge, and language of their

new classmate into the community of the classroom. Furthermore, all teachers need strategies and resources that they can use to recognize and include the background knowledge and experiences of our most diverse students.

A subtheme to this recommendation is reflected in Tom's experiences in mainstreaming special-needs students into his classroom. School specialists and homeroom teachers must create opportunities for collaboration in which learning objectives are not only identified but also actualized in the learning activities of the classroom. Tom often expressed feelings of frustration as a result of knowing what needed to be done, but not feeling like he had the tools or resources to do it effectively. Young (2006) suggested that people (including teachers) in spite of good intentions continue to construct people with disabilities as "outlier" not falling within the parameters of inclusion.

The people with disabilities are then usually excluded from the activities or opportunities these institutions offer to those who fall within the norms. When institutions make an effort to accommodate people with disabilities, it is usually grudgingly, and in a way that continues to call attention to their deviance and not afford them equality opportunity and respect. (p. 97)

Providing both pre-service and in-service teachers with the strategies and resources they needed to incorporate inclusion would not ensure that teachers took an inclusive stance to diverse individuals in the classroom, but did more effectively support those teachers who were committed but lacked the resources to do so effectively.

Possibilities of Deeper and Wider Inclusion

In addition to identifying practices that are aligned with the literature on

democratic inclusion, the data were also examined for ways in which the participants could push their practices to include both deeper and wider practices of inclusion. Young (2000a) suggested that adopting an inclusive lens created demands to deepen democracy for more students and in more authentic ways and further suggests that democratic inclusion occurs on a continuum of possibilities. Efforts to push democracy deeper and wider reflect ways in which teachers can work towards a democratic inclusive idea. “Most societies have some democratic practices. Democracy is not an all-or-nothing affair, but a matter of degree; societies can vary in both extent and the intensity of their commitment to democratic practices” (Young, 2000a, p. 5). Likewise when applying democratic inclusion to teacher practices in elementary classrooms, both extent of intensity and commitment to practice also occur on a continuum from limited democracy/limited inclusion to highly inclusive democratic classrooms. As teachers deepen and widen their use of democracy they and their students move along the continuum towards a democratic inclusive ideal. In this way, the teacher practices of this study are seen as Young suggested as occurring “intermittently, partially, or potentially” (p. 10). Specific areas identified in the data in which the participants could widen their use of inclusion represented their efforts to include students in deliberations, decision-making opportunities of the classroom, as well as to improve on their efforts to incorporate multiple perspectives in more inclusive ways. These occasions to deepen inclusion will be explored in the sections that follow.

Discussion and Deliberation

Young (2000a) described the process of deliberation as an “open discussion and

the exchange of views leading to agreed-upon policies” (p. 22). The emphasis in democratic inclusion is not only grounded in the process of deliberation, but is centered on the notion that through deliberation, citizens can make decisions and bring conflict and difference into the public to be worked through. Young suggested that topics of deliberation include contested problems that evolve out of living and working together. “A useful way to conceive of democracy is as a process in which a large collective discusses problems...that they face together, and try to arrive peaceably at solutions in whose implementation everyone will co-operate” (p. 28).

In the context of education, this aim to address issues and problems with a goal toward problem solving is reflected in various discussion strategies that teachers incorporate in the living and learning of the classroom. As an advocate of discussions, Hess (2009) suggested that discussions in democratic classrooms are a way to engage students in the skills and experiences necessary for public life. Additionally, discussions are central to democratic inclusive classrooms because they serve as a catalyst to involve students in the decision-making that occurs in the classroom.

Discussions take many forms and can occur as formal, planned learning activities or take place spontaneously as issues arise. Central to discussions however occurring in the context of democratic inclusion is the level of student participation in the discussion. Young (2006) advocated for a level of engagement in which students play an active role in not only deliberating the topic of the discussion, but also in identifying and bringing forth topics and issues to be discussed and decided upon. As students bring discussion topics forward they present problems or questions that evolve naturally from learning and

working together and are therefore authentic and apply to the “real-life” happenings of the classroom. Furthermore, central to student engagement is the notion that all students in the classroom are participating fully and authentically in the discussions.

Overview of Participants Practices

All three participants incorporated discussions as a way to gather student opinion on various issues. These teacher-directed conversations typically happened in the form of whole class discussions in which the teacher facilitated the discussion in a question and answer format. Blythe facilitated class discussions on various topics in the curriculum and used them as a way to access student background knowledge and assess student understanding. Sydnee incorporated discussions into her teaching in the form of class meetings in which she and her students examined various classroom issues such as rules, norms, and procedures, as well as evaluating their progress on class goals. Sydnee conducted these in a way that lead to exploration of the topic and resulted in a class vote. Tom used discussions as a way to engage students in decision-making as well as to explore issues such as bullying in which he wanted to expand student’s thinking and experience on various issues. To illustrate how discussions occurred in the participant’s classrooms, I turn to an example from Tom’s teaching.

This discussion occurred at the end of a unit on Ancient Greece in which the students had been given the assignment to create a culminating project of their learning. Prior to starting the unit, the students were given a list of 50 plus culminating projects to choose from, and were also given the option to work on the project individually or as a group. For several weeks, the students participated in research and in-class learning

activities to extend their knowledge of the Ancient Greek culture and were approaching the end of the unit. Tom recognized that with so many projects, grading was going to be a difficult endeavor. He also recognized that creating an assessment rubric with his class was an ideal opportunity to include all the perspectives of the classroom in a decision that directly affected the students. So he presented the challenge to his students in the form of a class discussion.

In engaging his students in the process, Tom realized that student opinion would be as diverse as the unique individuals in his class. In an effort to involve all of his students, Tom facilitated the discussion by moving between small group and whole group discussions. He gathered student input as a whole group, and then had students discuss options in small groups. As he captured the student's ideas on the board, he asked clarifying questions to further understand what students were suggesting, as well as to get a sense of the value students placed on various ideas. He then brought everyone back to the whole group to deliberate, vote, and come to a consensus on the grading criteria. In the course of one discussion, taking place over 45 minutes, he moved between large and small groups four or five times. At the end of the discussion the students had established three broad categories with specific criteria in each. In spite of the potential variations in the projects, the grading rubric reflected enough detail so that student effort, quality of work, and learning could be assessed. Although Tom conducted this discussion in a very effective way in which students were engaged in curricular decision-making, there are several places in this example in which his democratic inclusive efforts can be improved upon.

Recommendations

Using a lens of democratic inclusion, there are several recommendations in terms of how the participants' practices can be improved upon in their efforts to more fully incorporate democratic inclusion in their use of discussions. These include preparing students to participate in discussions, aligning discussion purpose and strategy, and by engaging their students in controversial discussions. These recommendations will be explored in the sections that follow.

Prepare students with knowledge and skills to engage in discussions. It is important to recognize that democratic inclusive deliberations does not just happen automatically, but are the result of teacher's explicit teaching and modeling efforts to engage their students in various discussion strategies. Teachers that successfully incorporate inclusive discussions prepare their students prior to the discussion with background topic information, potential deliberation options, and resources that incorporate multiple perspectives. In this way, they ensure that everyone comes to the discussion prepared to engage. Parker (2008) suggested that in their effort to prepare students to engage, teachers create a "Ticket to Participate." Student's ticket to participate is completing assigned readings and experiences that prepare students to engage in the discussion with common background.

Additionally, teachers committed to principles of inclusion, bring in multiple and marginalized perspectives by incorporating resources based on diverse points of view, primary source documents, and narratives that represent historically silenced perspectives. In this way discussions are aligned with the aims of inclusion by creating

new ways of exploring issues from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, when teachers utilize these kinds of perspectives, the discussions that result encourage student to transform their thinking, see issues from multiple perspectives, and bring in the voices of historically silenced individuals and groups. Finally, this recommendation suggests that teachers explicitly teach, model, and reinforce democratic skills that are often the focus of deliberative discussions. Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) identified democratic skills as

critical inquiry, knowing how to ask good questions and what kinds of questions need to be asked, knowing how to evaluate the legitimacy and accuracy of an argument and the data that accompany it, to view issues from a variety of perspectives, evaluate the implications of a given text, read between the lines, recognize and understand the unstated, the omitted, the subtext. (p. 36)

As teachers engage students in thoughtful, well-prepared discussions, students not only engage in the deliberation of various issues, but they also acquire the skills and experiences advocated for by democratic educators.

Create opportunities for student-initiated discussions. The discussion example from Tom's class and all of the discussions I observed from the other participants classes were all teacher initiated. In this way, the teachers brought up the issues, presented various viewpoints, and gathered student opinions. All three participants used discussions as a way to gather student opinion on various issues, but failed to create a forum in which students could bring up their own issues. Both Blythe and Sydnee used a whole class discussion where they as the teacher stood in front of the class and asked questions and captured student's responses. These were conducted in a way that lead to an exploration of a topic and resulted in a class vote. Similarly, Tom conducted discussions in a way in

which he introduced the discussion topic, gathered student opinion, and summarized the results. When I asked the participants about student initiated discussions, Blythe referred to examples in which the students brought issues to her attention that she would in turn put on the class meeting agenda. Sydnee suggested that she initiated discussion topics for and on behalf of students because she felt like in doing so, the topic gained credibility. The tenants of democratic inclusion would suggest that the participants needed to establish routines and a consistent forum in which students could bring up issues, and represent their thinking in front of an audience of their peers. In this way, not only do the students play an active role in deliberating the topic but accomplish democratic aims by bringing forth topics and issues to be discussed (Young, 2006).

Align discussion purpose, topic, and strategy. In the example from Tom's classroom illustrated above and in all three participant's classrooms, discussions were implemented using a traditional question and answer format in which the teacher asked the questions, and the students provided opinion-based answers. Other forms of discussion such as Socratic seminars, debate, deliberations, and talking circles were not referenced or used (Hess, 2009; Triplet & Hunter, 2005). Educational theorists focused on improving discussion techniques suggest that in order for discussions to be effective and inclusive, the discussion strategy should first be aligned with the discussion purpose and topic. For instance, if students are exploring various perspectives of a topic, a Socratic seminar with its purpose to enlarge thinking would be an appropriate strategy. If the purpose is to make sure that every student participates, a talking circle strategy would further that goal. Additionally, if the purpose of the discussion is to make a decision from

various choices and options, then engaging students in a deliberation would accomplish that purpose.

Additionally, there are several discussion strategies that promote the incorporation of multiple perspectives through their procedural norms. The National School Reform Faculty proposed several discussion strategies that involve all students, that are based on both large and small groups, and that accomplish several different learning objectives. For example, the strategy called “Save the last word for me” created by Patricia Averette, is organized around the purpose to expand thinking and engage students in examining, reflecting, and discussing a common text. The protocols and norms of this strategy encourage students to build upon each other’s ideas in a way that fosters reflection, critical thinking, and inclusion of ideas. Using curriculum guides as directives, teachers can choose an appropriate discussion strategy based on their learning objective, and engage students effectively and inclusively in discussions about various topics.

