“YOU LISTENED TO WHAT WE WERE SAYING”: A STUDY OF STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES WITH AN INCLUSIVE INQUIRY PROJECT

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Abstract

The over-representation of Black students at Rose Calder School[1], an alternative high school setting where I teach, provided the impetus to conduct practitioner research to better understand how I might revise my curricular and instructional choices to be more inclusive of Black students. This practitioner research study focused on students' experiences of a project I co-facilitated and designed in alignment with the II framework (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). Through a qualitative practitioner study, I examined six students' experiences with the projects and how those experiences related to the constructs of inclusion and exclusion. Data included archival audio recordings of project discussions, archival student work related to the project, and archival facilitator materials. Findings suggest that 1) all students participated in the projects in leadership roles, though student leadership looked unique for each student; 2) students used the projects to process experiences of exclusion and to design experiences of inclusion for others; and 3) student voices were the greatest influence on my decision-making process as a teacher. Along with each of the findings, I acknowledged the messiness of inclusionary practices within the context of larger injustices. The influence of these practitioner reflections on my teaching practices as they apply to broader inclusionary curricular and instructional choices are discussed.
Keywords: inclusionary practices, secondary, alternative setting, qualitative methods, practitioner research

[1] A pseudonym.

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Dedication

To Ravi and Mira

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Chapter I: Introduction

"I wish school knew I was smart!" Derrick[2] blurted out, on the first day of class, in response to the prompt I posed to the class circle, "What do you wish school knew about you?"

Jamal added, "No offense, lady, but I remember in fourth grade when I was sitting there, and this, no offense, but this Caucasian lady came in and took all the Caucasian kids out for the gifted class, and then me and all the Black kids were left there, just looking around, like 'what else are we supposed to think?'" Derrick erupted with laughter, connecting with this memory and remembering it similarly. Derrick and Jamal continued to talk more about their schooling and looked for my response at each interval. I wondered how comfortable they felt sharing and how my facilitation of the discussion made them feel.

Derrick and Jamal are current students at Rose Calder School (RCS)[3], where I teach English. Both students were asked to leave comprehensive secondary schooling to attend RCS for discipline and attendance reasons. Yet, this anecdote of theirs and the way they delivered it shed light on how their feelings of separation within school go back farther than middle and high school years. This moment in class gave me pause. Derrick and Jamal described an experience driven by policy decisions in which certain students were selected, based on white-normative standardized testing, for a pull-out gifted curriculum. Students not selected for the program were left in the mainstream classroom, without the experience of the gifted curriculum, according to their experience, and Derrick and Jamal, early on, noticed the racial divide. When asked, Derrick and Jamal had no idea that what they had observed as little kids had become apparent to the school and local community as problematic just recently, and the entire gifted education model

[2] All student and graduate student names are pseudonyms throughout this paper.
[3] All school and district names are pseudonyms throughout this paper.

had been revamped to include more racially equitable selection criteria and to be constructed as a push-in model, in which all students now experience gifted instruction. The overarching policies that defined the gifted program for Derrick and Jamal boiled down to their classroom experiences of curricular and instructional choices made by school staff. Here I was, at the helm of another classroom experience of Derrick and Jamal's, a classroom experience much later in their school careers, and one without a pull-out model for gifted education, but one surrounded by overarching policies, nonetheless, such as the district-wide equity goal to provide "diverse, inclusive, and rigorous learning experiences" for all. I wondered how different the current classroom experience felt to Derrick and Jamal compared to the classroom experience where they felt left out of a specific curriculum (Gifted) because of their race. I wondered how inclusive Derrick and Jamal feel while attending RCS, where, even if they might have positive learning experiences, they often reconcile those experiences with big feelings. For example, Derrick, when learning the comprehensive high school student news staff, chose to use his song as the introduction music to their daily news show; he asked me if he could leave class to sit in the student break room. I went to check on him, and he appeared to be pensive while streaming the news show on his phone, and then smiling big as texts from students started coming in. He told me the students at the comprehensive high school were letting him know they recognized his song on the show, and yet I noticed how far away he was from the in-person experience of their praise. His creative voice framed the comprehensive high school's daily news show, yet he never participated in any news story featured on the show.

I came to teach at RCS after working as an English teacher and an instructional coach for the comprehensive high school for 11 years. I had visited RCS on a few occasions as an instructional coach and was drawn to the school, knowing the unique opportunity to design a

curriculum that matches students' needs, given that the school is a small setting and that students who attend RCS have specific needs. After having completed the first part of a doctoral program with research interests around racial equity and school innovation, I noticed RCS had an opening for an English teacher. I was eager to apply for it and thrilled to get it, wanting to transfer my research observations to practice and hear from students about their experiences with my teaching approaches. At RCS, being the only English teacher and needing to differentiate for multiple grade levels in the same class, I have more flexibility with curriculum and instruction than I ever have since I am not required to keep in lockstep with other team members, as I have been in other school settings. I follow the state standards for curriculum, and I find that the English state standards give me much flexibility. For Derrick, Jamal, and all students who come to RCS, though, I question my own inclusive practices and approaches, how the division-wide equity goals filter through my teaching, how the social structure of whiteness filters through my interactions with Black students, how my practices are received by the students in my class, and how inclusive the classroom experience really is, no matter how much I attempt to include students' identities and voices in my curricular and instructional choices. These questions became foundational to my Capstone study.

Problem of Practice

The questions that formed as I listened to and considered the school experiences of Derrick and Jamal illuminated a problem of practice embedded in my teaching at RCS but of significance to any educator working to create experiences that are inclusive of all their students: Even though the school district has an equity-driven goal for learning experiences that are inclusive of all students, there are Black students currently enrolled at RCS who feel that they have not experienced inclusion at school. Educators who want to reach the goal of inclusion for

all students must gain a better understanding of how students experience curriculum and instruction that intends to be inclusive of them. The insight gained from these students can inform the creation and revision of more inclusive curricula and instruction.

The larger context for my problem of practice is a school district where RCS is situated and which holds a district commitment to educational equity, where "... all children receive what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential". One of the four district-wide goals toward building equity is to provide inclusive learning for all. The school district is currently in the process of developing its Inclusive Excellence Framework. In this draft process, they reference the definition of inclusion from another school district: "Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, decision making and policy making creating a true sense of belonging and the ability of everyone to engage and contribute authentically" (City of Durham, Racial Equity Terms and Definitions). However, for various reasons, Black students in grades 8-12 are disproportionately excluded from the comprehensive setting. According to the current program administrator at RCS, these reasons include but are not limited to, repeated disciplinary infractions, truancy, juvenile detention, housing displacement, and credit deficiency. Select Black students who meet the above criteria are enrolled at RCS, the alternative education campus, and are not allowed to enroll at the comprehensive setting without a readmittance process determined by school administrators. Of the 28 students enrolled at RCS for the 2021-2022 school year, 75% of RCS students were Black, in comparison to 29% of students in the comprehensive setting.

Additionally, the school district shares the national levels of racial mismatch between teachers and students: district-wide, although 29% of students are Black, only 8.9% of teachers are Black. Due to racial mismatch, teachers may not share cultural understandings with their

students (Stephens & Townsend, 2015; Ainscow & Messiou, 2017). Just as Jamal and Derrick experienced the categorical separation of students based on the construct of giftedness, classroom spaces can perpetuate exclusion (Louie, 2017). Classroom practices, since racial integration, have since held the role of "unidirectional assimilation into whiteness" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 3). White cultural norms dominate classroom experiences, and the European cultural fabric is "so deeply ingrained in the structures, ethos, programs, and etiquette of schools that it is considered simply the 'normal' and the 'right' thing to do" (Gay, 2018, p. 9). With standardized learning and standardized testing, for example, teachers are given top-down requirements to measure students against white-dominant norms of what academic success looks like (Paris & Alim, 2017). Because Black students run the risk of being excluded from their comprehensive setting at a higher rate than their white peers as well as being excluded from full participation within the classroom, there is an urgent need to better understand how curriculum and instruction might be revised to be more inclusive of Black students district-wide.

The constructs of exclusion and inclusion have been well described within political theory since inclusion is a major goal of the democratic process, and these nuanced constructs can be translated to the classroom. In political theory, the democratic process was defined as "a process of communication among citizens and public officials, where they make proposals and criticize one another, and aim to persuade one another of the best solution to collective problems" (Young, 2002, p. 52). Without a purely democratic process, groups or individuals tend to dominate decision-making processes (Young, 2002). Exclusion from the democratic process has been delineated into two types: internal exclusion and external exclusion (Young, 2002). Young (2002) defined external exclusion as when some people are kept out of discussion and decision-making, intentionally and unintentionally. According to Young (2002), internal

exclusion is when people participate, yet their voices do not influence or impact discussions and decision-making. Young (2002) listed several types of internal exclusion, such as when “the terms of discourse make assumptions some do not share, the interaction privileges specific styles of expression, the participation of some people is dismissed as out of order” (p. 53). Bloch-Schulman and colleagues (2015) translated these definitions to the classroom to describe inclusion and exclusion that occurs around classroom learning, which, they argued, should be a democratic process where all voices participate and influence decision-making. When applied to schools, external exclusion of students can refer to any type of absences, such as disciplinary consequences that require students to leave the classroom or school for short-term or long-term periods, such as being sent to the office, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions (Skiba et al., 2014), and thus are not present and participating in classroom processes. External exclusion can also occur when students are present but not participating in the discussion for any reason. Internal exclusion in school can refer to classroom practices, such as curricular and instructional choices, learning activities, and teaching styles that may exclude some student voices and make students feel dismissed or that their contribution is not within the order or norms of the classroom (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) noted how, while external and internal exclusions are of equal importance, internal exclusions “have often gone unnoticed” (p. 33) when it comes to education. Internal and external exclusion overlap, especially in educational settings. For example, a student might be present in the classroom but might not participate in the classroom decision-making. Perhaps they have their head down, and there is a possibility that the reason why they are putting their head down is because of the construct of internal exclusion, such as if they were made to feel that their contribution style is not normative to the classroom environment. According to Bloch-Schulman

et al. (2015)'s work, teachers can influence both internal and external exclusion of students, since they have an influence on sending students out of the classroom as well as how students might or might not feel welcome to contribute to the decision-making within the classroom.

In U.S. schools, commitment toward inclusion all too often comes with the ironic exception: "Unless you're Black" (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020, p. 435). Consistently throughout decades, and, despite recent efforts otherwise, Black students' experiences of school are drastically different than their peers, due to procedures, policies, and school norms that are rarely questioned by school staff (Love, 2004), all of which could be described as external exclusions and internal exclusions (Young, 2002). These experiences of external exclusion include class tracking or being assigned to lower academic level classes from an early age, and school discipline procedures that negatively bias Black and Brown students (Hotchkins, 2021). Black students are disproportionately excluded physically from the classroom due to detention, suspension, and expulsion that fall under discipline practices (Bottiani et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2021; Anyon et al., 2016; Mittleman, 2018). According to The Civil Rights Data Collection, during the 2015-2016 school year, Black males made up 8% of U.S. public school enrollment, and yet Black males made up 25% of males suspended and 23% of males expelled; similarly concerning, Black females made up 8% of U.S. public school enrollment, and yet Black females made up 14% of females suspended and 10% of females expelled (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2018). Race has been the most predictive factor in exclusionary discipline practices, and Black students have been the "most vulnerable to school exclusion" (Welsh & Little, 2018). Black students are experiencing physical exclusion by being asked to leave the classroom, the school day, and the school altogether at drastically disproportionate rates compared to their white peers. Because students were physically removed from the

classroom, students missed out on both social-emotional and academic learning (Gregory et al., 2018). Additionally, for students who are excluded from instructional spaces, their voices have been “hidden” and “an overlooked resource” in learning spaces that were meant to be inclusive spaces (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017, p. 2). Experiences of internal exclusion have included hegemonic and white-dominant curricula (Love, 2004). Inclusionary practices are needed to mitigate students' external and internal exclusion.

Ainscow and Messiou (2020) maintained that inclusionary practices must include engagement with the perspectives of students who have been historically excluded in a way that leads to dialogue between school staff and students. They defined these practices as II (II) and asserted that without centering the voices of marginalized students, hegemonic practices and processes would continue to exclude some students (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020; Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Ainscow et al., 2012). This study explored students’ experiences as they participated in an II practice.

This year, students at RCS have been given the opportunity to engage in an II process. RCS was awarded an Innovation Planning Grant, in which students partnered with a university Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) lab to design projects that RCS students envisioned could lead to change around a problem they observed in their school or their community. The YPAR lab was selected for partnership, given that YPAR can be part of an II process (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). As such, projects will be referred to throughout this paper as “II projects.” The projects intended to empower the voices of RCS students as they reflected on their experiences in school and community so that their projects “can be mobilized toward justice” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). I co-facilitated these II projects alongside two graduate

students to support student leadership and to inclusively center student voices in a school setting.

My intentions in designing instruction around these projects for students on the receiving end of exclusionary discipline practices are intentions toward inclusion. Especially for students who have had a history of external exclusion, as they were required to leave a comprehensive setting and attend an alternative setting, I wanted to provide a learning environment that empowers students with the ability to voice what topic they wish to research as well as with the opportunity to create change around the topic. When reflecting on his school career, Derrick mentioned frustration around how some learning spaces were set up in the comprehensive setting and how in one history class, he felt over-policed for having to ask permission to move his body to the pencil sharpener. I wanted to provide Derrick and his classmates with an experience in which they were at the helm of a learning space. However, I could not design and facilitate such a learning environment without thoroughly researching students' experiences of it and without giving ample space for their experiences to influence my inclusive teaching practices. Furthermore, the researched findings from this experience can influence inclusionary teacher practice, not only my own but teachers' practices in the comprehensive setting, in the original spaces where some students lacked feelings of inclusion.

Purpose of Study

I decided to engage in practitioner research (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007) to study students' experiences in my classroom as they engaged in an II project and how those experiences related to my teaching practices. By uncovering and listening to students give voice to their experiences as they engaged in the II process, I could gain a better understanding of inclusion from the perspective of those who have been excluded: Their voiced experiences of the

curriculum and instruction that was intended to be inclusionary could have implications for preventing school practices and learning experiences that result in the exclusion of students.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following central research question and sub-questions: What is experienced when students engage in an inclusive process facilitated by me, their teacher?

1. How and to what extent do the student participants' experiences reflect experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion?
2. What factors influenced my choices regarding curriculum and instruction as I facilitated my students' engagement in the process?

Researcher Statement

As a 40-year-old white woman who was raised in an upper-middle-class household, when I came to teaching fifteen years ago, I was not prepared to be culturally responsive to the diversity of students I taught. Over the years, I have gained culturally responsive pedagogical theory and knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2010; Paris & Alim, 2017; Hammond, 2015). Later in my teaching career, I took three years outside of the classroom to serve as an instructional coach and often hit the obstacle of working with teachers who wanted to blame students, especially Black and Brown students, for their failures rather than reflect on pedagogical areas of growth to better respond to the multi-cultural experiences of students in their classrooms. Soon after, I took leave and started a doctorate program with the goals of better understanding how we as schools and teachers are failing students who do not fit white-normative standards and imagining innovative ways to build inclusion for all students in school. And now, back in the classroom, I wonder if the theory and knowledge I have gained come

through my practice, as I strive for equity in an alternative setting, serving predominantly Black students, who, in most cases, have been on the receiving end of exclusionary disciplinary practices. I wonder how district policies and societal structures filter through my teaching practices to create classroom experiences for students at RCS.

Given the history of exclusionary practices on students who attend RCS and my positionality as a white teacher, with limits to establishing trusting relationships with current students, this study drew on practitioner research to reflect on my inclusionary practices for all students. Participants were given the agency through II projects to choose how their experiences might influence change, and the researched conclusions through this Capstone--of how my practices related to their experiences of this II project--can inform school and staff practices.

Definition of Terms

Inclusion

Inclusion is a term that used to be applied only in discussions of students receiving special education services but now has been used more generally, meaning the broad efforts "to eliminate exclusionary processes that are a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in relation to race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and perceived abilities" (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017, p. 1). Ainscow and Messiou (2017) emphasized the removal of barriers to inclusion and for this process to involve the participation of historically excluded students.

Exclusion

Exclusion represents, broadly, any formal or informal processes in which there are barriers to students' involvement in school, such as school processes that involve imbalances of power, when feelings and attitudes of exclusion are the outcomes of such processes (Ainscow, 2020). Bloch-Schulman and colleagues (2015) applied to their own classroom Young (2002)'s

terms “external exclusions” and “internal exclusions,” two terms to describe exclusion from decision-making processes in the classroom.

External Exclusion. According to Young (2002), external exclusion occurs in democratic processes when people have been excluded from participation, discussion, and decision-making. When applied to schools, external exclusion of students has been referred to any student absences, such as when related to disciplinary consequences that require students to leave the classroom or school for short-term or long-term, for example, being sent to the office, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions (Skiba et al., 2014), and thus are not present and participating in classroom processes. Using Young (2002)’s definition, external exclusion can also occur when students are present in the classroom but are not actively participating in the decision-making processes of the classroom.

Internal Exclusion. Internal exclusion has occurred when people have been included in democratic processes, yet their voices have had little influence or impact on discussions and decision-making (Young, 2002). Young (2002) pointed out that this can happen when people feel their communication style is not in line with the norms of the decision-making process. Internal exclusion in school has referred to classroom practices, such as curricular choices, learning activities, and teaching styles that may exclude some student voices from influencing discussions and decision-making, such as when they have felt their communication style or behavior was not accepted as normative (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015).

Equity

Equity is an element of inclusion, meaning fairness in the process of inclusion, with fairness associated with the power structures surrounding the specific population on the receiving end of inclusion, such as historically marginalized populations (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017).

RCS's school district defined equity: "Educational equity means that all children receive what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential." Equity stands apart from equality, which means receiving the same treatment rather than individuals receiving what they need equitably.

Inclusive Inquiry (II)

II is an approach to inclusion where schools have put students and student voices at the center of designing learning processes, focusing on historically marginalized students. The process is ongoing and iterative (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). Bloch-Schulman (2015) included specifics to involve students in classroom participation in a way that combats internal exclusion, such as sharing time and emotional space for greeting, use of student narrative in curriculum and instruction, and elevating student voice and positive uses of student rhetoric.

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

Participatory Action Research has been part of the II process. YPAR disrupts positivist research traditions that attach importance to objectivity in methods and to the expertise of the academia-sanctioned investigators. Thus, YPAR involves research participants who are most impacted by a research topic as the designers and co-researchers of studies, rather than solely being situated as research subjects. YPAR features youth as co-researchers in studies they design, emphasizing growing social justice, creating change, and raising criticality around inequities in their communities. YPAR has also been paired with design principles (Falkenburger et al., 2021), such as design thinking (Doorley et al., 2018), in which students move beyond research findings and design solutions to the problems they identified. YPAR values youth's experiences and perspectives as knowledge and expertise that can lead to collective action (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

Theoretical Lens: Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS)

I used CWS as a theoretical lens to examine how the social structure of whiteness contributes to my inclusive teaching practices. An area of criticality within Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the examination of the social construct of whiteness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Matias et al. (2014) offer CWS to be used by white teachers in conjunction with CRT to further deconstruct the complexity of white teachers' experiences teaching students of color, having limited background knowledge and experiences of directly confronting race.

Matias and Boucher (2021) offered caution with CWS. Often, the process involved with CWS takes center stage, involving self-aggrandizing epiphanies of white people as they realize, often for the first time, that racism is everywhere (Matias & Boucher, 2021). These epiphanies are loud and dominant in themselves; they further marginalize the voices of Black and Brown people, and the process of CWS often lacks a key component: recognizing what damaging and direct impact whiteness has on historically marginalized people (Matias & Boucher, 2021). I strived to conduct CWS purely through the observations and dialogue of how the construct of my race directly impacted Black and Brown students in this II project, for "a critical study of whiteness must demonstrate the interaction between the exertion of whiteness to how it dehumanizes people of Colour" (p. 10). CWS provided an added layer of criticality for this practitioner research so that I could reflect on the impact of my teaching practices on the students in my class and how whiteness is not invisible in their experience.

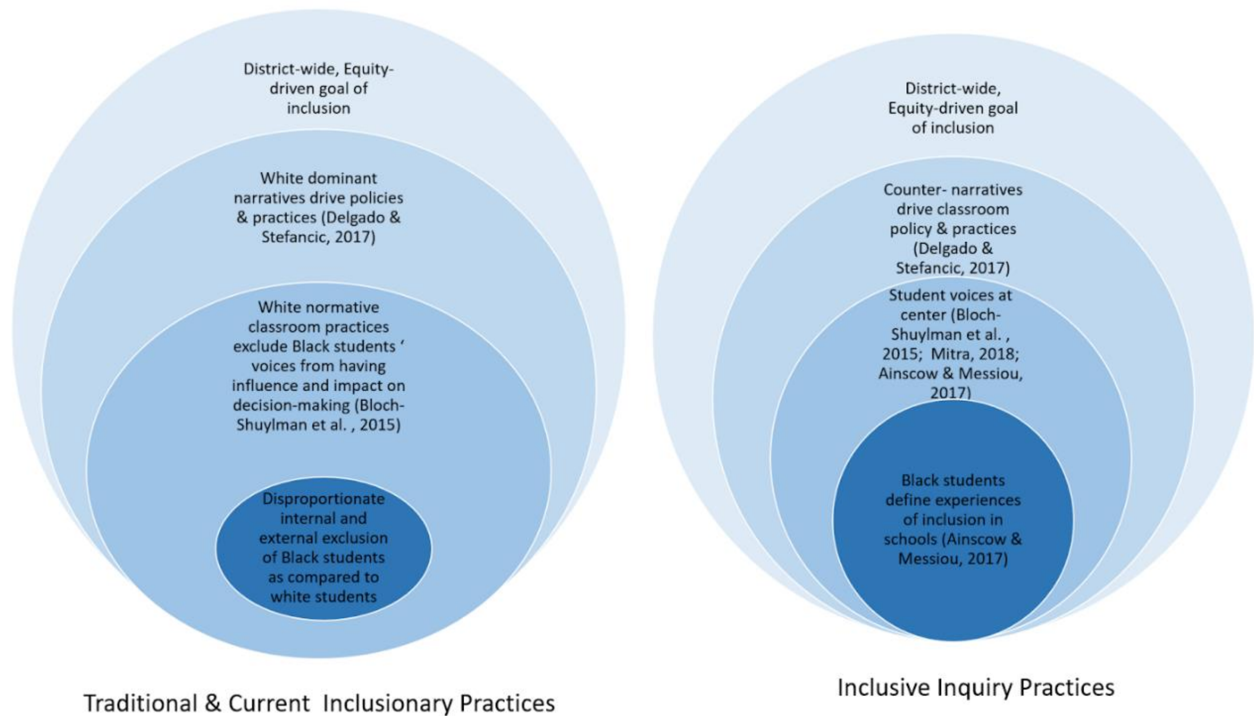
Conceptual Framework

Given that Black students are disproportionately excluded from schools in comparison to their white peers, I drew from the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT; Delgado et al., 2017) and II (Messiou and Ainscow, 2020) to better understand the internal and external

exclusionary processes Black students have faced and what classroom inclusionary processes might best serve students who have been on the receiving end of exclusion. Figure 1.1 illustrates, on the left, how Black students have been disproportionately excluded from schools and classroom practices, which has been fed by and has fed white-dominant narratives that Black students are behavioral problems (Howard, 2013) and that all students should assimilate to European, middle-class cultural standards (Gay, 2015). These white-dominant narratives have driven school policies and classroom practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). On the right side of Figure 1.1 is an approach toward inclusion, II (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017), a process that has placed students and student voices at the center of an ongoing, dialogic process toward inclusive practices. With students' voices at the center, there has been potential for deep change in school and classroom practices (Mitra, 2018), since students have been able to participate in removing barriers to internal exclusion and influencing decision-making in and out of the classroom (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). When student voices have taken the form of critical counter-narratives, there has been a transformation toward educational equity (Miller et al., 2020). The Black students in my class can inform my teaching practice by sharing their critical counter-narratives. In the following section, I will describe each framework's influence on my study's development.

