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PRESERVICE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

THE IMPACT OF DIALOGUE

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Abstract

Preservice Teachers' Understanding of Inclusive Education: The Impact of Dialogue

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Despite the often-claimed purpose of equity, inclusive education has been defined and interpreted in different ways that paradoxically marginalize students. Teachers play a primary role in enacting inclusion, their concept of inclusion is, therefore, critical to inclusive practices and outcomes. This qualitative case study explored the impact of dialogue on preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education, using three major research questions: a) *How do five preservice teachers conceptualize inclusive education before and after participating in a series of group dialogue?* b) *How do preservice teachers negotiate meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs toward inclusion during the group dialogues when they face challenges around the concept and practice?,* and c) *How do facilitations—content/topics, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary materials and activities—mediate those negotiations?*

The participants were five female under-/graduate students in a teacher education program at a private Catholic University in the Northeastern United States, who were completing practicum at the time of the study. Data were collected from multiple sources, including surveys, follow-up conversations, pre/post-dialogue journal entries, individual semi-structured interviews, six group discussion sessions and accompanying artifacts (mind-maps and self-reflections), and field notes.

For the first research question, qualitative content analysis and pre/post comparisons of individual participants' journals and interviews were examined, to identify how the pre-service teachers changed their conceptualizations of inclusive education through their participation in the

dialogue series. The commonalities and variations in their conceptualizations following the dialogue series were synthesized through cross-case analysis. For the second and third research questions, discussion segments and post-dialogue interviews were analyzed via constructivist grounded theory along with review of the supplementary artifacts.

The findings suggested that group dialogues provided a learning space for the preservice teachers to deepen their understandings of inclusive education. A synthesis of the five single case studies revealed that, after the dialogue series, the preservice teachers conceptualized inclusion as a) a channel to prepare students for transition from the classroom/school to society, and b) a means to empower marginalized students under the rhetoric "for all," as well as c) viewed teachers as a mechanism of inclusive action/enactment. Five themes emerged, revealing the ways in which the preservice teachers negotiated meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs toward inclusion as they addressed challenges around the concept and practice through interactions, as well as the ways in which the facilitation mediated their negotiations. The five themes included: a) Convergence, b) Expansion Through Convergence, c) Divergence, d) Inconclusiveness, and e) Multiple Patterns. Further, the facilitation set the context where the preservice teachers could think through concrete examples in practice, provoked them to develop new ideas and perspectives and to (re)think about the issues critically enriching the discussions, and fostered their collective and individual sense-making.

This study adds to knowledge on inclusive education and teacher dialogue as a learning tool, providing in-depth descriptions of how pre-service teachers developed a deeper understanding of inclusive education through facilitated group discussions that problematized taken-for-granted notions and practices of inclusion. It also provides a new instructional method of research that elucidates preservice teachers' negotiation processes in dialogues.

To my grandparents, (alive) history,

You have given me a life through my mother and father.
I am proud to be your granddaughter, part of your history.

Acknowledgement

It is ironic that I am sobbing right now while writing this acknowledgement. The burden has been lifted, and I should feel relieved and happy. That is true. However, considering this final piece of writing for my dissertation as a reflection to close my journey that has taken up my whole 30s, I thought of the first day I began this journey back in Summer 2015. My parents saw me off at the airport and when we were saying goodbye, my mom ended up crying, who had never cried in front of her daughters before. All my excitement turned into sadness, and I was crying in the airplane all the way coming to the States.

My life has changed a lot as a person and a professional since then. I married, I built a community, made new friends and colleagues in and outside of Boston College, I have become faculty at USJ as I resigned from my job in Korea as a classroom teacher. All happened while in the C&I doctoral program at Lynch. Making everything work was challenging while dealing with negative emotions—loneliness, homesickness, regret, and despair; yet, it was definitely a life-changing experience that prepared me to be a novice scholar and teacher educator as I tried to successfully perform all my responsibilities and tasks as a doctoral student, supervisor, and teaching fellow. Now I know better about who I am, and I have become a person who is persistent, perseverant, and resilient.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In recent years, inclusion has become an omnipresent concept in the field of education globally. Particularly in the United States, promoting inclusion for all students has become an imperative, including K-12 and higher education. This contemporary issue is closely associated with an increasingly diverse student body across the P-20 continuum. As perceptions around diversity and inclusion are intertwined, creating an inclusive learning environment and cultivating a culture of inclusion for all learners is widely accepted as a moral good (Kirby, 2017). It is also postulated that an inclusive learning environment gives students a more equitable opportunity to learn (McLaughlin, 2010). For these reasons, pursuing inclusion and implementing successful inclusive practices are an utmost responsibility for all educators.

Despite its prominence in today's educational climate, inclusion is a fluid and complex concept that is not easily defined. Researchers have searched for definitions and meanings, strived to find ways to conceptualize, and operationalize the term, while also investigating its manifestation in practice (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Florian, 2014; Lalvani, 2013; Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). In special education, inclusion is understood as the placement of students with disability in the general education classroom (Kavale & Forness, 2000). A substantial amount of research has investigated teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion in this sense and ways to improve their inclusive practices for everyone in the classroom, including students with disability. Since teachers are the immediate agents who directly interact with students in the classroom, many researchers believe that the success of inclusion greatly relies on the positive attitudes and beliefs of teachers about the inclusion of students with disability (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; de Boer et al., 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

Other researchers have approached inclusion as organizational changes for school reform and improvement. This line of research has focused on the examination of key elements and factors needed to create inclusive schools (Ainscow et al., 2006). From this perspective, inclusion is understood as encompassing (a) the whole school community; (b) inclusive leadership and school cultures; and (c) school-family-community partnerships for all marginalized students, such as students with disability, English language learners, students from diverse backgrounds, including race/ethnicity, culture, language, and religion, and students with different gender/LGBTQ+ identities. Relatedly, some scholars have emphasized a connection between inclusion and the issue of power (Trent et al., 2002).

For these reasons, although the concept of inclusion is central to contemporary educational thinking, what we mean by the term, inclusion, is often unclear. The same is true for diversity, as applied to certain groups of students. How has inclusion been defined and interpreted? Who are diverse students? How do researchers and practitioners understand inclusion in theory and practice in terms of student diversity?

Discourse on Inclusive Education

Discourse on inclusive education has flourished in the field of special education since 1975, when the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) was legislated to ensure the educational rights of all students with disability and their placement in the general education classroom as much as possible. Aligned with the historical development of special education, research on inclusive education has actively been conducted since the mid- to late 1990s (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Zigmond et al., 2009).

Inclusion was originally interpreted as "mainstreaming;" that is, the belief that students with disability should be exposed to the "regular" classroom with their non-disabled peers. Soon,

however, researchers and teachers began to debate how much students with disability should be integrated into the general education classroom and whether these students had to be fully included alongside typically developing peers (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Zigmond et al., 2009).

While the discourse on inclusive education primarily focused on the education and placement of students with disability in the United States, it was expanded to support the education of all marginalized students who face challenges in learning, when UNESCO introduced and declared the idea of "Education for All" with child-centered pedagogy (Ainscow et al., 2006; UNESCO, 1994). The potential student body considered for inclusion, in turn, included not only students with disability but also gifted students and other vulnerable or disadvantaged student populations, such as students from low socioeconomic status (SES), language learners, or immigrant students from racially, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

This shift in focus corresponded to research being conducted on inclusive schools. Acknowledging that inclusion requires whole-school improvement and reform, researchers came to realize that inclusion enhances democratic values in school, such as participation, respect for diversity, community building, equity, and social justice (Ainscow et al., 2006). This line of research has studied inclusive leadership, inclusive school cultures, and collaboration with families and community partners as the core school practices necessary to create an equitable learning environment and meet the needs of the students who have historically experienced any forms of marginalization in schools, especially in urban schools (Kozleski & Thorius, 2014).

Today, the discourse on inclusive education has further evolved, and inclusion has become a more complicated concept. For example, researchers have proposed that

student diversity should be viewed not just based on ability differences but consider the intersection between ability and other social constructs (identity factors) that influence students' identities and lived experiences; that is, students' intersectional identities should be taken into account beyond their disability labels (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). In addition, it has been argued that inclusion implies "normality" (Annamma et al., 2013; Minow, 1990), which implicitly indicates the majority of typically developing students educated in the general education classroom are the norm and all others are the deviation.

As such, inclusion also implies "exclusion." Given that we assess others as "different" based on the hidden point of reference of the norm (Minow, 1990), inclusion departs from the assumption that there are diverse students who have been excluded or marginalized to imply a "power hierarchy" between the majority who fit in the mainstream and those who do not (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). In sum, over the years researchers have striven to understand inclusion in a variety of ways in terms of who should be included and what and how classroom practices should be implemented (Kozleski et al., 2015).

Problem Statement

Inclusion is a vital topic that directly speaks to equity in education—the educational rights of all students that ensure equitable, quality learning opportunities and full participation in educational programs (Ainscow et al., 2006; Artiles et al., 2011). Teachers are at the forefront of enacting inclusion as they interact with students in their classroom on a daily basis. Thus, it is critical for teachers to understand the fluidity and complexity of inclusion and take students' intersectional identities into consideration, as their conceptual understanding of inclusion ultimately affects their practices.

Although many teachers believe that inclusion is to meet the needs of all students in the classroom, they tend to associate inclusion primarily students with disability who can be educated in the general education classroom (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Lalvani, 2013). Such beliefs may impact teachers' tendency to foreground a label of students with disability over their capacity, strengths, individuality or personhood. As a result, they are paradoxically marginalizing students with disability in their practices, perceiving them as struggling learners who need more resources and supports than students without a disability, or stereotyping students based on their disability category or common barriers they tend to experience (Slee, 2013; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017).

Rather than reflecting the current understanding of inclusion as noted in the extant literature, a number of empirical studies have been conducted based on the traditional concept of inclusion. Particularly when examining teacher beliefs about and attitudes toward inclusion, surveys and interviews were the two most popular methods used in previous research. Survey and interview questions were created based on the researchers' understanding of inclusion as originally conceived, which involves the placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom alongside typically developing students (Cullen et al., 2010; Forlin et al., 2011; Lalvani, 2013; Sharma et al., 2012; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). As a result, the participants' responses were constrained to this student population. Additionally, those research methods focused on participants' views at a specific moment in time and did not offer the depth of understanding that would be gained by studying participants' views over an extended period of time. Finally, both surveys and interviews provided an insight into individual participants' attitudes and beliefs, but did not explore the group's process of sense-making of inclusion or co-construction of its meanings.

It is imperative to guide future educators to recognize that a genuine pursuit and enactment of inclusive education begins with a critical examination of the taken-for-granted concept of inclusion, a deeper understanding of its fluidity and complexity, and an awareness of the intersectional identities and personhood of individual students beyond students with disability. However, little is known about the best methods to support preservice teachers to deepen their understanding of inclusive education before they begin their practice as teachers. Thus, there is a need to explore a novel method to help preservice teachers gain an in-depth understanding of inclusion.

Drawing from a small body of literature on dialogue and teacher learning, this study used group dialogue as one such method. Sociocultural learning theory posits that learning occurs through social interactions between individuals whose ways of knowing and being are diversely shaped by their contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Miyake & Kirschner, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978); therefore, dialogue, as a form of social interactions, can be a collective learning tool among preservice teachers (Wells, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore preservice teachers' understandings of inclusive education by focusing on the impact of dialogue on those understandings. To this end, I designed a series of group dialogues that consisted of subtopics for each session, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary reading materials and activities, aligned with the overarching theme of inclusive education. Facilitating the group dialogues using the designed structure, I first explored preservice teachers' conceptualizations of inclusive education before and after they participated in a series of group dialogue. Second, I theorized preservice teachers' sense-making of inclusion

during the group dialogue series and the mediating effect of facilitation on their sense-making. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do preservice teachers conceptualize inclusive education before and after participating in a series of group dialogue?

    1.1. How does each preservice teacher conceptualize inclusive education before and after the dialogue series?

    1.2. After the dialogue series, what are the commonalities and variations in the conceptualizations of inclusive education across the five preservice teachers?

2. How do preservice teachers negotiate the meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs toward inclusion during the group dialogues when they face challenges around the concept and practice?

3. How do facilitations—content/topics, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary materials and activities—mediate those negotiations?

Contribution to the Field

This study addressed the crucial question of how dialogue as a learning tool impacts preservice teachers' understandings of inclusive education. The study was inspired by my personal experiences in supervising preservice teachers, a position I held from Fall 2017 to Spring 2020. This opportunity allowed me to be involved in field experiences and to interact with both undergraduate and graduate students majoring in Elementary Education (and Early Childhood). Through these interactions, I learned a great deal about preservice teachers' experiences and thoughts regarding their students and inclusive education. I came to believe that group dialogue provides a space to enhance preservice teachers' learning by sharing and exchanging of ideas, thoughts, and experiences as a community of learners.

Prior to beginning my dissertation study, I conducted two pilot studies in Fall 2018 and Spring 2019. The preliminary findings were consistent with the existing literature. That is, the group discussions I led revealed that many preservice teachers had a limited understanding and perspective of inclusive education, which could be problematic as they become beginning teachers. For example, all participants stated that inclusive education was for everyone; yet, their focal students were not everyone. They cited specific groups: "if there is a student with some types of disability allowing them to access the materials and being included in the lesson" and "especially for English Language Learners, they want to feel included with their peers." One disturbing comment I heard in Spring 2019 was from a graduate student, who said, "students of color in urban schools are more likely to be at higher risk." Her assumption implied a deficit perspective of students from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds without actually fully knowing the students. Anticipating that this dissertation study would reveal similar perspectives of the participants as the findings from my pilot studies, I envisioned the group dialogue series would help problematize and disrupt such assumptions by engaging them in discussions that critically address the issues around inclusion.

This study contributes to the field by providing an in-depth description of how preservice teachers understand inclusive education and how dialogue impacts their understandings. The study findings speak directly to teacher educators, demonstrating the necessity of structured group discussions with facilitation, in which preservice teachers can have critical, in-depth conversations with one another about any important topic in teacher education programs as I did it with inclusion. Lastly, the study applies a novel method to inclusive education by thoroughly examining the group discussion process. Since none of the previous studies have utilized a series of group dialogue to investigate and further advance preservice/in-service teachers'

understanding of inclusive education, this study significantly contributes to the field as a stepping stone to open up a new avenue for instructional methodology. These findings will contribute to advancing the field of inclusive education and teacher education, both in theory and practice, by highlighting the potential and capacity of dialogue with facilitation as a key learning tool to deepen preservice teachers' learning.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains seven chapters. The first chapter presents the social and educational context in which the study was conducted and the aim of the study. It also includes a discussion of the potential contribution of the study to the field and an overview of the dissertation. Chapter 2 introduces sociocultural learning theory as the theoretical framework for the study and provides a review of the literature to situate the study within the existing research on inclusive education and on the role of dialogue in teacher learning. In terms of the research on inclusive education, I included (a) the historical backgrounds and development of inclusive education, and (b) research trends of inclusive education. For research on dialogue in teacher learning, I reviewed the role of dialogue as a learning tool and the benefit for teacher learning. Chapter 3 contains the methodology for this qualitative case study, including a detailed description of the design process of the group dialogue series, data collection methods, and analysis procedures and process to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 reports five single-case studies comparing each preservice teacher's pre- and post-dialogue conceptualizations of inclusive education, followed by a synthesis of the conceptualizations across the five participants after the dialogue series in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents the different ways of negotiation among the preservice teachers during the dialogue series and the mediating effects of facilitation on their

negotiations. Finally, Chapter 7 addresses discussion of the findings, implications of the study,

limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Learning Theory

The sociocultural perspective on learning comes from the idea that there is no strict demarcation between the person and the world (Vygotsky, 1978). That is, humans are inextricably connected to the world in which they live; language, behavior, and sociocultural norms that are shared within a community form our ways of knowing and thinking (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Often, learning occurs collaboratively through social interaction among people (Miyake & Kirschner, 2014). By participating in social activities, people also shape their identities in a community of practice in which they are mutually engaged in a joint enterprise, generating collective repertoires (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The characteristics of sociocultural learning theory can be explained as six themes; each theme may be described as follows:

(a) The human person is not a natural entity, but a social and historical product that continually remakes ourselves, and in doing so, we make society and history;

(b) This formation and transformation of the person can occur only in a social context that is constitutive of being;

(c) This relation between social context, people, and things is sustained and transformed in practical activity;

(d) The person is formed not only in practical activity, but in human relationships, this activity sustains;

(e) The insistence that the person, constituted in the activity and relationship in a social context, is fundamentally split, estranged from him- or herself—alienated, inauthentic, and divided;

(f) The person strives to achieve identity. (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000, pp. 231-234)

According to Parker and Goicoechea (2000), sociocultural learning theory views individual learning as a "process of human change and transformation" derived from participating in social activities and relating self with others in a community (p. 239). This hints at the importance of attending to relationships and contexts in education. With its nondualist ontology, the sociocultural perspective takes an interpretive stance in educational research focusing on interactions as the unit of analysis. Methodologically, the research is concerned with what participants in discourse speak (i.e., "the content of speech"), as well as how they speak (i.e., "the ways participants in discourse move and transform one another") in a community (p. 238).

As a strand of sociocultural learning theory, situated learning places emphasis on context. Learning is contextualized (Collins & Kapur, 2014; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000). According to the situated learning perspective, every learning activity a person does is situated in the world; "agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 33). In the real world, people learn in authentic contexts (Collins & Kapur, 2014; Fishman et al., 2014), and therefore, the knowledge they acquire, too, is contextualized through specific circumstances.

Bakhtin's Dialogicality

According to Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981), dialogue is a life itself that constitutes human relationships (Rule, 2011). As such, dialogue is a fundamental, ongoing human activity in which

language plays a central role in exchanging and sharing ideas and perspectives between interlocutors. Those ideas and perspectives are articulated and expressed through language that conceives "ideologically saturated" points of view about the world (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 271). As dialogue is "a classical form of speech communication," interlocutors in dialogue mutually engage in social interaction, because, in dialogue, words do not exist in isolation (Jaworski & Coupland, 2008, p. 76). That is, one speaker's words are relational and dependent upon those of the other speakers.

"No living word relates to its object in a singular way" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). Dialogicality involves the multiplicity of ideas represented in words that are historically saturated with the many contexts of their use, heterogeneity of meanings in action, and diversity of voices (Wertsch, 1991, as cited in Markova, 2003). Thus, dialogicality "offered infinite openings for new interpretations of language and thinking in the multifaceted and multi-voiced world" (Markova, 2003, p. 32). Applying this to the discourse of inclusive education, the word "inclusion" is filled with different meanings, histories, values, and tensions that are interpreted differently in practice. Specifically, preservice teachers make sense of and understand inclusion differently according to their world view, which, in turn, is influenced by their social, cultural, and political context.

Dialogicality, as a fundamental aspect of language, has generative potential in teaching and learning, particularly through dialogue. While different ideas and perspectives are conflicted, contested, and challenged in dialogue, interlocutors can deepen their understanding of the world by co-creating heterogeneous meanings of the word that indicates its object. As they interact (respond and react) with each other in dialogue, participants learn each other's world that is represented in their words. Thus, expanding Bakhtin's theory to learning, learning is "profoundly

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dialogic, constitutive of human being and of the unfinished process human becoming" (Rule, 2011, p. 940). To deepen preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education, dialogue should explicitly address the various meanings, histories, values, tensions embedded in the term "inclusion" and provoke their heterogeneous sense-making of inclusion.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

As one of the earliest and central scholars who laid a foundation for sociocultural learning theory, Vygotsky argued that a learner's psychological development is affected by social interaction. Based on this argument, Vygotsky (1978) theorized the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to the gap (distance) between a learner's actual developmental level and their potential developmental level. When learners are at their actual developmental level, they can solve a problem independently. With assistance (social interactions) from peers or adults who are more knowledgeable, they can reach their potential developmental level. Thus, ZPD can be considered a space for human mental activity in which learning occurs (Shabani, 2016). In other words, group dialogue can be ZPD itself that is mediated by language.

The concept of scaffolding is relevant to the theory of ZPD. Broadly, scaffolding is defined as the support given to the individual learner or a group of learners from "some more knowledgeable other or agent" (Reiser & Tabak, 2014, p. 45). Scaffolding can also be a way of providing an overall structure. With the structure, scaffolding makes a task more manageable for learners by removing frustration and risk, prompting learners to articulate their thoughts and reflect their experiences, and situating learning in context (Reiser & Tabak, 2014). In this regard, scaffolding can promote preservice teachers' learning as teacher-learners (Albert, 2012; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

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The ways to facilitate group dialogue include scaffolding, such as structure, learning materials, and a facilitator. Dialogue, as a human social activity, is discursive in nature; yet, providing appropriate structure can facilitate dialogue among preservice teachers (Collins & Kapur, 2014). Group dialogue is structured with the content/sub-topics of inclusion to be addressed. Well-designed curriculum materials give teachers the opportunity to learn as they help shape teachers' understanding of knowledge as one form of scaffolding (Grossman & Thompson, 2008). Supplementary reading materials that represent grounded examples of tension in practice help problematize preservice teachers' understanding of inclusion. In the third form of scaffolding, a facilitator plays a significant role as a more knowledgeable agent. Horn and Kane (2015) studied conversational opportunities to learn (OTLs) with the three groups of mathematics teachers and found that each group showed a different quality in their collaborative talk. The group talk facilitated by an instructional coach was more sophisticated. As this finding shows, the role of facilitator is critical for high-quality discussions. Likewise, preservice teachers' group dialogue should be facilitated with a set of questions to elicit in-depth discussions about inclusive education. With such facilitation, preservice teachers are expected to further reflect and articulate their thoughts and experiences from a more critical perspective.