Engage in controversial issues. A third recommended area of improvement in the participant’s use of discussions is extending the kinds of topics that were discussed. Young advocates for deliberations and discussions based on major social problems that teach young people to critically analyze issues and events that problematize dominant interpretations, suggesting that the topic of democratic inclusive discussions should be contested problems that evolve out of living and working together. Teachers committed to democratic inclusion reflect on the kinds of controversial issues their students can engage in and invite their students to initiate discussions based on the kinds of issues that are important to them. Both Blythe and Sydnee discussed topics with their students that

reflected the procedures, rules, and norms of the classroom. Sydnee extended the topic to include *school* policies, rules, and norms but none of the participants engaged the students in critical or controversial issues that extended beyond the classroom.

Furthermore, the participants did not reveal any inclination to engage in controversial issue discussions in spite of adopted curriculums creating a space for them. Teacher's hesitancy to engage in controversial issues is directly aligned with what Smith and Barr (2008) described, suggesting that teachers would "circumvent potentially controversial issue to do with intergroup relationships, particularly where issues of identity were concerned, and ignore or very subtly steer conversations back to 'safe ground'" (p. 412).

The participants of this study did not make references to controversial issues discussions. The closest thing to a controversial issue discussion I could identify was a discussion Tom had with his class on the issue of bullying in which he organized his class into teams to discuss what bullying looked like at their school and to research the potential problems and pitfalls.

When I followed up with the participants about this, they expressed the common concerns such as "what do I do if they bring up a controversial issue or issue that I am not comfortable addressing?" or "What if I get in trouble with my principal or from parents of my students?" These fears suggest that not only do teachers need administrative support when engaging in controversial discussions, but also that they further need training on navigating the potentially dangerous terrain of controversy. When working with my pre-service teachers, I help them navigate their fears by introducing them to various resources that provide multiple perspectives on various issues, such as pro-

con.org in which they and their students can gain background knowledge in the various current and controversial issues. I also suggest that my students take advantage of administrative and parent support by engaging them in the research of controversial issues. Rather than jumping into the discussion alone, I suggest that teachers foreground the issue by communicating to parents, and that they utilize parent volunteers in facilitating student's inquiry into the issue. Additionally whenever possible I encourage teachers to assign students to interview their parents (and other potentially contesting individuals) as part of gathering data about opinions, and often taken for granted assumptions. In this way, controversial issues can be explored with many perspectives and in ways that are meaningful for students and in a way that potentially opens up a space to explore and deconstruct controversial issues of importance with the school and local community.

Decision-Making

In the context of education, a democratic inclusive classroom is established as teachers and students interact with each other and with the curriculum in ways that include all perspectives and voices in the decision-making of the classroom. Teachers of democratic inclusive classrooms view decision-making as an ideal avenue for students to express opinions, to include multiple perspectives and identities, and to incorporate democratic practices into their classroom community (Benhabib, 2002; Gutmann, 1987; Young, 2006). Integral to democratic inclusive classrooms are decision-making opportunities that involve all stakeholders, including students, in deliberating both curriculum and classroom decisions.

Students are engaged in curriculum decisions when they deliberate what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is evaluated. Students participate in classroom decisions as opportunities arise from living and learning together that allow students to deliberate problems and their potential solutions. Closely connected with teacher's use of deliberations and discussions, all three participants incorporated curriculum and classroom decision-making in a way that gave students a context in which to apply democratic skills and processes and participate in inclusive acts. The participants in this study established democratic inclusive classrooms by engaging their students in decision-making opportunities around curriculum and classroom issues. Blythe involved their students in curriculum decisions by involving her students in the planning and teaching of daily devotionals. Together as a class, they then defined what devotionals would look like and the students planned and taught the devotionals each day. Blythe described that every devotional was unique and reflected the personality of the student in charge. Turning devotionals over to her students was a way to involve them in the decision-making of the classroom and resulted in her students incorporating their situated knowledge (Haraway, 1991), interests, and abilities. Sydnee incorporated decision-making as problems evolved out of learning together and in the form of class meetings. These decisions were based on issues that reflected the happenings of the classroom. The issues were authentic and inclusive because they were based on the interests, needs, and problems as perceived by those who were directly experiencing them. Tom engaged his students in all aspects of curriculum decision-making by allowing his students to direct what was taught, how it was taught, and how it was evaluated based on student needs and interests. When the

expectations of math instruction changed mid-year, Tom took the issue to his students and asked them how they wanted to be taught math. The students discussed several options, as well as what they felt would help them be most successful and suggested a math program that explicitly taught them math skills with an inquiry based application. Furthermore, Tom is the only participant that involved his students in assessment decisions. To illustrate how decision-making occurred in one of the participant's classrooms, I turn to two examples from Sydnee's teaching.

In the early spring, Sydnee and her students were trying to make a decision on how they wanted to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday. The class discussed several ideas and decided on a read-a-thon. They continued their discussion by deciding what activities would be allowed and not allowed during the read-a-thon. Sydnee began the conversation by expressing her concerns and then invited her students to deliberate about what would work for them, while at the same time alleviating her concerns.

Here is what I am worried about. I am worried that if you come in your pajamas, then you won't focus during science and math in the morning. I am worried that if you bring blankets and pillows, then in the afternoon you are just going to want to build forts on your desks with them and you aren't actually going to be reading. Tell me what you guys think. (Sydnee, Observation, March 1, 2012)

The students discussed several options and finally came up with a decision that they would only bring what they could personally handle. She validated their decision by reaffirming her trust in them and their ability to be responsible for their own behavior during the activity.

A second example from Sydnee's class occurred when she and her students discussed and deliberated several different desk arrangements. A student in her class had

been hinting that it was time to change seats, and a different student even drafted up a desk arrangement that he thought would be better. Sydnee brought up the issue to the class, several students suggested various desk arrangements, and then the class voted.

First we voted to get the top picks, and then we voted again between the top two. The vote was one student different (10-11) so I told the non-voters (kids who didn't have a strong opinion either way) to vote so that we could have a clear winner. We ended up with a 14-10 majority, so that arrangement "won." (Sydnee, Interview, Sept. 29, 2011)

Through these examples, and many more throughout the year, Sydnee demonstrated her commitment to democratic inclusion by involving her students in various decision-making opportunities.

Recommendations

Although occurring in Sydnee's class, these examples of student decision-making reflect how all three participants engage their students in their individual classrooms. These examples suggest several opportunities for teachers to improve student decision-making by engaging students frequently and consistently, extending decision-making beyond the classroom, and striving for inclusive outcomes.

Engage students frequently and consistently in student initiated decision-making. One way to push inclusion deeper is to involve students in both curriculum and classroom decisions frequently, and consistently throughout the school year. Most of the decision-making opportunities for students reflected procedural, classroom management systems in which teacher and students would discuss class rules, class jobs, or other norms of interaction. Even with Tom and Blythe's efforts to include their students in curricular decisions, the opportunities were few. All three participants could expand their

incorporation of democratic inclusion by identifying more opportunities for students to engage in both curriculum and classroom decisions. Sydnee was very effective at establishing a routine around class meetings in which they occurred every week, on the same day, at the same time. After the first couple of meetings, the students knew what to expect before, during, and after the meeting and no longer needed to be guided on procedural norms. They knew that each class meeting would start with class business, would follow with a discussion of issues or problems that needed to be addressed, would then proceed into bucket filler time in which Sydnee would read the bucket fillers and would end with “class share” and a game that focused on their community building efforts.

The recommendation for all teachers is to establish a forum and procedure for students to engage in the decision-making efforts of the classroom. When they occur sporadically or unplanned, students are not prepared with the skills with which to participate in the deliberation. Furthermore, when decision-making opportunities are scarce or inconsistent, students do not gain a sense of what to expect, and are left feeling unsure. In this inconsistent environment it is difficult to establish a sense of routine and trust that must be realized if marginalized voices are going to participate. Additionally, as students gain more confidence in their decision-making abilities, teachers preparing students to active participation in democracy turn the facilitation of the deliberations over to students to run, stepping in only when necessary

Extend decision-making beyond the classroom. As students gain confidence in their decision-making ability, inclusion would suggest that students engage in decisions

that extend beyond the classroom which influence school, local community, and global community. Issues that arise out of their direct experiences in the classroom and school are a good starting place because it is important to engage students in deliberating issues that are meaningful to them. However, it is also important that students learn to identify with issues in the larger community and more importantly recognize how they can become a part of the solutions. For examples of school wide efforts to engage students in deliberations and decision-making that result in more inclusive and socially just schools and communities I recommend Apple and Beane's (2007a) *Democratic Schools: Lessons in Powerful Education*.

Additionally, there are multiple websites and resources that illustrate how students, even very young students, engage in deliberating local issues. The website *Kids Can Make a Difference* illustrates how elementary students in Maine took on the issue of hunger and poverty in their local community. Through their research and service learning efforts, they helped keep a local food bank open, wrote letters to politicians, organized fund raising events, and increased awareness for hunger in their community. In this way, these students had the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge they had experienced on a classroom level to extend to their local community. Not only did they acquire skills and experiences of democracy, but they also gained confidence, and a sense of ownership in the issues around them.

Strive for inclusive outcomes and not just voting. Whenever the participants engaged their students in decision-making efforts, the final result was always culminated in a vote. Even though voting is a democratic process, in the participant's classes, it was

also identified as an outcome. The participant's practices did not reveal any efforts to accomplish Young's other inclusive outcomes such as maximizing social knowledge, transforming thinking from self to others, correcting social biases, addressing social justice, and resulting in legitimacy. Instead, the participants of this study incorporated decision-making only as a forum for gathering student opinion and to engage in voting procedures.

The above example from Sydnee's classroom illustrates how the participants engaged students in decision-making with a voting outcome. As Sydnee and her students voted on various issues in the classroom, the process reflected students stating their preference on various issues, and voting on the outcome rather than exploring issues, deliberating proposals, and deciding what would be best for the most number of people. The concern with voting as both a process and outcome is that it reflects more of an aggregative model than a deliberative one and as such promotes self-interest without requiring students to interact with others whose preferences may differ. Young (2006) suggests that with this focus "citizens are never required to leave the realm of their own interest. There is no account for cooperation or coordination" (p. 20). Additionally, inherent in the act of voting is the notion that opinions are unchanging and do not require students to explore multiple perspectives, alternatives, or variations of preference.

Inherent in expanding teacher's practices beyond voting would be to explore other opportunities for decision-making in which many solutions or proposals are explored. As students engage in deliberations about various issues, one strategy that lends to inclusion is to have students "take a different stance" and deliberate from a perspective that is

different from their original viewpoint. Another way to accomplish Young's outcomes of decision-making is to include examining multiple issues from multiple perspectives, and encouraging students to work together to combine, collaborate, or extend their proposals to accommodate new ideas and ways of doing things.