Figure 1.1

Conceptual Model



Critical Race Theory

Because Critical Race Theory (CRT) has connected racism, policy, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), I used it to explain the connection between students' experiences of school to the larger, structural relationships between racism, policy, and power that filter into classroom experiences. Though CRT originated as a theory of law for analyzing the language of laws and the systems that uphold laws (Delgado & Stefanicic, 2017), it has also been applied to other institutional structures, such as schools, that influence the outcomes of people, such as students. The fundamental tenets of CRT that I used as a lens to consider the internal and external exclusion of Black students are as follows:

1. Racism is everywhere and is systemic.

2. White-dominant narratives pervade systemic thinking, such as the dominant narrative that Black people were mistreated during slavery, but since the Civil Rights Movement, continuous progress has been made, and racism no longer exists.
3. Dominant narratives are destructive in that they influence perceptions, biases, and treatment of Black and Brown people and provide justification to systemically oppressive policies and practices.
4. Black and Brown people can voice their truths and experiences as counter-narratives, and these counter-narratives should be held against white-dominant narratives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

These four tenets informed my research for this study. While analyzing data on students' experiences of their II projects, I did so through the lens that racism is everywhere, and students' experiences of racism in schools were influential on their experiences of their project.

The following constructs shaped my understanding of students' experiences in the classroom and shaped my focus when examining my inclusive teaching practices and the students' experiences of it through practitioner research.

White-Dominant Narratives. White-dominant narratives, or a collection of "stories that perpetuate white privilege, white supremacy, and patriarchy" (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 470), have long haunted academic settings, silencing the experiences of oppressed populations (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As seen in the model for current inclusionary practices in Figure 1.1, white-dominant narratives have influenced school external and internal exclusionary processes for Black students at a disproportionate rate as compared to white students. Dominant narratives of Black students as behavioral problems have justified sending students out of the classroom, issuing them suspensions and expulsions, and excluding them from school. Hegemonic

curriculum and white-normative classroom expectations and practices have excluded students from having an impact and influence on classroom decision-making. Because the RCS students have been excluded from the comprehensive setting, in many cases for behavioral justifications and have been in the classroom with predominantly white teachers during a time in educational trends of standardized learning and testing, white-dominant narratives have contextualized the RCS students' perceptions of school and their self-perceptions as students. My practitioner research gave space to students' classroom experiences during their II projects, and I focused on how white-dominant narratives presented as part of that experience.

Student Voice and Counter-Narratives. Suppose students who have been excluded are involved in impacting and influencing the decision-making in the classroom. In that case, their voices can serve as counter-narratives, contradictory or alternative narratives, to the white-dominant narratives which drove the systems that excluded them in the first place. One of the advances of the CRT movement of the 1970s was narrative analysis, such as using counter-narratives to reveal the falsehood in dominant narratives and critiquing the way dominant narratives have failed to depict the embodied experiences of Black people (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Consequently, without counter-narratives, stories around Black students' struggles have dominated the conversation of many researchers and educators in a way that has perpetuated the lack of success for Black students (Tyrone et al., 2017; Crenshaw et al., 2015). There is potential that, since white-dominant narratives have driven exclusionary practices, then empowering counter-narratives could drive inclusionary practices. Miller et al. (2020) described the processes involved in creating and examining critical counter-narratives. Through counter-narratives, researchers and participants can engage in inquiry, critical reflection, and generativity that lead to transformative action (Miller et al., 2020). When examining inclusionary and

exclusionary practices in schools, CRT aligns with II framework tenets (described below) through the recognition and acceptance that exclusionary practices are the product of systemic racism as well as through the critical need to support excluded students to voice counter-narratives throughout the process of generating actionable inclusionary practices. The II projects the RCS students engaged in for this study attempted to put student voices at the center of the process to give them space to create counter-narratives to challenge the white-dominant narratives in education.

II

Messiou and Ainscow developed the II framework following multiple studies placing student voices at the center of inclusionary practices. The framework provided specific guidelines for creating inclusive practices that give students agency and voice and allowed teachers to develop their practice by incorporating their students' input and ideas (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020; Messiou & Ainscow, 2015). The II framework (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow 2020) asserted that

1. Inclusion is an ongoing, dialogic process, with conversations with students at the core of the process.
2. The inclusion process should identify and remove the barriers to inclusion.
3. Inclusion practices must involve all students' presence, active engagement, and achievement.
4. There must be a specific focus on groups of students who have been historically marginalized, underachieving, and repeatedly excluded from schools.

The project that provided the context for my study utilized the II framework. Through II projects, students at RCS (students who represent historically marginalized and historically

excluded groups of students) were given the opportunity for active engagement in an ongoing process in which their voices were centered and held the power of decision-making. The II framework also influenced my decision to use practitioner research methodology as it provided me with the opportunity to learn from the students after they engaged in the project. I used students' active engagement as evidence to confront my teaching practices, identify barriers to inclusion, and inform my future curriculum and instruction as well as that of other educators.

Exclusion of Student Voices. Also depicted in Figure 1.1, white-dominant narratives have influenced the racial disproportionality in excluding students from school through both external exclusion and internal exclusion. Within their framework of II, Messiou & Ainscow suggested that when students are excluded, their voices are "hidden" from school settings, which is a missed opportunity, for "their views can, under certain conditions, encourage inclusion in education" (2020. p. 2). Through external exclusion, Black students' behavior has been labeled as problematic, justifying exclusionary disciplinary practices, pushing Black students and their voices out of classrooms and schools at a disproportionate rate compared to white students. Through internal exclusion, white-normative curriculum and instructional practices have excluded a disproportionate rate of Black students from having the opportunity to contribute their voices in a way that impacts decision-making authentically. When the disproportionate rates of Black students have been left out of either participating at all or authentically participating in classroom decision-making, the lack of criticality around exclusionary practices has perpetuated their use. Ironically, the very voices that could inform inclusive practices, the voices of students who have been historically marginalized, have not always been included in the decision-making of school policies and classroom practices. This study not only investigated the experiences of historically marginalized students as they engaged in an II practice, a practice

designed to create space for student voices, but it also provided me with the opportunity to critically examine my own teaching practices for how effectively I listened and responded to students' voices and experiences, and how effectively I empowered student voices to have a direct impact on change.

Inclusion Through Intentional Design. When taking on the II process, teachers have positioned students as researchers who have the power to investigate their learning environment and make changes to it (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). The II lens also emphasized the need for intentional design to center students who have been historically excluded from schools and to empower them to drive the investigation towards their membership in schools. One mode of II that has captured this intentional design is to involve students in their research around topics related to inclusion (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020), such as YPAR (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). YPAR has featured youth as co-researchers in studies they design, emphasizing creating change and raising criticality around inequities (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Figure 1.1 indicates that the true inclusion of students is impossible unless it actively works to reverse and remove the barriers to inclusion, white-dominant narratives, and white-normative classroom practices. This approach would involve viewing exclusion and inclusion as processes rather than static positions for students, making the inclusion process an iterative process. Inclusion should never be considered fully achieved since classrooms constantly involve new students, and students' voices constantly evolve. There will always be a risk of exclusion, so the process must continually examine that risk. The RCS students' II projects during this study were intentionally designed to confront the white-normative classroom practice that privileges the teacher's voice. The projects did this by asking the students to identify what problem within their school or community *they* would like to explore through research. Employing practitioner research methodology in this

study provided another potential agent for change: students not only had the power to influence the problem they identify in their community, but the practices involved in giving them the space to do so was examined and will inform my future teaching practices.

II and CRT Together

II gave a model to center student voice, inquiry, and input when designing school experiences. CRT laid out the tenets and analytical frame through which we can understand the pattern of excluding Black students and their voices. II and CRT together have the potential to counter the dominant narratives around Black students. Allowing students to make disruptions to the status quo in schools helps schools to grow their inclusive practices and helps students to be engaged in learning, such as in studies when students can give input to lesson design and ultimately change teacher inclusive practices (Messiou & Ainscow, 2015, 2020, 2021). As I gathered the voiced experiences of RCS students participating in this II project and analyzed and interpreted them along with my decision-making processes through practitioner research methods, I gained a better understanding of how included they felt in the learning experiences I co-designed; these findings will inform my inclusionary teaching practices, which then, according to the II framework (Messiou & Ainscow, 2020), can inform teaching practices of my colleagues as well.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the previous chapter, I justified the need to examine through practitioner research the experiences of Rose Calder School (RCS) students as a means for informing my inclusive teaching practices, as well as the inclusive teaching practices of my colleagues. I explained how Black students were asked to leave the classroom and the school at higher rates than White students through racially disproportionate disciplinary practices. Even when they were not externally excluded, they were excluded internally through white-normative classroom practices and white-dominant narratives. I explained how Inclusive Inquiry (II) provided a framework for creating inclusive practices that center students' voices and make inclusion a student-led process. Critical Race Theory (CRT) contextualized the participants' experiences in my study as being influenced by the perceptions, biases, and treatment of Black and Brown people through white-dominant narratives and systematic oppressive policies and practices (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). As such, in the following literature review, I describe research regarding a major structural influence on Black students' experiences: the dominant narratives of Black students, predominantly deficit narratives (Ladson-Billings, 2020). Next, to better understand what we know and what can be learned from an investigation of individual student experiences, I review existing research focused on exploring individual student experiences of Black youth and research that gives voice to Black students as counter-narratives. Finally, I explore the related literature on inclusive classroom practices through the lens of the II framework to identify how inclusion is currently conceptualized in research and practice.

Dominant Narratives' Failure to Link Individuals to Systems

From ancient tradition, stories have been bridges that connected individual experiences to larger systems (Bell, 2003). Dominant narratives in the American educational system, or a

collection of “stories that perpetuate White privilege, White supremacy, and patriarchy” (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 470), have long haunted academic settings, silencing the experiences of oppressed populations (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Within dominant narratives in education has been the pervasive theme of deficit thinking, or blaming cultural differences of students and families as the reason behind academic failure (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Dominant and deficit narratives in educational research and school practice have failed to recognize both individual experiences as well as the systems in place that oppress individuals by grouping individuals into blanket conclusions and at the same time blaming individuals for negative outcomes without acknowledging the systemic oppression that surrounds those outcomes.

Howard (2013) conducted a selective literature review to disrupt dominant and deficit narratives of Black males. Knowing the extant literature that depicts Black males as “problems,” Howard (2013), sought to purposefully exclude studies that used the term “problem” in studies of Black males. After reviewing studies from 1998-2010 that included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, Howard (2013) concluded that even in the literature that intended to disrupt negative depictions of Black males and that refrained from using the term “problem,” there “remains a persistent sense that this group is still a problem” (p. 78). The literature Howard (2013) reviewed was ultimately simplistic in its depictions of Black males’ experiences, monolithic in its portrayal of Black men, and missing the complexity involved in Black males’ experiences. Consequently, Howard (2013) identified a persistent need for research that focuses on the excellence of Black males, on schools that find success with Black males, and on the “unforgiving resilience” of Black males, for “navigating difficult terrain,” (p. 78) inside and outside of school. Howard (2013) ended his review with the sentiment that there is still much to learn about the “diversity of [Black males’] experiences” (p. 80).

While examining the individual experience of a 20-year-old Black male student working on his High School Equivalency diploma, Golden (2017) found in a narrative analysis case study that the dominant narrative around grit, or the power and responsibility of individuals to pull themselves out of oppression, can be internalized for that individual through self-blame and group-blame, rather than seeing the systems that contribute to the oppressive conditions they experience. The participant in Golden (2017)'s study previously had a strong attendance record and a self-articulated goal to complete a post-secondary, second-chance program to receive the equivalent of a high school diploma. Still, after two months, he stopped coming to the program. According to Golden (2017), the participant felt pressured by his guidance counselor to leave the comprehensive high school to attend this High School Equivalency diploma program, and in doing so, he was denied access to special education services for his dyslexia, since the program was not required to provide these services. Golden (2017) sought, by using his previously recorded individual interviews for a prior study, to explore what the student's experience was while attending. Golden (2017)'s purpose in analyzing the student's experience was to improve the program to prevent future dropped attendance. He observed that not only does the richness in individual identity get reduced to stereotypical representations, but the student internalized these stereotypes and did not realize the structural oppression at play in influencing how school reduced his identity. Within the student's narrative, Golden (2017) analyzed these societal stereotypes coming through, such as when the student would blame his peers as those "who do not want to learn or take school seriously" (p. 363). Similarly, Golden (2017) observed the student self-blaming for his academic performance, with framing similar to the grit narrative, all the while not aware that his special education services were being denied. The grit narrative assures that when individuals work hard enough, they can overcome negative outcomes on their

own (Golden, 2017). Golden (2017) found the self and group blame particularly interesting since the student could look at structures outside of school and comment on racialized oppression, such as with treatment by police. Golden (2017) emphasized the fault is not the students for internalizing deficit thinking around schooling but of society for “the poverty of our collective imagination and analysis of race, class, and opportunity” (p. 363). Back to the ancient tradition of stories to connect individuals to structures (Bell, 2003), Golden (2017) saw the societal prevalence of grit narrative as one obstacle that keeps individuals themselves from connecting the stories of their lives to their structural backdrop: “A focus on ‘grit’ and other non-cognitive individual traits as the determining factors necessary for academic and life success masks these absences and deep inequities in educational and other social systems” (p. 363). The student in this case study blamed himself for failures when systemic oppression contributed to them, and Golden (2017) contended that self-blame was the intentional design of dominant discourses. By design, dominant narratives around Black students use broad-stroke descriptions and deficit-based depictions (Ladson-Billings, 2020). Stories are designed to omit a complete picture that includes individual stories of Black students’ experiences. The implications from research on the dominant narratives of Black students is the need in future research for a specific focus not only on individual student experiences but also on Black excellence as well as opportunities for students’ criticality, to move from grit narrative framing towards collective framing of systemic oppression and what influences it has on Black students’ experiences of school. Since the II process of YPAR is intended to be a pedagogical tool in which students are empowered to explore the impact collective systems of oppression have on the topics they research and to use their strengths to create change in those systems (Cammorata & Fine, 2008), this study aimed to

examine how students experience the process and how well the II process met its intended purpose.

Unpacking Black Students' Experiences of Schools

There is now a growing body of research that seeks to give voice to Black students through qualitative methods that add more nuanced depictions of Black student experiences. These studies attempt to fill the gaps of what we know about Black youth experiences as a consequence of monolithic depictions from dominant narratives of outcome deficits (Allen, 2013).

Allen (2013) confronted the dominant narratives around Black male students, specifically Black middle-class male students, in a qualitative study that analyzed narrative data of student experiences and narrative data that described the interventions of the students' fathers. The narrative data was part of a larger ethnographic study at a suburban high school focused on the impact of school policy, as it came through interactions between all stakeholders at the school site. Using interview data from six Black male students, their fathers, and teachers selected by the students, as well as observing the students throughout their school day, Allen (2013) found themes around racialized perceptions of students' intelligence by some teachers and experiences of racialized discipline practices against the Black students who were interviewed. Another finding was how, when middle-class identity intersected with race, several of the students' fathers were able to intervene when dominant narratives were being applied to their sons, and the fathers were able to meet with teachers and administrators to offer counter-narratives, narrowly avoiding disciplinary exclusion (Allen, 2013). Middle-class status was identified in participants by using multiple criteria, including "household income, education level and occupation of parents, residence location and ownership, and social groups the families were involved in"

(Allen, 2017, p. 189). Although Allen (2013) celebrated the strengths of six Black families in successfully navigating the challenges of racialized treatment at high school, Allen also reflected on how, in each of these cases, their families were able to save their individual students from harm. Yet, the hard work of these families did little to correct the immediate systems of racism in this school. Allen (2013) celebrated the power and human agency behind these cases of resistance and remained hopeful at the potential power if families were to form together in collective resistance.

From the same large data collection from the same suburban high school, Allen (2017) focused later on four working-class Black male students to examine their expression of masculinity in comparison to the dominant narratives around Black male masculinity. After interviewing and observing the four boys in their school interactions, Allen (2017) reflected on students' divergent feelings. On the one hand, there was a theme of the power of the individual to use school as an opportunity to "'be something better'" (Allen, 2017, p. 275); yet, at the same time, there were expressed experiences of whole systems of oppression. When asked about negative academic and discipline outcomes, students responded in interviews with similarly divergent feelings, deemphasizing systemic causes of their experiences and resorting to individual, self-blame, a sign that the students had internalized "dominant discourses of Black masculine identity that position them as culturally deficient" (Allen, 2017, p. 275). Allen (2017) found from one boy's description and a follow-up with a teacher, that there was a pattern in which the student was being disciplined for his behavior by being sent to an in-school suspension space. Still, after Allen's interviews with the student and the in-school suspension teacher, Allen inferred that the student was able to manipulate the system, intentionally participating in behaviors that would send him to the less-structured space of the in-school suspension room to

resist the racialized constraints within the classroom, such as the classroom teacher's microaggressions against the student and the classroom teacher's control of curriculum and instruction and over-policing of classroom procedures. Allen (2017)'s qualitative examination gave insight into Black students' strengths in seeing the systems of racism around them and using their agency to resist it, even while internalizing dominant narratives of deficiency. However, both Allen's studies (2013, 2017) illustrated a dichotomy; Allen pointed out the boys and their families as active members, not passive members, of the larger systems of school, and yet the individual actions the families and students made did not necessarily change the larger systems of oppression in their school. Allen's (2013, 2017) evidence pointed to the complexities of systemic racism, dominant and deficit narratives, how students internalized them, and the agency students and families take on an individual level to resist them. I connected Allen (2017)'s findings to this study, specifically how students sought out unstructured spaces, even when that involved disciplinary actions, as I observed students' II project work within an instructional space that was less structured than a traditional classroom and one in which the majority of students were asked to attend due to disciplinary actions.

Two recent studies (Annamma et al., 2019; Carter Andrews et al., 2019) have pointed out the general omission of Black girls from the conversation on Black students, yet where there is mention of Black girls, the focus is on their rowdiness, disruptiveness, hyper-sexualization, and a sweeping narrative even worse than crisis, one of blame and invalidation. In a mixed-methods exploration of the discipline records of 3,628 female students in Denver K-12 settings, Annamma et al. (2019) quantitatively analyzed the rates and categories of discipline infractions and then qualitatively analyzed the language written in each discipline referral through a critical lens. They found trends of Black girls being disciplined more so for subjective causes, such as

disobedience or those behaviors based on adult perceptions. White girls are disciplined more for objective causes, such as bringing weapons to school or vandalism. The trends of subjective decision-making around discipline consequences illustrate the systemic and implicit bias against Black girls (Annamma et al., 2019). Annamma et al. (2019) urged schools to hold a richer understanding of Black girls:

> Black girls possess varied experiences and skills, all of which need to be viewed as strengths. In other words, there is a multitude of ways of being a Black girl, and no one set of behaviors should be expected or demanded from them to be given equal access to educational opportunity (p. 233).

Noticeably, Annamma et al. (2019)'s study, while diving into a thorough investigation of disciplinary referral language, lacked the qualitative input of the students' voices around these experiences during these specific discipline moments, making the omission of Black girls' voices even more palpable. These noticeably missing voices informed my study and my choice to observe how students' voices and participation in the II projects.

Drawing from five high schools in a large urban city, Carter Andrews et al. (2019) incorporated 70 Black girls' voices, as well as their perspectives on how their individual experiences relate to systems of injustice, by using the following research question to lead their research: "In what ways does a critical conversation space allow for Black girls' meaning-making about their individual and collective schooling experiences?" (p. 2533). The critical conversation spaces used by Carter Andrews et al. (2019) were similar to focus groups but less formal and intentionally led by Black female researchers to design a supportive, free-flowing space based on Black female kinship. This study aimed to offer Black female students agency while participating in the research. Carter Andrews et al. (2019) found themes of intense and

negative racialized experiences of school, being judged by stereotyped qualities of deficit, and at the same time, clarity and understanding around the positive relationships at schools, especially teachers. In the discussion of their favorite teachers, the girls could identify specific traits and interaction styles of those teachers with a keen awareness of that teacher's impact on their school experience (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). The girls noticed "teachers demonstrating fear of their Black students" (Carter Andrews et al., 2019, p. 2546), especially in moments when Black students were attempting to stand up for themselves. The girls noticed that adults judged them unintelligent and unmotivated (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). The power of critical conversation spaces for Black female students with fellow Black female facilitators to offer safe spaces for students to name and identify systemic injustices alongside the emotional support of the facilitators is a power that Carter Andrews et al. (2019) recommend should be replicated with spaces similar to critical conversation spaces at all schools for all marginalized students. The girls were concerned about the instruction and curriculum they received in classrooms:

> Concerns about teaching strategies and teacher turnover, along with suspicions that their peers at other schools learn more advanced content, weighed on the girls' minds. The adults responsible for scaffolding the girls' development were denying them opportunities to experience empowerment through learning. (Carter Andrews et al., 2019, p. 2548)

The one modification to the focus groups Carter Andrews et al. (2019) recommended was to conduct these spaces without the ethical constraints of research, naming specific times in which students asked facilitators directly for mentorship and advice. This request could not be met for the ethical considerations of this study. Another drawback to Carter Andrews et al. (2019)'s examination of Black female student experiences of school was that it was unclear if the students

could see any actionable outcome of their critical conversation spaces. Even though Carter Andrews et al. (2019)'s study offered the space for participants to make the connection between individuals and systems, there appeared to be a disconnect between participants influencing outcomes as a result of their input. Again, the implication is a need for research methods that directly align Black students' expression of needed change and the opportunity to make that change happen, such as what can occur when students engage with YPAR (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

Allen (2013, 2017)'s research primed my interactions with students around my research questions with anticipation that these questions around experiences of inclusion and how they might relate to teaching practices are complex questions rooted in systemic injustices, which can present for students as internalized self-perceptions. I incorporated from Annamma et al. (2019)'s study how much concern the student participants had around their teachers' strategies and overall treatment of them, as well as the times in which Carter Andrews et al. (2019)'s student participants wanted more of a teacher/mentor relationship when navigating the topics of research by building a study using practitioner research methods to incorporate student voice in reflecting on my teaching practices. Students' experiences of teachers related to feelings of inclusion and exclusion. Students may be willing to be honest about feelings of inclusion as it relates to race within the community of a classroom, especially if they understand that their honesty can amount to change.

For this study, I took from the literature on dominant narratives of Black students as well as the literature on individual experiences and counter-narratives of Black students the importance of practicing classroom choices that provide for students' feelings of inclusion, where they can be honest and critical of societal power structures as well as how teacher practices

influence their feelings of inclusion, which is why I wanted to study students' experience of a project in inclusionary intentions.