Research on Inclusive Education

Historical Development of Inclusive Education

Understanding the history of special and inclusive education requires knowing the sociological, political, and economic contexts in which the educational system has developed (Tomlinson, 2017). The historical development of inclusive education in the United States has been closely associated with special education and laws surrounding it. Thus, the emergence of inclusive education was rooted in the exclusion of students of color and students with

disabilities. Beginning in 1954, when the United States Supreme Court case of *Brown et al. vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* made the decision that segregated schools were discriminatory, inequitable, and violated students' civil rights, separate classrooms for special education were also considered as a form of discrimination (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Tomlinson, 2017). Further, in 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) mandated that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to the maximum extent appropriate (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). As such, it promoted the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular/general education classroom to receive education with students without disabilities (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Mainstreaming students with disabilities (i.e., integration) has now become the norm (Kavale & Forness, 2000).

In the 1980s, under the Regular Education Initiative (REI)—a precursor to the current era of "inclusive education" for students in special education—students with disabilities were placed primarily in the general education (regular) classroom and received academic instruction during a certain period of time in the resource room or other "pull-out" setting. Soon, a debate around inclusion arose in special education. Some researchers suggested that flexible placement would be more appropriate depending on the severity of a student's disability, whereas others proposed full-time physical integration regardless of disability (Kavale & Forness, 2000). The proponents of full inclusion were criticized since they supported the idea solely from a moral perspective while lacking a clear definition of inclusion and empirical evidence of the effectiveness of educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Zigmond et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the more progressive idea of full inclusion continued to be supported through a reconstruction of the school system. That is, some argued that for all students to be able to

receive both equitable and excellent education, the school system needed to be structured as an adhocratic organization in which teachers collaborate and mutually adjust to solve a problem, rather than maintaining an education system where general and special education work separately (Skrtic, 1991).

Public Law 94-142 was later amended and its name was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. Some new requirements were mandated when the IDEA was reauthorized, yet, the key principle of LRE remained the same. The IDEA mandated that public schools providing special education must ensure access for students with disabilities to the general curriculum in the LRE placement "to the maximum extent appropriate" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), which continued to support the initial meaning of inclusion. Thus, inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom alongside typically developing peers became the norm of special education in the United States, the dominant discourse of inclusive education.

Internationally, the meaning of inclusion began to expand as it supported the learning of all students who experience learning difficulties (Ainscow et al., 2006; UNESCO, 1994). For example, UNESCO included *Education for All* in the Salamanca Statement in 1994, indicating that promoting inclusive education requires "fundamental shifts in policy" in order to enable schools "to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs." These schools are "institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs." (UNESCO, 1994, p. iii).

The Salamanca Statement stressed creating inclusive schools for everyone, but particularly "those who are most vulnerable and most in need" (p. iv). The Statement continued to emphasize the education of all children:

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social,

emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted

children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations,

children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other

disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups ... the term 'special educational needs'

refers to all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning

difficulties…Schools have to find ways of successfully educating all children, including

those who have serious disadvantages an disabilities ... (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6)

The document's focus on all children, which seemed to expand the boundary of the

student population considered for inclusion, subsequently drew researchers' attention

internationally to the discourse on inclusion, which became more vibrant across the world

(Ainscow et al., 2019). The Salamanca Statement was codified in the United Nations Convention

on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990; the United States is the only U.N. member nation that

has not signed on to the CRC.

Acknowledging that the target student population concerning inclusion is *all* students, but

particularly those from marginalized groups in addition to students with disabilities, the field of

inclusive education has further evolved. Some researchers have pointed out that racially,

culturally, and linguistically minoritized students and economically disadvantaged students have

not been appropriately served in educational settings and neglected in discourse on inclusion.

Due to structural inequality in the U.S. school system, students from diverse backgrounds have

historically been marginalized and must be taken into account for inclusive education (Trent et

al., 2002). Trent and colleagues acknowledged the complexities in implementing inclusion,

emphasizing that teachers must "acknowledge that ethics, power, and privilege must be

addressed across an array of relationships within the context of inclusive education" (p. 12).

Therefore, educators are required to critically reflect on their own biases, prejudices, and/or generalizations about students who might have different ethics, that is, "how their perceptions about race, class, disability influence rules and consequences that are established for culturally and linguistically diverse learners with disabilities" (Trent et al., 2002, p. 18).

Similarly, a group of scholars have viewed inclusive education from a critical perspective. The core of their approach is that disability is one of the differences in individuals that is socially constructed such as race, gender, class, or language, and that the identity of individuals is multidimensional, shaped by the intersectionality of different social constructs (Connor et al., 2016; Lawrence-Brown & Sapon-Shevin, 2014). Critically examining the reality of students of color being disproportionately placed in special education, these researchers began to contemplate how race and disability affect one's life experience as systems of oppression, which may have prevented students of color with disabilities from being given an equal opportunity to learn (Connor et al., 2016). The researchers have viewed the phenomenon from the so-called DisCrit perspective (i.e., dis/ability and critical race theory), and criticized the normalizing process of racism and ableism that renders students of color, students with disabilities, or those of color with disabilities a "deficit" (Valencia, 2010).

Variations in the Discourse on Inclusion

"Inclusion" has been defined and interpreted differently over the years. By and large, it is regarded as a way to respect difference, value diversity, and enhance a sense of community. However, how the term emerged and has divergently developed reflects the local context of each country—philosophies, school systems, and policies regarding inclusion are varying (Avramidis

& Norwich, 2002). As a result of this ambiguity of meaning, the study and implementation of practice across countries is complex (Armstrong et al., 2011).

Numerous researchers in the United States and around the globe have strived to conceptualize inclusive education. Researchers now generally agree that inclusion is not merely placing students with disabilities in general education classrooms, namely, integration or mainstreaming; inclusion is more than placement. While physical placement in the general education classroom originally was the prevalent definition of inclusion because it protected the civil rights of students with disabilities, Kunc (1992) supported inclusive education in terms of social and affective functioning of students with disabilities. He claimed that students with disabilities need to learn life skills for a future of living together in a community and that they could not learn appropriate behaviors and skills (e.g., forming a friendship) in the segregated classrooms where they often experience social isolation. As the rationale for why students with disabilities need to be in the general education classroom with typically developing peers, Kunc used Maslow's hierarchy of needs, according to which, individuals can pursue higher needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization only after they meet the basic needs such as physiological survival, safety, and belonging. Kunc criticized school systems in the 20th century as institutions of injustice because they overlooked the importance of building caring communities where students can feel a sense of belonging, a basic human right. Rather, students with disabilities did not have the right to belong since they did not exhibit good behaviors or achievement. He concluded that inclusive education should ensure everyone feel a sense of belonging, abandoning "the idea that children have to be *normal* in order to contribute to the world" (Kunc, 1992, p. 38).

Blamires (1999) proposed a developmental model of inclusion. Inclusion is comprised of three dimensions—physical, cognitive, and social—and should be understood as a continuum of

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access and engagement. In an ideal situation, a student achieves full access and engagement in all three dimensions. Realistically, however, a learner who is physically fully included in the general education classroom may not comprehend subject knowledge nor be engaged in interactions with peers, whereas another learner can form a friendship with peers (social dimension) but may have limited understanding of content knowledge (cognitive dimension) and be "pulled out" to the resource room (physical dimension).

Accepting Kunc's argument, Avramidis and colleagues (2000) distinguished inclusion from integration:

> *Integration* refers to "fitting" the child to existing provision (with necessary support and individualistic modifications to curriculum, teaching processes, etc.). *Inclusion* refers to reconstructing educational provision to promote "belonging" (Kunc, 1992), i.e., all pupils in a school see themselves as belonging to a community, including those with significant disabilities. (Avramidis et al., 2000, p. 278)

The authors claimed that integration primarily has to do with the placement of students with a disability, which requires that students to "assimilate" in the given educational environment. Inclusion, on the other hand, they suggest, is associated with a change in the environment, as it requires school restructuring, which results in the provision of accommodation to those needing it.

A more progressive conceptualization of inclusion was proposed by a group of researchers who considered inclusive education as a school improvement/reform movement (Ainscow et al., 2006; Artiles et al., 2011; Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). These researchers believe that inclusion is a way to achieve equity in education. In a such definition, inclusion is defined as "a principled approach to education and society" (Ainscow et al., 2006, p. 15). This definition

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foregrounds moral values such as equity, participation, community, respect for diversity, and sustainability, thereby emphasizing inclusion as a desirable pursuit in education from an ethical perspective (Messiou, 2017). The researchers stressed that inclusion, in a more comprehensive sense, should be an ongoing "process" of promoting the participation and achievement of all learners and diminishing exclusion of any students from the curricula, cultures, and communities of local schools (Ainscow et al., 2006).

In a similar vein, yet another synthesized definition of inclusive education also values "process" over a static notion of a result.

Inclusive education is a "continuous struggle" pursuing (a) redistribution of quality opportunities to learn for all students; (b) the recognition and value of student differences; and (c) the opportunities to represent marginalized students and families in decision-making process that affect their lives. (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013, p. 35)

Waitoller and Kozleski redefined inclusive education from the social justice perspective, incorporating Fraser's tridimensional approach to justice (Keddie, 2012). The authors viewed inclusive education as ongoing process for quality education by respecting student diversity and empowering students and families on the margins.

In conclusion, according to the recent discourse on inclusive education, inclusion is viewed as the opportunity for *all* students to access and participate in meaningful school activities, as well as for parents and caregivers to participate in decision-making around their children's education. Furthermore, inclusive education should be an ongoing process in pursuit of achieving ethical values in school. Thus, an inclusive learning environment should increase participation and engagement of students in classroom activities. To this end, teachers should

acknowledge their students' intersectional identities and reduce racialized and minoritized stereotypes and prejudice that may hinder students' willingness to learn (Pinkard et al., 2017).

Research Trends

Inclusive Schools

Since inclusive education is more of a concept than one specific method or strategy, many researchers admit that it is difficult to quantify the quality of inclusion. The difficulty, in part, is due to the differing local context in which each school is situated and what counts as the quality of inclusion may vary. For this reason, some researchers who have focused on inclusion as part of school-wide improvement have attempted to find ways to create successful and effective inclusive schools and key components embedded in such schools in a qualitative way. These researchers have acknowledged that the process of change requires elements such as a long-term planning, vision, time, resources, strong leadership, and the commitment and collaboration of educators (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

Booth and Ainscow (2002) developed an index for inclusion and proposed a process, comprised of five phases, for making schools more inclusive. The two British researchers proposed three dimensions of the index as essential for changing schools: creating inclusive cultures, producing inclusive policies, and evolving inclusive practices. Laying a foundation for the other two dimensions, creating inclusive school cultures consists of two elements: building community and establishing inclusive values.

> This dimension [Creating inclusive cultures] creates a secure, accepting, collaborating, stimulating community, in which everyone is valued as the foundation for the highest achievements of all. It develops shared inclusive values that are conveyed to all new staff, students, governors, and parents and caregivers. The principles and values, in inclusive

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school cultures, guide decisions about policies and moment to moment practice in

classrooms, so that school development becomes a continuous process. (Booth &

Ainscow, 2002, p. 8)

Other researchers have studied the elements of effective inclusive schools and their

cultures. Four studies stress collaboration among educators as the most salient feature (Futaba,

2016; Hehir & Katzman, 2012; Lyons et al., 2016; Tjernberg & Mattson, 2014). One important

aspect of successful inclusive schools is that teachers collaboratively work to solve problems,

which leads to building strong and collegial relationships. Collaboration is embedded in the

school culture; teachers believe that educating all students is their collective responsibility. As a

result, teachers in these schools support each other rather than working in isolation. They have an

open conversation about their students and teaching practice and share ideas and materials in

order to better meet the needs of students.

Using multiple case studies, Hehir and Katzman (2012) studied three successful inclusive

schools in the greater Boston area. Four core elements were found across the schools, which

substantially aided the schools to become inclusive: (a) educators' shared understanding of

inclusion as a core mission/vision and their commitment; (b) mission-driven leaders bringing in

resources and supporting teachers and families; (c) structure for collaborative problem-solving,

which Skrtic (1991) referred to as adhocracy; and (d) teacher relationships for collective

responsibility and accountability.

Among several significant factors promoting an inclusive school culture, what Tjernberg

and Mattson (2014) referred to as a school community where all students feel competent and

valued, teacher collaboration through mentorship and continuous discussions about pedagogy

was one such factor. Similarly, another study conducted in a Japanese school showed that

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collaborative problem-solving worked well in the collectivistic school culture, because the decision-making process involved a consensus among a group of educators. Thus, the researcher concluded that collaboration advances inclusive education (Futaba, 2016). Lyons et al. (2016) studied the values, knowledge, and perspectives of stakeholders in four elementary inclusive schools in Canada. Corresponding to the findings of the studies described above, a collaborative team approach, in addition to stakeholders' shared beliefs about student learning and commitment to inclusion, was the central factor for fostering inclusion in the schools.

In the literature on inclusive schools and their cultures, what the researchers found as the key element for effective inclusive schools was collaboration among educators who work in the schools. The findings of these studies confirm the assumption that teachers are the key agents for successful implementation of inclusion and, therefore, their attitudes may affect their practices and successful inclusion.

Teachers and Inclusive Education

A distinctive feature of research on inclusion is that numerous studies have been conducted regarding teacher attitude toward inclusion. Considering that student learning is substantially influenced by teachers, researcher interest in teacher attributes for inclusive education is reasonable (Fishman et al., 2014).

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Self-Efficacy With Regard to Inclusion. Teacher attitudes toward inclusion vary. However, it appears that teachers who have a positive attitude are more likely to implement successful inclusive education (Allday et al., 2013; Burke & Sutherland, 2004; McLesky & Waldron, 2000).

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of general education teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward mainstreaming/inclusion between 1958 and 1995 in North

America, the UK, and Australia. The researchers reviewed 28 studies that used surveys to investigate more than 10,000 teachers' attitudes in both elementary and secondary schools. For example, support for and willingness to implement inclusion, and teacher perceptions of the effects of inclusion. The researchers converted each study's results to numerical data, calculating the proportion of agreement responses. The majority of the teachers (two thirds) agreed with the general concept of inclusion, and more than half of the teachers were willing to implement inclusive practices in their classes. The findings also found that the majority of teachers reported needing more time, training, and resources to successfully implement inclusion.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) expanded the boundary of the synthesis by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) by incorporating more international studies. The researchers also identified additional factors (e.g., child-related, teacher-related, and environment-related) promoting teachers' acceptance of inclusion of students with disabilities. Results showed that teachers generally exhibited positive attitudes although acceptance of full inclusion (or zero reject) was not apparent. Finally, child-related factors (e.g., children's nature or severity of disability) were strongly associated with teacher attitude.

More recently, de Boer and the colleagues (2011) did a similar literature review. In 26 studies published between 1998 and 2008, the researchers examined not only elementary school teachers' attitude toward inclusion of students with special needs but variables that influence their attitudes and the impact of these variables on the social participation of these student population. Different from what the previous reviews reported, the findings revealed inconsistent results regarding teacher attitude, either negative or neutral attitude (belief and feelings) toward inclusion. The variables they found relevant to inclusion included years of teaching experience,

experience with inclusive education, disability type, and training. The more experience the teachers had with inclusion and training, the more positive attitudes they exhibited.

Measurement of Teacher Attitudes, Beliefs, and Self-Efficacy. Some researchers have strived to develop instruments to evaluate and quantify teacher attitude and disposition such as self-efficacy and emotions. One of these relatively new instruments, Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale (TATIS), measures change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities in regular classrooms. Developed by Cullen et al. (2010), TATIS is based on the eight instruments from 1990s to 2000s that measure attitudinal changes of both in-service and preservice general education teachers across school levels after a certain training or professional development. This seven-point Likert-type scale is comprised of nine items that fall into one of three dimensions: teacher perceptions of students with mild to moderate disabilities (POS); beliefs about the efficacy of inclusion (BEI); and perceptions of professional roles and functions (PRF).

Another instrument, the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) scale (Forlin et al., 2011), is designed to measure preservice teachers' perceptions about inclusion from the three dimensions: sentiment or comfort level to the individuals with disabilities (sentiments); willingness of accepting learners with different needs (attitudes); and concerns about implementing inclusive practices (Forlin et al., 2011). Comprised of 15 items, this scale is a refined version of SACIE (Loreman et al., 2007). SACIE was developed from an international data sample that represented a series of survey results from hundreds of preservice teachers across multiple countries. The final validation of this instrument was from 996 preservice teachers from four countries: Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Canada.

Finally, Sharma and the colleagues (2012) developed Teachers' Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) to measure teachers' self-efficacy for their inclusive practices across four countries. This six-point Likert-type scale consists of 18 items divided into three domains: efficacy to use inclusive instructions (EII), efficacy in collaboration (EC), and efficacy in managing behavior (EMB). According to the researchers, this scale can also be used to measure preservice teachers' self-efficacy of teaching for inclusive education.

Conceptualization and Understanding of Inclusive Education. Relatively few studies have addressed teacher conceptualizations or understandings of inclusive education. Of these, two studies examined teachers' understanding of inclusive education in North America (Lalvani, 2013; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). Lalvani (2013) explored teachers' conceptualizations of inclusive education by conducting in-depth interviews with 30 current teachers in general education and special education in New Jersey. The findings indicated that teachers interpreted inclusive education in various ways; however, regardless of their specialties, the majority of teachers conceptualized inclusion in terms of placement for educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Three themes emerged from the research: inclusion as privilege, compromise, and social justice. The teachers who saw inclusion as privilege and compromise seemingly supported the idea of inclusion but only at the abstract level. The dominant view was that decisions for students with disability to be placed in the general education classroom should depend on their disability type, severity (functioning level), cognitive abilities that represent as IQ scores, and (challenging) behaviors. In general education classrooms, students with disabilities need to "catch up" on academic learning, or at least benefit from social-emotional learning in place of academic learning. Some special education teachers regarded self-contained classrooms as more

beneficial for students with disabilities due to their specialized instruction. Lalvani concluded that the underlying perspective that shaped these teachers' understandings of inclusion was a biomedical model that views disability as the cause of the problem, highlighting deficit thinking (Lalvani, 2013).

Only a small number of the teachers demonstrated a strong willingness to implement inclusion. These teachers approached inclusion for all students, not only for students with disabilities but also all historically marginalized groups, such as students of color. It was based on their understanding that inclusion entails democratic values such as equity and social justice, and their rejection of the categorization, or otherness, of students, such as normal *versus* abnormal, disabled *versus* abled. Lalvani (2013) suggested teachers need to critically reflect on their roles who are "perpetuating the status quo" (p. 26). She called for more opportunities in teacher education programs for preservice teachers to engage in dialogue so that they can advance their understanding of inclusion as to social justice and envision their position to disrupt dominant discourse and marginalization of students.

Woodcock and Hardy (2017) examined teachers' understandings of inclusion in Ontario, Canada. The researchers asked 120 teachers in elementary and secondary schools how they would define an inclusive classroom using an open-ended question and a closed question of whether or not they believed an inclusive classroom was an effective way of teaching all students, expecting the answer to be either yes or no. The responses were analyzed according to Nancy Fraser's theory of justice (Keddie, 2012), which the authors reinterpreted in the context of inclusive practices:

(a) Ensuring adequate resourcing to provide for the needs of all students (redistribution),

(b) Supporting social change which actively recognizes and values the specific abilities and capacities of all students (recognition),

(c) Providing opportunities for active and meaningful participation for all students (representation). (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017, p. 670)

The findings indicated that teachers were more concerned with recognition and representation issues than resourcing (redistribution). What teachers thought important was students' safety, their sense of being welcomed and valued within the learning environment, and the feeling that their needs were being met. The teachers also articulated inclusion as a general concept at the abstract level and emphasized special needs students and/or students with disabilities, in particular, rather than recognizing all students' differences, personhood, and the complexity of each student. The researchers critiqued this way of understanding inclusion, which undergirds deficit perspectives on students with special needs and students with disabilities, which, again, reinforces the categorization of this student population. Therefore, they asserted that inclusion should be understood from the social justice framework as this approach helps teachers deliberate appropriate inclusive practices for inclusion in terms of resourcing (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017).