Incorporating Multiple Perspectives

Young reminds us that in our attempts to involve all individuals in deliberative processes "democratic discussions and decision-making processes must take special measures to assure that the voices and perspectives of all social segments can have an effective voice in which they express their opinions and judgments from the specificity of their position and experience" (2004, p. 2). Young suggested that inclusion is about involving *all* individuals affected by a decision regardless of race, class, gender or other characteristics that have traditionally marginalized and excluded them from democratic deliberation processes. Democratic inclusion reflects the incorporation of multiple perspectives and is a process in which differentiated positionalities and situated knowledge attend to the particular situation of others and be willing to work out just solutions to their conflicts and collective problems.

An inclusive pedagogy moves beyond the dominant traditions of society and seeks to include multiple voices, perspectives and narratives in the classroom. Young (2000a) and others (e.g., Apple & Beane, 2007a; Gutmann, 1987) assert that democratic classrooms can become an ideal place to identify, recognize, and invite unique perspectives into classroom deliberations, and decision-making in authentic and meaningful ways. As such, educators whose work is informed by notions of democratic

inclusion advocate for and attempt to create learning environments in which typically excluded and silenced opinions and perspectives are included in the curriculum of schooling.

Overview of Participants Practices

In an effort to incorporate inclusion into their teaching practices, the participants in this study looked for opportunities in which to invite all of their students to participate in the learning of their classrooms. Both Blythe and Tom were constantly evaluating who was participating and who might need some formal encouragement and intervention from them as the teacher to create opportunities for participation. Blythe used a roaming microphone so that all of her students could be heard. Throughout discussions, Tom engaged his students in questions such as “Have you had a chance to share your thoughts and opinions? Do you feel like you have had a voice in this?” Sydnee incorporated all perspectives into classroom deliberations by fore fronting and involving students who are typically excluded. Both Sydnee and Tom work to include all students’ perspectives by teaching their students important listening and communication skills so that students can respond respectfully to each other. To illustrate how the participants incorporated multiple perspectives in the classroom, I turn to two examples from Blythe’s teaching.

When thinking about how multiple perspectives could be included in her teaching efforts Blythe looked for opportunities in the curriculum to bring in various, diverse points of view. As Blythe and her students were learning about the Mormon pioneers and their trek to Utah, Blythe saw an opportunity to incorporate multiple perspectives as they examined the events and people associated with western migration. Blythe made sure that

she incorporated primary source documents that portrayed the perspectives of not only the pioneers, but also the perspectives of the American Indians who inhabited the Utah valley before the pioneers arrived. In this way, she brought in marginalized perspectives that are normally not included in the social studies curriculum.

A second example of how Blythe incorporated multiple perspectives was reflected in her use of timelines. During my first observation of her classroom, Blythe directed me to a timeline that she had created that spanned an entire wall of her classroom. She was excited about the opportunity to bring in multiple perspectives of history as they studied the state history curriculum. She further suggested that she would use the timeline to help students locate themselves in history and time. As I looked closely at the timeline, I recognized important people, places, and events that reflected the history of the state, and specifically the religious history of her school community.

Recommendation

When analyzing the above examples as well as those of the other participants, there are opportunities to improve practice by expanding what it means to incorporate multiple perspectives. Using democratic inclusion as a lens provides an ideal framework to work towards in expanding teacher practices. When thinking about how multiple perspectives could be pushed deeper both in terms of classroom discussions and in an exploration of the curriculum. There were several examples from the participant's classrooms in which there were opportunities to push inclusion deeper such as including multiple marginalized perspectives, deconstructing and contextualizing positionality, and incorporating an affirmative action pedagogy.

Include multiple and marginalized perspectives. At first glance, Blythe's use of timelines looks like an ideal inclusive opportunity to bring in multiple perspectives to the curriculum. However, when the timeline and how it was used in her classroom was examined with an inclusive lens it revealed that the only histories included in the timeline were those of dominant individuals and groups. In spite of the fourth grade curriculum covering historical movements such as the western migration, and exploring the cultural contributions from various community members, Blythe made no reference on her timeline to immigrants or to marginalized groups. In examining those who have historically been excluded from democratic processes, Benhabib (2002) reminded us that the voices of women, children, and minorities have often been silenced and must be considered in inclusive efforts. This would suggest that a way to make her timelines more inclusive would be to first include the perspectives and experiences of marginalized people throughout history. A second way to make her timelines more inclusive it to incorporate perspectives and events from her student's lives as well, suggesting that they have important contribution to make as they situate themselves in the larger story of history.

In Blythe's timeline and in the teaching practices of all the participants there was no reference to the histories of women, children, or minority people. The implications of the teachers use of multiple perspectives in their teaching practices suggests that teachers themselves need to be made aware of how multiple and marginalized perspectives have historically been excluded from the curriculum and learning experiences of the classroom. Furthermore, in adopting a pedagogy as advocated by Maher and Tetrault

(2001), teachers can create opportunities to not only examine how various individuals and groups have been excluded in history, but can also engage students in deconstructing how their own privilege dominates and excludes. Additionally, in engaging teachers in the complex and often controversial acts of deconstructing privilege and perspective, teachers need to be given resources to use with students that explore various events from the perspective of marginalized individuals and groups.

In encouraging incorporation of multiple perspectives, Young cautions teachers to make sure that when examining multiple points of view, it is important to recognize the appeal to include multiple perspectives, and not just two sides of an issue. Young referred to this as contextualizing perspectives. “By including multiple perspectives and not just simply two that might be in direct contention over an issue, we take a giant step towards enlarging thought” (Young, 2004, p. 10). This represents a way that Blythe and the other participants can extend their practice of inclusion. In the example described above, Blythe presented two perspectives of the Mormon migration. In improving her practice, Blythe should include multiple perspectives from various groups. Furthermore, with the groups represented, differing opinions could be shared that demonstrate notions of positionality and how our situated knowledge is expressed in various situations.

Deconstruct and contextualize positionality. In addition to recognizing and including marginalized individuals and groups, Young and others (e.g., Boler, 2004; Maher & Tetrault, 2001; Smith & Barr, 2008) suggested that in pushing democracy deeper, citizens involved in democratic deliberations should also deconstruct and contextualize the power relations that exist because of positionality. Maher and Tetrault

suggested that in deconstructing democratic possibilities, it is about more than just including multiple positionalities, rather individuals must be invited to contextualize and deconstruct the power relations that exist because of positionality and culturally situated ways of knowing. Democratic inclusion reflects the incorporation of multiple perspectives and is a process in which differentiated positionalities and situated knowledge attend to the particular situation of others and be willing to work out just solutions to their conflicts and collective problems from across their situated positions.

The practices of the teachers in this study revealed no references to positionality when attempting to incorporate multiple perspectives. Furthermore there was no evidence that the teacher participants even considered notions of positionality when inviting students to participate. A recommendation therefore is that teachers need to explore positionality in terms of themselves and their students not only when inviting students to participate, but also in their exploration of how individuals and groups have been historically excluded because of positionality. This recommendation has significant implications for teacher educators who are preparing pre-service teachers to engage in democratic inclusive practices. We must use our courses to explore notions of positionality and how it relates to our role as teachers, and further examine how it excludes and includes individuals and groups from participating in the learning activities of the classroom.

Incorporate an affirmative action pedagogy. Boler (2004) and Young (2006) advocated that a democratic inclusive classroom often reflects teachers taking affirmative steps in their commitment to incorporate multiple perspectives by silencing the majority

to bring voice to the silenced minority. The data did not reveal either Blythe or Tom engaging in an affirmative action pedagogy, but there was one example from Sydnee's class that reflected this inclusive opportunity.

One example of Sydnee's efforts to incorporate an affirmative action pedagogy and to include a marginalized perspective of the classroom was reflected in a discussion in which the students were deciding on changing their attention signals. One student raised his hand and suggested that they change the way they count down from English to Portuguese because they had been learning Portuguese together as a class. Sydnee worked his response into the discussion and turned the outcome to support his idea. Sydnee later reflected on why his suggestion was particularly important.

I felt especially good about this suggestion because it came from a student I am more worried about emotionally. I think it was good for him to see his suggestion valued and incorporated. I was predisposed to accept his suggestion simply because it came from him, and I wanted him to see that his opinion was valued. (Sydnee, Interview, March 1, 2012)

In this way, Sydnee took affirmative steps to include the suggestion of a student that typically acted up and reacted violently in class. Although she did not label her behavior as affirmative action pedagogy, or even refer to Boler's work, Sydnee's actions signaled an attempt to consciously bring his opinion to forefront.

The implications of the participant's use of multiple perspectives in their teaching practices suggest that teachers themselves need to be made aware of how marginalized perspectives have historically been excluded from the curriculum and learning experiences of the classroom. Furthermore, in adopting a pedagogy as advocated by Maher and Tetrault (2002), teachers can have experiences not only in examining how

various individuals and groups have been excluded in learning, but can also engage in deconstructing how their own privilege dominates and excludes. Additionally, in engaging teachers in the complex and often controversial acts of deconstructing privilege and perspective, teachers need to be given resources to use with students that explore various events from the perspective of marginalized individuals and groups. Young (2006) and Benhabib (2002) would suggest that resources need to reflect in particular the experiences of women and children. Finally, as with all opportunities to push democracy deeper, the participants need to be encouraged in their efforts and have professional spaces in which they can explore their attempts to educate for democracy. For example, throughout the research process, as the participants reflected on their own practice, they were then able to engage in ways to improve their practice, they were more able to incorporate new ideas, and found new ways to incorporate old ideas. As is often the case between theory and practice, as the participants were able to make connections between theory and practice, their practice improved, suggesting that administrators and teacher educators have a role in supporting and engaging teachers in the theory of democratic inclusion.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of three elementary teachers that incorporate aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice. Aligned with the literature on deliberative democratic inclusion, this dissertation represents an initial effort to fill a gap in the research by applying the theory behind deliberative inclusion (Young, 2000a) to the practice of teachers in elementary classrooms. As the data were analyzed with a democratic lens, it revealed teachers

creating caring classrooms as aligned with the literature. The data also suggested many opportunities in which the participant's incorporation of democratic inclusion could be expanded upon to push their practices deeper, or widen their use of democracy. In addition to examining the participants practices for alignment with the literature, there were several important findings that are not within the scope of this study to be explored thoroughly, but that ought to be explored in future research on democratic inclusive teachers.

Additional Findings

First, as indicated in Chapter IV, the participants of this study described themselves using notions of positionality. For all them, this was their first exposure to the notion of positionality and as such they were unfamiliar with many of the contextual and historically uses of positionality to exclude or privilege various individuals and groups. An important finding that emerged from their descriptions of themselves was the common characteristic that all three participants had experienced some form of exclusion due to religion, race, or language. Although not inherent in the purposes of this study, a future study should look at this notion of teacher's dedication to inclusion as stemming from their own personal experiences with exclusion.

Second, as reflected in the initial research questions of this study, the notion of limiting and supporting factors was to be explored with the teacher participants. Although addressed in both electronic posts and follow up interviews, this question did not reveal any consistency or revealed themes among the participants. Each of the participants

experienced limiting and supporting factors within the culture of their school and classroom and in very contextual ways. A future study should investigate how the factors of teacher, students, and school culture influence teacher's abilities to incorporate democratic inclusive education. Because it was proposed as an important theme for this study, the descriptive findings and supporting literature comprise the Appendix.