The Inclusive Classroom

The related literature on inclusive classroom practices through the lens of the II framework involves literature surrounding classroom practices that center student voice, students' active presence, engagement, inquiry, and design, with a particular focus on students who have been historically marginalized, and a collaborative exploration amongst teachers and students of how learning can be more inclusive (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow 2020). The literature surrounding the aforementioned topics dives into pedagogical approaches that aim for students' experiences of inclusivity in the classroom, such as youth participatory action research (YPAR), democratic processes, and culturally responsive pedagogies.

Student Voice

Mitra (2018) examined, through a literature review, the research over the previous ten years with a focus on urban secondary schools, the topic of student voice, and its impact on the classroom and school improvement. There are different levels of student voice in interaction with adults: listening, in which adults listen for student input; collaboration, in which adults work alongside students towards reform; and leadership, in which students hold authority and decision-making power (Mitra, 2018). Students most vulnerable to systems of injustice have significantly benefited from schools' efforts to center their voice. Students who experience systems of injustice have great insight into how to improve these systems (Mitra, 2018). Mitra (2018) gave examples of how to incorporate student voices, and they included listening to a failing student about their understanding of why they were failing, structuring focus groups with teachers and students together for teachers to hear from students about their experiences, as well

as for students to be involved in the problem-solving of the school, and finally for students to build community-based groups to address school and community needs. Based on her research, Mitra (2018) warned of the need for criticality when growing student voices in schools, with the danger without criticality including a "tokenistic or symbolic" (p. 475) rather than authentic engagement with student voices, such as superficially including student input without allowing it to influence and impact change. YPAR is one way to engage students in their "critical inquiry process" (p. 476) as students drive the research process to make actionable changes. On top of YPAR, Mitra (2018) recommends other "layers of inquiry" (p. 476) as teachers engage with students through critical inquiry. Mitra (2018) concludes the potential for student voice to "spark student learning" (p. 479). From Mitra's research, I designed this study since the original II project was intended to center student voices. Yet, I wanted to use practitioner research (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007) to examine their voiced experiences further so that their participation in the study can lead to changes in my teaching practice.

YPAR

There is now a growing body of YPAR that specifically aims to include students as co-researchers in order to effect change in their schools and communities. In an integrative literature review that included studies from differing methodologies, Shamrock and Cummings (2017) analyzed 45 empirical and peer-reviewed studies from 2009-2016 that involved youth in participatory action research, with the aim to identify the qualities of YPAR, as well as the potential impact of YPAR. The top outcomes among the 45 studies included

> increased social justice awareness and knowledge about the topic of research in the youths, youth learning the process of taking responsibility and taking leadership roles, enhanced relationships with adults, developing and strengthening a sense of

connectedness and belonging to the community, and youth being given 'an opportunity to become agents of change within their own communities' (Shamrock & Cummings, 2017, p. 405-406).

After analyzing the qualities of YPAR, Shamrock and Cummings (2017) observed the range in the levels of participation from youth in the whole process of research: "Though many projects are limited in the amount of time and resources they can spend on fieldwork, expanding the areas of children and youth participation, beyond their use as a data source, must be prioritized as a part of research design" (p. 408). YPAR, a newly growing field, seems to have the potential to connect individual students' experiences to their structural barriers, alongside the potential to create student agency in making changes in removing those barriers, by supporting students in making evidence-based recommendations to appropriate stakeholders.

One opportunity to create change from the research findings is to combine YPAR with innovation principles, such as design approaches. YPAR has been used extensively, emphasizing the research process, with students' final steps being their research findings. Recently, YPAR has been combined with design approaches, extending YPAR beyond research findings and into the design of solutions. Falkenburger et al. (2021) created an evidence-based toolkit to support adults who involve youth in YPAR along with design principles. The first benefit Falkenberger et al. (2021) listed was that youth engagement in research and design "promotes inclusivity" (p. 2). Facilitator practices that Falkenbuger et al. (2021) prioritized included making sure students feel comfortable engaging in the process, allowing students to choose their modes of engagement, and facilitating a "shared governance" (p. 4) to promote student leadership in decision-making.

Even with the promising potential of YPAR in combination with design approaches, few YPAR studies have featured Black youth and even fewer have featured them as direct contributors to the design of solutions. One of these studies focused on a Council of Youth Research outside of Los Angeles, where Black and Latino high school students participated in YPAR during a summer program (Bautista et al., 2013). By analyzing the methodological tools the youth used in their research and analyzing the data of recorded meeting dialogue, field notes, and student presentations, Bautistia et al. (2013) noticed the way this student organization was able to transform research traditions and how the students' creativity in communicating their research findings was "a form of resistance, a re-envisioning of whose knowledge is valuable" (p. 6), in contrast to the dominant narratives that surround educational research, such as objectivist research traditions. Bautista et al. (2013) found that the students' growth throughout their YPAR projects included the skills in being able to name the systems that feel oppressive to their experiences as well as the skills in being able to identify ways to respond to them and that this criticality "leads them to develop a voice and an informed perspective that needs to be considered as we, as adults, develop policies and practices that impact them" (p. 20). Even though featuring an extracurricular experience, Bautista et al. (2013)'s YPAR study fits most of the tenets within the II framework as well as the YPAR emphasis on empowering student voice to influence policies and practices. However, since students in the study concluded their projects by presenting their research findings, rather than designing solutions related to these findings, it is possible that students were lacking a direct line of agency to define their own experiences of inclusion, as suggested by the II framework.

Another YPAR study featuring Black youth documented how students' multi-modal research could communicate counter-narratives, which, although not solutions to problems,

could be conceived as products of design. The study involved seven male students at an affluent suburban high school in the Midwest (Smith & Hope, 2020). Smith and Hope (2020)'s facilitation of YPAR included protocols within sociopolitical development and critical social analysis frameworks. The students were invited to participate in YPAR that featured a photovoice project, meaning they used photographs of students as discussion and critical analysis starting points around problems and solutions from their schools and communities, and Smith and Hope (2020)'s study was aimed at exploring how "Black boys make meaning of their school experiences with regard to race, identity, and oppression, within the context of a YPAR program designed to facilitate critical social analysis for Black boys?" (p. 561). The meaning-making through the YPAR process became even more complicated than Smith and Hope (2020) anticipated when it became apparent that students were working against deficit narratives around themselves and the way they had internalized deficit narratives around each other and ultimately themselves. Still, the students could use the process of YPAR to create counter-narratives of Black student achievement by creating a new photovoice project that depicts a high-achieving school assignment completed by one of the students or co-researchers (Smith & Hope, 2020). Smith & Hope (2020) asserted the importance of criticality protocols when facilitating YPAR to support students as they navigate dominant narratives due to systems of racism.

Two other studies featuring II practices, including YPAR, ultimately impacted how students engaged. Messiou and Ainscow (2015) followed a three-year project in secondary schools in which teachers, as part of a lesson study in collaborative teacher teams, came together with students as co-researchers to examine lessons related to inclusive practices in the classroom. Students were involved in various ways, including giving input to the teachers before the design of the lessons, contributing to the design of the lessons, and giving feedback and ideas around the

impact of future teaching practices after the lessons had taken place (Messiou & Ainscow, 2015). Student feedback included minor revisions, such as the use of time in a lesson, and broader feedback, such as the engagement level of classroom activities (Messiou & Ainscow, 2015). Teachers used the feedback to identify professional development themes and worked in collaborative teams to develop their practice based on these themes (Messiou & Ainscow, 2015).

I take from the research and literature on YPAR the inclusionary benefit of positioning youth as co-researchers and the benefit of pairing design approaches with YPAR. The primary benefit is that students can act as lead change agents. Additionally, for Black and Brown students, the design of counternarratives may occur in this process. Considering the potential of these benefits through YPAR projects, I chose to examine one such project through the lens of practitioner research so that I may amplify these benefits by examining students' experiences of the project and the choices I made while co-facilitating the project.

The Classroom as a Democratic Forum

In addition to the benefits listed above, Messiou and Ainscow (2021) found that the II framework influenced a greater sense of democracy in schools. It is helpful to understand the connection to democracy by looking more deeply at the political science definition of inclusion and exclusion, as well as scholars who have translated these definitions to the classroom. Even though not a K-12 example, there are lessons to be learned from the experiences of Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) as they sought to apply tenets of democracy toward pedagogical practices. Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) named strategies they, as professors and students, found success in using to remove the barriers to internal exclusion in their college-level class called Reclaiming Democracy. Those strategies included The Greeting, Affirmative Use of Rhetoric,

and Use of Narrative. Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) claimed greetings to be underestimated in building partnership between members of a classroom since “the greeting recognizes that others are necessary to the process of meaningful engagement” (p. 34). Greetings can also be a space for self-exploration when given time, space, and classroom invitation (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). By Affirmative Use of Rhetoric, Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) described the importance of not using instruction to change the language and style of student communication but rather to teach students the power and impact when students express themselves, their diverse backgrounds, and their diverse opinions and positions in their own voices and their own special way (p. 35). The Use of Narrative, according to Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) is to encourage students and instructors to communicate their own experiences through storytelling and for this storytelling to have a component of public affirmation. These three strategies should be used, according to Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015), in addition to a curriculum with “both participatory and justice-oriented elements” (p. 46). For example, the professors who taught the course described in this article involved students in a culminating community project that focused on justice-oriented topics from their surrounding city and utilized inclusionary strategies during the class sessions leading up to this culminating project (Bloch-Schulman al., 2015). Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015)’s efforts to model democratic processes at the same time as teaching them provided further practical examples of how inclusive practices can look in the classroom.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

In considering how best to approach inclusive practices for students who have been historically marginalized, I relied on culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining scholarship to further specify and exemplify inclusive practices. The literature defining culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 2014), culturally responsive (Gay, 2010), and culturally sustaining (Paris &

Alim, 2012) pedagogy aligns with Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015)'s suggestions on how to build internal inclusion in the classroom, where all students may influence discussion and decision-making (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). Ladson-Billings (2014), Gay (2010), and Paris & Alim (2012) focused on teacher practice, or pedagogy, in order to examine more closely how various teachers connect more effectively with their students in ways more than just using culturally-inclusive curricula, just as Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) identified strategies of practices in addition to their community-project curriculum. As an anthropologist, Ladson-Billings (2014) noticed the importance of teachers who sustain the culture of the students in the classroom (Paris & Alim, 2012) as a fluid and iterative process "to ensure that consistently marginalized students are repositioned into a place of normativity--that is, they become subjects in the instructional process, not mere objects" (p. 76), which aligns with Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015)'s description of eliminating internal exclusion by including all student voices in a way that can impact discussion and decision-making. In supporting the relevance of students' cultural differences, Ladson-Billings (2014) named the areas of focus as academic success, or the learning growth of students, and cultural competence, which she defines as students' ability to acknowledge the cultural differences of their peers positively, and sociopolitical consciousness, which is the application of classroom learning to tackle larger and oftentimes structural problems outside of the classroom. Cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2014) pair with Bloch-Schulman (2015)'s strategy of the importance of Greeting.

Similarly, Gay (2010) shared the routines and rituals she used in the classroom with the focus on building community, for example, giving class time and space for students to explore and share aspects of their identities and to create "a sense of camaraderie, an esprit de corps, a climate of caring, and a community of learning where we assist one another in the struggle to

know and share in the celebration of our success" (p. 219). Gay (2010) expanded on the importance for teachers to communicate care for diverse students. Attributes of care for students include "attending to person and performance" (p. 63), "action-provoking," (p. 64), "prompting effort and achievement" (p. 66), and "multidemensional responsiveness" (p. 68). Gay (2010)'s elaboration on communicating care aligns with Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015)'s approach of using Greeting, which is one way to communicate attentiveness towards students, as well as the fact that the work should be social-justice oriented, or leading to action. The II framework (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020) also aligns with Gay's recommendations for the teacher's responsiveness to diverse students to be ongoing and a multi-faceted process. However, in Gay (2010)'s description of communicating care, there was some messaging that put the teacher in the position of expert or provider in some cases, such as in her recommendation to prepare "students to understand and deal realistically with social realities (what is), along with possibilities for transformation" (p. 62), to teach "ethnic, racial, and cultural knowledge, identity, and pride" (p. 63), and finally, to provide "personally relevant learning experiences for socially, ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse students" (p. 63). Given the frequent cultural mismatch between teachers and students, it could be problematic for a teacher to practice expertise in these areas. However, centering students and elevating their voices is one way to support students as experts on their realities, culture, and feelings of relevance towards learning experiences.

One qualitative study on culturally responsive teaching made notes of the direction needed towards creating classrooms that involve student voices to create a sense of inclusiveness (Samuels, 2018). Samuels (2018)'s research led 200 elementary and secondary teachers from a low-socioeconomic urban school district in culturally responsive training and followed up with

focus groups to hear teachers' perspectives on culturally responsive pedagogy. The study aimed to encourage discussion around culturally responsive teaching practices between teachers and researchers and among teachers (Samuels, 2018). After analyzing the teacher discussions on both the benefits and challenges of culturally responsive pedagogy, Samuels (2018) observed that part of the process of being culturally responsive involves for teachers to examine their own biases, and teachers commented on the need for reflective practice in examining biases. Specific to reflection, Samuels concluded that teachers should "explore how they act (and do not act), as well as what they say (and do not say)...to reflect upon their biases and how they negotiate themselves in the classroom and with students" (p. 29). When discussing strategies for the facilitation of culturally responsive pedagogy, Samuels (2018) concluded that "participants spoke most extensively about giving students voice and allowing that voice to be largely represented in multiple contexts" (p. 27). Because of the prevalence of the topic of giving students a voice, Samuels discussed the need for teachers themselves to "engage in dialogue on how to foster an inclusive climate and culture with students" (p. 29) as to be provided access to "strategies and tools for fostering an inclusive and responsive educational environment that gives voice to all students and promotes equitable access and opportunities" (p. 30). I integrated Samuels (2018)'s researched findings into this study through the use of practitioner research as a space for reflection on my own culturally responsive and inclusive practices of centering student voices, knowing from Samuels the importance of reflective practice in building a culture of culturally responsive pedagogy amongst educators. I also noted Samuels (2018)'s exploration of the lack of student perspective. While the intention was to gather teacher perceptions, the topic of discussion in focus groups often moved to the importance of students' voices in the classroom,

making the presence of students' voices in research on inclusive practices an area I focus on for this study.

Currently, in school practice, students' individual experiences and voices are not often included in discussions and decision-making (Messiou & Ainscow, 2021). However, Black voices are needed more in educational research and the classroom environment (Bryan, 2017). Black student voices have the potential to create counter-narratives to disrupt the dominant narratives that withhold their power of connection between individual experiences and the systems in context to individual experiences. YPAR is one potential methodology to empower Black student voices and give them the agency to use their voices to influence the systems surrounding them. However, there are dangers to the use of student voices.

The literature around Black voices, dominant narratives, counter-narratives, and inclusive classroom practices, justified the need for a practitioner research study on the teaching practices that touch on each of these topics. After gathering together what classroom practices fit within the II lens, I stressed the importance of designing a research study that demanded my self-reflection of my teaching practices and for that self-reflection to be influenced by the input of students, since they are the experts of their own experiences.

Chapter 3: Study Design and Methodology

The study design and methodology described below came forth to address the following research questions regarding Rose Calder School (RCS) students' experiences of an Inclusive Inquiry (II) project: What is experienced when students engage in an inclusive process facilitated by me, their teacher?

1. How and to what extent do the student participants' experiences reflect experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion?
2. What factors influenced my choices regarding curriculum and instruction as I facilitated my students' engagement in the process?

Study Context

To respond to the research questions above, this study used data collected during the 2021-22 academic year at the school in which I work, Rose Calder School (RCS). RCS was awarded a state-granted K-12 Innovation Planning Grant, through which we could design experiences that put student voices and student inquiry at the center of classroom curriculum and instruction. One aspect of the grant was a collaboration between RCS students and a university Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) lab to design projects that RCS students envision could lead to change around a problem they observe in their school or their community. The YPAR lab was selected for collaboration since YPAR is one example of an II process. This study investigated my own experiences as well as those of the student participants as they engaged in these II projects.

School

RCS is the school setting for students in grades 8-12 who are assigned to an alternative option from the comprehensive middle school or high school. Students are asked to join RCS for

various reasons, including, but not limited to, repeated disciplinary infractions, truancy, juvenile detention, housing displacement, and credit deficiency. A select few students choose to attend RCS over their assigned comprehensive school; in 2021-2022: out of 28 enrolled students, 23 students did not have the option of attending the comprehensive school, and the remaining three chose to attend RCS over their comprehensive school. There is an over-representation of Black students in comparison to the racial makeup of the comprehensive school district: During the 2021-2022 year, 28 students were enrolled at RCS, and 75% of RCS students were Black, 11% Mixed Race/Other, 3% Hispanic, and 11 % white. In comparison, the racial makeup of the school district in which RCS is situated was 29% Black, 12% Mixed Race/Other, 40% white, 13% Hispanic, and 6% Asian for the 2021-2022 school year. The district is located in a middle-sized city on the central east coast, where 4,350 students attended K-12 during the 2021-2023 school year.

Participants

All students were invited to participate in the II projects. Ultimately nine students actively engaged in the II project; upon conclusion of the projects, all nine were invited to participate in the study; six students agreed. Individually with students, I explained the purpose of the study and what would be required of them. I explained that by using the recordings of our sessions, my notes, and their student work, I would be examining what happened to my teaching practices when they engaged in the II projects and what I could learn about their experiences. I explained that at any point of the project, they could opt out of the study. There was a consent form (Appendix C) as well as opt-out instructions, which I gave to students and their families.

As seen in Table 3.1, from the six student participants, five students identified as Black, and one student identified as Mixed Race. Two students identified as male and four students as female. Students represented mixed grade levels, from grades 10-12.

Table 3.1

Participant Descriptors and Project Topics

Student Pseudonym	Gender Identification	Racial Demographic	Grade	Project Topic
Derrick	Male	Black	11	School Lunch
Kingston	Male	Black	11	School Lunch
Trinity	Female	Black	11	School Lunch, Popular Culture
Alexis	Female	Mixed Race	11	Popular Culture, Prenatal Care, School Lunch
Destiny	Female	Black	12	Popular Culture, Prenatal Care, School Lunch
Jada	Female	Black	10	Popular Culture

II Projects

As a principal investigator on the K-12 Innovation Planning Grant and the English teacher at RCS, I facilitated the II projects alongside two graduate students, whose pseudonyms are Jean and Ashley, from the YPAR lab. The project began in October 2021 and concluded in mid-June, 2022. We facilitated this work with students once a week during either an English class period or an afternoon activity period. During the first weeks of the project, we worked to establish trust with the students and to introduce them to YPAR. After two-three sessions, when asked what problems students observe in their school or their community that they might want to research more in-depth, groups of students formed around three topics. Table 1.1 identifies the

specific II projects the participants chose to work on. Trinity, Alexis, and Destiny worked with more than one group.

School Lunch. The group of students who chose to focus on school lunch was able to affect change through the YPAR and II process the most extensively out of all the groups. The School Lunch group was also the largest. This group of students passionately shared their observations about school lunch, how much of a problem it has been for them daily, and what a contrast it is from the experience of food that they love. These students expressed discontent with their school lunch program. They communicated a shared interest in pursuing school lunch as a project topic, one for which they wanted to research and find a solution. They noticed how the lunches were delivered to RCS inside soft cooler bags from the comprehensive high school. According to the students, this transportation process left the food soggy and unpleasant, when the contents of the meals were not appetizing to the students from the start. One example students provided was soggy chicken tenders. The school lunch group named their project Neighborhood Kitchen. The Neighborhood Kitchen group started with two student leaders, Derrick and Kingston, and eventually involved nearly all students at the school in their cooking events. Their project process involved researching the experience of school lunch for their fellow students, identifying what it was exactly that made them feel so dissatisfied with their school lunch experience, and interviewing a local chef who leads training towards culinary certifications about how they might update the school kitchen and how they might plan meals for the school community, going shopping for their supplies, hosting five cooking events throughout the spring for all students and staff, collecting survey data from students and staff about the impact of their cooking events, co-creating a documentary film around their project along with a local film organization, and finally presenting their project to the school board and superintendent. Finally,

Derrick and Kingston gave feedback to the school administration that a cooking class should be offered at RCS. That feedback was taken into account, and a cooking elective will be offered for RCS students during the 2022-2023 school year.

Popular Culture. One group of students formed with three students, Jada, Trinity, and Destiny. Students in this group were curious about how popular culture is depicted in museum settings as well as who gets to decide what goes into a museum after they reflected on a general feeling of underrepresentation of Black culture in museums. Students in this group remembered specific moments in elementary school when they recognized Black historical figures but were curious to find out if there was a museum representation of the lesser-known Black historical figures. Students used their research time to organize a field trip to Washington D.C. to collect some observational data. Jada, Trinity, and Destiny wanted this trip to be offered exclusively to the female students at RCS. They mentioned wanting this exclusivity to balance the work of the school lunch project, which male-identifying students led. Students organized the trip to take place in April 2022. The trip itinerary included visiting the Library of Congress, having lunch at a restaurant downtown, visiting the National Hip Hop Museum, and then a Black-authored bookstore near Howard University. Five students attended the trip, including Jada, Trinity, and Destiny. The trip's chaperones included a co-teacher, the two graduate students (Jean and Ashley), and me. This group used their II project time following the trip to reflect on their travels and findings.

Prenatal Care. Two students, Destiny and Alexis, shared the experience of attending prenatal visits at a local hospital. Destiny and Alexis shared their experiences and expressed a problem of sometimes being assigned male providers whom they trusted for their care. Destiny also shared the problem of feeling left out of decision-making and understanding all the

information surrounding her pregnancy; she wondered if that treatment was related to her age. Alexis had a one-year-old child, received prenatal care, and delivered her baby to the hospital. Destiny was pregnant and was at the time dealing with her first few prenatal visits throughout this project time. The two students used the project time to process their experiences with doctors.

As their project time developed, Destiny took the lead in researching what the experience might be like for her when she arrived at the hospital for delivery. She intended to schedule a visit to the hospital and to use the project facilitators' support to gather the information that would help her understand what the delivery process is like at this hospital. However, due to COVID restrictions, she could not attend in person. As an alternative, Destiny researched hospital intake and delivery processes online. For her final product, she chose to put together a slide show for herself to be able to visualize better what might happen when she arrives at the hospital for delivery. Due to attendance issues, Alexis stopped engaging with the project before coming to a final product.

Project Facilitation. Between October 2021 and June 2022, I met with the two graduate students, Jean and Ashley, to reflect on the projects and to plan the subsequent facilitation sessions. The beginning of our meetings involved coming up with structured plans for the week. Later, we moved to semi-structured approaches after receiving input from students. Throughout the week, I spoke individually to each student to gain insight into the following week's schedule. In the early stages of the project, I observed a higher level of student involvement in classroom discussion than I had experienced yet with these six students, four of whom I had worked with during the previous academic year. I also noticed that these projects influenced my curricular

choices for classroom time outside the II projects and in our English classes. Those early experiences propelled my interest in the study.

Study Design

I designed this study to investigate the influence of the students' participation in this II project on their classroom experiences and my choices around curriculum and instruction. The research design of this study was based on practitioner research (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007). Practitioner research is practice-based and bridges theoretical inquiry with practical inquiry and "with its focus upon local inquiries designed to address and ameliorate local problems, should necessarily be concerned not only with solutions but with the conditions that produced the problems in the first place (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007, p. 200). Although specific to one specific topic of investigation, practitioner research should result in findings that can contribute to more general discussions and critiques.