Inclusive Practices. Interesting, little is known about what teacher practices are appropriate for successful inclusive education. However, this is not surprising because the discrepancy between the conceptual development of inclusion and the instructional practices for its implementation has been consistently criticized (Florian, 2014). This dissonance might have been caused by the lack of consensus on the definition among scholars and the enactment of inclusive education that vary according to the local context in which schools are situated across countries.

Recognizing this gap, Florian (2014) developed a framework for understanding teachers'

instructional practices for inclusive education regardless of contextual differences. The inclusive

pedagogical approach in action (IPAA) framework can be used as an analytic tool for researchers

to investigate how teachers utilize instructional practices for inclusion in school settings. The

framework consists of three core assumptions, associated concepts/actions, key challenges, and

the list of evidence (what to look for in practice). The key assumptions are as follows: (a)

difference is accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualization

of learning; (b) teachers must believe they are qualified/capable of teaching all children; and (c)

teachers continually develop creative new ways of working with others. For example, the

evidence under the second assumption includes focus on *what* is to be taught (and how) rather

than *who* is to learn it; providing opportunities for children to choose (rather than pre-determine)

the level at which they engage with lessons; strategic/reflective responses to support difficulties

which children encounter in their learning (Florian, 2014, pp. 290-292)*.*

Preservice Teachers[1] and Inclusive Education

In a similar vein, there has also been a great deal of research on the attitudes of preservice

teachers toward inclusion. For example, Avramidis and colleagues (2000) surveyed preservice

teachers in the UK to explore their attitudes toward inclusion of students with special needs in

regular secondary school. The authors operationalized attitude as a construct that included three

components: affective, cognitive, and conative/behavioral reactions. To measure the extent of

agreement, they used different questionnaires using Likert scales. They also administered a

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[1] The term "preservice teachers" in this dissertation also refers to student teachers, prospective teachers, teacher candidates, or sometimes, beginning teachers, who are undergraduate or graduate students in teacher education programs. The word "preservice teachers" has been used interchangeably with these other terms in research. In this dissertation, I unified the terms as "preservice teachers."

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Likert-type inventory to measure student teachers' perceived skill possession and confidence level for inclusion.

Based on the responses from 135 preservice teachers, results of a quantitative analysis indicated that these student teachers tended to hold a positive attitude toward inclusion conceptually. A general concept of inclusion in the study indicated "restructuring of mainstream [regular/general education] schooling so that every school can accommodate every child irrespective of disability" (Avramidis et al., 2000, p. 278). Yet, participants' self-efficacy (i.e., perceived competence) was significantly lower depending on the severity of their students' disabilities.

In addition, there were three open-ended questions within the survey asking (a) what factors would promote the pre-service teachers' positive attitude; (b) what needs to be changed in the classroom environment; and (c) what needs to be changed in the school. Content analysis revealed that (a) more knowledge and strategies, experience, support, and training were needed to foster preservice teachers' positive attitudes; change in classroom structure, smaller class size, and more resources were required in classroom environments; and a centralized department addressing special educational needs of students and a new school ethos were associated factors for school change. Based on the qualitative data, Avramidis et al. (2000) concluded that although the preservice teachers agreed with the concept of inclusion, their responses were primarily focused on integration (i.e., physical placement). The authors also pointed out that the preservice teachers' underlying medical model of disability may further marginalize students with a disability.

The literature indicates that preservice teachers' knowledge and expertise to execute individualized lessons for students in special education services are necessary for being more

confident in teaching and have positive attitudes toward inclusion. For practice, preservice teachers are more likely to rely on knowledge they acquire in teacher education programs than experience (Burke & Sutherland, 2004). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that preparing preservice teachers to advance knowledge and expertise in inclusive education should begin with teacher education programs (Allday et al., 2013).

Conclusion

Despite many researchers' endeavor to articulate nuanced definitions of inclusion, the majority of studies of inclusive education have been conducted on the premise that inclusion is primarily for educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom. To reduce the disparity between the conceptual development of inclusion and the definition embedded in the empirical studies, new empirical studies are needed based on the expanded, complex definitions of inclusion. Given the discrepancy in the number of studies on teacher attitude toward inclusion and those of teacher understanding of and/or practice for inclusion, further research should pay more attention to the latter, which would allow us to adopt and implement the genuine meaning of inclusion.

The literature confirms that researchers in the field of inclusive education believe that teachers' positive attitude is a prerequisite for successful inclusion. However, is that enough? What would lead to an improvement of teacher practice for inclusion to be authentically enacted? Change in understanding leads to change in practice. Thus, preservice teachers should be better prepared to educate all students by engaging in the learning activity of critically examining the meaning of inclusion, their own knowledge and perspectives, and understanding inclusive education more in-depth. To this end, discovering new instructional methods that aid preservice teachers' learning to teach for inclusion should be accompanied.

Research on Dialogue as a Learning Tool

Dialogue can be used as both a vehicle for teachers to explore their understandings about inclusion and to reveal those understandings to researchers and others. Why is dialogue critical as a learning tool? How can it be used in teacher education?

Notion, Role, and Benefits of Dialogue in Teacher Learning

Wegerif (2008) explained how dialogue plays a significant role for learning of the participants by interpreting Bakhtin's theory of dialogue:

> For each participant in a dialogue the voice of the other is an outside perspective that includes them within it. The boundary between subjects is not, therefore, a demarcation line, or an external link between self and other, but an inclusive 'space' of dialogue within which self and other mutually construct and reconstruct each other. (Wegerif, 2008, p. 353)

Rule (2011) drew on Bakhtin and Freire's work to discuss the role of dialogue in relation to learning and transformative practice. Dialogue, for both scholars, was considered as "an authentic way of being" (p. 927). Especially for Freire, dialogue enables participants to build a "dialectic of mutual becoming," which stimulates the "interactive dynamic of growth and development" within the dialogue between self and others (p. 928). At this point, mutual growth and development can be regarded as *learning*. According to Rule (2011), Bakhtin rejected the notion of dialectic for being reductionist, generating one, single voice. Rather, he argued that conflict, opposition, and struggle between viewpoints in dialogue builds "a progressive development of consciousness" of the participants, that is, mutual change and enrichment in understanding (p. 932).

Dialogue typically refers to in-person interactions through spoken language (Wells, 2000). Grounded in Vygotsky's theory of human development, dialogue is viewed as a central knowledge-building activity because humans can achieve common understandings through dialogue. Dialogue can be called dialogic inquiry in that it allows co-construction of knowledge among participants as they share and exchange the ideas (Wells, 2000).

Penlington (2008) conceptually analyzed dialogue using a theory of "practical reason" in philosophy and provided a rationale for why dialogue is important and how dialogue among teachers works to change their practice. This conceptual analysis departed from the question of inquiry: how does an inquiry dialogue between teachers prompt change within a teacher's practical reasoning and hence in her practice? Practical reasoning refers to "a process that is activated and developed via *our interaction with others*" (p. 1306). Practical reasoning is developed through interactions with others. Interactions involve language use, which makes them dialogic.

How, then, does dialogue prompt change in teacher practice? Due to the nature of dialogue, which requires at least two people, there are multiple perspectives. Such different viewpoints enable teachers to reflect on and critique their own perspective as otherness. This enhanced self-consciousness leads teachers to change practice as they reflect upon the hidden factors, such as emotions, belief, or desires, that affect their actions. Penlington (2008) concluded that dialogue plays a role as a catalyst that triggers improvement/change in teacher practice.

Dialogue and Teacher Learning

Wallen and Tormey (2019) studied how elementary teachers in Ireland enhanced their agency and self-efficacy through dialogue. This collaborative dialogic inquiry was intended to improve the teachers' knowledge and expertise with regard to teaching English language

learners. Five classroom teachers teaching English learners in general classrooms and a teacher teaching English in a small-group setting participated in dialogue. The dialogue occurred monthly for eight sessions over the course of academic year, and each session lasted for two hours. A researcher joined the dialogue as a facilitator, who mainly posed open-ended questions regarding language learners. For example, questions about teachers' knowledge of and perspective on language learning, language learners, and their practice. Those questions stimulated the teachers to reflect on their knowledge and practice so that they could participate in collaborative meaning-making activity.

Data were gathered from the eight meetings, post semi-structured interviews, participants' reflections, and the facilitator's field notes. Using grounded theory and constant comparative analysis, the researchers found out that, over time, the teachers ended up having increased agency rather than attributing the demands and pressures of teaching language learners to other stakeholders, such as the department of education or the students they had to teach. As the teachers recognized their capacity during dialogue, they felt more confident that they could make decisions in teaching language learners with autonomy as professionals. The researchers also indicated the need for a facilitator to guide dialogue in the right direction. Facilitation, as a form of scaffolding, should be required to make unguided dialogue among teachers be more profound, fruitful, and deliberate (Wallen & Tormey, 2019).

Dialogue and the Learning of Preservice Teachers

Dialogue has been used in a similar way to foster preservice teacher learning (Damrow & Sweeney, 2019; McIntyre, 1997). Studies confirm the power of dialogue to afford preservice teachers the learning opportunity to teach. The only difference from the studies focusing on teachers' learning was the purpose, which was to help preservice teachers grow as future

educators rather than providing an opportunity for ongoing professional development to in-service teachers. Dialogue can be utilized in any area of teaching and learning for preservice teachers' professional growth, including knowledge, expertise, disposition, or professional identity.

A study conducted by McIntyre (1997) is an important contribution to the field of teacher education and multicultural education. McIntyre, as a white teacher educator, inquired how white preservice teachers would make meaning of whiteness using participatory action research (PAR). With 13 preservice teachers, she held eight sessions of group dialogue to collaboratively explore racial identity as white educators and the meaning of whiteness by leading difficult but critical talk about race and racism.

After the pre-interview to get to know individual participants and build rapport and understand their initial thoughts of white racial identity and whiteness, McIntyre began two-hour group sessions comprised of a variety of activities, including sharing personal experiences relevant to race, discussions based on the selected readings or questions posed, co-creating a collage demonstrating whiteness, and reviewing their initial thoughts of racial identity and whiteness from the interviews. Influenced by Freire's work, McIntyre strived to make group dialogue a space for consciousness-raising. She believed that the process provoked the participants' critical thinking to be more aware and be able to analyze issues related to multicultural education. Analyzing the group talks using the modified version of constructivist grounded theory by Charmaz, she theorized preservice teachers' meaning-making of whiteness in the context of teaching and learning.

In other research, Damrow and Sweeney (2019) conducted a qualitative case study to explore preservice teachers' experience of participating in facilitated dialogue with peers who

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had a different racial, cultural, and linguistic background and how it contributed to their learning about teaching for social justice. research participants were 10 preservice teachers across two different universities in the United States, who voluntarily engaged in the year-long research project. The universities were located in geographically different regions; therefore, the participant demographics varied in terms of race, culture, and language.

Five pairs of participants were engaged in conversations via a video-conference software program, and supplementary group discussions were initiated by two researchers. In addition to the pair and group dialogues, the researchers interviewed each participant three times—before, during, and after a series of dialogue. The topic of the discussions centered around teaching for social justice. The authors designed dialogue (both paired conversations and group discussions) as a medium to provide opportunities to deeply understand culturally responsive teaching and cases that reflected injustice, to examine the participants' own biases toward different social groups and communities and to nurture commitment for social justice teaching. As part of the structure of the dialogue, the researchers provided participants with a great deal of scaffolding in varying forms (e.g., multiple materials, video, and open-ended questions).

The researchers simultaneously collected and analyzed data from dialogue. Data from earlier paired conversations and group dialogue informed the design of future ones. Themes that emerged from their analysis indicated that the participants built a community of learners that offered a space for wider, deeper dialogue among the preservice teachers. The study stressed that, for dialogue to be meaningful, building respectful and trusting relationships between the participants was essential. Such relationships allowed preservice teachers to be more attentive to each other's voices and perspectives, so that they ultimately could have more in-depth dialogue (Damrow & Sweeney, 2019).

In conclusion, dialogue can be an effective means to enhance the learning of (pre/in-service) teachers, as it enables participants to reflect on their own and others' perspectives, dispositions and practice, exchange and share ideas, and collectively make sense of a concept. In this sense, dialogue can be a useful vehicle for discerning teachers' thinking about inclusion. Since none of the previous studies have investigated preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education through a series of group dialogue, it was worth conducting a study to fill that gap.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Learning occurs through social interactions. Social interactions occur through dialogue in which language is used as the central tool. Dialogue can function as an interactive learning space; dialogue with colleagues or more experienced others provides us a professional learning opportunity to hone our own practice, as it influences "the way we deliberate about what to do within ourselves" (Penlington, 2008, p. 1309). Dialogue enables participants to understand self and others and to advance their ideas, thoughts, and reasoning through interaction. Therefore, learning through dialogue has to do with scaffolding, a temporary support provided by more knowledgeable others to enhance one's learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Although in the same teacher education program, individual preservice teachers personally and professionally have different histories, backgrounds, and experiences. Since other preservice teachers are more knowledgeable in some areas than a given individual, interactions with colleagues can further facilitate their own learning (Albert, 2012; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Given this potential of dialogic scaffolding, the purpose of this study was to explore preservice teachers' understandings of inclusive education and how dialogue impacts their understandings. Using dialogue that was intentionally designed as facilitated structured discussions, first, I attempted to understand how preservice teachers conceptualize inclusive education as they engaged in a series of group dialogue. Second, I investigated how preservice teachers made sense of inclusion through the dialogue series, in particular, the ways in which they negotiated when dispute around inclusion arose. Thus, the research questions examined in this study were:

1. How do five preservice teachers conceptualize inclusive education before and after participating in a series of group dialogue?

1.1. How does each preservice teacher conceptualize inclusive education before and after the dialogue series?

1.2. After the dialogue series, what are the commonalities and variations in the conceptualizations of inclusive education across the five preservice teachers?

2. How do preservice teachers negotiate meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs about inclusion during the group dialogues when they face challenges around the concept and practice?

3. How do facilitations—content/topics, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary materials and activities—mediate those negotiations?

Research Design

To answer the research questions, I designed my research as case studies. As a strand of qualitative research, a case study is empirical inquiry suitable to investigate "a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context" with *how* and *why* questions (Yin, 2014, p.16). The phenomenon investigated in this study was preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education and the impact of group dialogue series on those understandings. Multiple factors influence one's understandings, such as a sociocultural background, personal history, and educational and professional experience. I assumed that the participating preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education would be particularly grounded in or influenced by the school(s) and classroom environment(s) that they had experienced as students and as teacher candidates while completing their practica.[2] Similarly, preservice teachers' negotiations to

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[2] Practicum in this teacher education program refers to field experience where preservice teachers visit a school to experience teaching and learning in practice. Preservice teachers not only observe the teacher and students in the assigned classroom but also interact with them and teach lessons. At this university's school of education, pre-practicum involves a semester-long weekly visit (10 weeks) and full-practicum consists of full-time student teaching throughout a semester; only the students who have completed three pre-practica are eligible to start their full-practicum.

address the challenges around inclusion during the dialogue sessions would primarily be based on their prior and current teaching experiences within the real-school contexts.

In qualitative research, researchers seek to gather a variety of data to accomplish the research goals, which typically involve thick or rich description of a phenomenon, and to give credibility to the description (Wertz et al., 2011). Case studies, following the qualitative tradition, take an eclectic approach to data collection that relies on multiple ways of collecting and analyzing data to understand a phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Gathering multiple sources of evidence increases accuracy and credibility of the data in a case study, thus strengthening the overall quality of the study (Yin, 2014). To explore the research questions, this case study relied on multiple data sources, including surveys, follow-up conversations, journal reflections, individual interviews, group dialogues, artifacts, and field notes.

The data analyses consisted of two units of analysis: (a) each individual preservice teacher and (b) the group of preservice teachers. I probed, at first, five individual cases of how each preservice teacher conceptualized inclusive education before and after the six dialogue sessions (RQ 1.1.) and how their conceptualizations were common or varied after the dialogue sessions (RQ 1.2.). Next, I investigated their collective sense-making of inclusive education during the group sessions (RQ 2 & 3).

To answer the first set of research questions, I compared and contrasted each preservice teacher's initial (pre-dialogue) and final (post-dialogue) journal reflections and semi-structured interview transcripts and analyzed those data using qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014; Schreier, 2014). With regard to the second and third research questions, I primarily analyzed group dialogue transcripts following a constructivist grounded theory process (Charmaz, 2006) to theorize the group's sense-making of inclusive education. Reviewing my field notes and

artifacts generated from the supplementary activities of the group discussions (e.g., mind mapping and self-reflection journal writing) aided this process.

Design Process for Group Dialogue Series

My pilot studies, existing research, and a personal conversation with two researchers informed the design of the group dialogue for this study. Since dialogue was used as medium to advance preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education, it was necessary to design the group dialogue in such a way that the preservice teachers would consider it a space to learn about inclusive education more in-depth. I envisioned the dialogue would provide preservice teachers with learning opportunities to reflect on their own ideas and perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes toward inclusive education, critically interrogate the meanings of inclusion in practice by addressing tensions and conflicts that have arisen or may arise in real school contexts, and seek teacher practices that can be more inclusive and just for all learners.

The group dialogue took the form of structured group discussions in line with problem-posing education, which requires the teacher (in this study, the researcher who was a facilitator) and students (preservice teachers) to take part in the sense-making activity of the world (inclusive education) as critical co-investigators who have shared authority in the inquiry process (Freire, 1970). The specific purpose of the structured group discussions was to increase the preservice teachers' awareness and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) of challenging issues around the concept and practice of inclusion so that they would gain an in-depth and critical understanding of inclusive education, ultimately leading to implementation and enactment of inclusive practices.

Thus, I was intentional when designing the structure of group discussions, including content and format. I mapped out the topic selection and arrangement, supplementary materials

and guiding questions, and plans for each session, based on existing literature. I revised and refined the structure across sessions and within a session through an iterative design process based on my research experience from the pilot studies, two model studies (Damrow & Sweeney, 2019; McIntyre, 1997), and the personal communication with Drs. Damrow and Sweeney about how they designed and facilitated pair and group conversations.[3]

Pilot Studies. The idea for the study emerged from my supervision work since Fall 2017. At this university, practicum supervisors are supposed to visit an assigned school and work with teacher candidates on site once a week for 10 weeks. One of their responsibilities is to facilitate group dialogue[4] so that preservice teachers can exchange and share their ideas and experiences in the classroom and reflect on their own practice. The supervisors' handbook contained a list of topics and prompts that could be used for the group dialogue; yet, overall, it was an open, unstructured space for discussion.

As a facilitator of the group dialogues, I wanted to create a meaningful space and improve the quality of dialogue for the learning of preservice teachers. I thought of developing a curriculum as a structure for group discussions, infusing my research interest in inclusive education as the overarching theme of dialogue. I envisioned that engaging in the structured group discussions concerning inclusive education would benefit both the preservice teachers and myself as a researcher in terms of our professional growth, as it would enable us to be deeply engaged in discussions on inclusive education, which is a critical topic for educators given the

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[3] March 25, 2020, I had an online meeting with them via Zoom where they shared a couple of sample materials and scripted plans with me, which informed my design of the group discussion sessions.

[4] This university's school of education specifically refers to this type of group dialogues as Quality Conversations (QC). QCs were on-site weekly group discussions held during regular school hours. Teacher candidates were encouraged to share their reflection and experience in their classroom during QC. Participation in the weekly QC was a requirement for teacher candidates to successfully complete their practicum.

increased number of diverse students in the general education classroom, including students with disabilities.

I consequently designed a 10-week curriculum for the purpose of developing preservice teachers' knowledge and expertise in inclusive education and understanding their experience with the curriculum. I piloted the curriculum with preservice teachers completing their practicum at two different suburban elementary schools in the Fall semester of 2018 and Spring semester of 2019, respectively. As part of practicum requirement, I facilitated the group dialogue with the curriculum, which lasted 40 minutes. My observations and findings from the first pilot study informed the research design of the second pilot study. And, ultimately, both pilot studies became great resources for improving the overall quality of the current study, as they guided the research design, helped me design the structure of group dialogue as an iterative process, and informed how to effectively facilitate the group dialogue (see Figure 1). The structure and topic for each session in each semester were not entirely the same nor fixed, as our talk did not move along as I planned at times.

Figure 1

Design Process for Group Dialogue for This Study

Pilot Studies
- Fall 2018 & Spring 2019
- 8 & 6 preservice teachers
- suburban elementary schools
- Group dialogue on inclusive education

Model Studies
- McIntyre (1997). Group dialogue for meaning-making of whiteness
- Damrow & Sweeney (2019). Pair/Group discussions as to teaching for social justice

Present study
- Spring 2020
- 5 preservice teachers
- Virtual group dialogue on inclusive education

Both pilot studies were conducted in suburban elementary schools with a small group of female teacher candidates completing their practicum. As a supervisor, I had no choice about which group to work with as the practicum office randomly assigned a group of teacher candidates to a school partnering with the university. The groups consisted of a mix of graduate and undergraduate students, a majority of whom were white, majoring in elementary education. The main difference between the pilot studies was the setting, the school environment and the place where the group dialogue occurred. A detailed description of each pilot study follows.