Another theme that emerged from the participant's data was the notion that student readiness affected their abilities to incorporate democratic inclusive practices. Unanticipated as a theme, all three participants referred to student readiness as indicated by developmental factors such as age, grade level, as well as readiness in terms of exposure to notions of democratic inclusion with prior and subsequent teachers. This was an important factor because the participants suggested that even if the teachers were committed, motivated, and trained on how to incorporate democratic inclusion, if there students were not ready to engage in the practices, then they would be limited. When I talk to my own pre-service students about notions of democratic inclusion, they consistently ask me if this can be practiced with younger children. I try to provide examples from my own teaching that suggest that it can, but also suggest to my students that it happens on a continuum both in terms of developmental levels and readiness of students. A potential study in the area of democratic inclusion would be to replicate this same study but for early childhood educators. As part of the study, teachers trained in early childhood practices could help identify the democratic inclusive opportunities, as well as see how to envision these practices in the classrooms with very young children.

Finally, an important recommendation that resulted from all of the teacher's

practices was the need for more training and exposure to democratic inclusive theories and practices. Pre-service teachers need to be educated on principles of inclusion, but need to do so in classrooms in which those principles are modeled so that they can experience them first hand. Furthermore, as pre-service teacher candidates experience aspects of inclusion in their teacher education training, they will gain a sense of empowerment that has the potential to translate into their own classrooms. Additionally, none of the participants of this study revealed any prior training or experience in discussion strategies, deconstructing positionalities, or affirmative action pedagogy. This suggests that teacher educators dedicated to notions of democratic inclusion must explicitly teach and model these practices for their students, as well as provide them with opportunities to facilitate democratic inclusive spaces with their future students.

Conclusion

Educating for democracy has long been established as a central purpose for schooling in America and continues to be included in the ongoing discourses on educational policy and programs. While educating for democracy has been defined in many ways, it is commonly agreed that it is the knowledge, skills, and experiences that members of a democracy should possess in order to be contributing citizens of a global society. Nested within the context of democratic education, inclusion as advocated by Iris Marion Young (2000a, 2004, 2006) provided the framework for this study. Young (2000a) suggested that inclusive democracy enables the participation and voice for all those affected by problems and their proposed solutions and describes the image of

inclusion is that of a “heterogeneous public engaged in transforming institutions to make them more effective in solving shared problems justly” (p. 12). Within the context of education, democratic inclusive education is established for the purpose of creating learning environments in which each student is valued and recognized as part of the classroom community and in which multiple perspectives are included in the community building and decision-making efforts of the classroom.

This study explored the perceptions and experiences of three elementary teachers that incorporated aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice. Aligned with the literature on deliberative democratic inclusion, this dissertation represents an initial effort to fill a gap in the research by applying the theory behind democratic inclusion to the practices of teachers in elementary classrooms. In analyzing the data, several important themes emerged as practices aligned with the literature and as opportunities for teachers to expand their practices to become more inclusive.

All three participants successfully established caring classroom communities in their efforts to teach and model democratic process and content, celebrate student individuality and model inclusive practices with their students. A potential reason for the alignment in this area was revealed in the data as all three participants were exposed to principles of caring communities in their teacher education programs. Additionally, areas for improving their practice reflected the ways in which the teacher participants incorporated multiple perspectives in their deliberation and decision-making efforts. This finding has implications both for future research and for teacher educators that are engaged in preparing pre-service teachers.

Finally, as the framework of democratic inclusion is applied to the context of elementary classrooms and schools, future research possibilities abound. As emerging from the limitations and scope of this study, future research is needed in exploring the notion of teacher's dedication to inclusion as stemming from their own personal experiences with exclusion, exploring the limiting and supporting factors that teachers experience in their attempts to educate for democracy, exploring notions of student readiness as a limiting and supporting factor, and examining the impact of teacher education programs that engage pre-service teachers in the principles and practices of democratic inclusion.

As Young (2000a) suggested, democratic inclusion in schools and classrooms does not just happen naturally, but is a direct result of teacher's deliberate attempts to incorporate the multiple perspectives of students in the community building and decision-making efforts of the classroom. As a study that examines teachers attempts to incorporate democratic inclusion into their learning environments, this study also celebrates and applauds the efforts of the teacher participants to engage in the complex work of inclusion as they prepare students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to engage in deliberative problem solving in making classrooms, schools, and society more just.

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APPENDIX

LIMITING AND SUPPORTING FACTORS

Central to the purpose of this study, the participants were asked questions both in their electronic posts as well as in their individual interviews that addressed how they felt limited and supported in their efforts at democratic inclusion. A limiting factor is one that is described as creating a boundary, hindrance, obstruction, or obstacle to the participant's attempts to educate for democratic inclusion. Whereas a supporting factor empowers, sanctions, and endorses the teacher's practices. It is important to note that as the participants described how they felt limited and supported, they identified several factors that were then categorized as limiting, supporting, or both depending on how it was referred to within the context of the participant's experiences.

There were several themes that emerged from the data as the participants discussed ways in which they felt limited and supported. As an initial list of words, I took notes of the various factors identified by the participants. The factors were then organized and linked together as themes based on similar uses and contexts. These themes were then organized into over-arching categories of teacher, student, school, and mandate. The themes of teacher and student reflect factors within the classroom while school and mandate reflect factors that occur outside of the classroom. Descriptive phrases and words associated with each factor were then identified in an effort to establish context for each factor. Frequency totals were then categorized for each participant individually, and then compared among the participants. The sections that follow provide descriptions and illustrations of each factor and are organized by theme rather than participant to create a comprehensive overview of the issues and context in which the participants of this study

are incorporating democratic inclusive principles. Table A1 represents the factors of teacher and student as occurring within the classroom environment

As emerging themes from the data, the factor of teacher and student are reflected in the context of the classroom. Rather than occurring externally, these factors reflect the readiness and interactions of both teacher and students and are evolving and contextual. In this sense, notions of commitment and readiness are explored. All three participants referred to teacher and student factors as being central and fundamental to their attempts at incorporating democratic inclusion into their teaching.

Teacher

The teacher participants of this study are all full time elementary school teachers. Blythe had 2 years of teaching experience, both in fourth grade, and is in her first year teaching at a religious private school. Sydnee had 2 years of teaching experience, both at

Table A1

Classroom Factors

Factor	Subfactor	Description
Teacher	Commitment	Personal commitment, motivation, disposition, and inclination to incorporate democratic inclusion.
	Readiness	Exposure and training Experience as a teacher Directly tied to student readiness
Student	Experience	Development age/grade level Experience in previous grade or setting
	Readiness	Confidence in ability Directly tied to teacher readiness and elements of trust between teacher and students.

the same school. She previously taught fifth grade and was currently teaching fourth grade. Tom had 6 years of teaching experience both in fifth and sixth grades. Currently he was teaching sixth grade, and was in his first year at a new school. As the participants refer to the factor of teacher as being a limiting and supporting factor, they are referring to themselves and the commitment, experience, and readiness they bring with them to the teaching profession.

Teacher Commitment

This factor refers to the participant's personal commitment, motivation and inclination to incorporate democratic inclusive practices into their teaching environments. Teacher commitment reflects an active and conscious decision to incorporate democratic inclusive practices and often requires rejecting other practices that are not aligned with principles of inclusion. All three participants referred to teacher commitment as a central and fundamental factor in their practice and suggest that they as the teacher are the initiating source for their efforts. All three participants describe their commitment to democratic inclusive practices as stemming from their own desire and motivations to become teachers.

Identified as teachers with strong commitments to democratic inclusion, I wanted to understand where the participant's commitments came from and how they were established. All three of the participants referred to experiences from their own education and upbringing that made them open to the ideas and possibilities of democratic inclusion. Examples of being raised in families that valued participation, of being educated in classrooms that supported student decision-making, and examples of being

excluded in situations that increased their awareness of inclusion were all shared as important in developing their commitment and inclusion. These experiences previously explored in chapter four resulted in opening up reflective spaces of learning so that when the participants were formally introduced to the theories and practices of democratic inclusion, they were motivated and willing to explore what it means to be a teacher committed to such practices.

Teacher Readiness

This factor refers to the training, experience, and readiness the participants describe in their becoming teachers that incorporate democratic inclusive practices. All three participants graduated from accredited universities with formal teacher preparation and certification programs. Although the training programs did not have a strong emphasis on democratic inclusion, all three participants referred to experiences in their teacher preparation programs that helped them identify and gain a commitment to these practices. Both Blythe and Sydnee refer to taking a teacher preparation course in which they were directly taught the theories and practices of democratic education and experienced principles of democracy such as choice as part of the course. Blythe refers to a professor that shared examples of democratic inclusion from her own teaching in elementary schools.

The inspiration was given as examples were shared of children whom she had taught who had been given those opportunities to really choose to reach their potential. Rather than being in some sense limited by a scope and sequence, they were allowed to expand as little or as much as they liked. The idea of this really hit home with my personal belief of wise use of agency being the defining characteristic of good learners and eventually successful people.

Sydnee suggested that she would not be inclined to use democracy if it were not for what she learned in a similar teacher education course.

It is mostly a principle that I learned in that class. I liked it because I had never been given democracy in a class and it rang true to me and I felt that it was right. That is the only place where this concept was addressed. Not in any other class, any district training, or any faculty meeting. I think it would be really scary to incorporate democracy if you had never experienced or seen it because you wouldn't know how it was supposed to be or how you would get there.

Consistent with Blythe and Sydnee, Tom referred to his teacher education experiences as a source of his commitment and preparation. He remembered a mentor teacher that complimented and praised him for giving his students choices.

For me, that was the first time I ever consciously thought about giving choice to students. I made the conscious decision to think about choice. That was the trigger for me to become more democratic, because before then I was so worried about content and how to teach it.

Aside from this one experience, Tom could not identify or recall any other reference to democratic inclusion in his teacher preparation program. Although minimal, all three participants refer to experiences in their teacher training as being the starting point in which they began to think about and explore notions of democracy.

In reflecting on the teacher participants' experiences with democracy, there is a direct connection with what they experienced as students with how they then implemented democracy in their own classrooms. For instance, all three of the participants reflect being exposed to aspects of choice as an element of democracy in their teacher education courses. In turn all three participants give their students choices as part of their learning. On the other hand, none of the participants report having experiences in their training or coursework in which they were engaged in the inclusive

work of deconstructing democratic processes or in the problematizing of social inequalities as is reflected in the work of democratic inclusive educators such as Maher and Tetrault (1994). The participants refer to practices of democracy that reflected involving students in creating classroom rules, and in giving choices within the current structure of the classroom, but none of the participants advanced democracy to the level that Young (2000) would suggest is needed in order to be truly inclusive. This both reflects the method and context in which the participants were exposed to principles of democracy and has implications for teacher education programs committed to principles of democratic inclusion.