Practitioner research adds an extra layer of criticality to the curricular and instructional choices I made this year, putting historically marginalized students' voices at the forefront of the curriculum through the II project. Ultimately, practitioner research in education ought to derive from a practitioner's "desire to improve," and it ought to also "contribute to the development of professional knowledge" (McAteer, 2013, p. 19). I used the methodology's format of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (McAteer, 2013, p. 21) to further investigate and improve my practice and consider the potential professional learning that can come around inclusiveness.

Positionality

Warren and Marciano (2018) commented how "researchers run the risk of doing more harm than good, despite their intentions" (p. 686) when exploring vulnerable outcomes with vulnerable populations. Because I work with a vulnerable population of students, I must heed

this warning. Hence, I used the reflexive methods of practitioner research (McAteer, 2013). I also used critical whiteness studies (CWS; Matias et al., 2014; Matias & Boucher, 2021) as an added reflexive step to stop and examine my role in the II project.

I am a white female teacher in her early 40s from an upper-middle-class background who has taught English for 11 years and has worked for three years as an instructional coach at the high school level. Additionally, as a doctoral student of education, I focused my studies on racial inequities in schools and classroom innovation. 2021-2022 was my second year teaching at RCS, and I taught predominantly Black students from predominantly low socioeconomic status households. Even when engaging in the student-centered process of II with my students, I still ran the risk of "doing more harm than good" if I didn't develop a rigorous level of reflection on my practice. As I conducted this practitioner research, I threw myself at the center of this study, but I did so with immense criticality. I used the updated caution of Matias and Boucher (2021) to conduct this practitioner research, trying not to center white narratives and further marginalize students but rather to examine whiteness, most importantly in the context of how students receive it. As such, I centered students' voices as my main sources of data. I was intentional about not coming to conclusions solely on my own from student evidence, but using the evidence as a source for follow-up interactions with students through member checking, to gather from their perspective, how my findings landed for them. I wanted the space of this study to involve the reflexivity and criticality of practitioner research and CWS without adding noise, tone-deafness, and other tropes of whiteness, such as savior-complex or the tendency to speak for Black and Brown students.

I recognized the interest convergence at play with this study. Derrick Bell described interest convergence as a concept in which white people only support or allow progress for Black

and Brown people if the progress also fits white people's interests (Bell, 2004). While the study has the potential to improve the curricular and instructional experiences of Black and Brown students, I recognize that this study fits my interest in partially fulfilling the requirements for my doctorate. The II project work would have happened regardless of this study, and the II project was intended to identify and remove barriers to students' experiences of inclusion. Adding this practitioner research study to the II projects inserts my interests to examine my involvement in the projects and complete one requirement for my degree. Knowing the interest convergence at play informed my attempts for my interests to emerge without dominating student interests and attempting to protect student interests throughout the study. I tried to protect student interests by holding student voices at the center of data analysis, member checking my understanding of the data, and presenting the findings of this study in a way that can benefit the participants' future experiences of instruction and curriculum at their school. I hope this study will have an even more significant impact in identifying and removing barriers to students' experiences of inclusion.

Reflexivity Statement

Practitioner research is reflexive (McAteer, 2013). The goal of my ongoing reflexivity in this study was to find a neutral stance to examine students' experience in these II projects fairly. However, given my positionality and identity, I recognize I am an outsider to RCS students' experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Thus I acknowledge my subjectivity in interpreting the data for this study.

Throughout the student projects, I used a teacher's diary to reflect on my interactions with students. Rather than relying on memory in my diary writing, I used the transcribed audio of our interactions to have the exact language students used. One cohort member in my doctoral

program served as a critical colleague, reading over drafts of my study and giving me feedback. I also utilized both graduate students who co-facilitated the II projects with me as member checkers to ensure the data were accurately represented and to check my perceptions of classroom experiences. I engaged in member checking with students as I made meaning of the data. My intention with this study was to be more inclusive in my teaching. As such, I examined evidence of my practice for growth opportunities. Most of my teaching experiences have been in high school English classrooms within the same school district as RCS, and in all my classes, historically marginalized students were enrolled. I realize I have worn unexamined patterns in my teaching practice; I aimed to approach them with a freshness for this study.

Conflict of Interest

There were two areas of potential conflict of interest for this study. One, as the researcher, I was also the assigned English teacher for the participants of the study during the 2021-2022 academic school year. Two, I am employed by the school division where the study takes place and also received a stipend as project manager for the K-12 Innovation Grant, through which student participants worked on the II project. To regulate personal bias caused by the potential conflicts of interest described above, I maintained a constant state of ethical reflexivity on the experiences of co-facilitating students in this II project. To mitigate the conflict of interest of holding grading power over the students who were invited to participate in the study, I waited until all final grades were submitted before approaching participants for the consent process. I also utilized a critical colleague to generate feedback on writing. Additionally, member-checks were conducted with student participants and graduate student participants in order to affirm the analysis of the data was in line with their perceptions.

Data Collection

After gaining access to this research through IRB approval (Appendix A) and local district approval, data was collected over one month following the students' II projects work. Data included 1) archival audio recordings of II student and facilitator lessons, 2) teacher observation log (Appendix B), 3) teacher reflexivity diary, 4) student work connected to the II project

Data Sources

Archival Audio Recordings of the 2021-2022 II Project Sessions

As a part of the II project the study participants were engaged in, most class sessions for the project were audio-recorded for note-taking and planning for the co-facilitators. At the time of data collection, upon the conclusion of the 2021-22 school year, there were 12 recordings, approximately 50 minutes each. I hired an outside transcription company to transcribe the audio recordings and applied pseudonyms to the original transcriptions when names were used. These data provided information related to my instructional moves and student engagement in class activities, supporting the response to both research questions.

I excluded the talk, behaviors, and interactions of those students who did not provide consent to participate in the study. The original transcriptions were deleted once the student pseudonyms were applied.

Facilitator Documents

Throughout the 2021-22 II projects, I wrote weekly diary entries to reflect on my progress in providing inclusive curriculum and instruction. These entries described what the students were doing, what they were talking about, and how they interacted during the project session. Also, I included my reflections on the choices I made as the project progressed.

At the time of data collection, upon the conclusion of the 2021-22 school year, I used this diary to provide me with data related to my second research question: What factors influenced the choices I made regarding curriculum and instruction as I facilitated my students' engagement in the II process? If and when my diary referenced a student who did not consent to participating in the study, I did not include that reference.

Facilitator documents also included any instructional or curricular materials used by the facilitators over the course of the 2021-22 school year in service of the II projects. These documents included facilitators' emails, lesson plans, and notes. These materials gave context to my research question: What factors influenced the choices I made regarding curriculum and instruction as I facilitated my students' engagement in the II process?

Student Documents

These included surveys students created, presentations, a documentary film, and student feedback drafted in response to their research experiences. The documents were used to see evidence of what can be learned about inclusive teaching practices related to an II project, evidence of student engagement in the II project, and evidence of student experiences of the II project. These documents gave context to the student-voiced experiences of the II project. At the time of data collection upon the conclusion of the 2021-22 school year, I gathered all the student work collected from the students who provided their consent to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed data collection and transcription of audio files. I read each data source thoroughly, multiple times, to immerse myself in the experiences represented in each file. Next, I used the qualitative research software Dedoose to code each file. I coded the data using deductive interpretation along with inductive interpretation (Johnson, 2016). Deductive codes

were generated using key elements of Critical Race Theory (CRT; Delgado et al., 2017), II (Messiou and Ainscow, 2020), and internal and external inclusion (Young, 2002). Emergent codes were generated through the data analysis process, as themes emerged from students' experiences of the II projects (Johnson, 2016). In vivo coding was used within the inductive process to capture some of the emergent codes. Johnson (2016) defines in vivo coding as "using the participants' own words and phrases as codes to describe conceptual categories" (p. 124), given the particular emphasis on centering student voices in this study. I maintained a codebook (Appendix B) with each code described and exemplified. A critical colleague read over the codebook, double-coded three audio transcriptions, and then we met to discuss code analysis to regulate researcher bias (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). In addition to coding, I also employed content analysis (Johnson, 2016), which I used to map out the many directions and topics the students' project work encompassed. At the end of analyzing three to four files, I conducted analytic memoing, capturing the key understandings from that chunk of data. Eventually through coding, analytic memoing, and content analysis, I began to organize themes around the data and to make decisions around further analysis moving forward (Johnson, 2016). Following each step, I returned to the data sources for iterative analysis, and the process was cyclical. All student participants and graduate student participants were invited for member checking throughout the data analysis process. Five participants responded, and member checking sessions lasted from 30 to 60 minutes.

Ethical Considerations

I received IRB approval of this study through the University of Virginia (Appendix A). I used IRB guidance to ensure that ethical considerations were accounted for. Due to the nature of practitioner research, I considered the ethical implications of immediately analyzing data and

introducing change that can impact students' experiences (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). For that reason, I committed to a rigorous research process and only introduced recommendations for change that are grounded in data (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).

Trustworthiness

Strategies used to maximize trustworthiness included the triangulation of data collection, triangulation of theoretical perspectives, ongoing member checking with participants, drafting memos used for reflexivity, and peer debriefing with critical colleagues (Hays & Singh, 2012). Member checking occurred during data analysis since, as recommended by Hays and Singh (2012), member checking is "not just reviewing transcripts with participants; it is asking them how well the ongoing data analysis represents their experience" (p. 206). All participants were invited for member checking. Data were triangulated through the multiple data sources of project audio recordings, student work, and facilitator documents. Theoretical perspectives were triangulated by the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT; Delgado et al., 2017) and II (Messiou and Ainscow, 2020) to guide the data analysis. By conducting data collection and data analysis exhaustively and interactively (Hays & Singh, 2012), I worked to maximize trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Findings

In Chapters 1 and 2, I described how the impetus to examine inclusion within my teaching practices emerged after reflecting on Rose Calder School (RCS) students' journey in education: despite the school district's commitment to providing inclusive education for all students, these students were still not experiencing inclusion. Using the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (Delgado et al., 2017) and Inclusive Inquiry (Messiou and Ainscow, 2020), I connected students' experiences of attending RCS to the constructs of external exclusion and internal exclusion (Young, 2002; Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). As a classroom instructor, I hold the potential to influence students' experiences of both internal exclusion and external exclusion and attempted to do so this past academic year by co-facilitating an II project for students.

As such, I conducted a practitioner research study to examine students' experiences of an Inclusive Inquiry (II) project co-facilitated by me, and the aim of studying students' experiences of the II project was to understand better the impact of my instructional choices on students' experiences of inclusion and exclusion (both internal and external). I co-facilitated the II project alongside two graduate students from a university Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) lab, and we facilitated the project around the core invitation for students to investigate a topic in their school or community they perceived to be a problem and for students to use the II project to work towards a solution. The study I conducted was guided by the following research questions: What is experienced when students engage in an inclusive process facilitated by me, their teacher?

1. How and to what extent do the student participants' experiences reflect experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion?

2. What factors influenced my choices regarding curriculum and instruction as I facilitated my students' engagement in the process?

Contextualizing and Framing the Findings

Six participant students were involved with three II projects around the topics of school lunch, prenatal care, and popular culture. There were two participant graduate students, and these were the II project co-facilitators. The projects are described in detail in Chapter 3, but for the readers' reference in this section, the core inquiry topics and the student participants for each project are listed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Project Topics, Core Inquiry, and Group Members

II Project Topic	Core Inquiry	Group Members & Grade Level
School Lunch	Why doesn't school lunch bring us together like food should?	Derrick (11th), Kingston (11th), Trinity (11th), Alexis (11th), and Destiny (12th)
Prenatal Care	What are my experiences of visiting prenatal appointments as a teen mom?	Destiny (12th) and Alexis (11th)
Popular Culture	Who gets to decide what popular culture goes into museums?	Jada (10th), Trinity (11th), Alexis (11th), and Destiny (12th).

The data sources for the study included the student work related to the II project (one documentary, one school board presentation, two slide presentations, one mindmap, and student

feedback forms), the project facilitation materials (lesson plans, emails, and my facilitator diary) and audio transcripts of 12 class sessions. Although there were three data sources for this research, I heavily relied on the audio transcripts to get a sense of what was happening in the moment of the project process and how students were voicing their experiences of the projects, as well as the student work to get a sense of how students chose to describe the project process. I used a qualitative data analysis approach, using deductive and inductive analysis. I concluded with three findings after examining the most prominent themes that emerged.

Following the data analysis process described in more detail in Chapter 3, I came to the following findings:

1. All students participated in the II projects in leadership roles. However, student leadership looked unique for each student.
2. Students used the II projects to process experiences of exclusion and to design experiences of inclusion for others.
3. Student voices were the greatest influence on my decision-making process as a teacher.

In this chapter, I elaborate on each finding and give evidence for each finding. I use for evidence verbatim quotations from students and narrative descriptions of the II project process. One formatting note is that, as best I could, I captured students' voices in their language. I decided against using "*[sic]*" when student language did not match APA 7 style formatting to keep with the intention of this study, which was to affirm multiple uses of rhetoric (Young, 2002). Along with each of the findings, I point out the messiness of inclusionary practices within the context of systemic structures of racism.

Finding 1: All students participated in the II projects in leadership roles. However, student leadership looked unique for each student.

In response to my first research question of how and to what extent do students' experiences reflect experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion, I found that, when students were at school, students' participation in the II projects related to experiences of inclusion. Messiou and Ainscow defined inclusion as the broad efforts "to eliminate exclusionary processes that are a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in relation to race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and perceived abilities" (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017, p. 1). Young (2002) delineated exclusionary processes into two categories: internal exclusion and external exclusion. External exclusion occurs when not everyone is present and participating in decision-making, and internal inclusion occurs when participants who are present participate in a way that feels authentic to them (Young, 2002). I interpreted students' engagement in the II projects and found relationships between their participation and the constructs of inclusion, internal exclusion, and external inclusion.

Primarily, when students were at school, they all participated and were engaged in decision-making in ways that encouraged authenticity, which points to the construct of inclusion. Further, students each engaged in some form of student leadership. However, it is significant that participation and engagement in decision-making and student leadership looked different for each student. Students engaged in the II projects in multiple ways. Some students, such as Derrick and Destiny, took on student leadership naturally and sometimes took on a facilitator's role. Other students, Kingston, Alexis, and Jada, occasionally took on student leadership roles through their actions, initiating the actions of others, and other times, they took on participatory roles. Trinity tended to take on a behind-the-scenes student leadership role that encouraged her

group members' participation. The following are narratives summing up my observations of students' participation in the projects and how their participation evolved over the 2021-2022 academic year. The following narratives include data to support my observations.

Derrick

Derrick, an 11th-grade student, engaged as a student leader and prominent voice around the student projects. He insisted on delivering the presentation to the school board and confidently introduced himself as a student who was there to represent the group:

> Hi my name is [Derrick's full name]. But my team calls me Derrick. I am glad to be standing here and telling you about our neighborhood project, which we did as a team. (Student Presentation, 6/1/2022)

He participated in almost all of the project class discussions around school lunch and one of the project class discussions around popular culture. He also stopped by the classroom outside of class time to connect with the facilitators and tell them about various moments outside of school in which he was reminded of the school lunch project. After one month of project work, Derrick moved on his own into a student leadership role of the school lunch project, taking over facilitation for one class, spearheading the first food shopping and cooking events, recruiting student and staff members to contribute to a documentary film about the school lunch project, and finally presenting in person at a school board meeting about the project. Derrick named the school lunch project Neighborhood Kitchen after reflecting on the project's ability to bring people together, which he expanded on in a class discussion:

> Seeing our school become a community together. Cause we wasn't community before, I kid you not. When we started the school, it was groups…This [Neighborhood Kitchen] was all together. That was one group (Class Discussion, May 11, 2022).

When the whole student body was given an unrelated opportunity to collaborate with a local filmmaking nonprofit, Derrick stepped up as the only student interested in producing a film and then chose to make the film as a documentary about Neighborhood Kitchen. Derrick gave informal feedback to the program administrator that they think a cooking class should be offered at RCS, and as a result of their project, a cooking elective will be offered for students during the 2022-2023 school year.

Kingston

Kingston, an 11th-grade student, also contributed to the school lunch project as a leader. However, he participated more in leading the project's activities rather than being a prominent voice in discussions. Kingston, who had experience in the food and service industry, quietly led cooking sessions and decision-making in the moments of making food. For example, while I was cooking alongside students during one cooking session, Kingston walked up next to me and motioned for me to hand over the spatula since he wanted to brown the breakfast sausage his way (Facilitator Diary, March 30, 2022). He also influenced decisions for upcoming meals. On his student feedback form about the II project, Kingston predominantly listed details of action:

> Form Question: What went well with the project?
>
> Kingston's Written Response: Everything like how it all started for us. The talk of making it come apon and making it happen like going out to meet on chef and all I think it's been ah great experience.
>
> Form Question: What would you like to see change with the YPAR work for the future?
>
> Kingston's Written Response: Making it happen like putting it in store for others kids and get them and play with learn how to cook better and have better food. (Student Feedback Form, 5/1/2022)

Kingston designed the slide presentation, which Derrick used when speaking in front of the school board. Kingston also gave informal feedback to the program administrator about the need for a cooking class at RCS, and the feedback was received and acted upon.

Destiny

Destiny, a senior, contributed to both the prenatal care project and the popular culture project, and Destiny participated as a student leader for both projects. Destiny led the prenatal care project by initiating this topic and sharing her experiences as she had just recently been to her first prenatal care visit: “Okay, this is for me what I experienced by being pregnant” (Class Discussion, 1/26/2022). She engaged Alexis in the conversation, asking Alexis to share her experiences with prenatal care appointments. Destiny expressed concern that she does not want medical students and residents at the hospital when she goes in for labor and delivery. She explored the topic of prenatal care throughout several project sessions. She finished her research on it by designing a slide presentation with more information about how labor and delivery happen at the hospital where she was being seen. She wanted the audience for the slide presentation to be herself; she wanted to familiarize herself with the hospital procedures so that she could feel more comfortable as she got closer to her due date.

For the popular culture project, Destiny took leadership in designing the field trip the students took to Washington, D.C: “I feel like everyone should be here by like 7:30” (Class Discussion, 4/19/22). Unprompted, Destiny met with the school administrator to decide on the logistics for the trip, as they pertained to timing and food. Destiny organized the breakfast and lunch for the trip and communicated her plan with all field trip members. Destiny was also involved with shopping for one of the school lunch projects.

Alexis

An 11th grader, Alexis, got involved with the prenatal care group project and the popular culture project. In the prenatal care project, Alexis shared her personal experiences with prenatal care visits in multiple discussions. Alexis shared that she was uncomfortable with a male care provider for prenatal visits: “You can’t tell me what's going on with my body if you got a whole thing hanging” (Class Discussion, 1/26/22). She shared that she expressed to her care team her preference for a female caretaker: “I had one [male doctor] when I had to get one on-call with a check to see how many centimeter. I told them no, no, no, ma'am” (Class discussion, 1/26/22). She also brought up questions about the domestic responsibilities of mothers immediately following a baby’s birth versus the child's co-parent. In the popular culture project, Alexis contributed to discussions leading up to the field trip but could not attend the field trip. Later in the school year, Alexis got involved with shopping and cooking for the school lunch project. In one scene in the documentary about Neighborhood Kitchen, Alexis is featured at a grocery store, pushing the cart, delegating tasks to other students, and deciding what type of chicken to purchase: “We making Alfredo. You feel me? With the broccoli!” (Student Documentary, 5/26/22). During this shopping experience, Alexis took on student leadership by directing some decision-making about the ingredients needed for the meal.

Jada

Jada, a 10th grader, was involved with the popular culture project. Jada was the student who began the line of inquiry around popular culture which eventually led to who gets to decide what goes into museums: “We nailed down a research question, most specific to some work that Jada initiated, but Trinity, Destiny, and Alexis showed a lot of interest. They were all very engaged and contributed awesome insights. Through our collaboration, the research question is: How does music, tv shows, and book/writing (pop culture) relate to individual identity AND also

create a sense of community?" (Facilitators' Email, 3/22/22). Her questions began around popular culture. She engaged with the project by creating a playlist of music she feels most passionate about and sharing it with the project members: students, graduate students, and her teachers. She was integral to designing the field trip to Washington, D.C. Jada was the student who asked if we could go and who started to build the itinerary: "I attached a link for a cool museum Jada and I found today. It is a hip hop-focused museum in Washington DC" (Facilitators' Email, 3/16/22). She also was the most vocal in reflecting on the trip in the class discussions following. Jada's leadership came through by the way she was able to influence other students' interests and actions. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 3, Jada designed a playlist and designed some artwork to be displayed with her playlist. Her artistic contributions influenced other members of the II projects to create their own playlists. These playlists contributed to our relationship-building and sense of community (Facilitator's Diary, 4/29/22).

Trinity

Trinity, an 11th grader, was involved with the school lunch project after initially opting out of the project work and then requested to join back in on the school lunch project. Trinity participated in shopping and cooking for one school lunch project event. She also was engaged with the popular culture project group and helped design the field trip by researching a hip-hop museum for us to visit. After finding details about the hip-hop museum, Trinity wanted to make sure that the other students going on the field trip also had a voice in where we would go on the trip (Facilitator's Diary, 4/12/22). Trinity contributed to class discussions through a decentralized style of leadership. Her style of contribution in discussion involved affirming the experiences of others and sharing, sometimes vulnerably, her own related experiences. For example, when Kingston was sharing about how difficult it is for him while working at a pizza restaurant when a

customer's credit card got declined, Trinity affirmed his experience and added hers, since she also worked at a restaurant: "That's fucked up. Like I was just feel like alright, there you go. Like straight up. Like I don't feel it's my place to tell your card is declined. It's just food" (Class Discussion, 4/13/22). Similarly, when Derrick shared a difficult experience with a friend's parents, Trinity commiserated with him, "Oh, I hate when parents.." (5/12/22), and then her voice trailed off as Derrick finished his story. Trinity's leadership role involved active listening, validating her peers, and exhibiting empathy. I mention later in this chapter moments of missed opportunities in which I failed to validate students when they shared vulnerably. Trinity's style of facilitating those moments gave students better attention than my facilitation.

The Messiness of Finding 1

Through Finding 1, I describe evidence of inclusion, such as student engagement and the multiple traits of leadership that students exhibited. However, surrounding these positive qualities that relate to inclusion, I still interpreted evidence of exclusion, and that evidence related to larger systems of injustice. For example, it was still difficult to establish inclusion at times because of the external exclusion that occurred around student absences. Students were absent from school during the days of II project sessions due to several reasons, some unknown. I recognize that school absences have occurred for the six student participants due to larger systems of injustice, such as not having childcare, having to attend court cases, abruptly transitioning homes, transportation needs, and even student suspensions resulting from disciplinary incidents unrelated to the II projects.

At one point, attendance was so noticeably lacking that my co-facilitators arranged a meeting where we could strategize around the issue:

> I'm wondering if we can maybe schedule a meeting with all 4 of us to discuss some ways to encourage attendance? Some other ideas include maybe asking students when they do show up to school what they think about the project and just why they show up versus staying at home/not showing up. (Facilitators' Email, 1/24/22)

From this meeting and after talking individually with students, we came to the plan that we would meet students' needs by offering to branch out into different project topics since, originally, the students' met in one group, and their project work all focused on the school lunch topic. When students weren't there, we had no way of including them in decision-making; consequently, they were externally excluded from the projects on those days. Following this facilitators' meeting, we worked to reach out to students individually through texts and catch them up on decision-making once they returned. External exclusion, when it happened, was noticeable, and we worked together as facilitators and students to brainstorm ways to promote experiences of inclusion.