The first pilot study was conducted in a suburban K-8 school with eight female teacher candidates, one graduate student in early childhood education and seven undergraduate students in elementary education. Two were Asian Americans (one Chinese and one Korean) while the rest were white, whose first language was English. The practicum was scheduled on Tuesdays

from 8:00AM to 2:30PM, starting in the last week of September for 10 weeks. We had weekly group dialogue from 1:50PM to 2:30PM in the school library. With students' informed consent, I audio-recorded our discussions and collected their journal reflection, which were related to the topic of the discussions.

In Spring 2019, the second pilot study was conducted at another suburban K-5 elementary school every Monday from mid-January to late April. Six female teacher candidates majoring in elementary education participated in the study. Three were graduate students, two of whom were international students from China. The other three were undergraduate students. Four were white, native English speakers. Contrary to the previous school in Fall 2018, this K-5 school had a very limited space available for us and I then had to find an alternative space for our group dialogue, which was university campus. The preservice teachers agreed to have group dialogue at a conference room inside one of the university libraries, although it was inconvenient, because we had to leave the school site earlier than we were supposed to. I asked for permission from the school and practicum office. It was hectic to come back to campus, however, with the permission from the school and practicum office, we were able to have our group dialogue from 2:00PM to 2:40PM, in an intimate, quite environment without any interruption.

Similar to the first study, I audio-recorded our discussions and collected students' journal reflections. I additionally conducted semi-structured individual interviews with each preservice teacher for 30 minutes after the final group session, in order to explore their overall experience of participating in the group dialogue and learning about inclusion through the structured discussions. Unfortunately, I lost the first two weeks' audio-recordings due to technical issues with my recording device—a reminder of the difficulty of conducting research in a real-life

setting where unpredictable and uncontrollable issues could come up although I planned thoroughly.

Implications of Pilot Studies. From the two pilot studies, I recognized that preservice teachers' sense-making of inclusion during group dialogue was heavily contextualized and influenced by their immediate surroundings (e.g., the school and classroom environment) as they constantly interacted with the mentor teacher and the students while completing their practicum. For example, when the first pilot study was conducted at a suburban school where a substantial number of students were international students whose first language was not English, the preservice teachers' primary focus of discussions was culturally and linguistically diverse students (alternatively, it could have been the influence of U.S. society where racial and cultural diversity precedes disability). In contrast, when the second pilot study was conducted at another school that emphasized inclusion due to a number of students with disabilities, the group brought up students with disabilities more frequently during the dialogue. Across the studies, the preservice teachers tended to think about inclusion not just theoretically but more in practice. In terms of topics, the preservice teachers expressed a unifying interest in discussing classroom management based on their primary concern about students with challenging behaviors.

The other important lesson that emerged from the pilot studies was that it was pivotal to build rapport between the preservice teachers and me, as well as among the preservice teachers, in order to make dialogue an authentic sense-making activity. Close relationships not only enable everyone to willingly share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences but also alleviate situations where disagreements or conflicting ideas come up. Further, building a trusting relationship between the researcher and participants produces trustworthy data (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

In short, my experience of conducting the pilot studies informed me of how to improve the design of the group dialogues and ways of facilitating the actual discussions during my data collection. Grounded in the literature on inclusive education, I reorganized the content and sub-topics of the discussions. I also modified the overall structure and format of group dialogue, including adjusting the length of the dialogues and time allotment for each section within a discussion. I also refined the guiding questions and activities to be more appropriate, such as modifying the journal prompts to be explicitly connected to the topics that would be addressed during the discussions. I rearranged the subtopics and supplementary reading materials in sequence.

Furthermore, I learned that dialogue requires some degree of flexibility for adjustment during the actual dialogue although the structure is predetermined (McIntyre, 1997). This allows participants to "shape the process" together (Wallen & Tormey, 2019, p. 138) and, in turn, leads us to build mutually beneficial "reciprocity" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 157) by co-creating an equitable learning environment with the preservice teachers as it gives them agency and shared power as active contributors to the group discussions. In this regard, first, I committed to actively incorporate preservice teachers' ideas, suggestions, and questions regardless of the pre-designed structure as we began our group discussion and throughout the semester. Second, I not only valued the preservice teachers' voices but also spontaneously responded to them with new questions or comments during the discussions to promote their learning.

Changes in Research Design

I originally designed the study to be conducted through practicum as a supervisor. In my pilot studies, the research participants were the preservice teachers with whom I was working, and we had a 40-minute dialogue for 10 weeks. It was possible to integrate my research into

practicum because group dialogue was part of the practicum requirements. As a result, the participants did not need to be committed to my research, thereby avoiding any ethical concerns that might arise between the researcher and participants.

However, due to concern about the research integrity of the study being conducted as part of students' practicum requirements and the outbreak of COVID-19, which forced practicum to be suspended, I had to redesign my study and the structure of group dialogue along with recruiting new participants. Thus, instead of having ten 40-minute sessions, I decided to hold the group dialogue series for a longer time period (90 minutes) with fewer sessions (6 sessions) so that I would be able to recruit a small group of research participants who were willing to participate in in-depth discussions that would fully address the topics and questions I had prepared. The setting and data collection format of this study had to be changed to a virtual environment from a physical classroom. To answer the research questions, all of the data— journal reflections, semi-structured individual interviews, surveys and follow-up conversations, and group discussions—were collected virtually.

Setting

The study was conducted in a virtual environment due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The original setting planned for the study was an actual physical space, either an empty classroom or a conference room on campus where the participants and I could interact in person and collectively do the supplementary activities. However, all in-person gatherings were suspended and classes switched to online in early March of 2020. Thus, data collection for individual interviews, follow-up conversations, and group discussion sessions was conducted on a video conferencing platform, Zoom. During the pandemic, this virtual environment was the only possible way to collect data as it allowed us at least to see each other's faces, which worked well

for this study most of the time. However, the participants and I were not able to meet and interact in person throughout the data collection period, which inevitably must have interfered with building rapport and relationships between the participants and researcher me, as well as among themselves. This clearly posed a limitation regarding the activities I had planned.

The setting to which the participants were assigned for their practicum was varied in terms of school level, grade level, and classroom type. Partnering with the university's school of education for practica, however, all of the schools were located in northeastern United States. As teacher learning is situated in a context (Putnam & Borko, 2000), I expected that the participants' discussions would be contextual based on their experience and observation in their school/classroom environment to which they were assigned for the practicum. Thus, it was crucial to know their classroom context, specifically their mentor teacher and student population. Their classroom information was collected by surveys and follow-up conversations.

Participants

The research participants were recruited through purposeful sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposeful sampling was the appropriate recruitment method given that the study was qualitative case study. Qualitative research does not intend to generalize study findings; rather, it attempts to provide an in-depth description about the focus of the inquiry (Yin, 2014). As the purpose of my study was to explore the impact of dialogue on preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education, it was necessary to recruit the research participants according to the criteria. Thus, the participants had (a) to be preservice teachers (teacher candidates, whether undergraduate or graduate students), (b) to have completed at least one practicum or in the process of completing their practicum at the time of the study regardless of school level, and (c) yet to begin their official teaching experience in school as a classroom teacher.

After the IRB approved the study in Spring 2020, I created a flyer to advertise my research project, which also included a general overview of the study and information about a compensation (a gift card) for successful recruitment. The compensation was to be given to participants who entirely or partially completed the requirements for the study. (For further details, see Appendices A & B.) I publicly sent out group emails with the flyer as an attachment via Canvas to the students who had taken my course and also asked fellow doctoral students and a couple of faculty members to orally advertise my study in their courses. Through these means of advertisement, potential participants who expressed an interest in voluntarily participating in my study reached out to me via email, and I further communicated with them to see if they met the recruiting criteria and give them the informed consent form as an electronic copy. Students who finally agreed to participate in the study signed the electronic informed consent form and returned it to me.

I initially recruited six research participants who had signed the informed consent form. However, one participant who went through family issues due to the COVID-19 outbreak dropped out of the study before I began to collect data. As a result, I ended up with five participants, whom I named Holly, Dana, Lauren, Mei, and Brooke,[5] enrolled in the teacher education program at a four-year private Catholic university in the northeastern part of the United States (see Table 1).

Although the participants shared some commonalities in terms of demographics, each was unique in terms of their personal, educational, and teaching experiences. All participants were heterosexual female coming from the middle- or upper-middle class family. They were able-bodied, except for Lauren, and white native English speakers, except for Mei, who was

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[5] All of their names were pseudonyms.

Asian American (see Table 2). While Dana was majoring in Secondary Education and English, the others were Elementary Education majors. Brooke was the only graduate student completing her daily field experience (i.e., full-practicum), whereas the rest were undergraduate students completing their weekly field experience (i.e., pre-practicum) at the time of the study.

The participants' current practicum levels and classroom contexts varied, particularly in terms of the diversity of the student body, as reported below (see Tables 3 & 4). In addition, their overall teaching experience and personal experience with diverse populations were differed vastly. A summary of their experiences from survey responses and follow-up conversations is reported below (see Tables 5 & 6). A full description of each participant's personal, educational, and teaching experience is presented as part of the single-case studies in Chapter 4.

Table 1

Participant Profiles in School of Education

	Year in College	Major(s)	Minor/ Concentration	Practicum Level
Holly	Sophomore	Elementary/Applied Psychology	Special Education (C)	Pre-practicum 1
Dana	Sophomore	Secondary/English	Music (M)	Pre-practicum 1
Lauren	Junior	Elementary/Applied Psychology	n/a	Pre-practicum 3
Mei	Junior	Elementary/ Computer-Science-Math	Teaching ELLs (C) Special Education (C)	Pre-practicum 3
Brooke	Graduate (5th year)	Moderate Support Needs (G) Elementary/Applied Psychology (UG)	n/a	Graduate Full Practicum

Note. (G) graduate, (UG) undergraduate, (M) minor, (C) concentration.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

	Holly	Dana	Lauren	Mei	Brooke
Age	20	19	21	22	22
Gender	F	F	F	F	F
Preferred Pronoun	She/her/hers	She/her/hers	She/her/hers	She/her/hers	She/her/hers
Race	White	White	White	Asian	White
First Language	English	English	English	Chinese Mandarin[6]	English
Second Language proficiency	n/a	Intermediate Spanish	n/a	Chinese Cantonese[7] Beginner Spanish	Intermediate French
Socioeconomic Status (SES)[8]	Upper-middle	(Upper-)[9] Middle	Upper-middle	Middle	Upper-middle
Disability Status	n/a	n/a	ADHD/LD	n/a	n/a
Attended School Types (K-12)	Public - Suburban	Public - Suburban	Private - Suburban/ Religious	Public & Private - Urban	Private - Religious

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[6] Mei did not indicate English as her first or second language. After communicating with her in the follow-up conversation, I learned that she spoke only Chinese with her parents and started to learn English when she entered elementary school as a first grader in the United States.

[7] Mei indicated she can understand Cantonese but cannot speak it.

[8] The information is the participants' perceived (self-reported) family socioeconomic background.

[9] In the survey, Dana indicated her family SES as middle class. However, she mentioned she was from upper-middle class in one of the group dialogue sessions.

Table 3

Overview of Participants' Practicum Placement in Spring 2020 (Classroom Context)

	Holly	Dana	Lauren	Mei	Brooke
School Type	Urban Public School	Urban Public School	Private Religious School	Private Religious School	Urban Public School
Classroom Type	Inclusive	SEI	GE	GE	Inclusive
Grade	3rd grade	9-12th grade	Kindergarten	6th grade	3rd grade
Class Size	28	19	18	15	18
Number of Adults	5	4	3	3	3
Roles of the Adults	1 Teacher 1 Para 3 Student teachers	1 Teacher 3 Student teachers	1 Teacher 1 Para 1 Student teacher	1 Teacher 2 Student Teachers	1 Teacher 1 Para 1 Student teacher
SP[10]'s Gender	F	F	F	F	F
SP's Race	White	White	White	White	White
SP's Years of Teaching Experience	16-20 years	6 years	10 years	1-5 years	12 years
SP's Areas of Licensure	Elementary/ Moderate & Extensive support needs	Secondary English/ELL	Early Childhood	Elementary	Elementary/ Moderate support needs

Note. SEI – Sheltered English Immersion; GE – General Education.

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[10] SP (supervising practitioner) indicates the mentor (classroom) teacher in the participants' assigned classroom.

Table 4

Information About Student Diversity[11] in Participants' Assigned Classrooms in Spring 2020

	Holly	Dana	Lauren	Mei	Brooke
Students on IEP or 504 plan	Approx. 10-15	Approx. 5	4	3	7
Students' disability types	ASD & Others	AD/HD	AD/HD	AD/HD, ASD	ASD, LD, DD, HI, SLI, EBD, AD/HD
Number of ELLs	Approx. 8-10	19	6	2	13
Students' home languages	Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish	Spanish, Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, Arabic	n/a	Portuguese, Spanish	Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Cantonese, Mandarin
CLD students (SOC)	Approx. 26	19	6	1	17
Students' race/ethnicity	Black/AA (5) Hispanic/Latinx (20-25) Interracial (2-5)	Black/AA (n/a) Hispanic/Latinx (n/a)	Black/AA (2) Hispanic/Latinx (1) Asian (3)	Hispanic/Latinx	Black/AA (6) Hispanic/Latinx (6) Asian (4) Interracial (1)
Students with LGBTQ+ identities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Students with intersectional identities	Many	19	2	2	17
IEP/504 plan & SOC	Many	n/a	Approx. 2	n/a	2
IEP/504 plan & ELL	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	n/a
ELL & SOC	n/a	19	n/a	n/a	10
IEP/504 plan & SOC & ELL	n/a	Approx. 5	n/a	n/a	5

Note. ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder; AD/HD – Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder; LD – Learning Disabilities; DD – Developmental Delay; HI – Hearing Impairment (Hard

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[11] Student information is reported based on participants' estimate/speculation.

of hearing); SLI – Speech Language Impairment (Communication Disorder); EBD – Emotional or Behavior Disorder.
n/a = unknown.

Table 5

Participants' Teaching Experience

	Classroom Teaching Experience			Outside-of-Classroom Teaching Experience
	Duration	Role	Paid or Voluntary	Brief Description of Experience
Brooke	10 months	Full-practicum student, Summer teaching fellow and intern	Summer teaching & Internship—paid	Summer camp counselor, Sunday School teacher, Teacher assistant at special education school
Holly	3 years	Teacher's assistant	Voluntary	Summer camp counselor
Mei	3 years	Classroom aide	Work study Voluntary	English immersion tutor in China
Lauren	2 months	Kindergarten assistant	Voluntary	Summer camps counselor Babysitter
Dana	3 months	Substitute teacher in a public suburban middle school and high school	Paid	Resident assistant, High school choir section leader, Sunday School teacher

Table 6

Participants' Personal Experience With Diverse Populations

	Experience With Individuals With Disabilities	Experience With Individuals From Racially, Culturally, and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	Experience With Individuals With LGBTQ+ Identities
Holly	College friends (AD/HD), Students with disabilities from practicum and summer camps	Friends (mostly Asian Americans), Students from practicum	High school/college friends
Dana	Friends (AD/HD), Elementary school classmates with behavior disorder, Students with ASD and other extensive support needs at the special education school, Students with ADHD from practicum	Friends (Arabic/Greek descendent), College residents who were international or whose home language was not English, ELLs from practicum	Family members, High school/college friends, Coworkers - fellow RAs
Lauren	A girl with cerebral palsy for one-on-one aide, Students with AD/HD from practicum	Family members (Two nieces were adoptees from Korea), College friends, ELLs from practicum	College friends/classmates
Mei	College friends/classmates (LD or AD/HD)	All Family members, Friends who were international or whose home language was not English College roommate/classmates, Coworkers (teachers from practicum), Students from practicum	College friends/classmates
Brooke	Family members (ID, ASD), Friends with extensive support needs from the special education school, Students with various disabilities from practicum and at summer camps.	College friends/classmates, Coworkers (teachers from practicum), Students from practicum	Family members, High school/college friends

Disclosure of Relationship Between Researcher and Participants

The degree of personal and professional relationship I had built with each participant prior to the study varied. I have known three participants prior to this study. I had had a longstanding relationship with Lauren since the beginning of the Fall semester of 2018 as an instructor as well as her practicum supervisor in Spring 2019. Holly and Dana took my class together during Fall semester in 2019. I had not had any personal relationship with Brooke. However, when I first met her for our initial meeting before I began my study, I instantly recognized who she was because her face was quite familiar to me. It turned out that she, as an intern, and I, as a supervisor, had worked in the same school in Fall 2019, a semester before I conducted this study. I had seen her in the hallway a couple of times. Lastly, I had no relationship with Mei at all until I first met her virtually for our initial meeting. Thus, she was the only participant whom I have never met or seen in person.

Data Collection

Given that the purpose of the study was to build cases on the impact of dialogue on the preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education, I collected data from multiple sources, including surveys, follow-up conversations, journal reflections, individual interviews, group dialogues, artifacts, and field notes. The data were collected during Spring 2020, from March to June. Before holding group sessions, I asked for participants' weekly schedule via email to find possible dates and times for our group sessions using a spreadsheet. I fixed settled out schedule for the first three sessions in April and adjusted the time for the remaining three sessions due to participants' finals.

Surveys

Surveys were conducted to examine the participants' backgrounds, personal, educational, and teaching histories, and classroom contexts of their practicum (Yin, 2014). It was important to gather factual information about participants because it provided a foundational understanding of who they were as persons and how they thought and spoke about inclusive education during the group dialogue series and interviews, which was significantly influenced by and contextualized in the environments they had been situated in and exposed to (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The first survey included questions about (a) demographic information such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, self-reported family's socioeconomic status (SES), and disability status (as optional); (b) educational history in K through 16, school types, college majors, practicum levels, coursework relevant to inclusive education; and (c) prior teaching experiences and personal experiences with diverse population, such as individuals with disabilities, individuals from racially, culturally, linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, and individuals with LGBTQ+ identities. (For the entire protocol, see Appendix C.)

The second survey aimed to examine participants' the classroom context of their current practicum. The survey questions included grade level, class size, average number of adults in the classroom, classroom teacher information, and information about student identities. This survey helped me understand the participants' classroom contexts comprehensively. The survey questionnaires were created on and distributed through Qualtrics.

Follow-Up Conversations

Initially, I planned to have follow-up conversations with each participant, if necessary, in order to ask for clarification, elaboration, or further explanation on anything that was not clearly presented or understood by me as the researcher during the data collection period. I held two

major follow-up conversations with each participant. The first set of conversations was initiated

after the first group session, as I made the mistake not to record a discussion that lasted for about

5 minutes in the middle of the first session. The other set was conducted after the first survey, to

flesh out their survey responses by obtaining more contextual information. All of the

conversations were held via virtual conference calls, phone calls, or email communications, from

March 2020 until the data analysis was completed. The oral conversations were audio-recorded.

Journal Reflections

Journal reflections were collected as a supplementary data source for the semi-structured

individual interviews. I collected pre-/post-dialogue journal reflections for the following purpose.

The reflections were utilized for data triangulation of the interview transcripts (Brantlinger et al.,

2005) and as the assessment instrument for comparison to identify changes in each preservice

teacher's conceptualization of inclusive education before and after the dialogue series and

changes in their lesson analyses.

The journal reflections included two parts: (a) explaining their own definition of inclusive

education, and (b) analyzing a lesson according to their concept of inclusive education. I

provided participants with the same journal prompts and the link for the lesson video they were

supposed to watch twice, before and after a series of group dialogue (see Figure 2). The lesson

analysis data did not illuminate their conceptualizations and, therefore, were discarded for

analysis.

Figure 2

Prompts for Pre-/Post-Dialogue Journal Reflections

Part 1. Your own definition of inclusive education

How do you define inclusive education in your own words? What do you think of its purpose? What do you think of the features of inclusive education? What do you think an inclusive classroom should look like? What do you think a classroom teacher should do to cultivate an inclusive learning environment? What does inclusion mean to you?
(You can explain it based on what you know, or what you have thought, learned, or experienced.)

Part 2. Lesson Analysis Task

Please Watch a 7th-grade ELA lesson video and analyze the lesson according to your definition of inclusive education.
What do you notice? What do you notice about inclusive education/inclusion?
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr0H0RHQHis

Individual Interviews

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant before the first group session and after the final session. The main purposes of the pre-dialogue interview were to (a) lay a stepping stone to building an interpersonal relationship with each preservice teacher, and (b) closely attend to each participant's conceptualization of inclusive education written in the pre-dialogue journal reflection. I conducted semi-structured interviews, after I reviewed their initial journal reflection. The interview questions to explore participants' initial understanding of inclusive education were adapted from an existing interview protocol administered in previous research (McIntyre, 1997).

The interview questions were also adapted from existing surveys intended to measure teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in previous research. The instruments reviewed were mostly self-reported scales, including *The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice* (TEIP) *Scale* (Sharma et al., 2012)*, Options Related to Inclusion Scale* (Romi & Leyser, 2006), *Teacher Attitude*

Toward Inclusive Education Scale (TATIS; Cullen et al., 2010), and *The Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised* (SACIE-R) *Scale* (Forlin et al., 2011).