In addition to being exposed to principles of democratic inclusion in their teacher education programs, the participants of this study also refer to readiness as being an extension of their level of experience as certified teachers as well as their confidence in their teaching environment. The research conducted by Berliner (1986) and Berry (2006) suggested that novice or beginning teachers are not ready to incorporate democratic principles because they are in “survival” mode in managing the complexities of teaching. According to the definitions established in this research (Berry, 2006; Steffy & Wolfe, 1997) both Blythe and Sydnee would be considered novice or apprentice teachers because they have less than five years teaching experience. However, neither Sydnee nor Blythe referred to readiness based on their years of experience. Rather they both expressed feelings of confidence and assurance in their readiness and suggested that once a teacher is committed to democratic inclusion, that years of experience is not a limiting factor. In contrast, Tom reflected on his first years of teaching as not feeling confident to

incorporate democratic principles.

Early on in my teaching career I was so worried about doing the right thing that my classroom was very much teacher driven and very little student driven. I functioned as more of a dictator than a facilitator for student learning.

In this sense two of the participants felt ready to incorporate democratic principles upon entering the profession. Furthermore, according to (Berry, 2006; Steffy & Wolfe, 1997), only Tom with his six years of teaching experience would be considered ready to engage in democratic inclusion. Berry (2006) suggested that Tom with his experience would be defined as a professional or expert teacher that is able to incorporate student needs and feedback into his teaching. Furthermore, because of his experience, Tom would be more able to incorporate innovative techniques that help all students learn. None of the participants refer to being unready or unwilling to incorporate democratic principles into their teaching. In fact, the participants of this study view their novice status as an attribute that allows them to incorporate democracy more than the teachers with extensive experience.

All three participants referred to the more experienced teachers as unwilling to incorporate democratic principles. Blythe shared an example of this unwillingness from a recent faculty meeting in which a guest speaker came to teach the faculty about ways to integrate problem solving into the classroom.

It was wonderful. It wasn't until I left that I felt the distinct disapproval from other members of the faculty who assumed that they knew how to teach better than he did. There is a fear to try something new with the erroneous thought that it would be mayhem and chaos.

Sydnee referred to experienced teachers as the "dinosaur teachers" at her school that are afraid to try new things and suggested that perhaps newer teachers with less experience

are more inclined to attempt to incorporate democratic inclusion.

It could be that the more experienced teachers have had more issues with what the district tells them to do, or feel limited in what they can do. I have teachers around me that feel that way because they have been through more years and more policy changes. If democracy isn't something they are already doing and they have been teaching for a lot of years, I think they would be skeptical and they would probably say 'do what works for you but I am going to keep doing things the way I have already done them.' Because they already have their method and they don't change, I think it would be very uncomfortable for the ones who have had a longer career.

Tom also expressed a similar sentiment about experienced teachers not willing to try new things when he reflected that, "too many of the teachers have been here for a while. They say 'It is not going to work; it didn't work for us so it can't work now.'" This sentiment is interesting because according to Berliner (1986) the teachers with more experience, or what he calls the expert teachers are in a much better position developmentally to incorporate democratic inclusion. According to Berliner expert teachers, in addition to having a solid knowledge of subject matter, are defined by their ability to use classroom organization and routine to promote learning. They are able to incorporate a wide range of instructional options and resources and make decisions on when and how to use them. Experts utilize economy of effort by automating procedures and logistics. Experts have extraordinarily fast and accurate pattern recognition building upon and initiating schema about their student's background, knowledge, behavior and experience as well as the kind of activities and time needed to engage students in various learning activities. Contrary to what the literature would suggest, all three of the participants view their inexperience as a positive factor that allows them to try new things and be more open to new ideas. In this way lack of experience is considered a supporting

factor.

Another way the participants reflect readiness is in reference to moments in their teaching when they feel confident in their ability to incorporate democratic inclusive practices into their teaching. It is important to note that all three participants view democratic inclusion as occurring on a continuum of opportunity and believe that their attempts to educate for democratic inclusion are contextual. Readiness does not refer to just one occasion at the beginning of the school year, but rather refers to significant moments to engage or engage more deeply in democratic inclusion throughout the year. The participants refer to significant moments in time that indicate that s/he felt ready to release more control to students or to transition into more complex principles of democratic inclusion. Sydnee referred to gauging her own readiness by the amount of trust she felt towards the students in directing their own learning or tackling more complex issues.

I don't think that last year I would have been comfortable taking on this huge service-learning project, and honestly it scares me a little bit. But I felt like I was comfortable enough with how my teaching was going and just with my experience that I felt like I could try this.

As Sydnee gained more confidence in her own abilities and in her relationship with her students, she felt like she could engage in more complex forms of democratic inclusion such as deliberations with her students about global issues and service learning opportunities, which, according to Young (2000a), began to reflect democratic inclusion by pushing democracy deeper. Tom describes this evolution as beginning with small things like letting his students choose the color of the pen to highlight reading passages and then gradually moving towards more complex decision-making. As the year

progresses, he incorporates aspects of democratic inclusion into his assessment efforts as he lets students create their own evaluation rubrics.

Just as the teacher's experience moments of readiness, so do students. Student readiness was a significant factor for all three participants. As students gain more experience with democratic inclusion and demonstrate their own ability to be responsible for their own learning, they move from being a limiting factor to a supporting factor. Student readiness is therefore seen as both a limiting and supporting factor depending on the context and situation.

Student

When the participants refer to students as a limiting or supporting factor, they are referring to student experience and readiness. The participants refer to student readiness in two ways. The first is in terms of developmental factors such as age, grade, and previous exposure to democratic inclusion. A second way student readiness is referred to by the participants is on a continuum of experience, as the year progresses, students are more able to reveal relationships of trust in their interactions and as they are able to take on more responsibility with their own learning.

Student Experience

Both Sydnee and Tom refer to student experience in terms of developmental characteristics. Because they have both had experience teaching other grades, they are able to compare students in terms of age and grade level. Sydnee teaches fourth grade and describes evaluating her student readiness by watching to see how much democracy is

appropriate for that age group. She often compares her current fourth grade students with her fifth grade students from the previous year as is reflected in her description of developing class rules.

This year I had the kids decide the rules. In retrospect, I think that my 4th graders weren't quite mature enough for this. They're still very much in the mindset that adults are authority figures that tell you what to do, so it is hard for them to take control when it is given to them. Few students participated actively in the process. I think with my 5th graders I was more willing to let them vote on more things and let them have more control. I am feeling out what my fourth graders can handle and I don't feel like they are ready for what I gave my 5th graders. Last year, my 5th graders came up with a constitution. In our constitution we had all three branches of government and we decided that for the judiciary branch instead of deciding the constitutionality of rules, they actually would mitigate social classes. Next year if I teach 4th grade, I'll probably just have the students decide the consequences. If I am moved to 5th or 6th grade, I would feel more comfortable letting them decide the rules, but I would structure the process differently.

Sydnee attributed some of this readiness to student lack of experience and exposure in suggesting that her students had not had much experience with democracy given to them in the third grade. She reflected that when she first began working with them, "it appeared that they were new to this idea."

Tom also expressed similar sentiments in describing his student's readiness. Every fall he invited his students to participate in making a class constitution that everyone agreed to. He has done this each year and has experienced consistent success, except with this particular group of students. He suggested that developmentally this year's students were not even able to stay on task and that despite his repeated attempts to involve them in decision-making, they simply did not have the exposure or experience to participate.

I realized that they are not there. So I pretty much said, here are the expectations, what do you think? And then I moved on to the next one because they could not

talk. It boils back down to they didn't know how to interact with each other at all. No wonder this group is the most challenging group I have ever had, it is because they have never been permitted to talk in a democratic way and to listen.

Furthermore, Tom recognized the difference in readiness as he moved from one school to another and suggested that the school culture has a direct connection to how students are prepared to engage in democratic inclusion. He suggests that at his new school, because of their affluence, the students did not have any experience with real issues that affect them as individuals or as a class and therefore had no exposure to authentic experiences with democracy. He hoped to bring his current students to a place by the end of the year that reflected where his previous students were at the beginning of the year.

Student Readiness

The participants also refer to student readiness as they describe elements of trust and community of the classroom. This readiness develops as the culture and community of the classroom develop and evolve together. This readiness reflects statements by the participants in which they felt like their students were able to handle more responsibilities and ownership in the decision-making as the school year progressed. Sydnee believed that part of her student readiness was due to students not feeling comfortable in their new environment. "They didn't understand how I worked and they didn't know how to deal with democracy yet." She has since learned that she has to immerse her students gradually in democracy.

Day one they are saying 'what? We get to decide our rules? I don't really understand.' Like they didn't really feel comfortable with it. Some of the kids felt like they could say stuff but other kids were like 'I don't really know you, I don't understand that you are giving me control right now.'

Sydnee compares her students at the beginning of the year to her students at the end of the year as being completely different. At the beginning they were not even able to decide class rules. As the year progressed, however she frequently and consistently engaged her students in decision-making and in directing their own learning. Tom also described a sense of readiness by sharing examples of his students from previous classes.

As students gained exposure and experience with democracy, they moved from being a limiting factor to a supporting factor as teachers were more able to implement democratic inclusive practices. As the students progressed throughout the year, the teacher's described their democratic inclusive moments as being full of energy, moving in the right direction with unity, and with students more engaged in principles of democracy. At the end of the year, Sydnee described her class in the following ways.

I tell them that this decision shows that I trust them based upon what they have told me they can do. I trust you that you can do it. We talk about trust, we talk about respect. Is my class perfect? No. But it feels better. It feels more comfortable than it did at the beginning of the year. It feels more united, more congealed. It is to a point where I feel good about it.

Student readiness in this study is referenced in terms of developmental levels of students as well as their previous exposure and experience with democratic inclusion. As teacher's willingness connects with student readiness, democratic inclusion begins to take shape in the classroom. All three participants reflected teacher and student readiness as the most important factors and that are central to their democratic inclusive efforts. However, the participants also suggested that there are other factors that are outside of the classroom that influence their abilities to incorporate democratic inclusion. These factors are described as school culture and district, state, and federal mandates.

School

Although teachers and students are nested in classrooms within their schools, the factor of school culture represents how the participants felt supported or limited by school administration, grade-level team, and parents. These factors are linked to the larger socio-cultural influences of the district, state, and federal education programs and occur outside of the classroom. The participants recognize that they as teachers have a certain amount of autonomy over what occurs in the classroom and therefore describe their own commitment and readiness as a central factor in their attempts to incorporate democratic inclusion. Outside of their personal efforts and their interactions with their students however are factors that greatly influence how teachers feel empowered and supported or limited and hindered in their efforts. The most important factor outside of the classroom are school factors beginning first with the leadership of the school. Table A2 represents the factors of school and mandate as occurring outside of the classroom environment.