Another example of the messiness of Finding 1 is how student attendance impacted the issue of equity of voice. It is important to note that Derrick was the dominant voice throughout the school lunch project discussions. Otter, the transcription tool I used, calculated the percentage of different speakers' contributions during each of the audio recordings of class discussions. For the eight class discussions in which Derrick actively engaged in discussion, his voiced contribution averaged 45% of the discussion, including the facilitators' voices. There were numerous times when Derrick expressed frustration around being the most vocal student in his project (Facilitator Diary, 4/22/22). He wished other students attended school more and contributed to discussions more (Facilitator Diary, 4/22/22). He directed his feelings at other students. When I asked him for input to increase other students' involvement, he responded

curtly, “No ideas” (Class Discussion, 1/19/22). His frustrations were related to both internal and external exclusion since he wanted more students in attendance and more students involved with decision-making.

Finding 1 Conclusion

All student participants used their voices to actively engage as leaders in the II projects. Yet, their engagement had a variety of forms. Some students, Derrick and Destiny, communicated their voice through their command of discussion and natural inclination towards a heavily vocal student leadership. Other students, Jada, Alexis, and Kingston, expressed their student voice by modeling actions that contributed to the projects. Trinity conveyed her student voice in support of her fellow students. After interpreting each student’s participation, I found that the II projects included unique types of leadership. However, the inclusionary practices around student engagement were not without messiness. Students occasionally experienced external exclusion through absences that could be linked to larger systems of injustices. When student absences occurred more frequently, the facilitators and students collaborated on how to create more inclusive experiences.

Finding 2: Students Used the II Project to Process Experiences of Exclusion and to Design Experiences of Inclusion for Others

Also, in response to my first research question, I found that students were able to use the opportunities afforded by the II projects to process experiences of exclusion to innovate experiences of inclusion for others. To initiate the II project, the students were prompted to examine something in their school or community that felt like a problem and for which they could work towards a solution. In this section, I relate students’ II project work to the constructs of exclusion and inclusion. Even though participant students never explicitly used the terms

"exclusion" and "inclusion," I apply the II framework as well as the political science definitions of internal exclusion and external exclusion (Young, 2002) to exemplify how students' language relates to these constructs. Additionally, I relate students' II project work to innovation and design approaches, which, when paired with Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), can push students past research findings and toward solutions to the problems (Falkenburger et al., 2021). Throughout this finding, I highlight students' tendencies to offer alternative perspectives in their II project work. Furthermore, I make the connection that by processing their own experiences of exclusion as well as designing innovative experiences of inclusion, students were empowered to define for themselves what experiences of inclusion should be. Next, I illustrate the finding through the lens of three themes that emerged through data analysis: students identifying barriers to inclusion, students designing ways to remove barriers to feelings of inclusion, and students offering counter-narratives that voiced feelings of exclusion and that represented new feelings of inclusion. Finally, I point out the messiness of Finding 2, how growing sociopolitical consciousness in students who have been historically marginalized might inadvertently burden them to solve system problems, rather than putting that burden on those in power of those systems.

Theme 1: Students Identified Barriers to Feelings of Inclusion

An essential part of the II framework (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow 2020) is that the ongoing inclusion process should identify barriers to inclusion for them to be removed. Throughout the II projects, students shared numerous barriers to feelings of inclusion. Even though students never explicitly used "inclusion" or "barriers," they expressed various experiences in which they communicated feeling outcast, disrespected, disconnected, misunderstood, mad, embarrassed, deserving better, and lacking. In the school lunch project

group, Derrick and Kingston shared their experience of the RCS school lunch and how their experiences of the school lunch related to their feelings of exclusion in school. The prenatal care project group members processed their experiences attending prenatal care appointments and how moments in those experiences related to feelings of exclusion. The popular culture group used their collective inquiry to examine why and how representations of certain cultural and racial backgrounds are excluded from some museum settings.

Disrespected. The school lunch project started with a topic that readily comes up with high school students: how students dislike the lunch provided for them at school. However, on multiple occasions, the student group thought more deeply than any high school discussion on school lunch I had participated in, such as when students mentioned barriers to feelings of inclusion concerning school lunch. For example, Derrick, when presenting to the school board about how the project came to fruition, was able to tie their school lunch to a lack of connection: "It started at the beginning of the school year when we noticed how school lunch does not bring us together to bond like food should" (School Board Presentation, 6/1/2022). In the documentary film Derrick made about the school lunch project, he explained to the audience what specific factors of the school lunch left him feeling unsatisfactory:

> Okay, the lunch we used to get before…There's a guy that comes here in a pickup truck, he brings our food around 8 am. He just drops it off outside. He doesn't take it in our kitchen. He doesn't prep it for us, nothing. He drops it off outside, and it's food from either the elementary or the high school that they're going to either eat from lunch that day or yesterday, but they leave it here and let it defrost and then they reheat it and give it to us around 12. That is what our typical lunch was until we decided to do different. (Student Documentary Film, 5/26/2022)

According to Derrick, the contents of the school lunch felt disrespectful and impacted his ability to participate in afternoon academic classes:

> Three tenders the size of my pinky. Three tenders, bro. Three tenders, and that was disrespectful, bro, no fruit none of that. Three tenders, bro, and then they sit here, “Why do you act like that at the end of the day, why are y'all so jittery, you know? Like, y’all coming to school chill” Because I was able to get breakfast. We probably ate breakfast here. The cereal made me full! But you got that lunch. Just like, bro, who can really do anything? And so we'd sit in the class after you fed me three fingers and learn and process and stay here and sit here and not keep moving? And no fruit like no apples? No bananas? (Class Discussion, 11/10/2021)

He elaborated in a later discussion and mentioned how the school lunch keeps him from sharing authentically in class, which relates to internal exclusion (Young, 2002), “Bring it back to the food--how can I sit there and get into my creative mind and tell you what I want for myself in life? But my stomach hurt!” (Class Discussion, 11/17/2021). Kingston contributed to Derrick’s description of the contents of the lunch and said it makes him mad, “We can’t even get no god-damned seasoning in this joint! That’s how mad I be!” (Class Discussion, 11/10/2021). Moreover, it came up for Derrick in the same class discussion that the way the school lunch is delivered and served to students reminds him that he feels embarrassed about attending an alternative setting, even though the facility had the potential to be more than what it was:

> This right here should be the little facility. It ain't too big. It ain't too small, but you can have like some fun in it. This is jail. Like this should not be a school. A alternative school should really not be a dig. You make kids feel like outcasts. I'm coming here to school with six other people. That shit is embarrassing. And I'll get the food that feels like jail

food. Like right here. It is right here, bro, should be a facility like for like teenagers who don't have no like after school activities, to get away from world problems. This should not be a alternative school. Honestly, I understand where they're going with alternative schools, but if you could get a kid to sit in an alternative school, you could get a kid to sit in a public school. (Class Discussion, 11/10/2021)

Derrick complained about the food, but it was more than the food. It was all the feelings associated with getting even worse food than the comprehensive setting due to the transportation process, which allowed time for the food to sit in its condensation, a point often pointed out by Derrick. That transportation process was part of his feelings of being othered, sent away to another facility, and sent the leftover food.

Comparative thinking continued in a later discussion when Trinity brought up the lunch privileges of a local private school. Derrick remembered that at his previous restaurant job, he prepared food for a private school:

Trinity: What’s that private school called up here?

Derrick: [named school]?

Trinity: Yea, they get free [food] delivery.

Derrick: Yea, at [named pizza restaurant], we used to do the same shit. We used to cater, like every Friday, we used to cater to private schools and shit. (Class Discussion, 11/17/2021)

Additionally, Derrick contrasted student food selection to lunches that staff members bring to school, “Facts: y'all teachers be coming up with some home cooked food and shit while we eat in jail!” (Class Discussion, 11/17/2021). The question of ordering food for pick-up or delivery came up in one class discussion. Derrick quickly made the association that, since there was a

school policy against students ordering outside food, during one time he did so, he narrowly avoided external exclusion (Young, 2002) in the form of a suspension:

> So, when I left, I left to go get some food, because I won't eating that shit, [the school administrator] was like "I'm not going to get mad at you or suspend you' or some shit because I asked her before, but she was on the phone, so she couldn't tell me no. I didn't wait for her to tell me no, you know what I'm saying? and I did it for a reason, so boom. And so when I came back she was saying like some shit like "If I let you order food the other kids will want to order food." What's the problem ordering food if you don't want to eat this? (Class Discussion, 11/17/2021).

In a planning discussion, when putting together details for one of the Neighborhood Kitchen food events, Derrick compared the possibility of a good food experience to what the typical reality is, "Yeah, cause maybe we can all sit down and eat together. We don't really do that in lunch, because we don't really want to eat that shit. So we run around to do everything" (Class Discussion, 5/11/2022). Derrick concluded, "We deserve a selection of real food" (Class Discussion, 11/10/2021). Derrick's conclusion, as well as the examples he, Trinity, and Kingston gave, fit the definitions of internal and external exclusion (Young, 2002), since students expressed their frustrations with school lunch in relation to feeling left out from the decision-making around their school lunch, left out from being equal participants around a table, both by the comparative quality of their lunch to teachers' and by the nature of the lunch preventing them from sitting alongside their peers, which point to external exclusion. Further, Derrick felt unable to contribute authentically to the classes that follow school lunch, an example of internal exclusion. In their II project, the school lunch group processed the barriers to inclusion and the barriers related to their research topic.

Used, Misunderstood, and Left-Out. In the prenatal care group, students also expressed barriers to feelings of inclusion.Destiny and Alexis bonded over feeling unsettled by having a male practitioner assigned to them when showing up for a prenatal appointment. Alexis summed up the feeling, “You can tell me what's going on with my body!” (Class Discussion, 1/26/2022). Destiny shared more about feeling left out from some decision-making details around her care, and she questioned if it was related to her being a teen mom. Destiny mentioned feeling uncomfortable with the idea of the university hospital practice of having medical students and residents present and working during labor and delivery:

> I made that known, like, so known, that I do not want too many people in there. I want my mom. I want the dad and the child there. The midwife is fine, and the doctor. That's it. The students can be in there for a second. For a second, yo. For a second, like I mean, I know you have to learn but that's MY life. (Class Discussion, 1/26/22)

Overall, their initial discussion around prenatal care related to feeling misunderstood, burdened for the benefit of medical students’ learning, and left out of information by care providers.

Further, both Destiny and Alexis bonded around the times when they felt a barrier because they were alone in decision-making and taking action for their children. They expressed wishing for more support from their co-parents. For instance, Alexis talked about middle-of-the-night feedings and feeling the sole responsibility of caring for a baby: “Like, right, especially if you're breastfeeding” (Class Discussion, 1/26/22). The prenatal care group processed feelings related to barriers to inclusion, such as when they were not involved enough in decision-making and when they were all alone.

Unseen and Uninvited. The popular culture group touched briefly on barriers to the feelings of inclusion when reflecting on their field trip, in which we visited the Library of

Congress as the first stop before heading to the National Hip Hop Museum and then a Black-authored book store. Jada and Destiny reacted intensely to the Library of Congress and chose not to tour the space with the rest of us but to sit on a bench when we were there (Facilitator Diary, April 29. 2022). Upon entering, the expansive ceilings and formality of the design, including columns, overwhelmed Trinity, and she shared afterward that she was expecting there to be more books (Facilitator Diary, April 29. 2022). Jada, when asked if she went around to the different exhibits inside the Library of Congress, responded, “No, Destiny was complaining the whole time” (Class Discussion, 5/3/2022). The popular culture group built one of their research questions around external exclusion (Young, 2002): "Why are some cultural representations left out of museums and some not?” Similarly, when visiting a space that felt, for multiple reasons, uninviting, students chose not to fully engage with the activities and exhibits in the space, which points to internal exclusion (Young, 2002).

Theme 2: Students Designed Ways to Remove Barriers to Feelings of Inclusion

All three II project groups designed ways to remove barriers to feelings of inclusion, which is another essential part of the II framework (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow 2020). Without prompting, students used some core principles of innovation, especially design thinking (Doorley et al., 2018), when processing experiences of exclusion.

Building Community. The school lunch project designed ways to remove barriers to feelings of inclusion in the most direct way by designing a collaborative cooking group called Neighborhood Kitchen, in which students and staff shopped and cooked together for the school on special event days. The Neighborhood Kitchen solution was intentional about bringing people together. For example, Derrick was asked by one of the facilitators why the theme of community was coming up for him with his project idea. Derrick answered,

> Because I feel like the only way we can learn in a good environment is if we all on the same page with it. And if we all like a community and a neighborhood together, nobody in the neighborhood robs the neighborhood or does bad to the neighborhood, everybody in the neighborhood is working out for each other. And it's also like, when we cooking and stuff is really like a potluck. Because like we all bringing our minds together to cook something. I mean, we ain't all bring something to the table. We all bring something to the table by having each other there. (Class Discussion, 5/11/22)

Throughout the project work, we explored through the student-driven curriculum what it was about food that helps people come together. What was the invisible thing that happens while hosting people for a meal? In discussion, Derrick named this invisible thing “love.” When asked by me in the student documentary if they found what they described as love through their Neighborhood Kitchen project, Derrick concluded:

> We definitely found a love. I feel as if food is another way of showing love. Like when you go home your mom cooks your great meals, you feel blessed, you feel tired, and you feel as if you're complete for the rest of the day. When I felt I was in school lunch, I was still hungry. I was ramped up, and I had no energy but I had enough energy to do everything other than schoolwork. So I would say Neighborhood Kitchen is the kitchen for the neighborhood. Everybody just joined our neighborhood to be a part of our community. (Student Documentary, 5/26/22)

It is important to note that the school lunch project took place in the afternoons and never occurred on the same day as a Neighborhood Kitchen cooking event. Even so, Derrick seemed to have enough energy to engage in discussion, as described in Finding 1. As such, Derrick’s energy and feelings were not directly in consequence of having eaten different food but

sometimes also related to the process of planning and redesigning a new food experience that brought the school together. The expression of neighborhood, community, and love contributed to students' experiences of inclusion.

The school lunch group, without prompting, followed the tenet to find an opportunity out of a constraint and the tenet to prototype and test an idea in a small setting before applying it to a larger one (Doorley et al., 2018). For example, Derrick quickly moved his frustration and embarrassment he previously expressed around attending an alternative school with a small student population towards the alternative setting, since it is small, being a great opportunity for his new ideas around school lunch and also a great place to try out an idea before making it into a larger project: "We gotta say first cause we have smaller school. If we think it make a change here faster than a bigger school. So they need to start with us first, and they can execute in other places" (Class Discussion, 11/17/21). Derrick also shifted his frustration with how teachers bring lunches to school that seemed much more appealing to him than the school lunch into a humorous scene for the documentary he was directing. Derrick set a scene in which he and I traded lunches one day. Derrick reflected on the experience:

> Me and her trading lunches, you know, she got the little nasty little chicken fingers and the nasty cornbread. Like you get oh, I got her Indian food. It was like salmon with some type of like mustard, oily sauce. That like her mother-in-law made with some potatoes. was some spicy pepper. (Class Discussion, 5/10/22)
>
> Let me just try to describe it. It's like I can't even describe, is that good. It's like the salmon hits. I thought like salmon was always hard or something. It's soft and juicy like way better than that tender. Oh my God, yeah. Oh my. (Student Documentary, 5/26/22)

Derrick was not only the expert on his experiences relating to exclusion but also the innovator in designing inclusive experiences at RCS.

Focusing on Oneself. The other student groups moved to remove barriers to feelings of inclusion. However, they chose to do so in more indirect ways. In the prenatal care student group, after processing experiences of exclusion around prenatal care appointments, Destiny was given the option to create something to make a change. One facilitator asked her if she might want to document her experiences so that care providers could hear them, hoping they might make some changes based on her experiences. Destiny expressed that she wasn't comfortable doing that. For the final product she chose for her project, she wanted to understand better the labor and delivery process at the hospital where she was being seen. She tried to arrange for a hospital tour, where she could gather data through an in-person visit. However, when she called the hospital, they were no longer offering tours because of COVID protocols. They also told her they do not have a tour available online. She ended up researching how a neighboring hospital admits patients for labor and delivery since it was the only online tour she could find. When asked what she wanted to do with her research, she chose to make a slide show but not for anyone else, for herself. In the last slide of her presentation, she wrote a letter to her future self following her birth.

Figure 4.1

Destiny's Last Slide from her Slide Presentation, 4/19/22

- Letter To Future Self After Birth -

Dear [redacted]

YOU GAVE BIRTH!! To your beautiful baby girl. I hope you enjoyed your birth I hope you remember every little detail I hope everything goes smooth and you enjoy every minute of it. I would hope that your baby pulled through and her weight is where it should be so you can have the natural birth you've always dreamed of. Your baby will hopefully be very healthy with no complications. One thing that I can reassure you is that your gonna be fine and you'll do great and you'll be a wonderful mommy. GOOD LUCK! And congratulations on your little blessing.

As seen in Figure 4.1, Destiny offers hope and success for her baby and herself. She envisions an experience in contrast to some of the feelings that came up for her during her prenatal visits.

Creating and Imagining Experiences. The popular culture student group was working with a research question that directly touched on issues of inclusion and exclusion, which was, "Who gets to decide what goes into a museum?" Even though they never directly created an experience of inclusion that answered this question, they still created experiences of inclusion during the II process. For example, after the Washington, D.C. field trip planning was underway, Destiny took a self-initiated student leadership role and approached the school administration to ask if she could be involved with decision-making in planning the food for the trip. Destiny bring the administrator to one of our II discussions to share the decisions they had come to regarding food. As soon as the session started, she asked about speaking first, "So do you want to want us to go first? (Class Discussion, 4/19/22). Next, she heard from other students what breakfast they wanted to order, and she let them know details about the lunch. During their discussion, she and

the program administrator had chosen a restaurant and called together to make a reservation. Destiny wanted us to look at the menu online and to know ahead of time what our price limit was. Destiny inserted herself into the decision-making process and wanted to provide food experiences for other people attending the field trip, pointing to the II framework (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020), in which students are involved in the decision-making of the classroom.

Also, in the popular culture group, students reflected on their field trip to two museums in Washington D.C.: the Library of Congress and the National Hip Hop Museum. Students reflected on a Rosa Parks exhibit from the Library of Congress. Derrick was in the space during this discussion, and he participated with students, expressing excitement about what they saw during their trip and how the Rosa Parks exhibit connected to his African American history class. One of the facilitators asked students if they were to make their own museum, and what they would put in it. Derrick responded, “I know exactly what I'll put. My museum will be filled with every Black empowering person that you don't hear about” (Class Discussion, 5/10/22). Derrick had space to remove barriers to inclusion in a museum setting, even though imaginative and hypothetical, which aligns with the II framework.

Theme 3: Counter-Narratives

There were several times that students were prompted to fact-check details of their projects. For example, after the documentary film *Neighborhood Kitchen* was completed, we held a school-wide screening and discussion of the documentary. Staff members asked Derrick if he had reached out to the nutrition department for the district to fact-check his following statement:

There's a guy that comes here in a pickup truck, he brings our food around 8 am. He just

> drops it off outside. He doesn't take it in our kitchen. He doesn't prep it for us nothing. He drops it off outside, and it's food from either the elementary or the high school that they're going to either eat from lunch that day or yesterday, but they leave it here and let it defrost and then they reheat it and give it to us around 12. (Student Documentary, 5/26/22)

The program administrator, who often helps to prepare the lunches for students, pointed out how technically the lunches are not from yesterday, they are from the comprehensive high school, not an elementary school, and they are not actually frozen when they arrive; instead, they are preheated and prepackaged and dropped off in soft coolers and then reheated for RCS students in the RCS kitchen at lunchtime (Facilitator Diary, 5/27/22). Within this discussion, students and staff concluded that the factual details were not important to this phase of the project since the quotation by Derrick in the documentary represented his overall impression and feelings. Derrick's messaging in the student documentary around how the school lunch project came about can be considered a counter-narrative since he is offering an alternative to the dominant narrative that the way school lunch is delivered and served at RCS is good enough for students.

Not only did students express their counter-narratives around their perceptions and impressions of aspects of dominant narratives, but they also worked to re-imagine narratives as they designed solutions in their II projects. The Neighborhood Kitchen represents a counter-narrative to students' initial reactions to school lunch as it was. Through Neighborhood Kitchen, students designed and executed a prototype that relayed messaging of community and togetherness, a counter-narrative, given that most students are selected to come to RCS for disciplinary reasons, such as in-school conflict. Derrick expressed an intention in the project, for the community to know who they are at their school and in a positive light. It bothered him that

one time when taking an Uber to school, the driver did not know RCS (Facilitator Diary, 3/30/22). Derrick insisted on contributing to the narrative when presenting the work to the school board. As soon as we brought up the possibility of presenting to the school board, he volunteered to be the voice of the presentation (Facilitator Diary, 5/20/22). Derrick used his work in the II project to lay the groundwork for counter-narrative since he worked to fill a void in district and community perceptions around RCS, RCS students, and their school lunch.

In the popular culture group and the prenatal care group, even though students did not arrive at final products that rewrote the dominant narratives around their topics, their expression of discontent around dominant narratives opened the space for counter-narratives. When prompted by facilitators to create final products that would more directly confront dominant narratives, such as communicating with care providers the discontent around prenatal appointments as well as designing their own museum in town, the two groups of students expressed that they were not interested in taking it that far in this phase of their research. In the prenatal care group, Destiny wanted to create her slideshow for herself (Student Presentation, 4/19/22). In the popular culture group, students chose to invest the majority of their time in planning the logistics of the field trip and for the field trip to have opportunities that they desired, such as good food, music, and book shopping (Class Discussion, 4/19/22). Destiny's work to plan student food experiences on the field trip touched on counter-narrative since she worked against the established narrative that I had in place, which was that the adult chaperones would be planning the logistical structure of the trip. Just like Derrick's counter-narrative led to policy changes at the school, such as who can prepare meals for students and what elective classes are available for next year, Destiny's counter-narrative work led to policy change, such as organizing for the field trip's participants to have breakfast provided for them.

The Messiness of Finding 2

Through Finding 2, I demonstrated evidence that students were able to process experiences of exclusion and to design experiences of inclusion for themselves and others. Just like in Finding 1, there is complexity in this finding as well, which relates to larger systems of injustices. It is evident that Derrick felt comfortable taking his design work to the top level of the district, the school board. Additionally, his work amounted to school-wide policy change, with a cooking class elective being offered the following year. However, the concerns brought up by the Prenatal Care Group and the Popular Culture Group did not as significantly result in the removal of barriers. As evidenced above, Destiny was not comfortable voicing her concerns to the prenatal care providers, and the Popular Culture Group did not actualize their imaginative inclusionary practices in a museum setting. Destiny's discomfort and the Popular Culture Group's inaction signify the impacts of larger systems of injustice, such as distrust in larger systems to hear, validate, and appropriately respond when people express concerns around inclusion.