These questionnaires were originally developed to quantify survey results from a vast number of teacher participants. Given the small size of participants for the present study, I acknowledged that conducting surveys would not generate any statically meaningful findings. Furthermore, these questionnaires were focused primarily on students with disabilities regarding inclusion. Rather than using the existing survey questions for the interviews, therefore, I merely reviewed these questions to create more appropriate protocols for semi-structured pre/post-dialogue interviews. After reviewing the aforementioned survey questionnaires, I adapted the questions to be aligned with the purpose of this study and to be appropriate for the interviews.

The post-dialogue semi-structured individual interview with each preservice teacher was conducted after all six group sessions were completed, using the same interview questions as in the pre-dialogue interview. In addition, extra questions centered around the participants' experience of the group dialogue series, particularly their interactions for sense-making of inclusive education. (The interview protocol is indicated in Appendix E.)

Group Dialogue Series

The group dialogue series consisted of six structured group discussion sessions, incorporating a variety of ways to facilitate the discussions among the preservice teachers. Having a structure to some extent was pivotal to maximize the learning opportunity of preservice teachers as it served as a form of scaffolding (Collins & Kapur, 2014). Without a clear structure, the conversation might end up being a mere account of their classroom experiences, touching upon the surface of challenging moments or events that occurred to them or observed by them. As Horn and Kane (2015) indicated, scaffolding, as a form of structure, should be provided by a

facilitator to make group discussions more problem-posing and/or more thought-provoking. This invited participants to exchange or share their ideas and thoughts more in-depth.

In this regard, I intentionally prepared several subtopics, guiding and follow-up questions, supplementary reading materials, and auxiliary activities under the overarching theme of inclusive education and provided them to the preservice teachers as the structure in each discussion sessions. Within the structure, the preservice teachers discussed subtopics by sharing their thoughts and connecting their prior or current teaching experience with the grounded examples presented in the supplementary reading materials. In addition, I facilitated each discussion with responses, comments, or subsequent questions to engage participants in the discussions from a more critical perspective. (The sample of the overall structure of the group dialogue series is presented in Appendix F.)

The format of group dialogue included an opening, main discussion, and close. I opened up the dialogue by greeting the participants and asking them to share any special event or issue they would like to talk about for the purpose of relationship building. I then introduced the topic and activities of the session as I posed guiding questions for the main discussion. The preservice teachers were engaged in group dialogue as they were doing the activities (see Table 7).

Table 7

Format of Each Discussion Session

Sequence	Content/Activity	Duration
Opening	- Greetings: Sharing of the day or week - Introduction of the session topic(s) & Virtual mind-mapping (from Session 3 through 6)	5-10 minutes
Main Activity	- Group discussions with facilitation (guiding question(s) & supplementary reading materials)	70-75 minutes (5-minute break)
Closing	- Closing activity (Virtual mind-mapping & self-reflection writing) - Informing the topic for the next session	10 minutes

Since the format of our dialogue sessions had become virtual due to COVID-19, I did not initiate a mind-mapping activity from the beginning as I could not find an alternative immediately. After our group session had begun, I found an online platform called *Popplet* that I was able to include as a virtual mind-mapping activity at the beginning and end of each session, starting from Session 3. I provided a keyword "Inclusive Education" and the preservice teachers collectively created a mind map about the topic related to a certain student population by adding other keywords. In each session, I provided a couple of keywords and the preservice teachers continued to expand the mind map by building on each other's keyword. By the end of the group session, I closed the discussion with a self-reflection activity. The preservice teachers individually shared a Google document with me and wrote a self-reflection journal at the end of each session. By reflecting on what was addressed and discussed, they either summarized key points, wrote takeaways that resonated with them, or sometimes left thought-provoking questions, which informed the following session. The self-reflection activity provided the preservice teachers with an opportunity to organize their thoughts. I wrapped up the session as I

introduced the topic for the following session. The duration of each session was approximately 90 minutes. All discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Artifacts

The artifacts (e.g., self-reflection journals and collective mind maps) were part of the data collection as the group dialogue sessions consisted of main discussions and supplementary activities. The artifacts were produced digitally and stored as Word or PDF files. These accompanying artifacts were not directly coded but reviewed as supplementary data that highlighted preservice teachers' thoughts and interactions. The mind maps, in particular, revealed additional information about the group discussions that texts could not display and were used as an important locus from which to visually track where the preservice teachers placed an emphasis on the topics and how they connected those ideas (keywords on *Popplet*).

Field Notes

Taking field notes was important because the documentation of my observations in the field and the reflections I made during the data collection period were used as data (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Before, during, and after each dialogue, I comprehensively recorded what I observed: the physical environment where dialogue was being held, what was discussed during each dialogue, and how each dialogue unfolded (e.g., how preservice teachers interacted with each other). I also documented my reflections from participant observation (Yin, 2014), while participating in the group discussions as a facilitator. The reflections included my emotional reactions to the dialogue, observations of my own interactions with the preservice teachers, analytic insights, questions about their utterances, and personal thoughts or plans for modifying the format of future dialogue (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). My field notes and reflections served as important documentation to assist in remembering facts, key ideas, and preservice teachers'

experiences expressed during the dialogue. Participant observation poses researchers the challenge of having potential biases as they came from an insider's perspective (Yin, 2014); therefore, taking careful field notes helped me be sensitive to researcher subjectivity that might affect the way I collected and analyzed data; that is, participating in, describing, and interpreting the group dialogue series. Thus, the field notes functioned as a self-analysis and self-critique (McIntyre, 1997).

Schedule for Data Collection

Scheduling data collection from the group dialogue series while obtaining research integrity was challenging, since it was not easy to find times that would work for all participants. In order to retain research integrity by having uninterrupted, in-depth group dialogues, it was necessary to adjust the schedule. To maintain the continuity and momentum of the group dialogue series, which would increase the research integrity, I decided to begin the group dialogue series in April, after conducting initial interviews with the participants. Holding each session for six consecutive weeks was ideal; however, I skipped the first two weeks in May to give the participants to enough time to prepare their finals as college students. Table 8 shows the timeline for data collection, and Table 9 presents the specific date and duration of each session with subtopics.

Table 8

Timeline for Data Collection in 2020

	March		April ~ May	June	
Data Sources	Initial Journal Reflections	Initial Semi-Structured Interviews	Group Discussions (6 Sessions) Artifacts Surveys	Final Journal Reflections	Final Semi-Structured Interviews
			Follow-up conversations whenever needed Field notes		

Table 9

Group Dialogue Data Collection[12]

Session	Date	Duration of Recording	Topic
1	04/09/2020	1h 06m 55s[13]	Introduction; Classroom management for students with challenging behaviors
2	04/16/2020	1h 33m 54s	Continued classroom management and inclusion; Embracing diversity regarding CLD students
3	04/23/2020	1h 36m 56s	Access to general education curriculum for students with disabilities
4	04/30/2020	1h 22m 35s	Terminology for struggling learners and at-risk students
5	05/13/2020	1h 35m 14s	Students with LGBTQ+ identities & gifted students
6	05/20/2020	1h 53m 06s	Online learning & intersectionality and power

Data Analysis

Initial data analysis began with a review of the data collected and my field notes while

data collection was still occurring, which mainly informed decisions regarding how I collected

the rest of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After data collection was completed, data were prepared

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[12] For group sessions, I discussed with the participants in advance and set up a schedule that worked for everyone.

[13] It was cut short due to the recording issue.

for analysis, which was primarily the transcription of audio recordings. Data analysis entailed coding all text-based data using specific analysis methods and writing analytic memos to fill the gaps coding could not capture (Saldaña, 2016).

My primary data sources were surveys, follow-up conversations, journal reflections, semi-structured individual interviews, group discussions, and artifacts, each of which, along with my field notes, was analyzed independently according to the research purpose and questions. For example, the survey responses and follow-up conversations were analyzed in separate processes but were used for a case description of each participant's background information and experience. The journal reflections and interview transcripts were examined together to build the five single-case studies to understand each preservice teacher's conceptualization of inclusive education using pre-/post-comparison and qualitative content analysis (RQ 1.1.) and to explore the themes across the five preservice teachers' conceptualizations using cross-case analysis (RQ 1.2.). The group dialogue transcripts were analyzed using constructivist grounded theory, along with the artifacts being reviewed, to theorize the group's negotiations of meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs about inclusive education (RQ 2 & 3). The field notes and my analytic memos complemented and supplemented the entire analysis process.

Data Preparation

Preparing verbal data for analysis through transcription occurred after data collection was completed. The audio recordings of the semi-structured individual interviews, the group dialogue sessions, and follow-up conversations were transcribed verbatim, because not only is verbatim transcription central to increasing integrity and accuracy of the qualitative data collection and to facilitating data analysis (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006), but transcription activity is also part of the data analysis process (Davidson, 2009; Ochs, 1979).

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As accurate transcription ensures the quality of transcription and trustworthiness (Dressler & Kreuz, 2000), transcription was carefully carried with the help of professional transcriptionists. I used a professional transcription service for audio recordings of interviews, group discussions, and follow-up conversations to generate error-free verbatim transcripts. Since English is not my first language, working with professional transcriptionists who are native English speakers was imperative. However, the professional transcriptionists were not familiar with the context of the research and terminology in special education, so the transcripts had to be revised. I reviewed all of the transcripts as I (re)listened to the audio-recordings and made amendments, using a handful of the transcription conventions I had adapted from Ochs and Capps (2001) (see Table 10). Moreover, especially with the interview transcripts, I asked the participants to review their individual interview transcripts and to correct any errors as a member-checking process for the accuracy of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, all the finalized transcript files were printed as hard copies, and the electronic copies were saved in a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, for data organization and analysis.

Table 10

Transcription Conventions Adapted From Ochs and Capps (2001)

Symbol	Meaning
.	The period indicates a falling, or final, intonation contour, nor necessarily the end of a sentence.
?	The question mark indicates rising intonation, not necessarily a question.
,	The comma indicates "continuing" intonation, not necessarily a clause boundary.
word…	Three consecutive periods indicate stretching of the preceding sound.
word … word	Three consecutive periods with space between words indicate the elimination of fillers.
-	A hyphen after a word or a part of a word indicates a cut-off or self-interruption.
WOrd	Upper case indicates some loudness.

word= =word	Equal signs, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers, indicates a point of overlap onset.
( )	A single parenthesis encloses descriptions of conduct.
[Inaudible]	Inaudible in a single bracket indicates that something is being said, but the transcriber could not hear it.

Data Analysis Methods

Although the specific methods and procedures of analysis I used to answer the research questions were varied, coding was common across the analyses as it is an essential process in qualitative data analysis (Saldaña, 2016). Prior to coding, I listened to the audio-recordings and read the transcripts several times to become familiar with what the participants had said and the meanings of their statements. I analyzed the data though multiple cycles of coding (Saldaña, 2016). All text-based data—journals and transcripts—were coded both manually and electronically on NVivo.

The manual coding was done directly on the hard copies of the data to capture and highlight what seemed to be the most meaningful. In fact, I highlighted, circled, or underlined the words or phrases of the statements I thought were important or wrote down keywords or my thoughts on the margins of the documents. I then wrote summaries and saved those as analytic memos on Google Documents. At the same time, I opened a new NVivo file to save all the text-based data and coded them referring to my manual coding results. Initial coding as the first cycle of coding consisted of In Vivo coding, descriptive coding, and process coding (Saldaña, 2016). I created a list of codes and sub-codes for the next round of coding, such as categorization and theme extraction.

In the following section, I preset the specific analysis method for each research question. An overview of my analytic plans that correspond to the research questions and data sources are laid out in Table 11.

Table 11

Overview of Data Sources and Data Analysis Aligned With the Research Questions

Research Questions	Major Data Sources	Data Analysis
1. How do five preservice teachers conceptualize inclusive education before and after participating in a series of group dialogue?	Surveys Journal reflections Semi-structured interviews	Case study (Yin, 2014)
1.1. How does each preservice teacher conceptualize inclusive education before and after the dialogue series?	Journal reflections Semi-structured interviews	Pre-/post-comparison Qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014)
1.2. After the dialogue series, what are the commonalities and variations in the conceptualizations of inclusive education across the five preservice teachers?	Journal reflections Semi-structured interviews	Cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014) Qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014)
2. How do preservice teachers negotiate meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs toward inclusion during the group dialogues when they face challenges around the concept and practice?	Group dialogues	Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006)
3. How do facilitations—content/topics, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary materials and activities—mediate those negotiations?	Group dialogues Post-dialogue semi-structured interviews Artifacts[14] - Mind maps - Self-reflections	Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006)

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[14] The artifacts were reviewed, but not necessarily analyzed with grounded theory.

Three Specific Analysis Methods

I employed three analysis methods to address my research questions. First of all, I used pre-post comparison using qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014; Schreier, 2014) to build five individual cases, one for each preservice teacher's initial and final conceptualizations inclusive education (RQ 1.1). Next, I used cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014) to understand commonalities and variations in the conceptualizations among the five preservice teachers (RQ 1.2). Lastly, I used constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) to analyze the ways in which the preservice teacher negotiated the meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs toward inclusion and mediating effects of facilitation (RQ 2 & 3).

Each Preservice Teacher's Conceptualization of Inclusive Education. Pre-/post-dialogue journal reflections and interview transcripts were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (QCA) (Mayring, 2014; Schreier, 2014) to compare and contrast preservice teachers' conceptualizations of inclusive education before and after their engagement with the group dialogues (RQ 1.1). Journal reflections were also used to triangulate with interview data (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The assumption of this pre-/post-comparison was that there might be some change in preservice teachers' final conceptualizations of inclusive education after participating in the dialogue series, as they discussed thought-provoking questions and tensions around inclusion, prompted by the researcher or spontaneously arising during the dialogues. The *change* meant inconsistency between initial and final data, which could be represented as an expansion, elaboration, and/or complication in preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education indicated in their oral and written statements.

QCA involves systematic description and interpretation of the content (meaning) of text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It is a useful tool for systematically comparing and contrasting

consistency and inconsistency of the participants' statements regarding inclusive education in their journals and interviews. The procedure for QCA is primarily informed by the work of Hsieh and Shannon (2005) and Mayring (2014). The first step of QCA is "inductive category formation" (Mayring, 2014, p. 79); that is, creating an a priori coding scheme grounded in the existing literature on inclusive education. To that end, I gathered and read the articles listed in Table 12 and summarized key concepts from each.

Table 12

The Literature on Inclusive Education Used for A Priori Coding Scheme

Existing Literature	Key Concepts
Kavale, K. A., & Forness, S. R. (2000). History, rhetoric, and reality: Analysis of the inclusion debate. *Remedial and special education*, *21*(5), 279-296.	Placement (mainstreaming, full inclusion, pull-out) GE teachers' perceptions/attitudes/beliefs (concerns about academic, socioemotional, administrative, teacher) Teachers' skills & abilities (capacity) Ideology (rhetoric vs. reality)
Zigmond, N., Kloo, A., & Volonino, V. (2009). What, where, and how? Special education in the climate of full inclusion. *Exceptionality*, *17*(4), 189-204.	What (Curriculum) Where (Placement) How (Instruction)
Kozleski, E. B., Yu, T., Satter, A. L., Francis, G. L., & Haines, S. J. (2015). A never-ending journey: Inclusive education is a principle of practice, not an end game. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *40*(3), 211-226.	Purpose; features; benefits; challenges; facilitating factors
Trent, S. C., Artiles, A. J., Fitcbett-Bazemore, K., McDaniel, L., & Coleman-Sorrell, A. (2002). Addressing theory ethics, power, and privilege in inclusion research and practice. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, *25*(1), 11-22.	Issues of ethics, power, and privilege

Qvortrup, A., & Qvortrup, L. (2018). Inclusion: Dimensions of inclusion in education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *22*(7), 803-817.	Three levels of inclusion: The numeric level—physically included in the community The social level—socially active The psychological level—a sense of belonging, perceived/recognized by other members
Florian, L. (2014). What counts as evidence of inclusive education? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *29*(3), 286-294.	View/perspectives on differences Teacher beliefs/self-efficacy, commitment Teaching practices

When developing the a priori coding scheme, I also integrated the categories drawn from the findings of my pilot studies (i.e., purpose/meaning, scope of population, focus of concern, classroom practice, and tension). Before coding, I further revised the a priori coding scheme in consultation with my advisor, adding more categories and a description of each category (the operationalized definition). The resulting a priori coding scheme consisted of eight main categories (see Table 13).

Table 13

A Priori Coding Scheme

Main Categories	Subcategories	Descriptions (Operational Definitions)
Purposes (Why)		Ideal status for which inclusive education serves/Orientation or direction to which inclusive education is headed
	Goals	The reason for which inclusion should be carried out in a certain way within education (Proximal goals)
	Democratic values	Values (principles or standards of behaviors) realized in and resulting from inclusive education the student teachers mentioned (e.g., equity, equality, diversity, social justice) (distal goals)
Features		The operational characteristics or components of inclusive education
	Scope of population (Who)	The targeted population for inclusion (students with disabilities, CLD students, everyone, teachers, families)
	Focus of concern (What)	Dimensions where the intention was weighed (e.g., physical, cognitive/academic, behavioral, social/affective)
	Placement (Where, to what degree)	Where and to what degree should the targeted population be included in a certain classroom
Benefits		Positive gains/outcomes during and/or after inclusion are implemented (e.g., academic achievement, social outcomes)
Challenges		Difficulties/barriers to the implementation of inclusion and/or negative consequences (e.g., negative outcomes for target students or for peers in academic/cognitive, physical, socio-emotional, behavioral aspect; administrative concerns; teacher concerns about time, training, resources, or physical environment)

Facilitating Factors		Elements that help/facilitate teachers to better implement inclusion (e.g., teacher capacity, school/system change, teacher collaboration)
Teacher Practices		Instructional strategies a teacher uses (or a student teacher would use) for inclusion:
		- What to teach
	- Curriculum	- How to teach
	- Instruction	- Methods/tools to evaluate student performance
	- Assessment	- Physical classroom setting and routines and/or social/emotional features
	- Climate/Environment	- Classroom/behavior management and disciplines
	- Management	- Other practices done in a broader school community (e.g., communication with
	- Other	parents, extracurricular activities, teacher collaboration)
Tensions		Conflicting examples of inclusion that occurred in the classroom/school (This might be practices or related to the issues of ethics, power, and privileges)
Attitudes/Beliefs/ Perspectives		Preservice teacher's perception and view on inclusion (e.g., positive-neutral-negative-mixed)

Preliminary coding was initiated with a small portion of data, using NVivo to revise the coding scheme. As a lone coder, I randomly selected four journals (two initial and two final journals) and two interview transcripts (one initial and one final interview) from different participants (30% in total,[15] of 10 journals and 10 interview transcripts) and segmented them in chucks according to the complete response to the journal prompts or interview questions. I coded the selected data line-by-line according to the a priori coding scheme. Referencing the operationalized definition of each category, I coded all instances that corresponded to the categories by creating specific codes under each category. For example, the main category *purpose* was comprised of two subcategories, *goals* and *democratic values*. And under *goals,* which was still a broad concept, I codified instances more specifically, such as *Enhancing students' positive feelings, Valuing student diversity, Meeting students' needs, Building relationships and community.* In the case of other main categories that did not have subcategories in the a priori coding scheme, such as *benefits*, I specified the main category by adding more codes such as *Social skill development, Emotional learning & experiences*, and *Learning differences,* which became subcategories.

Identifying and naming specific codes under each category helped extract themes. It was a messy, iterative process of manipulating and saturating sub-codes under the categories by creating, eliminating, merging, reorganizing, and rewording sub-codes that represented each category. Through this process, I updated the a priori frame on a spreadsheet indicating an anchor example for each category.

Next, my coding scheme was reviewed by an external auditor. The external auditor was a colleague whom I had met at a conference, a researcher in the field of special education doing a

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[15] According to Mayring (2014), 10-50% of data can be used for preliminary coding.

postdoctoral fellowship at another university. After I explained the research purpose and questions, I shared the Spreadsheet with her so that she could review the whole coding frame. The purpose of the external review was to ensure the coding scheme was logically clear and the categories along with operational definitions and anchor examples were distinctive from each other (Cho & Lee, 2014). I met her online to address any questions, comments, or disagreements she raised and to discuss specific codes under certain categories. I incorporated her feedback into the coding scheme and finalized it. (The finalized coding scheme that included anchor examples may be found in Appendix G.)

After the external audit, I analyzed the rest of the data (i.e., six journals and eight interview transcripts from five participants) with the finalized coding scheme; as the journals and transcripts coded in the preliminary coding phase were fully analyzed using the final coding scheme, it was not necessary to recode them at this phase. The whole process of coding was done through constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965), which involved constantly moving between the raw data and the coding scheme, and reviewing the codes and recoding some part of data. Throughout the coding process, I did a peer-debrief; that is, I explained some of my coding decisions to two other persons (e.g., my advisor and a fellow researcher). Peer-debriefing allowed me to reflect on and confirm my coding decisions and interpretations (Bengtsson, 2016), so that I could ensure credibility of the research as I minimized potential bias of content analysis as a lone coder.