Table A2

External Factors

Factor	Subfactor	Description
School	Administrative support	Professional learning communities, forum for teacher sharing, reward systems that reinforce democratic inclusion, autonomy for teachers
	Grade level team	Functional and dysfunctional teams, other teachers-attitude and willingness
	Parents	Involvement and volunteerism, communicated expectations
Mandate	Federal, state, and district mandates	Policies that focus on standardized testing rather than student learning, discrediting of teachers

Administrative Support

All three participants referenced administrative support as an important factor in their attempts to incorporate democratic inclusion. When supported, democratically inclusive schools are led by administrators that create authentic inclusive opportunities for teachers and students to participate in community building and decision-making processes of the school. Furthermore, and fundamental to a democratically inclusive school are teachers and students that are encouraged and allowed to direct and authentically participate in their own teaching and learning. In an ideal setting, administrative support translates into administrators providing and supporting professional learning communities by talking about democratic inclusion, establishing forums for teacher sharing about what is working and not working in their own classrooms, and in creating reward systems that reinforce democratic inclusion principles.

In his 6 years of teaching experience, Tom has taught at two different schools and been involved in several district level programs. In reflecting on his experiences, Tom describes his administrators in the following way.

I have had the opportunity to work with several different principals in a variety of capacities and I have not seen one principal support or acknowledge creating a democratic classroom. This lack of support transcends down to the teachers who will focus on what the principal wants.

The other participants reflected similar sentiments, and were not able to share any examples of their current administrators outwardly supporting their democratic inclusive efforts. Apple and Beane (2007b) suggested that in order for democratic inclusion efforts to be affective they must occur within the context of democratic schools in which administrators outwardly support and promote teacher's efforts. Although the participants

did not reflect any sentiments in which administrators were outwardly opposed to their efforts, they also were not able to identify any ways in which the administrators outwardly supported or promoted democratic inclusion in their schools. The participants were however, able to identify more subtle ways in which their administrators influenced their efforts.

Sydnee shared an example in which she felt like her efforts at democratic inclusion were supported by her principal. Sydnee and her class recently decided to participate in a service-learning project in which her students were going to raise money for a water purification charity in Africa. After making a plan with her students, Sydnee found out that the school was organizing a different school wide service project. She approached her principal to discuss options in moving forward.

Since we are doing a school wide humanitarian program, he kind of wanted us to adopt that as our class program. I had already given my students the choice and allowed them to vote on what we were going to do. Once I explained that to him, he recognized that I couldn't go back and change the decision so he decided to let us go forward with our plans. I feel like he backed me up and validated what I am doing and I appreciated that.

Sydnee suggested that this experience was the only time her efforts at democratic inclusion ever came in contact with her administration because usually her efforts reflected what she was doing in the classroom, and he gave her complete autonomy and latitude in that area.

Another way the participants describe administrative support is through procedures that reinforce or limit teacher's autonomy. Sydnee is the only participant that identified feeling trusted by her administrator and reflected a sense of autonomy.

Whereas, both Blythe and Tom shared examples in which they felt a lack of autonomy or

felt excluded in the decision-making processes of the school.

Blythe described feeling a lack of autonomy due to a school-wide policy that required all lesson plans to be approved by the principal prior to teaching. Tom reported similar frustrations in working with the administration at his school. He referred to an incident that occurred in which the parents of one of his students insisted that the sixth grade attend their daughters dance performance of the Nutcracker as a field trip. The sixth grade teachers discussed the idea and could not justify the time and expense because they could not make any curricular connections to the activity. They politely declined the invitation to attend. That same day, the principal came back to the team and insisted that they had to go to the performance suggesting that it was easier to force them to go than “fight the battle” with the parent. “This is not something worth dying over. You are all going. Case closed.” Tom reflects that this experience was extremely frustrating and eye-opening for him as he recognized what the administrative support at his new school would look like. Additionally, Tom realized through this experience that when important issues (such as negotiating with parents) were brought to the forefront, his principal would opt for an autocratic leadership approach rather than including teachers in the decision-making. Tom shared other examples throughout the year in which his principal imposed decisions upon him without consulting him or other faculty members. He experienced a lack of involvement in decision-making from curriculum and planning decisions to assignments in extracurricular programs, events, and responsibilities.

These examples shared by Blythe and Tom do not reflect administrator support and in fact are in complete opposition to what democratic inclusive schools advocate for.

Apple and Beane (2007a) suggested that just as students have the right to experience democracy in the classroom, the adult teachers and staff of the school must also be empowered to direct their responsibilities on a school level. In democratic schools, all stakeholders including teachers, students, parents, and community members should be engaged in the decision-making processes as they respond to needs, concerns, and interests. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) referred to the sense of efficacy that comes as a result of authentic participation as teachers have opportunities to affect the school organization. In contrast, when teachers are excluded in these processes, lack of autonomy and confidence in legitimacy of decisions are the result.

Additionally, in reference to administrative support none of the participants reflected opportunities to explore notions of democratic inclusion through professional development or decision-making activities that establish the school as a democratic inclusive space. The literature (Glickman et al., 2009; Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) would suggest that principals and school administrators play an important role in creating equitable learning communities for teachers through professional development and in establishing school structures and traditions that support democratic inclusion. Furthermore, none of the participants identified opportunities to share experiences, or engage in deconstructing or problematizing schooling in an effort to envision inclusive possibilities for action as advocated by the literature (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Smith & Barr, 2008).

In addition to administrative support, grade level team was a factor that is closely connected to the school culture and directly influenced how Tom felt limited and

supported in his efforts to implement democratic inclusion in his classroom. Neither Blythe nor Sydnee referred to being influenced by their grade level teams. When asked about it further, they both described their grade level teams as being very functional, and feeling very supported by their team members. Tom however felt like his grade level team was his greatest limiting factor.

Grade-Level Team

Teachers traditionally work with other teachers in the school as they are organized into grade-level teams or special assignment committees. Grade-level teams collaborate to establish curriculum, to coordinate scheduling, and cooperate with each other on assessment efforts. As such, the functionality of these teams has the potential to be very influential on how teachers then incorporate aspects of democratic inclusion. Team-level support was an important category for Tom and was referenced by him more than any other factor. As his first year at a new school, navigating the new school culture was challenging. His greatest challenge however was working with his grade-level team. Tom was on a team of three teachers in sixth grade. Two of the teachers were new to the team this year and one had been the team lead at the school for the past four years. In his interactions with the team, Tom consistently reported that anytime he tried something new, or something that had previously worked for him, it was met with resistance and conflict from the other members of his team. Furthermore, he did not feel supported by his principal in his efforts to resolve the issues with his team and referenced other school-wide policies that magnified the conflict and dysfunctionality he experienced.

I am on a nonfunctioning team. So trying to get our team up and running is hard

because I am not in a position to do so. I don't know if all the parties are willing to come together, which then affects the classroom setting because then I don't think that I can be democratic.

As Tom described his dysfunctional team, it was hard to imagine them interacting in professional ways that reflected the sense of collegiality that Marzano (2003) advocates for in which he describes professional and collegiate interactions as being those in which teachers openly share mistakes, demonstrate respect for each other, and constructively analyze practices and procedures. Ironically, this team had just been awarded a collaboration grant in which they were allotted one day a month, with a paid substitute, for the entire school year to focus on ways to improve student learning. In spite of having the resources to be successful, their interactions among team members felt forced and did not reflect notions of collegiality (Meier, 2002). Tom suggested that part of the problem with his grade-level team was due to a class configuration that created a 5th /6th grade combo class. This made it difficult to create a unified team because the combo teachers were split between two grade levels. He suggested that this class arrangement further strained the relations on the team and because of this, there was no sense of camaraderie.

There are two sixth grade teachers that mesh well together. We have one 5/6th grade combo teacher. She is an awesome teacher but playing two different roles, which has really caused her to not move forward. We are kind of spinning our wheels and I have seen that in other grade-level teams here. We really don't know how to progress forward. I proposed a re-teach in math to ensure that our struggling math students didn't struggle anymore and I was shot back with 'what do I do with my fifth grade students? Because I don't teach math the same time as you.' We are being held hostage to that.

Rather than focus on student learning, Tom's team could not move beyond their own team dynamics. Furthermore, because of the strained relationships on the team, Tom consistently felt criticized in his efforts with his own students.

As an extension of administrative support, team-level support reflects the larger structures of the school. In comparing his current team with other teams he had worked on, Tom remembered previous teams as being more dynamic with a clear vision and as being aligned and supported by the administration and school community. “There was a sense of camaraderie and a sense of unity.” He further described a previous school in which the fifth and sixth grade teams consistently collaborated together. Because they shared similar philosophies, one teacher would often pick up where the previous teacher left off. As Tom’s examples suggest, and as Sydnee and Blythe’s reference to functioning teams support, the grade-level team can be either a limiting or supporting factor or both depending on the context and ways in which team members interact.

Parents

As an important part of school culture, parents support and limit teacher’s democratic inclusive efforts through their involvement and in communicating expectations. Parental involvement represents how parents influence programs and activities of the school. Their efforts are described through informal and formal organizations such as PTA and school community council that support teachers by providing volunteers, money, and supplies. Parental involvement also refers to volunteer opportunities in which parents read with students, grade papers, and teach extended lessons in the classroom, thus freeing up teachers to attend to other aspects of the curriculum. All three participants referenced parental involvement as a factor. Both Blythe and Sydnee described the parents of their students as being very active in PTA and school community council and as being helpful in their teaching efforts. Whereas

Tom shared examples in which parents were both a limiting and supporting factor.

Blythe involves parents in specific lessons as a way of extending what her students are learning in the classroom. One example she shared was an assignment in which parents and students were asked to read a common text about rights and responsibilities. Parents and student were then asked to discuss various rights and responsibilities they have at home within the context of their own families. Students returned the next day, not only having read the passage but with new insights and examples of how this complex principle applied to them personally. Additionally, Blythe was able to involve parents in a way that not only supported the learning of the classroom but also extended it by applying it outside of the classroom. Blythe's practice of incorporating parents into the learning of the classroom supports the interactive relationship that Meier (2002) and Smith and Barr (2008) advocate for. In this way, parents help students construct knowledge and play an active role in the learning of the classroom.

Tom also described parents, and specifically the PTA as an important supporting factor. He remembered his first day of teaching in which he was greeted by the PTA president with supplies and books for his classroom. The PTA organization continued to support Tom throughout the year by helping him organize parent volunteers to come into his class to teach art and various mini-lessons. "Every time I interacted with the PTA they would thank me for being here. There was an unreal connection between parents and teachers at that school. We were like a true family." Through his description, Tom suggested that parental involvement was helpful in supporting his teaching efforts and in

providing needed supplies and resources. Tom however also referenced parents as a limiting factor.

Contextualized in the larger community, Tom felt the effects of parent expectations not only in previous shared examples, but also specifically in his efforts to incorporate aspects of democratic inclusion into his classroom. Tom's school district had previously incorporated aspects of democracy throughout their mission statement and professional training for their teachers. Specific references such as "enculturating the young for democracy" and references to historic advocates of democratic education were central to the districts efforts to support education for democracy. However, in recent months several parents expressed concerns with aspects of democracy and forced the district to rephrase their mission statement because of semantics associated with the concept of democracy. Furthermore, one of the extreme parents was elected to the school board, and the effects of that election changed the way that teachers, administrators, and students talked about what it meant to educate for democracy.