Finding 2 Conclusion

Students used the II projects to process experiences of exclusion and to design innovative experiences of inclusion for themselves and for others. Through each of the project topics of school lunch, prenatal care, and popular culture, students were able to share experiences of internal and external exclusion while identifying the barriers to inclusion, which were feeling disrespected, used, misunderstood, left-out, unseen, and uninvited. Students in the school lunch project initiated a design-thinking innovation approach to remove barriers to inclusion and create new and inclusive experiences for their community. In other student groups, students were in charge of defining for themselves what inclusion should look like, even when they were not

ready to share those definitions with a larger audience. In all project groups, students' definitions and designs served as counter-narratives to the established traditions they chose to confront related to school lunch, prenatal care, and popular culture. Within Finding 2, I pointed out the complexity of students' willingness to get involved with the removal of barriers at systemic levels, and how some students' unwillingness points to patterns of distrust in societal systems.

Finding 3: Student Voices Were the Greatest Influence on my Decision-Making Process as a Teacher

After analyzing the choices I made in curriculum and instruction while co-facilitating the II project, I found that students' voices were the most influential factor, as I was able to, for the most part, attend to student-voiced contributions. However, through data analysis, I found complex moments when it was evident that I did not fully attend to students' voices. When I did attend to the individual students' contributions, there was evidence that they were driving the curriculum. Data analysis revealed that some facilitation choices I made created a more democratic forum within the classroom. As such, in this section, I connect my instructional and curricular choices to aspects of a democratic learning environment, including the practices of a greeting and an affirmative use of rhetoric (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). Also, I demonstrate how, by attending to students' voiced experiences, the emerging project topics encompassed opportunities for students to contribute to the discussion authentically. Additionally, it was apparent that students gained ease in engaging with the discussions and were able to weave between easy topics and more challenging topics when the discussion related to specific topics they chose, and these topics trended towards sensory details. Finally, I point out how, when attending to student-voiced contributions to our discussions, the discussions developed from unstructured discussions to student-led structured discussions. I pose the finding students' voices

were the greatest influence on my decision-making process as a teacher. I pose this finding after analyzing a theme of attending to student voices as well as a theme of missed opportunities in response to student voices.

Attending to Student Voices

While co-facilitating the II projects, I was able to, for the most part, offer a presence in response to student voices. In this section, I give evidence of my attending to student voices through the instructional choices of putting importance on greetings and sensory experiences, facilitating between easy and difficult topics, and letting go of control.

Greetings and Sensory Experiences. Young (2002) and Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) describe the importance of the greeting when creating more democratic forums. The greeting works best when it occurs first thing, and it also works well when involving food (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). The greeting works because it establishes trust between people of different power positions (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). After analyzing my instructional and curricular choices around greeting in the II projects, I found these recommendations true but with qualifying conditions.

First, the greeting worked extremely well when tied to food and other sensory details. My co-facilitators, coming as outsiders to our RCS community, began bringing snacks with them from their very first session. Students were the first to request these snacks when I talked to students about the upcoming project work, which I communicated to Jean and Ashey, “The kids seemed jazzed and curious about what this project will be! They hilariously mentioned snacks. Did you still have in mind to bring some? If not, I can swing by!” (Facilitators’ Email, 10/19/21). During the sessions, passing around the snacks seemed to impact students’ comfort level while engaging with the co-facilitators and me. Additionally, from the first session, students began to

focus on food for their research topic, as they started to share and process about school lunch experiences. Hearing from students' voiced interest in food, we decided as co-facilitators to use one structured greeting, or ice-breaker, related to food for our second session. The prompt was described in our lesson plan as

> "How does your family prepare rice?"
>
> Tell people why you find it interesting and helpful to hear the story of how their family makes rice.
>
> Explain that they can share as much or little as they are comfortable.
>
> Pose some questions to spark what story they want to share
>
> How was rice cooked in your home when you were growing up?
>
> How do you cook rice now?
>
> Does it have any cultural or historical meaning?
>
> Is there a story or experience related to how you cook rice you would like to share?
>
> Let them know it can be a personal story, or about their culture.
>
> Let them know they have 2 minutes to share. (Facilitators' Lesson Plan, 10/20/21)

When it came to facilitating this "rice breaker," I led only with the initial question, and then the discussion took an unstructured turn, filled with student voices and lasting nearly the entire session time. Derrick, for example, became curious about his family's traditions around rice and called his father during the session to ask for clarification. Derrick's parents are from Liberia, and Derrick was born in the U.S. He remembered that traditionally, his family does not eat rice after someone dies, but he did not know why:

> Well, hello, Dad. Question: So I'm in class right now, Right? And they was asking about rice and I told them like when people die in our family we won't eat rice. Why is that?

> Like why do we not eat rice? Yeah, so why don't we do rice when people die our family? (Class Discussion, 11/3/2021)

Derrick filled us in on the Liberian cultural rationale for not eating rice following someone's death. The rice topic allowed me to prompt more student voice from Trinity after she initially responded to it, but I could not hear what she had said:

> Trinity: I said rice is amazing.
>
> Carly: Yes, tell me more about that.
>
> Trinity: You can mix rice with anything. (Class Discussion, 11/3/2021)

Trinity proceeded to tell us about the recipes she prefers. Later in the project, Derrick reflected on what he felt to be some successes. He described the way we were able to talk so much about food, which enabled us to connect on what he coined as a "tastebud level":

> Bring them together on like, a tastebud level? Like, you like that? I like that. Oh, that's cool. Which, "What else do you like?" You know, literally like that to start a whole conversation right there. "I like pizza. "You like pizza?" "I like pineapple on pizza." "Ewwww pineapple's nasty." Literally a whole conversation right there, bro. (Class Discussion, 5/11/22)

The topic of food was always a common ground for greeting, even in the other student groups, whose topics were not tied to food, but during which there were always snacks.

Similarly, students often discussed other sensory inputs. Some examples included the room's temperature, smells coming from the bathroom, noise levels coming from other classrooms, and bodily functions. I charted students and facilitators discussing food and other sensory experiences at the beginning of sessions, during the middle of discussions, and at the end. Each time, the exchanges seemed to allow for more connection. For instance, in the middle

of a session, students would return to the snacks and reignite connection around food. Also, students often lingered a few minutes after a session to speak individually with facilitators about what snack preference they had for the next session. I found that the construct of greeting was influential in the II projects and often included rich sensory details, but greetings and connection around sensory details worked best without time constraints.

Facilitating Between Student Experiential Topics and the Criticality Around Those Topics. The co-facilitators and I met weekly or exchanged email reflections to make decisions for the next session. We often discussed the major themes we heard from students and then set up a general plan moving forward. For instance, after the first brainstorming session, Ashley sent the following reflection:

Important points made:

- Food is energy
- The food at LMA is heated up, making it difficult to eat (condensation)
- Hot sauce makes this better, but is not the ideal solution
- Food is passion and life; it is important to all the individuals involved
- We recognize that the food served is part of policy at the school, city, state, and federal level: what is the best way to create change here then? Who do we contact and who will listen?
- Students need good food to learn and make it through the day
- Food affects our mood and ability to focus (Facilitators' Email, 10/27/21)

Explicitly reflecting on themes that students had contributed helped me to make curricular choices for the rest of the week as well as to call-back to themes I remembered from students' input during earlier sessions when the opportunity arose in later sessions. For example, after the

Facilitators' Email on 10/27/21, I planned a unit on the history of soul food, using a documentary *High on the Hog* as our core text to think critically about how the dominant culture has appropriated Black food traditions. I found that listening to, documenting, and making plans based on students' input allowed us the ability to weave back and forth between easy topics, such as some sensory experiences, and more challenging topics, such as the cultural appropriation of food.

Letting Go of Control. Students voiced many topics in many ways. I found that, since I was intentional about the II framework, especially the II tenet to center students' voices (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow 2020), I made choices that let go of control of the structure of the discussion as well as the style in which they were voicing topics.

Control of Discussion Topics and Agenda. While analyzing my in-the-moment instructional choices alongside the curricular planning I did for the II project sessions, it was striking how tolerant I was of all student-voiced contributions, no matter how well they aligned with our agenda, especially in contrast to the more rigid stance I take while teaching on a non-project day. For example, here is an interjection by Trinity in the middle of a project discussion, which I tried to attend to:

> Trinity: Y'all, I'm getting glasses? Oh, and they say I hit a prescription I was supposed to never.
>
> Carly: Did you pick out new frames? (Class Discussion, 11/3/21)

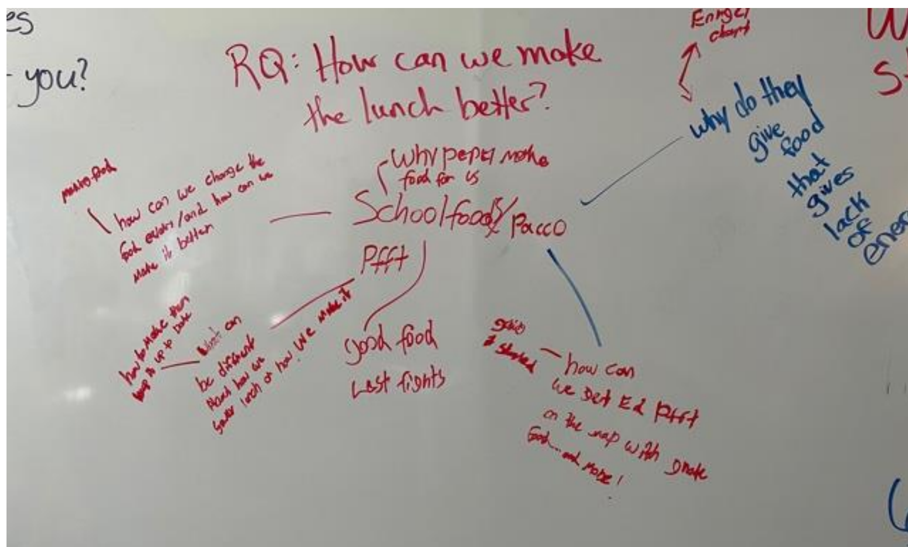
Reflecting on my response, I can see now that there was an opportunity to attend more closely to the emotion Trinity was expressing around finding out about a changed prescription, and I was dismissive by moving to the topic of frames. I expand more in the next section on missed opportunities. However, responding to and engaging with her interjection around glasses was a

different choice for me. I made the intention with the II projects to try to attend to all student contributions. Further, as detailed above, I found that students' interjecting contributions were often related to sensory experiences. As such, the "off-topic" contributions often became points of connection. In two cases, the sensory experiences communicated by students even developed into core project topics: school lunch and prenatal care. After the development of sensory-based core project topics, very few student interjections moved us away from our agenda for the day since the agenda eventually prioritized connecting around these "off-topics."

Control of Discussion Structure. I also made decisions at the moment to release control of the structure of discussions as I attempted to attend to the direction students were choosing. For example, at one point early in the school lunch group, I released control of facilitation when Derrick stepped up, spontaneous, and took over facilitation. Derrick expressed impatience with the pace at which we were facilitating the discussion and jumped up to the front of the class, grabbed the whiteboard marker, and started drafting a mind-map around their topic, eliciting input from other students in the session. The following mindmap emerged:

Figure 4.2

School Lunch Project Mindmap, 11/16/21



As seen in Figure 4.2, the initial research question (RQ) is in my handwriting, and the rest is in student handwriting. I found multiple moments of evidence in which students took on facilitation roles, such as times when Derrick came to the session with his own greeting, wanting to share what he cooked at home that related to our research (Class Discussion, 1/26/22) or when Destiny initiated the planning of logistics for the field trip (Class Discussion, 4/19/22).

Another example of a student-led discussion structure was when students in the prenatal care group, who had previously been meeting at the same time as the school lunch project, requested to have a separate, female-only meeting time for the project work. I reached out to the co-facilitators to provide this, "Due to the sensitive nature of the new project we discussed today, I wonder if we should find another time in the week where the girls could have time on their own to explore their research" (Facilitators' Email, 1/26/22). The female-only group broke into two project topics, the prenatal care group, and the popular culture group. When the popular culture student group planned their field trip, they requested that it be female-only. I found that when letting go of my self-imposed discussion structure, students established their own sense of structure.

Control of Language. Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) ascribed the importance of an affirming use of rhetoric to a more democratic learning space. They described an affirmative use of rhetoric as one in which all members feel comfortable using rhetoric to express themselves, rather than feeling the constraints and sterile-nature of logic. I translated this takeaway to our II projects by choosing to avoid shaping students' style of expression. This choice departs from my training as an English teacher and from my training in classroom management, in which I gained strategies to establish firm guidelines around student language. It is not lost on me the differences in language styles RCS students have from me. I chose to create inclusivity by not

setting boundaries around students' expression. The freedom for rhetoric was helpful for students' expression of their experiences and for students to be honest with questions. For example, when co-facilitating a session with the prenatal care group, the following exchange occurred:

> **Carly:** Do you have any sub-topic with what we're talking about? What you want to know more about or find a solution?
>
> [silence]
>
> **Carly:** Like, with YPAR, one component is that…
>
> **Alexis:** What the fuck is YPAR? (Class Discussion, 1/26/21)

Alexis' question, rich in rhetoric, gave me an emphatic reminder to stop and to make sure there was a common understanding of the terms I was using. In a previous version of my instruction, I might have stopped and addressed how she asked me this question.

Control of Certain Academic Tasks During Discussions. Another instructional choice that was unique to the II project experience was to refrain from imposing certain academic tasks during discussions. In a typical English lesson, I might have students use freewriting, notetaking, exit slips, or any other various academic tasks during a discussion. However, after one of the first II project sessions in which we sat outside with nothing but chairs to talk about what they were interested in researching, I found value in freeing up students so they could focus on discussion. The co-facilitators and I accommodated this by taking audio recordings and transcriptions as notes and one facilitator being our notetaker. Students engaged in these academic tasks during the next phases of their projects. They wrote reflections in their journals, they provided us with written feedback, and they designed presentations. However, in the moment of the discussions, they were free to talk.

Throughout the II projects, I intentionally let go of imposing my own structure on the discussions, which resulted in the opportunity for students to drive the curriculum of the project.

Missed Opportunities

Throughout my findings so far, I offer takeaways from the II projects that influenced me to replicate them or translate them in my future teaching practice. However, I also found points in my facilitation decision-making that I consider to be mishaps and hope to revise in future instructional moments. For example, there were two patterns that I hope to improve upon in the future.

The first pattern was how, in a few instances, students shared vulnerably, yet I did not attend to what they shared. For instance, Derrick, in the middle of a project discussion, shared some intimate details about his mother's new work schedule and how he started waking up in the middle of the night to make sure she made it to work safely:

> I get up every morning, my mom always wakes me up like two when she goes to work now. She goes work like 2am. She wakes me up to go reset the alarm and to watch her leave to make sure she safe. (Class Discussion, 5/12/22)

Rather than attending to the vulnerability that seemed to be coming up for Derrick here, the discussion next moved to the broad critique of society's expectations of people to work and to earn money in demanding ways. If I had this opportunity again, I would have facilitated more of Derrick's voice, to see if he wanted to share more about his experience of his mother's change in job, the change in their sleep schedules, and the concern for her safety, before we moved on to the larger injustices that this experience represents. Similarly, Trinity shared in one class discussion about her encounter with law enforcement that seemed to hold vulnerability. Rather than attending to that vulnerability, the discussion moved to an unrelated question about the

noise level in the classroom next door. Having a transcription record of our project discussions was insightful for finding moments in which I could have better attended to students' voices.

The second pattern was that in a few discussions, I started the session without greeting, and to catch someone up who was returning after an absence, I spoke for students rather than giving them space for them to speak for themselves. For instance, at the beginning of one class discussion, Derrick made it clear that he was not interested in participating in the session. Rather than giving space and attention to his request, I clamped up in a panic and started the session without even a greeting and then proceeded to speak for Derrick when getting the session started:

> I understand you don't want to talk [speaking to Derrick]. I was talking to Derrick yesterday about when we might want to share our findings around all of this. And put together almost like a newsletter or a pamphlet type thing of, or maybe a presentation of the pictures, the survey data. Maybe you've asked some people or some anecdotal data?

Not only did I speak for Derrick, but I proceeded to impose my thinking onto him in that session, heavily suggesting what format they might want to use to share their findings.
I missed the opportunity to attend to Derrick's needs at the moment and to give Derrick space to engage authentically in the decision-making around how to share their findings.

The Messiness of Finding 3

Throughout Finding 3, I give evidence of the ways in which student voices impacted my curricular and instructional choices. I was able to respond to student-voiced experiences by giving space to students' greetings and sensory experiences, facilitating students' contributions towards larger criticality, and letting go of control of time, agenda, language, and some academic tasks. The messiness of Finding 3 is that much of what allowed me to respond to student voices

through curriculum and instruction is the fact that I teach in an alternative setting. Since I also have experience of teaching at the comprehensive setting, I realize that the degree of responsiveness I gave to student voices in this project would not have been possible at the comprehensive setting. The complexity in Finding 3 is that students are able to receive this level of inclusivity only after experiencing exclusionary practices at the comprehensive setting. There are takeaways that can be translated to comprehensive settings, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. However, the irony that I was able to fully attend to student voices only while working in the alternative setting in which students were required to attend after being asked to leave the comprehensive setting is noted.

Finding 3 Conclusion

The prominent factors that influenced my instructional and curricular choices while co-facilitating the II projects were student voices. The practice of greeting students emerged as an excellent opportunity to engage with student voices, especially when involving food and other sensory experiences. Greeting students was beneficial throughout a project discussion, not just for a specified time in the beginning. Additionally, the practice of letting go of control came to me to center student voices, and I practiced letting go of discussion agendas, student language, and the structure of discussion. However, there were missed opportunities in centering student voices, such as when I did not correctly attend to student vulnerability. With this finding comes the complexity that I was able to make these inclusionary choices due to the autonomy of being an alternative school English teacher, yet students attend this alternative school as a result of larger, systemic exclusionary practices.

Chapter Conclusion

I came to three findings after analyzing the archival data of audio recordings of project discussions, student work, and facilitators' materials. These findings were in response to my research questions, which guided my exploration of what is experienced when students engage in an II process facilitated by me, their teacher. I found that all students participated in the projects in leadership roles, though student leadership looked unique for each student. Additionally, I found that students used the II projects to process experiences of exclusion and to design experiences of inclusion for others. Students' experiences of exclusion involved feeling disrespected, used, misunderstood, left out, unseen, and uninvited. When designing experiences of inclusion, themes emerged of building community, focusing on oneself, creating and imagining new experiences, and counter-narratives. Finally, I found that student voices were the greatest influence on my decision-making process as a teacher. Decisions of mine included attending to student voices and missing opportunities to attend fully to student voices. The underlying finding from this practitioner research was the importance of listening to students' voices and paying attention to students' actions. Along with each of these findings are underlying complexities that relate to larger systems of injustices, which cannot be ignored and which contextualize students' experiences of the II projects.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

> For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (Freire, 1970, p. 53, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)
>
> Equity requires a nonviolent, action-oriented spirit of co-creation and coinvention, necessitating an inversion of legacy power structures. (Hill et al., 2015, p. 8)

This study derived from my desire to improve my inclusionary teaching practices, given the unique student population at Rose Calder School (RCS), where I teach. Most students are asked to attend RCS from the comprehensive middle or high school due to reasons such as disciplinary infractions, time in juvenile detention centers, housing, or attendance issues. Additionally, most RCS students identify as Black, a demographic associated with higher rates of school exclusionary practices (Skiba et al., 2014). With historically excluded students in mind, I conducted a practitioner research study so that my findings could directly impact my teaching practices and contribute to more general discussions of inclusionary practices and critiques of exclusionary practices.

To study students' experiences of inclusion and exclusion and the instructional and curricular choices I made to impact those experiences, I focused my research on an Inclusive Inquiry (II) project, which I co-facilitated for students during the 2021-2022 academic year. Since the II project was designed to be inclusionary, I wanted to explore students' experiences of the project and the choices I made while co-facilitating the project. I analyzed archival data collected following the 2021-2022 academic year, which included audio recordings of project discussions; student work associated with the II project, such as student presentations, a student

documentary film, and student feedback forms; and facilitator materials for the project, such as email exchanges between the facilitators, lesson plans, and my facilitator's diary. The following research questions guided my research:

1. How and to what extent do the student participants' experiences reflect experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion?
2. What factors influenced my choices regarding curriculum and instruction as I facilitated students' engagement in the process?

During my research, I established trustworthiness by triangulating theoretical perspectives in my conceptual framework, triangulating the data, member checking with student participants, deliberating with critical peers, and drafting memos for reflexivity (Hays & Singh, 2012). Data analysis involved coding for constructs derived from my conceptual framework and coding for constructs that emerged along the way. After maximizing trustworthiness in data collection and analysis, I arrived at three findings that addressed my research questions.

The underlying finding from this practitioner research was the importance of listening to students' voices and paying attention to students' actions. Kingston described what he observed to be unique to this project in his feedback to the facilitators: "You listened to what we were saying" (Student Feedback Forms, 5/1/2022). As evident in the audio recordings and facilitator materials, students were given time and space to voice their perspectives on the school or community problems they chose to focus on for the II project. Similarly, students were given time and space to bring up any topic they chose, and the topics they decided on tended to relate to food and other sensory experiences. Likewise, students were given the space to express themselves using the rhetoric they chose. Sometimes students spoke through their actions as they worked towards the progress of their projects. For the most part, I made instructional and

curricular decisions to provide space for students' voices and actions, as well as to respond to students' voices and actions. There were times when I could have provided more space and response to students, and those opportunities were missed. As evident in the student work, students appreciated the II project and noted how it brought them together (Student Feedback Forms, 5/1/22). Accordingly, the three findings from this study, as they relate to my research questions, are

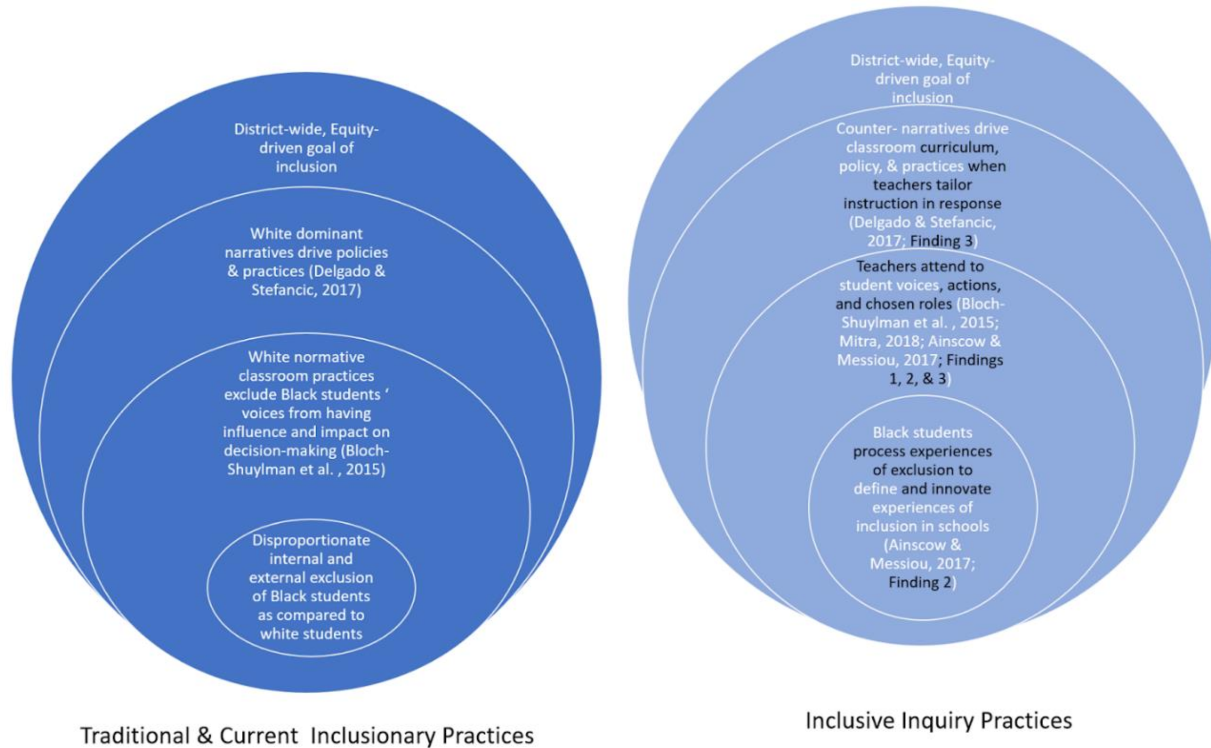
1. All students participated in the II projects in leadership roles. However, student leadership looked unique for each student. (RQ1)
2. Students used the II projects to process experiences of exclusion and to design experiences of inclusion for others. (RQ1)
3. Student voices were the greatest influence on my decision-making process as a teacher. (RQ2)

In this chapter, I will situate each finding within my conceptual framework and the literature. After discussing each finding, I will then offer specific recommendations based on the findings. These recommendations will include specific suggestions for my teaching practices and broader suggestions that can translate to comprehensive settings.