After coding all data, I organized the coding results on spreadsheets. I created a table that had two columns for pre- and post-dialogue conceptualizations of inclusive education and put all coded text in each cell of the table according to the eight main categories. Finally, I asked the external auditor to review all of my coding results on the spreadsheet. She left feedback directly

on the spreadsheets, and all her questions, comments, and disagreements were addressed and resolved through communication with her.

From the coding results, each participant's conceptualization of inclusive education before and after participating in the dialogues was compared according to each main category and subcategories for themes. I made charts for pre/post and compared the content of each main category/subcategory side-by-side. The themes that were either the consistent emphasis each participant placed, or change—expansion, elaboration, or complication of the concept after the dialogue—within each main category were presented descriptively.

Commonalities and Variations in the Preservice Teachers' Conceptualizations of Inclusive Education. After completing the five individual case studies by comparing each preservice teacher's pre- and post-dialogue conceptualization of inclusive education, I conducted a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014) to synthesize all cases as a group. The aim of the synthesis was to examine commonalities and variations in post-dialogue conceptualizations across the participants, as a result of their collective sense-making of inclusion during the group dialogue series (RQ 1.2).

Salient themes emerged by looking at trend within or across the eight main categories under the coding scheme (Cho & Lee, 2014) that applied to all participants, at the same time observing the distinct orientations of each participant. The themes were not merely a summary of each category among the five preservice teachers; rather, they were the essence of their co-constructive meanings of inclusion after they had jointly participated in the six group sessions. To identify and justify cross-cutting patterns with supporting evidence, I compared and contrasted their responses primarily from their post-dialogue journal entries and interview transcripts, using a chart to juxtapose codes and quotations from the five cases. In addition, I

reviewed my analytic memos for each case I created while conducting QCA. I was attuned to the homogeneity across the five participants, as well as to any uniqueness of individual participants that warranted noting.

In summary, I focused on the five preservice teachers' conceptualizations after participating in the group dialogue series as I considered those the collective learning outcomes, that is, an indicator of development/advancement of understanding, which were closely related to the overarching purpose of this study: to investigate the impact of dialogues on preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education.

Preservice Teachers' Ways of Negotiating the Meanings of, Perspectives on, and Beliefs Toward Inclusion and the Effect of Facilitation on Mediating Those Negotiations. To uncover how the preservice teachers negotiated the meanings of inclusion and their perspectives and beliefs about it during the group dialogue series as well as how facilitation—content/topics, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary materials and activities—mediated their negotiations (RQ 2 & 3), I analyzed the six group dialogue transcripts using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) and reviewed accompanying artifacts (e.g., mind-maps and self-reflections).

Grounded theory (GT) is one of the major qualitative analysis methods used to understand intricate human experiences by constructing a theory. Specifically, constructivist GT, as developed by acknowledging that knowledge is situated within the subjectivity of researchers and participants and that data, therefore, is also partial and problematic. Through the analysis process, constructivist GT seeks an interpretive understanding of human experiences, focusing on the particular context where the researcher and participants are situated, with the assumption

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that the interpretations are affected by the researcher's and participants' standpoints and positions (Charmaz, 2006).

I chose sociocultural learning theory as the theoretical framework for this study because the epistemology of constructivist grounded theory deeply resonated with me as the researcher. The way in which the five preservice teachers interacted when discussing contested issues on inclusive education, with facilitation from me, the researcher, during the group dialogue series— that is, how they negotiated the meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs about inclusive education when they faced challenges around the concept and practice—is contextual knowledge that may have been affected by the time and space in which the participants were situated. As language represents the subjective ideas of human beings (Bakhtin, 1981), our standpoints and beliefs regarding inclusive education, in this case, definitely influenced the preservice teachers' interactions during the dialogue sessions as well as my interpretation of their negotiations.

The initial analysis began when the group session started in April 2020. In GT, data analysis occurs simultaneously with data collection and primarily consists of coding and memo writing (Cho & Lee, 2014). Thus, while I was conducting the six group dialogue sessions, I was also actively writing my field notes concerning key concepts and ideas in the preservice teachers' statements, as well as my own thoughts and reflections during and after each session. After each session, I reviewed my field notes to see if any revisions of my plans for the next session were necessary. That is, I had planned all six dialogue sessions ahead of time, including a certain structure I intended to follow, but I soon realized that I was not able to strictly follow through with the plan as it was unknown how our discussion would unfold; so, for the sake of the spontaneity of our discussions, I tried not to overly control the flow of each dialogue session.

After the audio-recordings of the six group dialogue sessions were transcribed by professional transcriptionists, I (re)read and amended them while listening to the audio files several times. After the transcription was completed, I read the full texts again to extract only the sections of the transcripts that were necessary for analysis. First, I excluded the first session transcript for segmentation since the majority of that discussion dealt with the opening activity for the preservice teachers to get to know each other and to set the expectations for discussions. Second, I carefully reread the full texts from the remainder of the group sessions (Session 2 through 6) several times and divided each transcript into smaller sections (i.e., segments) according to the flow of the discussion. Each "segment" marked a transition that shifted from one specific topic to another. This process of segmentation is associated with descriptive coding, which is also called "topic coding" by Saldaña (2016), whereby I focused on several specific topics the preservice teachers and I talked about under the broader topic of each group session. Thus, each segment addressed one specific topic, typically opening with a guiding question posed by the researcher (me) as the facilitator of the discussion and closing when the preservice teachers had no more to say on the topic, which frequently was expressed as silence. In total, 30 segments were generated from the five group session transcripts. Third, within each segment, I marked instances where the conversation unfolded around the challenge regarding inclusion so that I could only focus on the preservice teachers' negotiations of meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs toward the concept. Through this process, I arrived at 13 segments for analysis as they showed instances explicitly posed to the preservice teachers, followed by their responses.

As a result, I began coding using only those 13 segments and then came up with initial codes that would help me code the various ways of negotiations. Some of the initial codes were as follows: (a) expanding the topic or example that was being addressed, (b) building onto each

other's explanation, (c) confirming or affirming each other's idea, (d) contesting/challenging others' perspective, (e) changing the stance, and (f) reflecting on own perspectives/beliefs. These initial codes could be further elaborated and/or revised, as I started coding the instances with NVivo.

The guidelines for the analytic process of GT are flexible (Charmaz, 2011; Cho & Lee, 2014). However, the process is typically comprised of (a) developing a set of initial codes created by interacting with the data, (b) developing more conceptual and theoretic categories, (c) linking relevant categories to saturate the main categories, and (d) establishing relationships between the categories and themes using constant comparative analysis (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). When coding the discussion transcripts from the 13 segments, which represented the instances of the negotiations among the preservice teachers, I followed the three steps theorized by Charmaz (2006): (a) initial coding, (b) focused coding, and (c) theoretical coding.

In the initial coding stage, the researcher should be open to any possible theoretical explanation emerging from data (Charmaz, 2006). I engaged in line-by-line coding of each segment, paying particular attention to the preservice teachers' statements and actions/interactions, following In Vivo and process coding methods (Saldaña, 2016). In Vivo codes refer to the actual terms used by participants and help researchers be attentive to language that "preserve[s] participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). Similarly, process codes indicate "changing and repetitive forms of action-interaction" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 173) of participants, which may range from simple daily activities to more conceptual functioning (Saldaña, 2016). Using the In Vivo process coding methods, I tried to capture the specific statements and actions/interactions of each preservice teacher within each speaking turn as closely as they were revealed in the data. I also

coded my own actions as a facilitator as well as the content (e.g., challenging examples around inclusion) addressed during the group sessions. As a result of this initial coding, a set of initial codes were generated and finalized through the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) in In Vivo.

The second step was focused coding, also called selective coding, as this coding method is intended to look for the most frequent and significant codes to develop categories (Charmaz, 2006). This involves deciding which initial codes have the explanatory power to include larger amounts of data. By actively comparing and reviewing the initial set of codes to the data (i.e., the segmented transcripts) and writing analytic memos throughout the analysis process, I identified the most frequent and significant codes for developing tentative categories and grouped some initial codes into those categories for categorization.

The final step of theoretical coding searches for "possible relationships between the categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63), which indicate theoretical codes—major categories or themes— that encompass the remainder of the codes and categories (Saldaña, 2016). In the current analysis, theoretical codes corresponded to the preservice teachers' collective actions (ways of negotiation as interactional patterns).

To aid in this process, I created a coding chart on a spreadsheet that sequenced each preservice teacher's speaking turn/response (e.g., specific actions) within each segment and how their specific actions led to generating a collective action(s), as the outcomes of those interactions in a group. This process allowed me to examine and theorize on the ways in which the five preservice teachers negotiated the meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs toward inclusion when they faced challenges around the concept and practice during the group dialogue series as well as the facilitation that mediated those negotiations.

To avoid coloring the data analysis with my preconceptions, which might influence the coding process and interpretation, I familiarized myself with the data revealed (e.g., what was happening to each and all preservice teachers during the group sessions) by rereading the segmented transcripts. I was careful not to assume the intentions behind their actions by interpreting their actions by connecting the data to my codes as closely as possible (Charmaz, 2006). My field notes and analytic memos also assisted in the analytic process, helping to ensure that the theory was grounded and supported by the data (Charmaz, 2006). Additionally, I used peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to increase the credibility of my analysis as a lone researcher. That is, under my advisor's guidance, I thoroughly recorded each step of my analytic process and was transparent when reporting to him. In addition, I worked with a fellow researcher (i.e., a Ph.D. candidate) who had no personal interest in my study, yet knew about my research interest and areas, including my dissertation study. After explaining the specific research questions to her, I shared the results of my analysis in several documents showing the themes generated from theoretical coding and the description of each theme, as well as my analytic memos and the corresponding segments of the group dialogue transcripts in charts. As an external auditor, my colleague reviewed all the information and confirmed the appropriateness of the themes and whether the selected segments of the transcripts and my analytic memos well represented and were matched with the themes.

Analytic Memos

Memo writing is critical in qualitative research to analyze data, interpret the findings, and write a draft (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Throughout the research process, particularly during data collection and the preparation to analyze the data, I documented my hunches, ideas, thoughts, reflections, questions, and insights to be actively engaged in analyzing data and develop my

ideas for theorization. The format of analytic memos varies, from length to content and style (McIntyre, 1997). My memos were comprised of open-ended narratives to document my analytic thinking in words, short phrases, or paragraphs to connect codes to categories, and graphics (e.g., tables, charts, or schematic diagrams) to identify relationships or connections between codes or categories. Analytic memos are not bound to formality; they can be informal handwritten notes, bullet points or a summary of coding, or an academically written paragraph (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). My analytic memos significantly helped me advance my analysis of QCA, cross-case analysis, and GT, as well as write drafts of the findings.

Trustworthiness

To maintain the scientific rigor of high-quality, sound qualitative studies, trustworthiness or credibility is important (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Unlike quantitative research measuring validity and reliability to generalize the findings, the primary goal of qualitative research is to provide in-depth description or interpretation of a phenomenon using a variety of research methods that involve the researcher's subjectivity and decision-making. Qualitative research does not share consensual or unified methods for data collection and analytic procedure due to its purpose, which focuses on exploring specific social contexts and particular individuals. Therefore, it is imperative for qualitative researchers to utilize multiple strategies to increase credibility and be transparent in their description of methods by clearly and thoroughly delineating the research process, including research design and analytic procedures and processes (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Noble & Smith, 2015).

Trustworthiness is associated with research integrity indicating that qualitative research must adhere to conducting the ethically sound process that is sensitive to power dynamics between the researcher and participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). To establish the

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trustworthiness of this qualitative case study, first of all, the overall research design, including the design of the group dialogue series and other data collection instruments and protocols, was informed by the existing literature. I collected multiple data sources for triangulation (Yin, 2014) and analyzed them consistently across the five participants. For qualitative content analysis (QCA) for the five single-case studies, I did member checks to confirm the accuracy of transcription by asking the participants to review their own individual interview transcripts and correct any errors. The coding scheme was created based on the existing literature and applied consistently to analyze each participant's journals and interviews for comparison. Throughout the analysis process, I kept track of the coding processes and decisions by documenting changes of my coding scheme, category names, operationalized definitions of each category, and examples (Bengtsson, 2016). I also worked with external auditor, who was a colleague of mine outside of my institution, who reviewed and examined all of my coding results until there was no disagreement between us. For grounded theory analysis of the group dialogue data, I followed the three steps of the coding process being conscious of my own researcher positionality, and utilized peer-debriefing whereby a colleague from my cohort who knew of my research reviewed and confirmed my analysis results.

In short, the entire research process was conducted consistently with solid data collection principles and analyses. For transparency, my analytic procedure and processes were meticulously documented. When reporting the findings, I tried to provide thick, rich descriptions of the analysis results and was conscious to ensure the interpretations were grounded in raw data, rather than making a logical leap or inference between my interpretation and the raw data.

Researcher Positionality

Qualitative research recognizes that knowledge is situated within the subjectivity of researchers and participants; thus, the data analyses and interpretations are influenced by the

researcher's positionality (Charmaz, 2006). One way to increase trustworthiness in qualitative research is to address researcher reflexivity—an understanding and full disclosure of positionality, including the researcher's background, history, beliefs, values, perspectives, and biases (Brantlinger et al., 2005). As my study was considerably influenced by my own positionality, it was essential to provide a detailed description of who I am as a person as well as a researcher.

I am a Korean native, who was born and grew up in Seoul for about three decades until I came to the United States for my Ph.D. program to study inclusive education. I had not realized the privileges I had had in my life in Seoul until I came to the States. I came from an upper-middle-class family, grew up as a happy child with one younger sister, and had both parents and both grandparents. Everyone in my family was healthy, able-bodied, except for my paternal grandmother, who acquired a physical disability in her left hand due to burn. She would tell me that that was why she gave up becoming a teacher because she was not able to play the piano. No one in my family had considered that she was a disability, but now I felt like she must have been so frustrated with the accident that discouraged her dream.

Without any concerns about my background and living conditions, I spent my childhood and youth focusing only on myself and my future, seeing my parents as my role model. I felt astonished and surreal, realizing how my life was safe and comfortable, whenever my grandparents would talk about their life stories full of predicament under the Japanese colonization, the Korean War, and the following division of Korean peninsula, the modern history of Korea. With the love and protection of my family, I grew up as a person who was very positive and high-achieving, who could voice her opinion confidently. But my parents had a

concern about me being inattentive, clumsy, and too energetic. In retrospect, I might have had a diagnosis of AD/HD had I gone through a neuropsychological testing.

I studied Elementary Education in college, upon my family's recommendation. It was ironic because I had never dreamed of becoming a teacher, although teaching as a profession was highly regarded in Korea. It may have been due to the fact that I did not have good memories of my teachers. The only blurry, but impressive one was from my fourth-grade teacher who removed my hair clinging to my clothes. Without seriousness, I did not land a teaching job upon graduation; I instead prepared to transfer to another university to study International Relations. I failed, so I returned to Education, finally becoming a teacher at an elementary school in 2010.

My experience as a classroom teacher was eye-opening. I came to love my job and interacting with my students. I did not want my students to have a school experience like mine; I wanted them to have good memories about school. I strived to support and build a positive relationship with each one of them, recognizing everyone had their unique needs. However, I began to struggle as I had to teach students with disabilities, since my school had two special education classrooms (resource rooms) run by the push-in-pull-out model. When I had a boy with ASD who was nonverbal and required extensive supports, for the first time, I never felt afraid nor hesitant to support him in my classroom, but felt an urgent need for more knowledge and skills about special education. I desperately sought out advice from the special education teachers about how to support my student and make the other typically developing students support him, too. I worked closely with his one-on-one paraprofessionals and parent, realizing the importance of collaboration. I tried to make my classroom as inclusive as possible by adapting my lessons so that everyone could participate in learning activities in their own way and enjoy their day-to-day lives in school.

I had become more interested in and knowledgeable about inclusion through my work and by taking more courses in special education in my master's program in addition to my major, Curriculum Studies. In particular, those courses gave me a basic understanding of students with disabilities, inclusive education, and inclusive practices like Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Fascinated by the idea of UDL as a framework for inclusion, I decided to pursue a doctoral program in the United States.

After five years of teaching experience, in 2015, I began my doctoral studies. My personal and professional learning experience in this unfamiliar context both allowed and forced me to think about inclusion differently. I realized my multiple, intersectional identities as an Asian, Korean, international student, a student of color, emergent bilingual, able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgender, Catholic, and so on. I learned a stereotype about (East) Asians as a "model minority," which made me uncomfortable because the term indicates hierarchy by race. I eventually became part of an immigrant family through my marriage to a Turkish man, who became naturalized as a citizen.

Within my family, I experienced a number of differences in race, culture, language, ability, and religion. These definitely were a new learning experience, but thriving over surviving was a huge challenge, which made me (my family) forget our strengths and capability and felt "disabled" and "inferior" sometimes, because of the barriers coming from our racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds which are different from those of the majority, leading me to question how much I belong here. I have had to constantly remind myself of the fact that I (we) are capable and competent.

Being able to pursue a doctorate in the U.S. has been a privilege. I have participated in research projects around inclusion. I have taught an introductory special education course and

served as a practicum supervisor to work with teacher candidates in several elementary schools and to observe multiple classrooms. I have facilitated conversations with groups of teacher candidates to explore their ideas of inclusion. My personal and professional learning experiences have given me the opportunity to contemplate the meanings of inclusion and helped shape and deepen my ideas and beliefs toward inclusion where teachers need to consider students' intersectional identities and individuality to support them beyond thinking about the education of students with disability alongside typically developing peers in the classroom. I believed that inclusion is a movement for equity and social justice that requires teachers to be lifelong learners to view and learn about their students from an assets-based perspective and improve their practices to support each individual student in the classroom. It is evident that my personal and professional history, experience, and beliefs that shaped my positionality as a researcher impacted my analysis, interpretation, and construction of a theory in this study.

Ethical Issues

Conducting this study with the dual positions of working as a researcher and as a facilitator allowed me to maintain insider-outsider positionality (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). As a facilitator, I had an insider's position that made me become an observant participant (Erickson, 2012) in facilitating the group dialogues. At the same time, however, I was well aware of my outsider's position as a researcher who was supposed to document the processes, collect and analyze the data, and report the findings to researchers and practitioners in education. Further, as a college instructor, I had built personal relationships with some of the participants, whom I had taught in my course and supervised during their practicum. These positional differences, as a researcher and facilitator, may have hindered the pre-service teachers from sharing their candid thoughts and experiences.

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I was aware of the communication barriers arising from racial, cultural, and linguistic differences between the participants and myself as the facilitator. Since I am Korean-born, and my first language is not English, I may have not fully articulated when conveying the points I made to the participants during the dialogue series. I tried to minimize the possibility of miscommunication and misunderstanding between us by preparing a thoroughly designed group dialogue series, where I scripted all of the questions and examples that I needed to orally explain to them.

As noted, I was also aware of power dynamics, the positional hierarchy that existed between us, the participants as college students and me as an instructor and supervisor. This relationship may have inhibited the participants from expressing their genuine thoughts and opinions during the discussions; they may have, instead, spoken about what they had perceived to be socially desirable or expected of them. I intentionally set the tone to create a safe space throughout the dialogue series, so that the preservice teachers could share their honest and authentic ideas and perspectives on inclusive education, however, some questions and conversations problematized their thoughts and beliefs, which may have touched upon their vulnerabilities or weaknesses.

I believed that these ethical issues, which may have affected my data collection in a way, would be moderated by my effort to create a safe space and build trust in our relationships. Thus, it was crucial for me to be mindful of my language and approach to establishing respectful relationships with the participants whose backgrounds were different from my own (Vakil et al., 2016). Furthermore, I took a reflective stance to acknowledge and critically examine my own researcher positionality and subjectivity, which may have affected the data collection and analysis throughout the processes of this study (Charmaz, 2006).

Chapter 4.

Five Preservice Teachers' Conceptualizations of Inclusive Education[16]

This chapter presents accounts of the five preservice teachers' conceptualizations of inclusive education. The first research question to be addressed is: *How do five preservice teachers conceptualize inclusive education before and after participating in a series of group dialogue?*

Since a case study is an in-depth inquiry of a particular phenomenon in a real-world context, case reports should be comprehensive and dense (Yin, 2014). Accordingly, I begin the narratives of the five cases with a description of the individual's personal and academic history and experiences in and beyond the classrooms, constructed based on the surveys and follow-up conversations. The five participants—Holly, Dana, Lauren, Mei, and Brooke—had in common that they were female and that during the time this research was conducted they were enrolled in the teacher education program at a four-year private Catholic university located in the northeastern part of the United States. Nevertheless, as revealed in the narratives, each participant is unique in terms of backgrounds, personality traits, personal and academic experiences, and the nature of her relationship with me, the researcher.