Tom was very aware of the political ramifications of democratic teaching and therefore did not want to label his teaching as democratic in an effort not to draw attention to himself or to his teaching practices.

I don't think there is a lot of support for democracy in the classroom. We are so worried about the syntax versus the actual concept and philosophies behind it, that for me, I am almost afraid to use that term because of the political connotations it has here. I am afraid to admit that my classroom is democratic in nature. I don't want to be used as the example of what to say or do in the classroom to prove a political point of view. I am afraid to say anything for the political repercussions.

In this case, parents and their expectations were very limiting to Tom as he attempted to incorporate aspects of democratic inclusion into his practice. Although they did not stop

his efforts, he felt limited know that there were potential parental conflicts with what he was doing in his classroom.

Another way that parents influence what is taught in the classroom, is through their communication of expectations that suggest approval or disapproval. All three participants refer to parental expectations that are expressed at parent teacher conferences as well as ongoing communications. Blythe reflected feeling very supported by parents and attributes her great relationship with parents to two-way communication that begins with her sending home weekly newsletters that explain what she is doing in the classroom. Sydnee also communicates with parents frequently about what is happening in the classroom as well as policy decisions that she and her students decide together. Recently she made a change to her homework policy that placed more responsibility on her students to complete missing work. She explained the policy ahead of time to the parents and asked for their support in it. When parent conferences came around, both parents and students were in support of the decision. These kinds of communications between school and home reflect ways in which parents, teachers, and students can work together toward shared goals. The work of Epstein and colleagues (1997) described how parents and teachers can work together in positive ways by reinforcing the importance of school, homework, and activities that build student skills and feelings of success.

In addition to communicating support for teachers, the participants also reflected parents communicating critical feedback as well. Parent teacher conferences provided a natural avenue through which parents could communicate their expectations. Blythe reports that the only negative feedback she received from parents was in regards to

assigning too much homework. She had made the assumption that at a private school, the parents wanted her to push their students. It was made clear to her during a parent-teacher conference that, for this particular parent, that expectation was not the case. She took the parent feedback back to her students and they discussed how the students were feeling about the amount of homework she was assigning, and how they wanted to proceed in moving forward. By incorporating parent feedback, Blythe not only reflected a desire to incorporate parents as partners in learning, but also used it as an opportunity to involve her students in issues that directly affected them. Tom also incorporated parent feedback into his teaching and tried to alter the way he approached his classroom and students based on those expectations. “I listen to the complaints and the compliments and try to balance it out. I use parent feedback as a barometer.”

All three participants reflect parent involvement and communication as an influential factor in their teaching efforts not only through involvement opportunities but also through the judgments that Meier (2002) suggest are typical for parent-teacher interactions, in which the best interest of the student is the central focus. However the interactions referred to by the participants in this study do not explore the parent-teacher interaction to incorporate ways in which race, class, and gender impinge on and privilege the interactions between parents and teachers. The participants in this study refer to parent interactions as status quo, and neither Blythe nor Sydnee referenced exploring the historical and contextual reasons for the interaction. Tom did however reference the affluence of parents in the community by suggesting that because of their wealth, there was a sense of entitlement that they could do whatever they wanted in regards to their

student's education. He referenced the previous example of parents forcing the teachers to attend the Nutcracker ballet as a field trip in suggesting that parents are used to getting what they want. When the teachers declined their invitation to attend, the parents called the principal and argued that it was their money, and she could not tell them how to spend it.

Within the factors of school culture, administration, grade-level teams, and parents, teachers feel supported and limited in various ways. Moving outward from the school, to external influential factors the participants referenced district, state, and federal mandates as a important factor in the ways in which they attempt to incorporate democratic inclusion.

Mandates

Although occurring outside of the classroom, the factor of mandates include limiting and supporting factors such as district, state, and federal programs that influence what teachers do in the classroom. Current references to mandates are priorities aimed at making adequate yearly progress (AYP), leaving no child left behind (NCLB), and a focus on standardized testing. Although not opposed to accountability measures that these mandated programs promote, educational theorists (Meier, 2002; Ravitch, 2010) suggested that mandates can only be viewed as supporting factors when they result in increased student achievement, professional learning communities, ongoing training, and use of resources that promote democratic inclusion. Blythe and Sydnee did not make any references to mandates as limiting or supporting factors. In fact, Sydnee suggests that no

talks about democracy in any teaching setting.

No one has addressed democracy ever. They haven't said do it, or don't do it. IT is kind of like- this is the core content, the way you teach it is up to you. Make sure you are using best instructional practices, but if there is some quirk about your personality and the way you teach it, then that is fine. One teacher uses more art. I use more democracy when I teach. I feel like the district doesn't care one way or the other. I view this as complete freedom. I don't think that [mandates] interfere in any way, shape, or form with my ability to teach my students what the state wants me to teach them.

Tom however referred to mandates as a limiting factor. He suggested that in the current political and educational climate, mandates such as AYP and a focus on standardized tests limit the autonomy of teachers and hinder their ability to create the learning spaces necessary to accomplish democratic purposes.

Currently there are more mandates on what we should teach and how we should be teaching which limits the autonomy teachers once had. In recent years it seems as if the legislators are trying to find a way to discredit educators and they are now 'attacking' the way teachers function in the classroom.

Ravitch (2010), in her critique of mandates such as NCLB with their focus on standardized testing suggest that discrediting teachers occurs when elected officials and business consultants intrude into educational decisions that should be made by professionally trained educators in the context of classrooms.

Congress and state legislatures should not tell teachers how to teach, any more than they should tell surgeons how to perform operations. Nor should the curriculum of the schools be the subject of political negotiation among people who are neither knowledgeable about teaching nor well educated. (p. 226)

These priorities imposed from the outside created precedence and pressures that did not align with or support democratic inclusive practices. They were often in direct conflict with teacher efforts to incorporate democratic inclusion in their classrooms. Tom further explained how this focus on AYP had changed the way that he and other teachers taught.

This emphasis has caused both new and veteran teachers to focus on the test instead of making sure that all of their students were invested in learning. When we focus so much on test scores and showing ‘results’ we tend to lose sight on creating an environment that will motivate students to want to become life-long learners. Students begin to dread the end-of-the-year testing and teachers become overly anxious during the testing process. We no longer celebrate the accomplishments of our students instead we focus on what they need to do and how to do it better.

Tom is not suggesting that testing and focusing on policies such as NCLB are not valuable. Rather he suggested that the prioritization on standardized testing and AYP did not always lead to democratic spaces. Tom’s perspective was validated by the work of Pederson and Velde (2007) that found that non-tested subjects experienced a reduction of resources and time allocated to the teaching of areas outside of the test. This narrowing of the curriculum makes it difficult for teachers to justify their efforts at creating a curriculum that supports democratic knowledge and experiences in an inclusive way.

In addition to not feeling supported to teach their students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed in a democracy, the participants suggest that mandates do not allow for the spaces in which students can engage in the processes of democratic inclusion. Because teachers are so focused on covering the curriculum and teaching to the test, they do not make the time necessary for students to explore, deconstruct, and problematize the inequities of schooling as advocated by Young (2004). Rather, democratic inclusion efforts are relegated to practices and decision-making opportunities within the classroom that do not always push democracy deeper into an inclusive space. In spite of heavily mandated curriculum, practice, and assessment, the teachers in this study continue to teach for democratic inclusion and do so in very creative ways as described in the findings of chapter five. However, as the lens of inclusion is used to

analyze their practices and the contexts in which they teach, possibilities are envisioned in which notions of democratic inclusion can be incorporated in ways that meet the demands of inclusion.

Conclusion

All three participants engage their students in democratic inclusive practices in the context of public schools. Inherent in this context are limiting and supporting factors that the participants identified in their attempts to educate for democratic inclusion. The participants of this study share unique perspectives about how they are supported or limited in their efforts for democratic inclusion. All three participants suggest that commitment and incorporation of democratic inclusion begin with them as the teacher, and that they as the teacher are the greatest limiting and supporting factor. Both Sydnee and Tom refer to student readiness as influencing their efforts at democratic inclusion and reference both developmental factors as well as exposure to principles of democracy as influencing their student's ability to engage in democratic principles. Extending the factors to school culture, the participants reference school administrators, grade-level teams, and parents as playing an important role in supporting and limiting their efforts. Blythe describes her grade-level team as being supportive and her parents as being appropriately involved in her teaching efforts. She suggests that her greatest limiting factor is the administration at her school that have enacted policies that limit the autonomy of teachers and that suggest a lack of trust. Blythe did not refer to mandates as either limiting or supporting her efforts at democratic inclusion. Sydnee points to student

readiness as the greatest limiting factor and to herself as the teacher in terms of commitment and readiness as the greatest (and only) supporting factor.

I don't feel like anybody is telling me how to run my class. I feel like they tell me what to teach but no one tells me how my environment should be or how I should get to where I want to be. They say this is where you want to be and I choose how I get there. And so I don't feel like anything gets in the way and I don't feel like anything encourages me towards it other than my own conviction.

She did however reference working on a functional team and feeling supported by her principal in her description of her teaching environment. In her descriptions of what it means to educate for democracy, Sydnee did not refer to school or mandates as limiting factors in her attempts to educate for democracy. Although not identified directly, these factors certainly contributed to her inclination and ability to incorporate democratic inclusion. Within the school culture, Tom identified administration and grade-level team as limiting factors and suggested that depending on the context, parents can be either limiting or supporting factors. Tom was the only participant that referenced mandates outside of school as a limiting factor and specifically referred to the focus on standardized testing that limits the spaces in which to teach for democracy.

Aligned with the unique personalities and the contexts in which they teach, the teachers in this study continue to incorporate democratic inclusive practices in spite of both internal and external factors that direct what they do in their classrooms. In connecting the descriptive findings of the participants to the broader literature on democratic inclusion, there is potential for understanding implications beyond the data as contributions to research on democratic inclusion are contextualized.

CURRICULUM VITAE

AMY BAIRD MINER

amybminer@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Utah State University, Logan, UT

PhD Curriculum and Instruction

2013

Dissertation: *Democratic Inclusive Teachers*

Advisor: Steven Camicia, Ph.D.

Defense Date: Fall 2012

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT

Masters of Education

1999

Thesis: *A Bio-bibliography of Pam Conrad.*

Advisor: James Jacobs, Ph.D.

Emphasis: children's Literature, integration, mentoring/supervision

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT

Bachelors of Science in Elementary Education

1993

Emphasis: inquiry based, thematic and experiential based learning.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT

2012-Present

Visiting Professor

ELED 445: Undergraduate elementary education social studies methods. Designed course objectives, strategies, lessons, assignments and assessments. Planned and implemented the social studies strategy fair, winter 2013.