Findings Contextualized in Conceptual Framework

Figure 5.1

Findings Within Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework for this study, drawing largely from Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) as well as the II framework (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017) informed my research questions (see above) and study design. The findings (see above) that resulted from this study added nuance to the conceptual framework. In Figure 3, the nuanced additions from these findings are noted in black font. Significantly, these findings align with the conceptual framework and do not take away from the conceptual framework, yet they offer more specificity and nuance. For instance, at the core of the Inclusive Inquiry Practices chart, Finding 2 supplements the original statement, which was “Black students define experiences of inclusion in schools,” with the statement “Black students process experiences of exclusion to define and innovate experiences of inclusion in schools.” Further, the original conceptual construct “Student voices at center” evolved to “Teachers attend to student voices, actions, and chosen roles at

center" with the addition of Findings 1, 2, and 3. Lastly, the statement "Counter-narratives drive classroom policy, and practices" became "Counter-narratives drive classroom curriculum, policy, and practices when teachers tailor instruction in response" following Finding 3. There are two major distinctions between the original and adjusted conceptual frameworks. The first is that students processing exclusion is part of the process of students defining inclusion. I observed in students' experiences with the II projects that when students were given the opportunity to define inclusion, they naturally wanted to tell stories about times when their experiences did not meet their definitions of inclusion. The second distinction is related to the impact the teacher can have when choosing to respond to student voices. Teachers can attend to student voices by giving presence and validation to students' voiced experiences. Also, student voices can influence teachers to tailor their instruction to match the needs voiced by students. When teachers facilitate this level of responsiveness, students can drive the curriculum. The students become the curriculum.

The original conceptual framework supported my interpretation of the data for this study since I used the constructs within the conceptual framework as codes and was able to observe the constructs at play for this II project. For example, I could observe what it looked like within this II project for students' voices to be at the center. Additionally, I could find situations in which students formed counternarratives through their work in the II project. After observing and analyzing the constructs of the original conceptual framework in action, I enhanced the conceptual framework.

Findings Contextualized in Literature

The findings of this study provide intersections between several theoretical and evidence-based themes within the literature. In the following sections, I will discuss each of the three

findings, contextualize them within the literature, and give the recommendations that I plan to integrate into my teaching practice, as well as recommendations that can apply to teachers in comprehensive settings.

Contextualizing Finding 1

One tenet of the II framework is that "Inclusion practices must involve all students' presence, active engagement, and achievement" (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow 2020). Similarly, the purpose of translating tenets of democratic forums to the classroom is to achieve engagement in which every member participates in decision-making (Bloch-Shulman et al., 2015). I found through this study that, although every student participated in the II projects, every student's active engagement and participation looked different. Student roles and participation in the II projects were each unique. Some students chose to be vocal leaders; some students chose to lead through action; one student chose to lead by supporting her team members.

The top level of student voice activities, according to Mitra (2018) is student leadership. Characteristic of student leadership, students take on the decision-making, while the adults' role is to support (Mitra, 2018). Mitra (2018) pointed out the irony that the U.S. rests on the values of democracy, and yet, along with the push for standardized learning, schools invested less time in fostering democracy and involving students in decision-making. I found that in the II projects, all students were able to achieve some type of leadership, and they were given the opportunity for a variety of roles related to leadership because of my active listening. Mitra (2018)'s literature review on student voice emphasized the important first level of student leadership is a level of listening. Mitra (2018) found that listening to students' voices can lead to student-staff partnerships, collaboration, and better relationships. However, Mitra (2018) cautioned against

tokenizing student voice or having "symbolic youth participation" which "can be damaging to young people" (p. 475). In contrast to previous teaching experiences of mine, the II projects allowed for multiple forms of student leadership, rather than forcing students into one type of symbolic or tokenistic leadership. Authentic student voice must be student-initiated and student-led for a relationship between student voice and power; whereas most of the student-voice studies Mitra examined were implemented with limitations (2018). Reviewing Mitra (2018)'s findings helped me to understand Finding 1. Students had the space to rise to the top level of student voice and to achieve student leadership after I engaged in a level of listening, hearing from students how they were choosing to get involved, and then collaborating with their selected styles of leadership.

Contextualizing Finding 2

I found that students used the II project to process experiences of exclusion while, at the same time, innovating experiences of inclusion. In some cases, students processed experiences of exclusion related to their project innovation. For example, in the school lunch project, students processed what their original school lunch felt like and how those feelings related to feeling disconnected from the comprehensive school. The fact that the lunches were dropped off by a courier driver rather than prepared at their school related to feelings of getting leftover service from the comprehensive school. In some cases, students shared experiences of exclusion that did not directly relate to their project topic, such as when Derrick shared with the school lunch group his experience of when a friend's parents made him feel unwelcome at their house after he found out that a parent had labeled him in a negative way. Processing feelings of exclusion relates to Ainscow and Messiou (2018)'s conclusion on "the power of listening to student views as a means of stimulating inclusive developments in schools" (p. 12), which they came to through

their research on II. Already a part of the II framework is a focus on the removal of barriers to inclusion. Also, in a number of cases, Ainscow and Messiou (2018) found that students' expression of barriers can be directly linked to teaching and learning. Still, in numerous other cases, they were related to general feelings of exclusion. For example, in their research at an elementary school, students mentioned feeling unwelcome or unsafe in certain school settings, such as the cafeteria or bathroom areas (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). Through II, school staff and students could work together to process these experiences, which ultimately led to students contributing to changes in the school. Ainscow and Messiou (2018) pointed to the power of dialogue in this case, how school staff listened to student views, even when listening to student views, which brought up some defensiveness in some school staff. My research relates to these findings, in that listening to student views around barriers to feelings of inclusion did not always fit nicely into our lesson agenda and even at times felt inconvenient to my facilitation of our agenda; however, the bonding, relationship-building, and curricular opportunities that resulted from students' having the openness to express their feelings made it worthwhile.

Not only did students process experiences of exclusion, but students became innovators of inclusion. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Neighborhood Kitchen group took what they perceived as a major constraint, the fact that they were a small and isolated setting, and turned it into an opportunity. Derrick reflected on how, since they were so small, they had the chance to build a real community around school lunch and to test out an idea that might be able to work on a larger scale. The prenatal care student group had the space to process what it was about the prenatal care appointments that made them feel excluded. The popular culture group processed their observations around who was represented in museums and how those representations related to or did not relate to their own identity. Since students were working to gather empathy

and understanding around experiences, find opportunities out of constraints, prototype and test out their new ideas as they reimagined everyday experiences, students clearly engaged in design thinking (Doorley et al., 2018). Significantly in connection to inclusion, after analyzing students' engagement with innovation and design approaches, I was able to identify that students were engaged in a more equitable version of design thinking, called Equity x Design since, according to Hill et al., 2014,

> While engaging with end users, many forms of design thinking still see the designer as separate from the user and grant the designer the power in the relationship—the power to decide with whom to do empathy work, the power to interpret the results, the power to decide the framing of the problem, and the power to pick the best solution. (Hill et al., 2014, p. 4)

In contrast to the typical power structure of design thinking described by Hill et al. (2014), in which the designer, not the user, holds the power of decision making, each student group worked on situations in which they were the users, which more closely fits Hill et al.'s Equity x Design approach. Equity x Design aligns with Critical Race Theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), in that it holds the core tenet that racism is everywhere and systemic. The Equity x Design approach relates this CRT tenet to the construct of design by stating that "Racism and inequality are products of design. They can be redesigned" (Hill et al., 2014, p. 1). Redesign towards more equitable experiences, according to Hill et al. (2014), requires more than "equity work," which helps with sociopolitical consciousness but is often lacking in action. Innovation and design thinking are pathways towards taking action in redesigning systems, such as those rooted in racism. Yet, design thinking requires a major shift to empower those most impacted by racism to have the agency around its redesign.

The Equity x Design approach also aligns with culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2017) in that Equity x Design holds as a principle that historical and sociopolitical consciousness is key. Additionally, the II framework matches the Equity x Design approach since it states as its second core principle that a construct called radical inclusion happens when diverse members contribute as stakeholders to remove inclusion barriers. Furthermore, tenets of democracy, as well as tenets of the II framework all, align with the Equity x Design approach, as it holds as its third core principle that "Process dictates product" and that "Inclusive design practices raise the voices of the marginalized, strengthen relationships across difference, shift positions, and recharge our democracy" (Hill et al., p. 7). It is important to note here that until I held Finding 2 alongside the Equity x Design approach, I questioned whether or not the prenatal care group and the popular culture group work could be categorized as design thinking since there were no clear and concise final products that dramatically removed barriers to inclusion in the same way that the school lunch project did. However, the core principle to focus on process helped me to understand that students in the prenatal care group and the popular culture group also engaged as innovators, since they used the project time to grow relationships and connections amongst students and between students and facilitators, as well as to disrupt positions of power and to grow a more democratic forum by engaging as decision-makers during their project sessions. Finding 2 sums up students' experiences through the II projects in that they were able to process experiences of exclusion and innovate experiences of inclusion since their work fits within the Equity x Design approach.

Throughout the II projects, students were creating counter-narratives as students engaged in the Equity x Design approach. Counter-narrative is an important construct, both in CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and in the tenets of democracy, as translated to the classroom

(Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). CRT asserts that Black and Brown people can voice their truths and experiences as counter-narratives, which should be held against white-dominant narratives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015), in their study of their college classroom in which they worked to grow a more democratic forum, emphasized the democratic value in narratives that "create alternatives to dominant paradigms that risk excluding or dismissing the experiences of others" (p. 40). When staff and students come together in the process of creating and sharing counter-narratives, students are invited to the table to reflect on and to critique their experiences of school "Including faculty voices in this exercise also gives students permission to be open and critical in their evaluations of their own educational experiences and, by deemphasizing the differences [between students and faculty]" (Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015). During the II projects, students could share their discontent around the project topics they chose and create reimagined alternatives to the situations they were researching. Even more than the final products from their projects, the sharing of these stories within the space of the classroom fits within the construct of counter-narrative since the process "reveal[ed] the source of values, priorities, and cultural meanings" (Young, 2006, p. 75). Dominant narratives that students worked to reimagine through the II project included the idea that teachers should hold power and expertise around curriculum and that students' experiences, especially Black students' experiences, are not relevant to the classroom or the curriculum.

Contextualizing Finding 3

Finding 3 describes a phenomenon in which students' voices drove the II projects' curriculum and my instruction. For the most part, I observed that I offered validating responses to the experiences students expressed. These validating responses align with Gay (2010)'s recommendation of the importance of teachers communicating care to diverse students.

According to Gay (2010), attributes of care for students include “attending to person and performance” (p. 63), which accurately depicts the way I chose to validate student voices as well as student actions. In Chapter 3, I detailed Gay (2010)’s recommendations. I made the point that even though communicating care, Gay still puts the teacher in the position of an expert since Gay recommends that teachers teach students the realities of the world and cultural competence. I mentioned how problematic my position as an expert would be since I teach predominantly Black students as a white woman. Consequently, for the II projects, I chose to put students as experts on their experiences. I intentionally tried to offer validating responses that communicated that I was witnessing their expressed experiences.

I mentioned in Chapter 4 how there were times when I did not appropriately attend to students’ vulnerability. I observed through the transcribed audio recordings of our discussions that there were times in which the direction of the discussion moved on after a student offered a vulnerable experience. I also spoke in Chapter 4 about the importance of letting go, yet this is one area in which I regret letting go. Looking back, I wish I had offered validation and attention through verbal response even after the discussion had quickly moved elsewhere. I wish I had taken a hard facilitation move to return to the students’ vulnerable offerings with more careful attention.

Within this finding, there are interpretations that I made to complement the literature that describes in detail how to center voices but does not necessarily describe in detail how to incorporate what students express into instruction and curriculum. For instance, I heard students expressing sensory experiences and integrated their voiced experiences into our curriculum. Students in the popular culture group talked about music. Jada, in particular, created a playlist to share with all group members, students, and facilitators, to represent the songs she feels most

passionate about. Her playlist inspired other group members to create their own playlists, and the playlists played a crucial role in our group dynamics as we drove in vans to Washington, D.C., for our field trip and continued our inquiry work around the songs and what deeper themes they represented.

Other scholars have written about responding through instruction to students' sensory experiences. For example, both Ladson-Billings (2017) and Emden (2017) wrote about using constructs of hip hop to structure their classrooms. Ladson-Billings (2017), in response to the problem of practice she observed that Black and Brown students' voices were not centered in a typical class at the university where she taught, "Their voices are muted and sometimes discounted, and their experiences are rarely integrated into the class discourse" (p. 148), responded to students' concerns by designing a project featuring hip hop styles of expression as the core curriculum for their course. In addition, through these projects, the students' final products eventually served in creating a new college course around the themes students chose (Ladson-Billings, 2017). In the II projects at RCS, the popular culture group's choice to start with an exploration of music and how music represents identity and then to weave that inquiry into deeper, more sociopolitically conscious questions, such as who gets to decide what popular culture goes into museums, relates to Ladson-Billings (2017) journey with her university students and how her response to her students pushed their sociopolitical consciousness, a tenet of culturally response teaching she claims is often neglected.

Emdin (2017) also uses hip hop structures, such as what he refers to as cogens, where teachers can listen to students, especially those who have been historically marginalized, in small group settings, about what is on their minds and what insight they have around curricular and

instructional choices. His rationale for creating these spaces fits under what he names reality pedagogy:

> It focuses on making the local experiences of the student visible and creating contexts where there is a role reversal of sorts that positions the student as the expert in his or her own teaching and learning, and the teacher as the learner. (p. 27)

Given the small number of students in each project group, I could pull off a more active listening role, which I realize would not have been possible if facilitated in a room full of students. The situation presented itself similarly to Ladson-Billings' (2017) and Emdin's (2017) descriptions of the group discussions they held with students.

Other sensory experiences expressed by students in project groups related to food. Connecting around food related to the literature on greeting and how important greeting is to the processes of democracy. Young (2002) first specified greeting as one of his three strategies for a more democratic forum, and then Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) translated that tenet to the classroom for a more democratic classroom. Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) observed the greeting as antithetical to the business or housekeeping details that often occur at the beginning of a class. This observation is consistent with my finding. As described in Chapter 4 as missed opportunities, there were times in which I neglected to provide space for a proper greeting at the start of class and then anxiously filled the room with agenda items that held logistics. According to Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015), the greeting is integral to establishing relationships, especially between people of different power structures. The greeting communicates respect, for "the greeting recognizes that others are necessary to the process of meaningful engagement in a democracy. The greeting seeks to include others by way of extending an open hand of invitation" (p. 35). It is also consistent with Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015)'s observations that food is a great

opportunity for greeting, and the rationale they provide is that food provides a perfectly unstructured meeting ground:

> food is an important socializing medium that encourages informal conversations, sometimes about matters personal and sometimes about ideas offered earlier in the classroom instruction. While both strands of talk are necessary and important, it is crucial to us that conversation be the main activity during the breaks. The unstructured opportunity for speaking in an atmosphere of sustenance allows the students to get to know each other and us as complex, interesting community members rather than "just" students or “only” teachers despite what our classroom roles may suggest. (p. 36)

The class discussion in which Derrick felt moved to call his father to ask about their Liberian rituals around rice when people in their family die represented this exact, unstructured yet personal and complex information we were able to learn about Derrick at that moment, thanks to the conversation being centered on food.

As I described in Finding 2, I let go of control of several things during my facilitation of the II projects. My choice to let go of control did not come from my overwhelm, as it has in previous teaching experiences in which I have not been able to manage a lesson towards a learning target. Instead, my letting go of control was intentional and related to my noticing the tenets related to more democratic forums at play, which included greeting, as described above, and an affirmative use of rhetoric. Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) also took Young (2002)’s recommendation to encourage an affirmative use of rhetoric to grow democracy when they designed their college classroom. Young (2002) defined the affirmative use of rhetoric as an opportunity to break away from requiring sterile logic-styled dialogue, which goes back to ancient traditions of democracy. Without the requirement of logic, rhetoric-filled expression and

argument can have a great impact. Bloch-Schulman et al. (2015) commented on Young's intention and noted how not only has student rhetoric been historically discouraged in classrooms, it has related to students' diverse backgrounds, and it has been punished:

> Rather than vilifying and rejecting rhetorical speech, recognizing the importance of the "affirmative uses of rhetoric" allows us to appreciate the importance of "emotion, figurative language, or unusual or playful forms of expression" in political communication and in the classroom, by allowing individuals and groups to express themselves, their diverse backgrounds, and their diverse opinions and positions in their own voices and their own special way (Young, 2000, p. 64, as cited in Bloch-Schulman et al., 2015, p. 39)

It is not lost on me that I am an English teacher guilty of having exerted external exclusion (Young 2002) on students for language that did not fit white-dominant norms. For instance, I have written discipline referrals for students for speaking to me with the word "fuck." Letting go of control around the style of expression students chose in this project never backfired. Students were so enthralled in their topics that they used expressive rhetoric to connect with the research, never to put others down. Further, when students made decisions around final products, they naturally adjusted their rhetoric for the formality of the occasion or the audience they had in mind, such as with Derrick's presentation to the school board.

By situating my findings within the literature related to student voice, counter-narrative, design thinking, culturally responsive teaching, as well as creating more democratic forums, I was able to formulate recommendations both for me in my future practice at RCS, as well as for teachers in any setting, and for these recommendations to represent an intersection of these multiple bodies of literature. Across these findings, it was evident that the II framework provided

for student-generated experiences of inclusion. For each of the three II projects, students, on their own accord, chose to design more inclusive experiences, both for the students' benefit and also for the benefit of others. Additionally, the II framework shifted my teaching practice in ways that I was able to analyze for this study. Holding intentionality around II as I co-facilitated these projects resulted in instructional and curricular choices I would not have made on a regular basis. My findings and recommendations will provide strategies I can consider when facilitating future II projects and strategies that can be applied to everyday instructional and curricular choices. I plan to share these findings and recommendations with my fellow RCS staff members and the RCS students I work with in future years. I also plan to share these findings with district leadership in hopes of influencing teacher practice in the comprehensive setting as well, considering that most RCS students attended these comprehensive settings before coming to RCS. In the next section, I will list these recommendations.

Recommendations

Based on my findings, I arrived at three recommendations. The following recommendations are ones I plan to implement in my teaching practice to improve students' experiences of inclusion in my classroom. I also mention in each recommendation how it can be translated to comprehensive classroom settings, knowing that my current teaching placement in an alternative setting is unique. I came to these recommendations after grounding them in my students' experiences of an II project, which I studied through practitioner research, and after grounding the recommendations in different bodies of literature. These recommendations add to discussions on culturally responsive pedagogy, student voice, democratic forums, design thinking, and most of all: inclusion.

These are the three recommendations to grow inclusionary practices in a classroom setting:

- Listen to students and share power with them.
    - Prioritize greeting.
    - Provide students opportunities to process experiences of exclusion.
    - Allow students to participate in a variety of ways.
    - Give students a choice in how they want their work to be received by others.
- Position students as innovators of their own inclusive experiences.
    - “Design at the margins” (Hill et al., p. 7)
    - “Start with yourself” (Hill et al., p. 7)
    - “Cede power” (Hill et al., p. 8)
    - “Make the invisible visible” (Hill et al., p. 8)
    - “Speak the future, design the future” (Hill et al, p. 8)
- Tailor instruction and curriculum in response to students’ voices, actions, and innovative design.
    - Build student focus groups
    - Conference with individual students
    - Make student changes to instruction and curriculum visible
    - Engage students as co-researchers in practitioner research

Listen and Share Power

Over the years, I have heard a repeated recommendation for teachers to support student voice and choice. However, through this practitioner research, I now have a more nuanced understanding of how to honor students' voices and choices through shared power.

Greeting. As detailed in this chapter, the greeting is one core tenet towards a more democratic forum, as it can provide a common ground for people of different power positions (Young, 2002). In my future teaching at RCS, I plan to make time and space daily for greeting. I observed the pitfalls when I did not give greeting importance--the students' participation was not as high as the times when we had time for greeting, and my move towards a logistics-based agenda item came off as abrupt and exclusionary. At RCS, I found students are able to establish greeting best around sensory details, and most significantly, around food. As such, I plan to incorporate experiences around food as much as possible. I found the need to improvise around greeting, given the trend that students can come to the classroom having had intense and sometimes traumatic experiences they are still processing when they arrive, such as housing displacement, changes in medication, or encounters with law enforcement. Superficial greetings do not always appropriately create common ground. I plan to listen and to observe first the way in which students are communicating with each other, including what they say and also their body language. I plan to move around the room in greeting, both individually and with the thole group, attending to where students are. I plan to have one or two structured greeting questions on hand and for these questions to be related to earlier observations and feedback I have received from students. I also plan to leave those aside if needed. Finally, I plan to communicate care in the transition from greeting to the agenda. I observed in our II project that the smoothest transitions were the project sessions in which the greeting topic related to our project work, so that transition felt seamless. Therefore, I plan to pay close attention to the sensory details within

the curriculum that have evolved from students and to use those sensory details as entry points to our day's work.

I recognize that I teach in a unique setting with a small class size and with students who, for the most part, I have been building relationships with for the most part for over two years. However, if in a larger, comprehensive classroom setting, I would still recommend some key takeaways. First, approach a greeting less like an icebreaker, with a rigid, teacher-driven prompt to begin dialogue around a prescribed topic, but rather, use the information you are gaining from students to initiate a greeting. Some of that information may present itself at the moment. Respond to it with active listening and validation. Also, pay attention to the transition from greeting to an agenda item. Often it can feel dismissive of the vulnerability that was just shared by saying, "Moving on." Find a way to weave the students' experiences into the curriculum. I found the best way to do that is if students have agency over the curriculum (see below) and if there are sensory details related to those curricular choices the students made.