I next present illustrations of each preservice teacher's conceptualization of inclusive education based on their pre-/post-dialogue interviews and journals, comparing their ideas after completing all of the six group discussion sessions with the ideas expressed before the first group session. In some instances, the participants claimed in the post-dialogue interview and journal that the group dialogues influenced their perspectives; for example, they confirmed an evolving perspective (e.g., "I think [I] definitely changed from before," "at the end of the study, I had a

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[16] The term *inclusive education* incorporates the concept of inclusion, since the researcher and participants used *inclusive education* and *inclusion* interchangeably during the interviews and dialogue series.

whole different view"). The dialogues also likely influenced participants to reflect in ways that confirmed or evolved their perspectives, even though not many instances of dialogue or interview claims explicitly indicated that.

Each account is reported according to the eight major categories of inclusive education used as the coding scheme to analyze the interview transcripts via qualitative content analysis (QCA): Purposes, Features, Benefits, Challenges, Facilitating Factors, Teacher Practices, Tensions, and Beliefs/Attitudes/Perspectives. However, I present Features and Teacher Practices with separate subheadings as these two categories have discrete subcategories. Features consist of three subcategories: Focus of Concern, Scope of Population, and Placement. Teacher Practices consist of seven subcategories: Personal Connection, Curriculum, Instruction, Accommodations/Related Services, Assessment, Climate/Environment, Management, and Other Practices.

I present the five cases in order according to participants' college year at the time of the study, from lower to higher. Thus, the cases of Holly and Dana are presented first as they were sophomores, followed by Lauren and Mei, who were juniors, and, finally, Brook, who was a graduate student.

Holly

Holly was a 20-year-old female sophomore in college in spring 2020, at the time of the study. She identified herself as a white, cisgender, native English speaker who is monolingual. Growing up in an upper-middle class family in the northeastern United States, she attended public schools throughout her K-12 schooling in a suburban area where the residents were predominantly white. Holly was majoring in Elementary Education and Applied Psychology, with a Special Education concentration. Of the courses she had taken, Holly named *Working*

With Students With Special Needs and *Learning and Curriculum in the Elementary School* as those relevant to inclusive education. The courses involved special education and multicultural education, respectively.

I got to know Holly through my class in fall 2019, when I was teaching the introductory special education course *Working With Students With Special Needs*. She had a strong work ethic and enjoyed collaborating with other classmates. Dana was another student of mine at that time, so Holly and Dana knew each other before participating in my study. Even after the data collection was completed in June 2020, I have maintained a special relationship with Holly. She took another special education course, *Educational Strategies for Students With Special Needs*, with me in fall 2020. Towards the end of that semester, Holly emailed me to volunteer helping me with my spring courses in 2021, as she noticed I would be teaching the introductory special education course again. She was eager to learn deeply about disabilities and help her fellow students learn in my classes, in addition to working with me.

I was pleased with her offer but also surprised, in that being an assistant in class requires extra work and commitment beyond completing her own coursework, but Holly remained eager even after I made this clear to her. Her offer confirmed that she has a passion for being an educator working for the inclusion of all children with disabilities. I was not certain if her drive was influenced by her mother who was a superintendent but had started her career as a classroom teacher; regardless, I speculated that her mother was a great influence and inspiration for Holly's career path to be an educator. (I accidentally learned about her mother's occupation when I ran into Holly on the shuttle bus on my way home from campus during fall semester. We had a conversation about our personal lives, and Holly shared what her parents were doing.)

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Eventually, Holly served as my instructional aide for the entire spring 2021 semester. Her work ethic was outstanding in that she conscientiously completed all the tasks assigned to her. She kept track of student attendance in two course sections, reviewed discussion posts and picked thoughtful questions for each class, and assisted me with technology for the hybrid course in which the students were attending class both in person and online simultaneously. Our bond beyond the typical instructor-student relationship was strengthened through this experience.

Experiences With Diverse Populations

Most of Holly's experiences with individuals with disability were from her teaching experience. At the beginning of her freshman and sophomore year, she worked at summer programs for elementary school-aged children. One program was designed only for students with special needs, and that is where Holly met students with high-incidence disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), and emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD). During our follow-up conversation, Holly described these children as having "trouble focusing" or issues with "anger management." She also brought up a girl with Fragile X Syndrome she had met in another summer program for first graders in general education; that is, not necessarily a program for children with disability. Holly did not provide further explanation about this girl, and I did not ask her to elaborate. In addition, her first pre-practicum[17] at an urban public K-8 school allowed Holly to observe students with disability in the classroom for a few weeks. She went into detail describing those students. The student she elaborated the most about was a boy with "severe AD/HD." He was not only having "trouble focusing," but was also "bouncing all around the room" and "making other students get

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[17] Pre-practicum is the terminology used to indicate the field experience that preservice teachers must complete before advancing to full-time student teaching in the teacher education program at the university the participants were attending. Full-time student teaching is called full-practicum. After completing three pre-practica can students begin full-practicum.

distracted." Holly shared what happened after her mentor teacher had done everything she could to support this student. The teacher eventually recommended to the boy's mother that she put him on medication, but she refused. Holly mentioned that there were a few other students with ASD and some with behavior issues whose diagnoses were unknown, but she offered no further explanation.

Exceptions to her exposure to persons with disabilities being primarily through her teaching were her college classmates who had a disability. Holly noted that she had a friend with "mild ASD" and another friend with AD/HD who had "a lot of trouble focusing and doing college work." However, "I never really think of them as having a disability necessarily. I'm more just think of them as my friends," she commented.

Holly acknowledged that she "mostly grew up in a very white suburbia kind of area" where the residents and students in school were predominantly white. Growing up, therefore, she had limited exposure to individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds except those of Asian descent as Asians were the only CLD group living in her town alongside the white majority and, therefore, were "more of the people I've become friends with." She did not mention any of her thoughts about why or how those friendships came about, but she seemed comfortable interacting with and being close to Asians. Not surprisingly, Holly commented she became best friends with Korean and Taiwanese descendants when she entered college. When asked about communicating with her friends of Asian descent, she responded that there was no language barrier since they were born and raised in the United States. I was wondering if she would feel more comfortable interacting with Asians, among others, due to her experience in youth. In fact, her pre-practicum at the urban public school was Holly's very first opportunity to interact with students from different CLD backgrounds, other than Asians. Holly shared her

struggle in remembering the students' names because she "had not necessarily heard of [those names] before" and expressed frustration, "whenever I mispronounced them [students' names], I felt horrible because I just hadn't gotten it right. There was a girl named [name of the student], and it took me so long to be able to pronounce her name." This episode resonated with me as an instructor as I have had a hard time pronouncing some of my students' names due to the different stress and letter sounds in English that Korean does not have. I appreciated her honesty and efforts to pronouncing her students' names correctly as a future educator.

With the LGBTQ+ population, Holly's experience primarily relied on her peers. Similar to the other participants, in her teaching experience, Holly had never met any students who identified themselves as LBGTQ+. During our follow-up conversation, she recalled a few college friends and some students from her elementary and high school, which she was no longer friends with. However, she went into detail about her best friend from her hometown, Amy[18], who identified as LGBTQ+. They had known each other since the age of five. Holly brought up an episode where Amy had expressed concern about visiting Holly at college. She was afraid of not being welcomed because it was a Catholic university, based on her preconception that the Catholic community traditionally has not accepted the LGBTQ+ population. For instance, an episode Holly shared with me was that Amy was worried about holding a rainbow umbrella when walking around campus for fear of being singled out or targeted for attack. Holly said she tried to reassure them nothing like that would happen, and nothing did happen when they actually visited the campus.

When I asked Holly how she got to know Amy's sexuality, she responded, "we kind of knew it." For a while, Amy did not explicitly disclose her LGBTQ+ identity, yet, Holly knew

[18] Pseudonym.

because she saw Amy started dating a girl in high school. So, when Amy eventually came out and shared about their relationship, it was not a shock because Amy had had "that vibe" since they were very little. Holly also told me that Amy and her girlfriend would teach students about sexuality in sex education classes in elementary and middle schools. As we talked, we agreed that LGBTQ+ issues are not addressed a lot in elementary school, as Holly said, "I was never taught it at my elementary school." She speculated that the reason why Amy took so long to come out was related to her inner struggle to understand what it means to have a different sexual identity in youth. Thus, based on her personal experience with Amy, Holly appeared to be well aware of LBGTQ+ issues. I saw her wearing a rainbow mask later on campus, which gave me an impression that she was actively advocating individuals with the LGBTQ+ identities.

Teaching Experiences

In spring 2020, Holly was a sophomore and just started her first pre-practicum. In fact, she did not have any official classroom teaching experience as a teacher candidate. Nonetheless, she had had abundant teaching experience outside of the teacher education program since high school. Specifically, she had three years of classroom teaching experiences as an assistant in the elementary school she and her younger sister attended. In high school, she volunteered for a year for the fifth-grade chorus as an assistant director, and for another two years as a junior and senior she assisted in the first- and fourth-grade classroom twice a week (once a week, respectively). Outside the classroom, as noted, Holly had worked for a six-week private summer program as a teaching assistant at the beginning of her freshman year in college. This program, she explained, was intended for academic and social-emotional learning for 15 elementary students with high-incidence disabilities. The following year, Holly worked as a camp counselor in the summer

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program for first graders. Altogether, Holly's teaching experiences speak to her passion for

working with children as an educator she has longed for since high school.

The Classroom Context of Holly's Current Practicum

Holly was completing her first pre-practicum in an urban public K-8 school. Since I had

conducted research on this school's transformation a few years earlier (Scanlan & Park, 2020), I

knew that the school was not a traditional public school, but a full-service community school

where academic, social, and physical and mental health services were provided to students and

their families through community partnerships.

Holly was placed in a third-grade classroom (inclusion classroom, which was what the

class was called by the school, since the students with disability were included for the majority

of their class time). Her mentor teacher was a white female who had more than 15 years of

teaching experience. Based on Holly's response on the survey, the mentor teacher was licensed

in elementary education, mild/moderate special needs, and severe/profound special needs. There

were four more adults in the classroom – a paraprofessional and three student teachers, including

Holly.

There were 28 students in the classroom and, as noted by Holly, the majority were

Latinx, some were black, and only one student was white; approximately half of them were

English language learners, whose home/native languages were either Brazilian Portuguese or

Spanish. Holly explained that she felt alienated in their Spanish classes where the students were

mostly able to speak Spanish to some extent, whereas Holly was not because she had not taken

Spanish since high school. She estimated that 10-15 students had a disability and were on an IEP

or a 504 plan. She recognized students with ASD, but was not able to specify the other students'

disability type. In fact, many students in the classroom had intersectional identities between race, culture, language, and/or dis/ability. She did not know any student with LBGTQ+ identities.

Unfortunately, after a few visits her pre-practicum was halted due to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, during her initial interview, Holly shared that being there was "just a very eye-opening experience." She reflected that her thoughts were merely leaning toward the benefits of inclusive education before the practicum; yet, being in that classroom taught her "this [inclusion] is way harder than it's just on paper." This classroom experience left her confused about inclusive education beyond her firm, initial beliefs.

Holly's Conceptualization of Inclusive Education

The group dialogue series impacted Holly's sense-making of inclusion as it became more elaborated and complicated. Thus, during our post-dialogue interview, Holly self-assessed her initial idea as "rudimentary" and "basic," referring to her primary attitude, "I know what inclusion is. It's just bringing people and giving them the opportunities." After the in-depth discussions of inclusion, however, Holly expressed several times that she was "still struggling" with the concept of inclusive education, acknowledging the examples of tension around inclusion we addressed during the discussions. Further, she began to contemplate racial diversity, influenced by the tragedy of George Floyd that occurred when the dialogue series were going on.

Holly said that she "absolutely loved" the discussions. In particular, having specific sub-topics helped her formulate her ideas of what to say and how to listen to other participants. Another reason why she liked the discussions was that she was able to openly talk about difficult topics "without feeling judged." Holly continued that the peers gave her a new insight and perspective as they came up with ideas she "never even thought of" and that she, in turn, came across "a whole new idea" or developed "so many ideas." What facilitated her deep thoughts was

supplementary readings, she noted. That is, the stories in the readings allowed her to see the issues of inclusion from a new perspective; for instance, that classroom management could be perceived negatively by students as opposed to the teacher's good intention and that even having access to virtual learning was a privilege.

Holly was motivated to "learn more" about inclusive education as she felt, "there's still a lot I don't know about being a teacher." She highlighted that she ended up "become[ing] more aware" of her own thoughts and beliefs. The discussions allowed her to ponder about her future practice with regard to inclusion while reflecting on her past practice as a student teacher and to appraise her own practice, such as "Oh, that's not what I want to do again." Holly utilized our self-reflection activity as a means to not only organize her thoughts in writing but to reinforce her commitment to action: "I feel like that just makes me more responsible for it [inclusion] in the future and not just being like, 'This is something I want to do' but then never doing it."

It was apparent that Holly's conceptualization of inclusive education grew out of participating in the group dialogue series, as I observed that she actively interacted with the other participants, listening to their opinions and voicing her own. Knowing Dana, one of the participants, prior to joining the group might have helped her feel more comfortable sharing her ideas. To further delineate Holly's conceptualization of inclusive education before and after the group dialogue series, I made reference to her pre-/post-journals and interviews. I primarily relied on the interview responses, since her journal entries were relatively short. Below, I present her accounts according to the eight major categories of inclusive education: Purposes, Features, Benefits, Challenges, Facilitating Factors, Teacher Practices, Tensions, and Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives.

Purposes

At the core, the purpose of inclusive education for Holly was to ensure educational opportunities for all students. However, she emphasized a different value after the dialogues. That is, she began her initial interview by underscoring the need for the same educational opportunities and experiences for all children, particularly students with disabilities. Bringing up the concept of opportunity gap that she had learned in another course, she stressed that inclusion aims at "giving all of them [students] kind of an equal playing field of being given equal opportunities." For Holly, inclusive education was equivalent to a "baseline education," in which every child learns about "the same materials" from "the same teacher" to acquire "the same foundational" academic and social skills.

While Holly was explaining the goal of inclusion in terms of students having the same opportunities and equal access, which encompassed the value of equality, she shared the idea of "equity versus equality" and corrected her perspective:

> And now, as I'm saying that, I'm kind of in between—We also talked about it was equity versus equality, and giving all students the exact same help or giving students different levels of help so they can all be on the same playing field. And I guess I would think of it more as the latter.

Holly said that she supported equity rather than equality, but was not assertive about it. She was trying to organize and convey her thoughts more accurately. She recognized that inclusion involves both equality and equity: "it's [inclusion] not just about giving everyone the same opportunities, but it's giving everyone the same opportunities while acknowledging how they each individually learn." Holly, as an Elementary Education major, had a strong belief that inclusion begins with ensuring all school-aged children "the same levels of education." She

equated the purpose of inclusion with that of public education, based on her claim that no single child should miss out on any foundational learning experience while attending public school.

It was interesting to see that Holly tended to mix up equality and equity, although she was able to discern the distinctive meaning of each. Unlike some of the other participants who rejected the value of equality, Holly supported both values, focusing on all children's equal access to education regardless of their individual differences. Although she explicitly said she put more weight on equity, her overall perspective was inclined to advocate for equality.

After the dialogue series, however, Holly still maintained her initial perspective that inclusive education aims at ensuring educational opportunities for everyone, but to "foster equity" in the classroom. Acknowledging that there are marginalized groups who are deprived of those opportunities, rather than creating a space where "everyone is the same," she now believed that inclusive education seeks to help marginalized students by providing "the resources they need" and to expose students who are the majority to those different from themselves for "leveling the playing field," so that everyone can be successful in the classroom. Such a statement revealed Holly's view that students in the marginalized groups tend to struggle more in school.

Further, Holly associated social justice with inclusive education, using the word "privilege" several times. Being aware of the power dynamic between different groups in society, especially marginalized people, she contended that inclusion is a means to keep classrooms from "perpetuating societal ideas of who's going to have more privilege than another person" with her belief that the classroom should not represent "the societal inequities" that exist in the outside world. She admitted that before the dialogue series she simply thought of inclusion

as bringing marginalized groups of students into the fold. However, during her final interview, she generated a more nuanced conclusion:

It's like trying to strike a balance of like, 'yeah, you'd want to make sure that they get that education that the main class is getting, but also not wanting to assimilate them so much that they're losing who they are.' So, I guess now I'm like trying to balance those two more than anything.

Holly was conscious that a teacher's efforts to ensure a quality of education for all students might have the unintended outcome of encouraging marginalized students to be assimilated into the majority by overlooking their individuality. Instead, individual students, Holly emphasized, should be able to be given "opportunities to express who they are" as unique persons. I concluded that her ideas about the purpose of inclusion evolved to be more intricate and critical after the dialogue series.

Features

Focus of Concern. Holly addressed both academic and social/affective aspects of inclusive education while at the same time considering the balance of equity and equality. Before the dialogues, however, she prioritized students' academic learning despite her comment about her personal value on relationships and the social/affective benefits of inclusion. She considered relationship building, as part of student learning, as "the hallmark of education in general." Thus, she found it positive that students with disability were "able to work with" and "create a connection with" their classmates and teacher in the general education classroom. Nonetheless, she expressed concerns about those students "fall[ing] behind and get[ting] lost in the shuffle" if they could not keep up with academics. For example, in her practicum she had observed some students just practicing spellings of basic words, separated from the majority of the students who

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were learning a homophone. Another incidence included a student who did not even know the meanings of words while the rest of the class was working on the antonyms of those words.

Across the interviews, Holly constantly viewed inclusion as aiming to build foundations for all children, which entails both academic and social skills. After the dialogues, however, she put more weight on social-emotional learning. Rather than confining her interest to social interactions between students with and without disability, she noted that inclusion involves providing an environment in which all students, particularly marginalized students, can share "how they feel" and "who they are" without fear of being judged. Similar to Lauren, another participant, Holly thought that teachers establishing strong relationships with students impacts students' academic progress as well as positive feelings in the classroom. In short, Holly valued both the academic and social/affective aspects of inclusion, yet her emphasis differed in each interview.

Scope of Population. Throughout, Holly acknowledged that inclusion is for "everyone." She thought every student would benefit from inclusion as it could be applied not only to students with disability but also to students with diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, and even typically developing students "who maybe aren't part of a quote-unquote, diverse population."

Looking at her interview responses below the surface, it became clear that she tended to prioritize a certain group of students for inclusion. In her pre-dialogue interview, Holly's account was primarily centered around students with disability as the target population. "I just think of inclusion is like having a special ed. student or student with disability in a regular classroom," describing several students with different disabilities participating in class activities in a variety of ways in the classroom she observed. Although she believed that everyone could benefit from

inclusion, she saw students with disability as the primary group to be included in the general education classroom to receive "those same educational opportunities" as their peers. Thus, she tended to associate inclusion with students who have "special needs."

Holly's focus on students with disabilities was widened in her post-dialogue interview. She admitted that at first she came up with students with disability "more than anything" when thinking of inclusive education. She then explained that "the biggest thing" she had learned through this study:

> I think this study has really helped me to come to realize that it's not just that one group, it's many different groups of kids, it can still involve kids who are, quote-unquote, gifted and are from diverse backgrounds or have a family that's like LGBTQ, or whatever. I think that one of the biggest takeaways from this was that inclusive education is not just including one group.

Holly had broadened her idea of who could be considered for inclusion, realizing that a number of marginalized groups exist beyond students with disability. "I think now it's like a lot more nuance and … It's not just like trying to include people who are technically on the outside." She considered more facets of students' identity, including race/ethnicity, culture, language, giftedness (ability), or sexuality and started to mull over the complexity of it all. Yet, she was still struggling with the question of "who is inclusive education for?" She said her thinking "keep[s] going back and forth" between "the more marginalized groups" and "everyone." Her rationale was that marginalized students need more support as they tend to struggle more in the classroom, yet the majority of students who are "white" and "heterosexual" also benefit from inclusive education as a way of being exposed to diversity. Eventually, Holly reconciled herself with the idea that "inclusion is for everyone, but more emphasis [was] placed

on marginalized groups." Compared to her initial response, which was primarily attentive to students with disability, her later ideas on the scope of population became more nuanced.

Placement. Holly's initial idea of inclusion was anchored in the general education classroom for "equal education" for everyone. She conceived inclusion as placing students with disability in a "regular classroom" with their typically developing peers in contrast to a special education classroom separated from their peers. Similar to Dana, who idealized full inclusion in her initial interview, Holly believed students with disability should stay in the general education classroom "for the majority of the time" or "pretty much full time." This does not mean that Holly was entirely against the idea of students being pulled out, she felt it should be "to some extent" for "only certain things." Without clarifying how frequent and for how long she thought students could be pulled out, she was firm that students must come back to the general education classroom, based on her stance that students with disability in a separate classroom would "fall way behind just in so many ways" because they would not receive the same opportunities as the majority of students in the general education classroom. As a result, "social barrier" would be created between the students with disability and those without, which, in particular, would keep students with disability from socializing and learning academic curriculum with peers. Thus, again, Holly interpreted inclusion as providing equal educational opportunities to all, meaning students with disability being able to learn in the general education classroom.