ELED 211, 331: Undergraduate elementary education framing seminar. Collaboratively designed and taught framing seminar by establishing course objectives, learning outcomes, assignments and assessments. Planned and implemented ARTS field Friday, winter 2013.

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT

Adjunct Instructor

2008- 2012

ELED 365: Undergraduate elementary education social studies methods

Designed course objectives, strategies, lessons, assignments and assessments. Planned and implemented the social studies strategy fair, winter 2012.

Rocky Mountain Elementary, Lindon, UT

Curriculum Specialist

2011-Present

Created and implemented the PUSH program (Promoting Unified Studies and Higher achievement) for Rocky Mountain Elementary which included writing an integrated curriculum for social studies, science, literacy, art; working with parent volunteers, creating learning opportunities and field trips in the communities, fund-raising, and grant writing efforts, as well as collaborating with and training of sixth grade teachers.

Utah State University, Logan, UT

Adjunct Instructor

2010-2011

TEAL 4050: Designed and taught undergraduate course on methods of instruction for social studies education. Worked with Level I instructors to establish course objectives, strategies, and assessments. Supervised Level III students during their practicum experience in the schools.

Utah State University, Logan, UT

Adjunct Instructor

2010-2011

EDUC 1010: Designed and taught undergraduate introductory course to elementary education. Worked with Level I instructors to establish course objectives, strategies, and assessments.

Alpine School District, American Fork, UT

Substitute Teacher

2011-Present

Rocky Mountain Elementary School requested me as a substitute teacher on an as needed basis. Taught various classes and supervised school activities for grades 2-6.

Utah State Office of Education, SLC, UT

UTIPS Test Writer and Director

2010

Oversaw the efforts of 30+ test writers/teachers in the area of elementary social studies. Responsibilities included training all test writers in “Unpacking the USOE Core” as well as hiring and overseeing the writing and approval of all UTIPS test items for grades 3-6. Coordinated efforts with secondary social studies director to ensure that all standards, objectives, and indicators of the USOE social studies core had multiple choice, constructed response, and essay test items available for teacher use.

All-for-Kids, Provo, UT

Curriculum Development Specialist

2006

Designed and developed the core set of curriculum for “All-for-Kids” an after-school extension program for under-privileged or challenged students. Subject curriculum included the following: science, physical education, art, as well as homework/tutoring techniques and classroom management (for all of the instructors).

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT and Houston, TX

University Liaison and Mentor of Student Teachers **1999-2001**

Worked as the regional coordinator and Liaison for student teachers in the Aldine School District, Houston, TX. Supervised student teachers and offered written and verbal feedback regarding development and implementation of effective teaching methods, improved student learning, teaching to objectives, and inquiry based teaching.

Brigham Young University

Research Assistant: Brigham Young University, **1999**

Assistant for Dr. Paul Cook with research, with a specific focus on mentoring, teacher advancement and supervision of elementary education teachers. Research utilized both qualitative and quantitative data, appearing in several of Dr. Cook's publications.

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT

Supervisor of Student Teachers **1994-1995**

Selected to mentor student teachers in providing feedback on instructional practices, effective teaching models, varied and differentiated methods of instruction, as well as how to facilitate improved student achievement through various teaching and classroom management strategies.

Jordan School District, Sandy, UT

Sixth Grade Teacher Southland Elementary School **1993-1994**

Jordan School District, Sandy, UT

Third Grade Teacher: Sunrise Elementary **1992-1993**

RESEARCH

Honors and Awards

Graduate Research Forum 1st Place Award Recipient. **2010**

Incorporating Democratic Practices in Teacher Education.

Participated in the annual Utah State University Graduate research forum and won first place in the college of education. Wrote a proposal and presented qualitative research exploring the efforts of two university professors educating for democracy.

Research Experience

Co-Investigator with Steven Camicia, Utah State University. **2010**

An examination of Power, Positionality, and Democratic Epistemology in Curriculum Design and Implementation of Democratic Education.

Paper presented at annual College and University Faculty Assembly, Denver, CO.

Co-Investigator with Sherri Marx, Utah State University. **2009-2010**

Incorporating Democratic Practices in Teacher Education.

Co-Investigator and member of Democratic Education Committee 2009-2010

with Winn Egan, Lynnette Erickson, and Jeffrey Nokes, Brigham Young University.

Democratic classrooms: Looking at first-year teacher practices.

Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Network for Educational Renewal, Bellevue, WA.

Co-Investigator with Lynnette Erickson, Brigham Young University 2008-Present

Exploring stories of democratic curriculum making using narrative inquiry; Engaging students in immigration issues through partner journaling; Exploring the NCSS themes through literature, artifacts and inquiry-based activities; Educating teacher to educate students to democracy.

PUBLICATIONS**Book Chapter (Peer Reviewed)**

Erickson, L.B., & Miner, A.B. (2011). Social studies teacher educators as curriculum makers: Engaging teacher candidates in democratic practices. In J. Kitchen, D. Ciuffetelli Parker, & D. Pushor (Eds.), *Narrative inquiries into curriculum making in teacher education* (pp.151-168). London, United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Journal Article

Miner, A.B. (2009). *The public school practices of participatory democratic pedagogy.* (pp. 33-38). IMPACT Journal. Utah Association of Secondary School Principals. Provo, UT.

PRESENTATIONS (Peer Reviewed)

Erickson, Lynnette B. McGowan, Thomas M., Neufeld, Judith A., & Miner, Amy B. (November 2012). *Social Studies as Context for Meeting the ELA Common Core.* Presentation at the National Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.

Erickson, Lynnette B., & Miner, Amy B. (October 2012). *Teacher Preparation Courses as Models of Democratic Communities: Preparing Teacher Candidates for Engaging All Students in Democratic Practices.* Presentation at the National Network for Educational Renewal, Denver, CO.

Erickson, Lynnette B., & Miner, Amy B. (October 2012). *Looking to the Future: Preparing Teacher Candidates to Take Up Democratic Education for All Students.* Presentation at the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association, Park City, UT.

- Erickson, L.B., & Miner, A.B. (2011). *Exploring stories of democratic curriculum making using narrative inquiry*. Paper presented at the College and University Faculty Assembly of the annual conference of the National Council for the Social Studies, Washington, DC.
- Camicia, S.P., & Miner, A.B. (2010). *Power, positionality, and democratic epistemology in curriculum design and implementation of democratic education*. Paper presented at the College and University Faculty Assembly of the annual conference of the National Council for the Social Studies, Denver, CO.
- Erickson, L.B., & Miner, A.B. (2010). *Refusing to sacrifice citizenship: Integrating the elementary social studies curriculum*. Poster presentation at the annual conference of the National Council for the Social Studies, Denver, CO.
- Miner, A.B., & Erickson, L.B. (2009). *Engaging students in immigration issues through partner journaling*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Council for the Social Studies, Atlanta, GA.
- Miner, A.B., & Erickson, L.B., Neufeld, J. (2009). *Exploring the NCSS themes through literature, artifacts, and inquiry-based activities*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Council for the Social Studies, Atlanta, GA.
- Egan, M.W., Erickson, L., Nokes, J.D., Miner, A., & Pierce, J. (2009). *Democratic classrooms: Looking at first-year teacher practices*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Network of Educational Renewal. Bellevue, WA.
- Erickson, L., & Miner, A.B. (2009). *Modeling democratic practices: Enculturating teacher candidates to prepare students for a democracy*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Network of Educational Renewal. Bellevue, WA.
- Erickson, L., with Alleman, J., & Miner, A. (2009). *Educating teachers to educate students for a democracy*. Panel presented at Invisible College preceding the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Rocky Mountain Elementary, Lindon, UT

School Community Council Member/Chair

2010-Present

Parent member of school community council responsible for school budget and proposed land grant funding. Responsible for development of the P.U.S.H. program; an integrated curriculum based on the USOE core for social studies, science, literacy, and art.

Additional responsibilities included participating in the hiring of a new sixth grade team.

The daVinci Academy, Colorado Springs, CO

Curriculum Development/ Project Coordinator: **2005-2006**

Parent member of 4th grade and encore collaboration team responsible for the writing and curriculum integration for the 4th grade production, “*A Fabric of a Nation*”- a social studies based production addressing the regions of the United States.

The daVinci Academy, Colorado Springs, CO

Assistant Director/Volunteer Coordinator: **2005-2006**

Director of costumes for cast of 100 elementary students (grades 2-5) in the production of the *Jungle Book*. Assisted with the set design and layout as well as coordinated all parent volunteer efforts. Production was selected by the Kennedy Center of the arts as “Top Elementary School Production” nationwide.

Academy School District 20, Colorado Springs, CO

Member of District 20 Accountability Committee: **2001-2003**

Assisted in writing and approving school site-plans district wide as well as creating nationally recognized accreditation standards for District 20 elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Participated as a member of the accreditation sub-committee.

Academy International Elementary School, Colorado Springs, CO

Member of School Accountability Committee: **2001-2003**

Helped write and evaluate school site plan. Worked on International Baccalaureate accreditation and assisted the principal with staff and teacher hiring, parent volunteers, PTA policies and special projects.

Academy International Elementary School, Colorado Springs, CO

Parent Volunteer Coordinator: **2001**

Organized and trained parent volunteers, worked with teachers and staff to create and hands-on opportunities for teachers to use in the classroom. Increased parent volunteerism from 50% to 85% in one year. Also participated in International Baccalaureate accreditation efforts.

Pattison Elementary School, Katy, TX

Curriculum Development Volunteer: **1998-1999**

Created science and math curriculum for “center-based” learning experiences for early grades. Organized parent volunteers and supervised learning experiences.

Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce, Monument, CO

Board Member: **2005-2006**

Evaluated current programs and created new programs for the Tri-Lakes community in the areas of education, member support and community events. This included conducting assessment of current programs, developing new strategic plan, conducting board training, and new member orientation. Also assisted in documenting all policies and procedures and set up a new volunteer orientation process.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

National Council for the Social Studies	2008-present
College and University Faculty Assembly	2008-present
National Network of Educational Renewal	2009-2010
American Educational Research Association (AERA)	2009-present
AERA: Social studies special interest group	2009-present
AERA: Teacher education special interest group	2009-present
AERA: Democratic education special interest group	2009-present

UNIVERSITY HONORS/SERVICE

Teaching Assistantship and Scholarship Recipient **2010-2011**
 Awarded full tuition scholarship and teaching position while pursuing PhD, Utah State University.

Graduation Speaker **1999**
 Department of Elementary Education, McKay School of Education, Brigham Young University.

Face of Elementary Education: **1994**
 Selected by the Brigham Young University faculty to represent the “Face of Elementary Education,” in which my daily approach to teaching was filmed and then shown to all new education students at orientation program in the College of Education. The video was designed to capture inquiry based, thematic and experiential learning.

Student Body President: **1991-1992**
 Elected as the first female Student Body President at Brigham Young University. In this role, represented students and university on all student issues and programs which included participating in university, faculty, alumni, student boards, and committees. Represented the university externally to media, inter-collegiate boards, and committees. Spoke and gave numerous presentations and speeches including addressing the entire student body.