Give Students Time and Space to Process Experiences of Exclusion. Students in the II project processed experiences of exclusion, as they named barriers to inclusion (Ainscow and Messiou, 2017). I plan to allow for this, no matter where it is in our agenda for the day. I want to do a better job of noticing when this is happening and to attend to what is being processed. For example, if Derrick were to share again how he felt when his friend's parents referred to him as a thug, I would do a hard facilitation move to make sure he knew I was witnessing those emotions. I found that paying attention to and validating these moments that students processed gave us a stronger bond as well as provided talking points that students eventually chose to focus on for the innovative design. Processing experiences of exclusion was a crucial step towards students designing their own experiences of inclusion.

I realize pausing a lesson and attending to students' processing experiences of exclusion is not always possible, especially in a larger comprehensive setting. However, it is possible for a teacher to set up a system to make visible and to table the concern being raised by a student, no matter where it is in the lesson, as well as to plan time after a lesson to return to these concerns. I feel like we teachers get fatigued by the impromptu and deeper concerns students bring up, such as their complaints around school lunch. Yet, there can be energizing power in the collective that forms when these topics are attended to, since, with attention, these complaints can become catalysts for change.

Allow Students to Be in Control of How They Want Their Narrative to Be Affirmed by Others. I found it informative that Destiny, in the prenatal care group, after processing experiences of exclusion related to larger systems of injustice, chose to work on a final product that would be just for her. I honored that choice, and I think it related to Young (2002)'s construct of "local publics" and how giving people the opportunity to share their narratives in smaller groups with "shared affinities," since communication in larger forums rarely is representative of all people affected by an issue. A public declaration sometimes is met in response and overpowered by language that normalizes injustice and suffering (p. 72). Young (2002) gave examples of women's groups and narratives around sexual harassment as groups that benefited from local publics. The fact that the prenatal care group requested a female-identifying-only time slot for project work relates to this point by Young (2002). This is not to say I will never ask students if they wish to share their work in larger forums, but I realize, thanks to Young (2002), the importance of allowing students to guide these decisions. By doing so, I can refrain from Mitra (2020)'s caution not to tokenize students' voices.

I have the flexibility to give students agency over their final product work for inquiry-based projects in a small setting. However, even in comprehensive settings, teachers can abstain from dictating a final product format before assigning projects and then listen to what project products are relevant to students. Further, the student may not realize the final product preferences until further into a project process. I recommend conferencing with students throughout a project, providing project models, and facilitating students to be in control of how they want affirmation of their work, whether it be a local public or a larger public.

Give Space for Multiple Modes of Participation. Similarly, students should have space to participate in group work, taking on a variety of roles. I plan to be more explicit with students to build their awareness of how they naturally are inclined to participate, to set some goals around what that style of participation looks like for them, and then also to encourage students to try other modes of participation throughout the year. This can also be done in any comprehensive setting, as long as there is allotted time at the beginning of a group project experience to support students' reflection, preference-setting, and goal-setting.

Facilitate to Innovate

Students in the II project were not only experts in their learning, but they were innovators

in their learning. Students took issues that they found to be problematic and designed alternatives using process steps that are unique to the problem-solving process of design thinking. Further, students gravitated towards a process that is a more equitable form of designing thinking, called Equity x Design. As recommended by Hill et al., (2014), I plan to incorporate the following steps of Equity x Design into future projects with students in an effort to position students as innovators of inclusion.

- “Design at the margins” (p. 7): position historically marginalized people as leaders of the design process, so in the case of RCS, I will continue to position students as leaders of design.
- “Start with yourself” (p. 7): in contrast to design thinking, in which you often work to design products and experiences for users, Equity x Design encourages to first examine yourself before choosing to make changes for others; similarly, I take this tenet to allow students who have been historically marginalized the space to start with their own experiences, if they choose, as places for design, and I can communicate to students that they are the experts of their own experiences.
- “Cede power” (p. 8): the general recommendation here is to invert traditional power structures and to move toward shared power. I plan to take this recommendation to heart in the classroom even when not working on project work. I plan to be intentional about my choices to cede power, such as around agenda and curriculum. I realize this is not always possible in larger settings, yet I recommend for teachers to really examine the moments when they feel overpowered by student voice and expressed choices and what reactions students’ expressions of power elicit from them. Are there any small or large opportunities to share power in the classroom?
- “Make the invisible visible” (p. 8): Hill et al. recommend making visible the “implicit bias, power dynamics, and hegemonic practices that govern relationships with people in our organizations, schools, and governments” (p. 8). I plan to do so by making student inquiry the core of our curricular moves, whether through II projects or through mini-experiences of II, such as establishing a

weekly cogen (Emdin, 2017) of students outside of class. I plan to use the topics and issues students bring up as access points for further sociopolitical consciousness-building (Ladson-Billings, 2017) through our curriculum. The key here, which can be translated to larger settings, is that I want to tie the sociopolitical consciousness-building curriculum to what students are bringing to the table during the cogen. For example, I do not want to, as a white woman, be in the position of expertise around the structures of racism when students have already expressed having lived experiences of racism. Rather, I want to use the experiences they express as beginning points for student inquiry.

- "Speak the future, design the future" (p. 8): acknowledging racism and other systems of oppression are products of design and can be redesigned, Hill et al. recommend working on that redesign. They say this, not with naive hopefulness but with caution that this process will be uncomfortable to break from hegemonic discourse and reimagine transformation. Hill et al. underscore the "power in language" (p. 8) and how traditionally, discourse is used "to influence and control ideas, beliefs, actions, and ultimately culture" (p. 8). I tie this recommendation to Young (2002)'s recommendation for the affirmative use of rhetoric. I plan to allow students to choose their own rhetoric when expressing themselves. I can facilitate student inquiry around their choices around audience when putting their self-expression into public settings. However, in the private classroom setting, that level of facilitation or control is not necessary. I am lucky to have an administrator who supports me in this decision. I realize that in other settings, I

might have to navigate students' use of rhetoric in my class as it is perceived through biases by outside evaluators.

Tailor Instruction and Curriculum in Response to Student Voice and Actions

This last recommendation is the most difficult to translate to a comprehensive setting. Teaching in an alternative setting, I have the advantage of small class sizes, in which I can easily tailor my instruction and our curriculum in response to students' decision-making. I am still able to do this and meet the expectations of the state, given that the standards associated with English instruction are general enough to allow for tailoring. However, that is not always the case in other settings, and standards that can be tailored are not always the case for other content areas. Nonetheless, I found a great impact from students' influence on my instruction and our curriculum, so the following recommendations are made with the potential for that impact as well as the realities of a comprehensive setting in mind:

- Build small focus groups of students that meet outside of class, focusing on historically marginalized students. These could take the structure of Emdin's (2017) cogens, or cogenerative dialogues with students, in which he recommends selecting a diverse group of students and ultimately hearing from students who else might be interested in joining, cycling students out. He also recommends setting up the space as a circle and having food. Students can give input to instruction and curriculum, according to Emdin (2017). Further, this small group could provide "local public" (Young, 2002) space when providing a local public is not possible in a larger classroom.
- Conference with individual students outside of class to ask for specific input on instruction and curriculum. For various reasons, these may be students who cannot or choose not to participate in the small group. They may also be students who have

individually unique experiences and needs. This may also be students who are in the small group and who gave you input to instruction and curriculum. After you have accommodated the changes in your planning, run these changes by the student to let them know about the changes and to see if the way you planned for them fits what they envisioned.

- Make changes and make those changes visible. Give credit to students for their input. Connect the dots for the class community, showing where student input was incorporated into instruction and curriculum. Making this connection can communicate, “I care,” like Gay (2010) recommends with utmost importance.
- Engage students in practitioner research. This study was designed as a practitioner research study. The insights gained from this study will influence my future teaching, and I plan to continue to conduct practitioner research in future years. Practitioner research in education is one methodology in which we as teachers can slow down and examine our practices and their impact on students. Whether practitioner research takes the form of a formal study or even an informal lesson study, students’ involvement in the research process is crucial. Further, keeping to the II framework (Ainscow & Messiou, 2017; Messiou & Ainscow 2020), students can and should be co-designers of practitioner research.

Overall, the above recommendations aim to create students’ experiences of inclusion by removing internal exclusion and external exclusion (Young, 2002), acknowledging that teachers have the power to influence both. Next, I will elaborate on the limitations of this practitioner research study.

Limitations

The value of practitioner research can be interpreted by some as having limitations. My position as a classroom teacher provided me with the advantage of rich data collection and trust given by the participants. The limitation of being the students' classroom teacher is that there was the potential that I would make assumptions about my students and their experiences, and/or I would be less reflective assuming I already knew what to conclude. To mediate this limitation, I provided multiple opportunities for the participants to check my interpretations of their experiences as well as to maintain a facilitator diary in which I engaged in explicit and critical reflection on my teaching practices, rather than using this process as a judgment of students in the class.

The second characteristic of this study that can be viewed as a limitation is the contextualized validity of a small, targeted sample. Because the study is context-dependent, its generalizability may be questioned. Due to the limitation of generalizability, I recommended further research for other class sections in the district following this study. Due to students' expressed feelings of exclusion in various comprehensive settings before arriving at RCS, further research is needed to examine students' experiences of inclusion and exclusion in comprehensive settings.

Conclusion

I conducted this capstone study to examine what is experienced when students who have been on the receiving end of exclusionary practices engage in an II project facilitated by me, their teacher. My underlying finding was the importance of listening to students' voices and paying attention to students' actions. Each student contributed their voice at the level of student leadership, and student leadership looked unique for each student. Part of the II process involved students processing their experiences of exclusion. Additionally, students designed experiences

of inclusion for others. I found that students' voices were the greatest influence on my instructional and curricular choices. The recommendations I plan to integrate into my teaching practices and translate to the teaching practices of others in my school district include to listen to and share power with students, facilitate to innovate, especially in line with the Equity x Design approach, and tailor instruction and curriculum in response to student voices, making visible to students how they influenced classroom choices. Future research is recommended to examine students' experiences of inclusion and exclusion in comprehensive settings. Finally, since practitioner research is a methodology accessible to all teachers, it should be conducted more broadly to examine teaching practices, and it should involve students in the design and implementation of future studies.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Certificate

Office of the Vice President for Research

Human Research Protection Program

Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences

IRB-SBS Chair: Moon, Tonya

IRB-SBS Director: Blackwood, Bronwyn

Protocol Number (4874) Approval Certificate

The UVA IRB-SBS reviewed "Incorporating Student Voices: A Study of Students' Experiences in an Inclusive Inquiry Project" and determined that the protocol met the qualifications for approval as described in 45 CFR 46.

Principal Investigator: Dirghangi, Carly **Faculty**

Sponsor: Heny, Natasha **Protocol Number**: 4874

Protocol Title: Incorporating Student Voices: A Study of Students' Experiences in an Inclusive Inquiry Project

Is this research funded? No

Review category: Expedited Review

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes
7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

Review Type:

Modifications: No

Continuation: No

Unexpected Adverse Events: No

Approval Date: 2022-04-21

As indicated in the Principal Investigator, Faculty Sponsor, and Department Chair Assurances as part of the IRB requirements for approval, the PI has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the study, the ethical performance of the project, the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects, and strict adherence to any stipulations imposed by the IRB-SBS.

The PI and research team will comply with all UVA policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws regarding the protection of human subjects in research, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. That no participants will be recruited or data accessed under the protocol until the Investigator has received this approval certificate.
2. That no participants will be recruited or entered under the protocol until all researchers for the project including the Faculty Sponsor have completed their human investigation research ethics educational requirement (CITI training is required every 3 years for UVA researchers). The PI ensures that all personnel performing the project are qualified, appropriately trained, and will adhere to the provisions of the approved protocol.
3. That any modifications of the protocol or consent form will not be implemented without prior written approval from the IRB-SBS Chair or designee except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the participants.
4. That any deviation from the protocol and/or consent form that is serious, unexpected and related to the study or a death occurring during the study will be reported promptly to the SBS Review Board in writing.
5. That all protocol forms for continuations of this protocol will be completed and returned within the time limit stated on the renewal notification letter.
6. That all participants will be recruited and consented as stated in the protocol approved or exempted by the IRB-SBS board. If written consent is required, all participants will be consented by signing a copy of the consent form unless this requirement is waived by the board.
7. That the IRB-SBS office will be notified within 30 days of a change in the Principal Investigator for the study.
8. That the IRB-SBS office will be notified when the active study is complete.
9. The SBS Review Board reserves the right to suspend and/or terminate this study at any time if, in its opinion, (1) the risks of further research are prohibitive, or (2) the above agreement is breached.

Date this Protocol Approval Certificate was generated: 2022-08-12

Appendix B

Codebook

Code	Definition	Examples
Students define experiences of inclusion		
Ongoing	Occurs over time, the process comes up again and again	Bringing it back to the food how can I sit there and get into my creative mind and tell you what I want for myself in life? But my stomach hurts, right?

Dialogic	The process of inclusion happens through conversation between people	Carly Dirghangi: And you're very happy to hear that. He went kind of more abstract. And just like if we had really good food, maybe we would feel more like a community. Derrick: Yeah, maybe we'll go sit down and eat together. We don't really do that in lunch, because we don't really want to eat that shit. So we run around to do everything. There's not much. I was a student in here like, oh, like. Because, I mean, that's why that's why I said what it means to me, I can explain what it means to me can explain everybody else, but Carly Dirghangi: represented in this presentation? Derrick: Can we call them? I'll call 'em.

		Ashley 16:08 Do you want to go into what the project means to you? Today? Okay, let's do that.
Student Innovation of Inclusion	Students engage in the tenets of innovation and design thinking.	What went well with the YPAR work this year? Cooking in the kitchen Getting to experiment

Student voice and student inquiry at center		
All students' presence and engagement	All students can attend and participate in class discussion	Oh, other kids are cooking this week? Now other kids are taking taking it on like their own responsibility to do the same thing we were doing we started moving and it's changing
Focus on historically excluded	Students who have a history of marginalization in schools are the topic of discussion and/or the participants in the discussion	I know exactly what I'll put. My museum will be filled with every black empowering person that you don't hear about
Greeting	Conversation that lowers the guard, builds connection, and fosters community	my favorite chips is Hot Fries.
--> Emergent Child Code Under "Greeting": Tastebud Level	Topics that are easy to personally connect to	I thought like salmon was always hard or something. It's soft and juicy like way better than that Tinder
--> Emergent Code: Challenging Topic	Topics that represent vulnerability and/or high level of critical thinking	My mom wasn't there. she was in hospital

Affirmative Use of Rhetoric	Naturally-inclined language is welcome and encouraged in project sessions	Oh, karma. Karma is a bitch for Real
Student Questions	Students generate questions and/or are prompted questions	Why don't we? Why don't we have like chef experiments and shit like that?
--> Emergent Child Code Under "Student Questions": Prompting More SV	Facilitators or fellow students as for students to elaborate or to give more student voice	Yes, tell me more about that.
--> Emergent Code: Missed Opportunity	Students began to open up with vulnerability, yet the direction of the discussion moved in another direction	Jada: I watch that movie, I cried like eight times. Yeah, Jean: I mean, it was it's very, that one's really emotional. But that one On the Come Up is more about like, her rapping career.
Counter-narratives drive policy and practices		

Identify barriers	The articulation of obstacles to feelings of inclusion	Okay, the lunch we used to give before and hen we told you word for word. There's a guy that comes here in a pickup chart, he brings our food around 8am He just drops it off outside. He doesn't take it in our kitchen. He doesn't prep it for us nothing. He drops it off outside and it's food from either the elementary or the high school that they're going to either eat from lunch that day or yesterday, but they leave it here and let it defrost and then we reheat it and give it to us around 12 That is what our typical lunch was until we decided to do different
Take away barriers	The planning or acting to remove barriers to the feelings of inclusion	We had the idea, If we made our own food at school, we will have more positive vibes at school, and we can inspire communities to get together and do the same.
Counter-narratives	Alternate perspectives to dominant perspectives around experiences of systems	I tell you every time we cook, brother smiles. I see more people smile on the days we cook than the days we don't. So it's like really nice to the soul too so we are in a happy state of mind.

Appendix C

Consent Forms

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent Agreement: Paper Copy

Study Title: Incorporating Student Voices: A Study of Students' Experiences in an Inclusive Inquiry Project
Protocol #: 4874

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study. Your child will also receive an assent form; please review the assent form with your child. All data will be collected only after grades are submitted for the 2021-2022 school year, and only after IRB-SBS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT-LEVEL approval of this protocol.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to study the experiences of your child in my classroom as they engaged in an Inclusive Inquiry research project and how those experiences relate to my inclusive teaching practices. By uncovering and listening to your child give voice to their experiences as they engage in the Inclusive Inquiry process, I can gain a better understanding of inclusion from the perspective of those who have been excluded: Your child's voiced experiences of curriculum and instruction intended to be inclusionary may have implications for preventing school practices and learning experiences that result in the exclusion of students.

What your child will do in the study: This study will take place at [redacted] over the months of June-July 2022, focusing on student experiences of an Inclusive Inquiry project. There are seven students who will have completed an Inclusive Inquiry project, including your child, who are all invited to participate in the study. Participants do not do anything other than consenting to allow me to use their class data after the school year is over. Students who participate in the study will consent to allow me to examine our archival recordings of class discussions that we took for the purpose of note taking, my own teacher diary reflections during the project, the facilitation materials from the project, as well as their class work related to the project.

Time required: The study will not require the use of your child's time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks for this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to your child for participating in this research study. The overall benefit of the study is to better understand my own teaching practices so that I can better improve the inclusivity of my classroom. This information will help my future classroom settings, as well as the classroom settings of my colleagues at [redacted], as I work in collaboration with them to better our inclusive teaching.

Confidentiality: The information that your child gives in the study will be handled confidentially. Your child's name and other information that could be used to identify you will not be linked to the data. Your child's name will be replaced by a pseudonym. The list connecting your child's name to this pseudonym will be kept in a locked file. The audio files recorded for this study will be deleted immediately following transcription of the files, in June 2022.

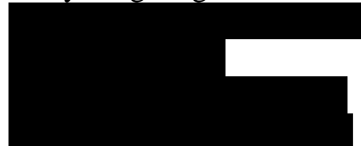
Voluntary participation: Your child's participation and/or your participation in the study is completely voluntary. The child's grades or school services will not be affected by the study.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw your child from the study at any time without penalty. Your decision to participate will have no effect on grades or school services. If you choose to withdraw, your audio data will not be used in analysis.

How to withdraw from the study:
If you want to withdraw your child from the study, email me at csn4a@virginia.edu. There is no penalty for withdrawing and withdrawing will not affect your child's experience as a student at Withdrawing will not affect their grades or school services.

Payment: Your child will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Using data beyond this study: The data you provide in this study will be retained in a secure manner by the researcher for five years and then destroyed.

If you have questions about the study, contact:
Carly Dirghangi

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To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.,
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
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Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs
Website for Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants
UVA IRB-SBS # 4874

Agreement:
I agree to allow my child to participate in the research study described above.
Print Name: ____ Date: _____________
Signature: ____
You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Informed Consent Agreement

Study Title: Incorporating Student Voices: A Study of Students' Experiences in an Inclusive Inquiry Project
Protocol #: 4874

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Consent Form Key Information:

- Participate in a study about your experiences in the Inclusive Inquiry project and my teaching practices.
- Allow me to analyze the recordings of our class discussions around our weekly research project.
- Allow me to analyze the work that you engaged in related to the Inclusive Inquiry project (e.g., student surveys, student artwork, student writing)
- No information collected and/or reported will connect your identity with responses.
- All data will be collected only after grades are submitted for the 2021-2022 school year, and only after IRB-SBS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT-LEVEL approval of this protocol.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to study your experiences as students in my classroom as you engaged in an Inquiry research project and how those experiences relate to my inclusive teaching practices. By uncovering and listening to you give voice to your experiences as you engaged in the Inquiry process, I can gain a better understanding of inclusion from the perspective of those who have been excluded: Your voiced experiences of curriculum and instruction intended to be inclusionary may have implications for preventing school practices and learning experiences that result in the exclusion of students.

What you will do in the study: This study will take place at [redacted] over the months of June-July 2022, focusing on student experiences of an Inclusive Inquiry project. There are seven students who will have completed an Inclusive Inquiry project, who are all invited to participate in the study. Students who participate in the study will consent to allow me to examine our archival recordings of class discussions that we took for the purpose of note taking, my own teacher diary reflections during the project, the facilitation materials from the project, as well as their class work related to the project.

Time required: The study will not require the use of your time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks for this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The overall benefit of the study is to better understand my own teaching practices so that I can better improve the inclusivity of my classroom. This information will help my future classroom settings, as well as the classroom settings of my colleagues at [redacted] as I work in collaboration with them to better our inclusive teaching.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. The audio files recorded for this study will be deleted immediately following transcription of the files, in June 2022.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no effect on grades or school services.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, your audio data will not be used in analysis.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, email me at . There is no penalty for withdrawing and withdrawing will not affect your experience as a patient/student/employee. Withdrawing will not affect your grades or school services.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Using data beyond this study: The data you provide in this study will be retained in a secure manner by the researcher for five years and then destroyed.

If you have questions about the study, contact:
Carly Dirghangi

Faculty Advisor: Natasha Heny
Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Telephone: (434) 924-1380
nam3c@virginia.edu

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs

Website for Research Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants
UVA IRB-SBS # 4874

Agreement:
I agree to participate in the research study described above.
Print Name: ____ Date: _____________
Signature: ____
You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Graduate Student Informed Consent Agreement: Paper Copy

Study Title: Incorporating Student Voices: A Study of Students' Experiences in an Inclusive Inquiry Project
Protocol #: 4874

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Consent Form Key Information:

- Participate in a 5-month study about students' experiences in the Inquiry project and my teaching practices.
- Allow me to analyze the recordings of our class discussions around our weekly research project.
- Allow me to collect and analyze the class work connected to this project (e.g., student surveys, student artwork, student writing, facilitator materials).
- All data will be collected only after grades are submitted for the 2021-2022 school year, and only after IRB-SBS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT-LEVEL approval of this protocol.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to study the experiences of students in my classroom as they engage in an Inquiry research project and how those experiences relate to my inclusive teaching practices. By uncovering and listening to students give voice to their experiences as they engage in the Inquiry process, I can gain a better understanding of inclusion from the perspective of those who have been excluded: Their voiced experiences of curriculum and instruction intended to be inclusionary may have implications for preventing school practices and learning experiences that result in the exclusion of students.

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Time required: The study will not require the use of your time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks for this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The overall benefit of the study is to better understand my own teaching practices so that I can better improve the inclusivity of my classroom. This information will help my future classroom settings, as well as the classroom settings of my colleagues at [redacted], as I work in collaboration with them to better our inclusive teaching.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this pseudonym will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. The audio files recorded for this study will be deleted immediately following transcription of the files, in June 2022.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no effect on grades or school services.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, your audio data will not be included in analysis.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, email me at csn4a@virginia.edu. There is no penalty for withdrawing and withdrawing will not affect your experience as a patient/student/employee. Withdrawing will not affect your grades or school services.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Using data beyond this study: The data you provide in this study will be retained in a secure manner by the researcher for five years and then destroyed.

If you have questions about the study, contact:
Carly Dirghangi

Faculty Advisor: Natasha Heny
Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Telephone: (434) 924-1380
nam3c@virginia.edu

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs

Website for Research Participants: https://research.virginia.edu/research-participants
UVA IRB-SBS # 4874

Agreement:
I agree to participate in the research study described above.
Print Name: ____ Date: _____________
Signature: ____
You will receive a copy of this form for your records.