Interesting, after the dialogues, the general education classroom was no longer the anchor classroom for Holly. Rather, she talked about the "least restrictive environment" (LRE) for students with disability. She still viewed inclusion as providing educational opportunities but maintained that, particularly for students with disability, those should be given in the LRE.

Benefits

The benefits of inclusion Holly described in both interviews were mostly anticipated, as was the case for most of the other participants. What was more surprising, however, was that Holly did not elaborate much on the benefits in her interviews, despite her enthusiasm for inclusion. This might have been impacted by her practicum experience, which was her first time to observe an actual inclusive classroom "up close." She recalled, "it was kind of tough to watch" the students with disability getting lost even with extra help.

Before the dialogues, Holly spoke highly of the social as opposed to academic benefits of inclusion. She described social interactions between students with and without disability as the core benefit of inclusion, supposing that they could create a "connection" with one another through those interactions, as she had witnessed "great friendships" by peers participating in the Best Buddies-like program in her high school, where typically developing students worked with students with disability in their special education classroom. As she saw it, for students in general education to be able to create "emotional bonds" with "people who are different than them" was an essential social skill in society. However, she was skeptical about those bonds occurring through occasional events. On the other hand, in terms of academic benefits, Holly thought that everyone could gain the same educational experience and foundational academic skills such as English or math. I perceived that she did not make a clear distinction between the purpose of inclusive education and the academic benefits.

After the dialogue series, Holly talked about "multiple benefits" of inclusion from a different angle. One benefit she stressed was "bringing societal equity into classroom" by creating a classroom environment as a "safe space" and "even playing field" for marginalized

students, in particular. Another benefit was having the majority of students be "more exposed" to diversity in the classroom, yet she did not go into detail here.

Reflecting on her own limited exposure to diversity, Holly personalized the benefit of inclusion for teachers, believing that it would help her to better support her students, as she viewed herself as "sheltered" and "uncomfortable talking about race." She did not illustrate the specific ways in which inclusion would be beneficial for her; yet, speculating from her comments, Holly would likely feel comfortable talking about race and be better able to support students of a different race as she gained more exposure to and engaged with them in the classroom.

Challenges

The major challenges related to inclusion identified by Holly in her initial interview corresponded to her academic concerns. She recounted the bad feelings she experienced during her observations when she saw students with disability fell behind in learning basic academic content in the classroom. Holly explained that "a caveat" of inclusion stems from the difficulty level of academic content; as it "gets more advanced" it becomes more challenging for teachers to make sure everyone understands. She condemned the teacher attitude of "you can just throw a band-aid on it and everyone can learn the exact same way," claiming that overlooking students' varying abilities to learn was "ignoring the problem." She believed that getting students to a more advanced level was "a little more nuanced." When I asked her a subsequent question of how to deal with those nuances, Holly's immediate response was: "I don't know." She did go on to suggest some ideas, but without confidence, such as having more adults to provide extra help and using IEPs for more individualized instruction, acknowledging the individual differences.

Holly also identified a lack of human resources as a challenge to inclusion based on her practicum experience. She felt it was strange that there was no paraprofessional in the classroom to give "extra help" or "one-on-one instruction" to students with disability, even though she noticed that the school had sufficient resources for services or technology equipment. She only experienced a few weeks of weekly site visits and, therefore, might have missed days when paraprofessionals came to the classroom or the perceived lack of support might have been due to a shortage of staff or to school policy. Unfortunately, we did not figure out why there was not enough teaching staff in the classroom.

Negative attitudes toward students with disability may also be a challenge to inclusion. While Holly did not explicitly refer to that as a challenge, she criticized her high school peers' attitude of "looking down on" students with disability when they worked together. Holly considered as substantially problematic the "savior" attitude of we are here to "help" you that some of her peers exhibited. As noted, she supported the idea of establishing friendships as the main benefit of inclusion. However, at the same time, she warned of the asymmetric beneficiary-benefactor relationships that can exist between students with and without disability.

Apart from her explanation of the challenges coming from her own experiences, Holly was focused more on teacher-related factors as anticipated challenge during her final interview. Not surprisingly, she brought up teacher workload as the major issue as did all the other participants. Holly repeatedly said, "the teacher has to spend a lot of time planning" to take student diversity into consideration and to choose appropriate resources for the students. She also brought up another challenge based on her own reflections. She suggested that their attitudes and dispositions of being "uncomfortable talking about race" might become a challenge for teachers with regard to inclusion, as it had been for her. She did not generalize it to all teachers; yet, she

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at least recognized that teachers cannot avoid addressing what makes them feel uneasy if relevant to their students' lives.

Facilitating Factors

Holly's initial interview response was heavily based on the school context she observed while completing her first pre-practicum. Given her point that a lack of adults in the classroom was a challenge for inclusion, she advocated for having additional "trained adults." She recalled a girl in the classroom who asked Holly to sit next to her and watch her do her work independently. Realizing the difficulty of juggling between giving attention to individual students and the whole group at the same time while hoping that no one, including a girl like the one Holly had met, would feel like they were not being attended to, Holly believed that paraprofessionals would alleviate teachers' burden by working one-on-one with the students who need extra help.

On the other hand, after the dialogue series, Holly turned her focus to individual teachers' effort, as she became more reflective of how she should strive for inclusion as a future educator. Individual teachers' efforts, as suggested by Holly in her final journal and interview, entailed self-reflection and continuous effort to create an inclusive classroom. For example, according to Holly, teachers, especially when they are white, should become "aware of" their own "privilege" that their students might not have and "recognize" their own "limitations" involving certain topics (e.g., "racial minorities") they do not know much about and, therefore, are reluctant to address. With such critical understanding of self, teachers should attempt to create an inclusive classroom environment where students feel safe and comfortable. Further, Holly noted that teachers should still invest in balancing between giving attention to the whole class and individual students, although paraprofessionals could help with that.

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Teacher Practices

Only one typical pattern stood out to me in Holly's conceptualization of teacher practices for inclusion. Throughout the interviews, she foregrounded personal connection as her priority, followed by instruction. I speculated our discussions must have impacted Holly's ideas on teacher practices for curriculum and climate/environment as she only talked about those during her final interview. While addressing accommodations/related services a lot before the dialogue series, she was substantially attentive to curriculum and classroom climate/environment afterwards.

Personal Connection. As did two other participants, Lauren and Mei, Holly highly valued personal relationships between the teacher and students in the classroom. In both interviews, she repeated several times the importance of getting to know each of the students "on an individual level" for its numerous benefits for both academic and social inclusion. In her initial interview this meant teachers acknowledge "every kid is different" by understanding, for instance, how they learn differently, what works for them, the disability's impact on learning, as appropriate, and that students with disability are not "stereotypical." Holly was well aware that getting to know each individual student precedes lesson planning and instruction.

Her initial perspective remained the same after the dialogues, as she stressed that everything the teacher does should be based on knowing the students. Holly said:

> If you don't know your students [it] can be really hard to create some kind of inclusive
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> education program for them … once you really know your students, I think that can take
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> a variety of forms depending on what kind of inclusion you're going for.

She began to acknowledge that inclusion could be shaped differently depending on the students in the classroom and the teacher's priorities for inclusion. In addition to possible disabilities,

knowing your students encompasses taking into account their multiple identities, such as ability, race/ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, and even gender—Holly pointed out we did not address this during our discussions. Therefore, what Holly believed as the most important practice was the teacher needs to establish "a strong foundation" with their students to understand them and envision what inclusion should look like in the classroom, commenting, "I'm not sure specifically what I would do without having a group of students in front of me, if that makes sense."

Curriculum. Holly did not say anything about curriculum before the dialogues, but mentioned using a variety of books to foster inclusion in the classroom. She remembered that during one of our dialogue sessions, Brooke, one of the other participants, shared an anecdote about reading a book related to Islamic culture and women wearing hijabs, and one of her students excitedly sharing what she knew about hijabs as if she was an expert. Holly thought it was nice that a student related her own culture and life experience to the story of a book.

In a similar vein, Holly stressed the importance of reading more books about racial diversity and "having open class discussions" in a safe environment where students could openly share their ideas with each other when asked a question such as, "how did you feel when this happened in the story about?" During the discussion sessions, I noticed that all participants were in agreement with using literature that represents students' diverse backgrounds, and Holly's response confirmed that she too had become a strong supporter of using diverse books as an inclusive practice.

Instruction. At all times, Holly placed an emphasis on lesson planning to determine appropriate resources, materials, or activities with the students "in mind," as she prioritized personal relationships with students. Teachers should make instructional decisions according to

their individual students, for example, whether to use "visual aids," "step-by-step" instruction, "read-alouds," or "stations" that ultimately benefit all students. Holly simultaneously paid attention to the need for teachers to be "flexible," but for different reasons before and after the dialogues. She acknowledged that flexibility was primarily needed to take students' individual differences into account, and she also highlighted the unpredictability of actual lessons, which sometimes "go off the rails" from what is planned. Afterwards, she noted that teachers could seek inclusion differently depending on their students' characteristics.

Another interesting comment Holly made in her pre-dialogue interview involved the teaching style she would use in the future:

> Then I would kind of use that style [planned but flexible teaching] just for all my students in the classroom, so that there was no differentiating between like someone with a disability as opposed to not. Um, but also accommodating for whatever needs the students have and making sure that every kid is being brought up academically, socially with the rest of the class, and not, not like some kids are moving forward and some kids being left behind.

This explanation hinted at her stance on differentiation. Holly seemingly rejected the idea of differentiation that has been an important concept in the field for years. However, examining her account in depth made it clear that Holly did not oppose differentiation *per se.* Throughout her interview, she conveyed her point that students with disability need "more supports" in the general education classroom. (Holly's concern here arose from her site visits during which she observed students with disability struggling to learn about what their peers were learning. She felt bad that even in the same classroom they were working on different activities—content and skills that the rest of the class had already mastered.) Given her preoccupation with providing

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everyone with the same learning opportunities for their foundational skills, differentiation in this context should be understood as students learning different levels of content in the classroom. Holly believed that ideally all students, particularly in elementary school, should acquire the same grade-level knowledge and skills with the right support so that no one falls behind. Thus, theoretically, the practice Holly envisioned in her future classroom was aligned with her stance advocating for both equality and equity, although she may not accomplish the same student outcomes in practice.

Holly had a new idea appeared in her post-dialogue interview. She was interested in engaging her students in the thinking process so they could become independent thinkers, rather than imposing her own ideas of right or wrong on them.

Accommodations/Related Services. Holly believed that providing different types of accommodations and related services to students is "a great way to start implementing inclusive education." However, only in her initial interview did she explain this standpoint in detail, basing it on her analytic observation of the inclusion classroom during her first pre-practicum. From her perspective, the students with disability in the classroom did not appear to receive any individualized accommodations, although she recognized that they would be pulled out for services such as speech therapy or counseling services during the day. Holly considered the accommodations her mentor teacher was providing as more of common teaching practices for everyone, as if it were a "typical gen ed. class" rather than a classroom for inclusion of students with disabilities. To follow up on her thoughts, I asked Holly what she thought should have been done in the classroom. She responded that she would have tried "little things the students would need" that would ultimately benefit all learners, such as giving oral explanations with visual aid, providing step-by-step instruction, or repeating instructions. She also perceived that assistive

technology would be a way to provide the same educational opportunities to students.

Specifically, she acknowledged the benefits of assistive technology for students, for example, who are nonverbal or have limited mobility, or those who need extra one-one-one assistance. While she viewed assistive technology as an alternative to "supplement with their [students'] learning" if not aided by paraprofessionals, Holly pointed out that the classroom needed more "physical person[s]," despite the use of technology. Thus, her response revealed her belief that for certain students, assistive technology cannot replace the academic and social benefits of getting extra help or attention from paraprofessionals.

Holly further suggested a cautious approach for teachers when providing accommodations or one-on-one support to students without "singling them out." She emphasized this approach again in her final interview, referring to the importance of having "adults" and "right supports."

Assessment. Holly did not address teacher practice for assessment in either of her interviews.

Climate/Environment. After the dialogue series, Holly envisioned her own classroom in the future to be a "safe environment." Such an environment involved an encouraging space where students are willing to share their feelings, ideas, who they are and their backgrounds. It would also be a non-judgmental space in which whatever everyone thinks or shares is respected. Additionally, Holly stressed she would like to set the tone of her future classroom with "the ethic of care" so that students "care" about and are "kind" to each other.

Management. Before the dialogue series, Holly briefly mentioned self-regulation skills that would benefit all students. She suggested the idea of teaching "the emotion regulation of just staying calm" after critiquing her mentor teacher's practice of not providing adequate

accommodations to the students who may need that in the classroom. Overall, classroom management was not on her radar.

Tension

Holly primarily felt that tension may arise from teacher practice that needs to balance the needs of individual students and those of the whole class, as she constantly struggled between equity versus equality. Before the dialogues, she pointed out this was challenging because it was almost impossible for teachers to simultaneously pay attention to individual students who need more help and facilitate the learning of everyone in the classroom. Holly found it important that every single student should feel like they are "being listened to"; yet, realistically she felt it might not be attainable in a large class without the help of paraprofessionals in particular.

Moreover, Holly talked about the flip side of inclusive education where students are pulled out for services, based on her observation of the inclusion classroom for her pre-practicum. She pointed out that while it was a great way to provide individual support to students according to their IEPs, the classroom became "very chaotic," with some students constantly stepping in and out. That is, she was implying that this kind of classroom environment would easily disrupt student learning, describing her classroom experience in the following way: "as an adult I couldn't focus in there, so I can't imagine trying to sit there and do my work with as like a kid. So, I think … it was a lot of stimulus."

On the other hand, after the dialogues, Holly pointed out the limitation of inclusive education in its effort to ensure everyone receives educational opportunities: "You'd want to make sure that they [marginalized students] get that education that the main class is getting, but also like not wanting to assimilate them so much that they're losing who they are." Recalling our discussion based on the question "Does inclusion mean that you're being integrated into the

majority?," during her interview Holly expressed her ongoing struggle with it. She both "agree[d] and disagree[d] with that," as she believed that giving opportunities does not mean erasing individual differences and making everyone the same. That is, she was concerned that the teacher practice of providing marginalized groups of students with the same educational opportunities as the majority of students could unintentionally become an act of assimilating them into the majority. Therefore, she stressed the importance of teachers balancing between these possibilities, but did not offer a concrete idea of how to do such. In short, the tension Holly explained between assimilating marginalized students versus respecting their individuality implied the issues of power between the majority and the marginalized.

Another example of tension brought up by Holly was associated with teaching topics such as LGBTQ students and/or their families. Although she acknowledged that building "an environment of tolerance and inclusion" requires teachers to "listen to people who are different than you," at the same time, she realized that it is not easy to remain "neutral" about those topics, as they are "very politically charged in our society." She continued, "inherently, you have an opinion" as a human being and, therefore, "it's hard sometimes to separate yourself from the teaching." The tension potentially could arise from within teachers if they thought like Holly, who wanted to address those topics but was well aware of the difficulty of being "impartial" and not impose her own ideas on the students.

Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives

As noted under Purposes, Holly equated inclusion with a "baseline" of education that aims at providing equal educational opportunities to all students, "I just think inclusion should just be a basic line level of just like everyone being able to have an equal education. That, to me, is what public education is about." It should be noted that Holly was majoring in Elementary

Education. From the perspective of an elementary school teacher, she always referred to children when she talked about inclusion. In her beliefs, inclusion involved ensuring every child acquired fundamental knowledge and skills and, therefore, she saw that as a value embedded in public education, particularly for elementary-aged children.

Overall, Holly had a positive attitude toward inclusion, frequently mentioning the social benefits of inclusion whereby students with and without disability could build friendships. However, she also envisioned inclusion as part of everyday life that "you're used to every single day," not something to be pursued through special programs such as Best Buddies, for instance. In such an environment, students with and without disability could have "real connection" with one another without typical students "being charitable." As noted, Holly was critical of having a "savior attitude" or "looking down" on students with disability, which she had noticed among her high school classmates. Although she strongly believed that genuine inclusion could lead to healthy, reciprocal relationships between students with and without disability, she still confined her idea of inclusive education to providing educational opportunities to students with disability in the general education classroom like their peers.

At the same time, however, Holly expressed confusion resulting from the discrepancy between theory and practice; that is, her conceptual understanding of inclusion and what it actually looked like in the classroom. Holly had realized from her pre-practicum that implementing inclusion is very difficult. Before acknowledging that reality, Holly was "totally for inclusion" as she was only attentive to the benefits of inclusion. However, the classroom experience made her think, "I don't know what I feel about inclusion now." As Holly began to consider the challenges of implementing inclusion in the real school context, she became more confused about her beliefs. That is, she was unsure of whether she should still believe inclusion

was a wholly positive concept. In her own words, "I feel like I'm very, very in the middle, right now."

Holly's struggle to understand inclusion was intensified after the group dialogues rather than resolved. "I actually feel like I struggled more with that [inclusion] this time around than I did the first time, which is kind of weird." She indicated that she had reached "a lot more nuanced" meaning of inclusion compared to her initial thoughts, which were pretty "straightforward." She had ultimately realized that inclusion was "not just trying to include people who are technically on the outside," but knowing that "there are other groups who are having trouble" accessing the educational opportunities their peers easily received.

In addition, she kept struggling with the scope of the target population as well—whether inclusion was for the marginalized or for everyone. She ended up reaching the conclusion that inclusion is for everyone but with more of an emphasis on marginalized groups of students. Further, she continued to wrestle with the issue of power whereby inclusion could be deemed as the integration of marginalized students into the majority. As noted, she tried to tackle that tension by finding a balance between providing marginalized students the same opportunities as the majority while respecting their individuality.

The group dialogue series made Holly more reflective about herself as a future educator and "what I [she] want[ed] to do to foster inclusion." The murder of George Floyd further awakened herself to "race" and what she could and should do for her "students who are not the same race" as she was. She reiterated the episode she shared in our follow-up conversation in more detail as it was stuck in her mind:

> … there was this one student in my prac[ticum] class who came up to me and she was
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> Black. And she was like, "You're never going to remember my name." And I was like,

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"Oh, what's your name?" It was [name of the student]. And I was like, "Oh, okay." I didn't really know, I didn't really know how to react to that because it was a name I'd never heard of before, but it wasn't like, outrageous. I didn't want to make her feel bad, but I still think about it now, how I should have responded to her when she said that to me. So, I guess I'm just feeling … I'm becoming more aware of that, of race in the classroom and how I want to deal with students who aren't the same race as me and like being more exposed to it versus being able to actually do something about helping them.

During the final interview, Holly was honest about her recent struggle with race issues as she confessed her fear of not knowing "how to talk about race" and making someone or even her student unintentionally "offended" by her comment. Such awareness and struggle simultaneously led her to find ways to deal with race as a white educator. What she proposed started from acknowledging her own "privilege" as a white person and how her daily experience was "vastly different from someone who was a different race." Critically examining both her knowledge and her ignorance, she stressed putting effort and time into learning more about and be "more comfortable with" difficult topics based on the assumption that students are not able to talk about difficult topics if the teacher does not feel comfortable to do so.

Although her pre-practicum made her realize the difficulty of implementing inclusion successfully, Holly still "liked" inclusion and believed it as "a great thing." By reflecting on and synthesizing her thoughts based on what she had learned from the coursework, observed in the classroom, and discussed through our group dialogue series, Holly concluded that inclusion is not the ideal that educators should reach, but always work towards. She put "progress" at the forefront, considering inclusion as what educators "should be striving for," regardless of the numerous "hurdles to jump through to get to that."

Holly's thoughtful reflection convinced me of her commitment to inclusion as well as the fact that her perspectives were impacted by the dialogue series. Similar to Mei, one of the other participants, who became interested in anti-racist education after the tragedy of George Floyd, Holly reached a heightened awareness of race and contemplated how she would dare to talk about race, especially with her students. She internalized the idea of inclusion as what she should continuously work toward for every student.

Summary of Holly's Conceptualization

Holly was a typical college student in a teacher education program in the United States. She identified as a white, heterosexual, able-bodied female, who grew up in an upper-middle class family in a suburban town, where the residents were predominantly white. As a sophomore majoring in Elementary Education and Applied Psychology with a concentration in Special Education, she was passionate about education and had assumed various teaching roles since high school, as a classroom aide, teacher's assistant, and summer camp counselor for school-aged children, along with serving as an assistant for my introductory special education courses in spring 2021. Holly was completing her first pre-practicum in an elementary classroom at the time of the study, yet it was suspended after a few weeks due to the COVID outbreak.

Highlighting Holly's conceptualization of inclusive education, she primarily associated inclusive education with providing educational opportunities for all students, centering her ideas around children attending elementary school. Before the discussions, she thought inclusion aimed at ensuring the same basic education to develop all students' foundational skills. Out of concern for students with disability falling behind in learning academics and socializing in a separate classroom, she advocated for the general education classroom being their primary placement for most of the time. Making a distinction between the meaning of *equity* and

equality, Holly said she was advocating more for equity. But given her emphasis on all children's equal opportunity regardless of individual differences, she was inclined to accept equality as a primary value for inclusion, apart from other participants who rejected it.

After the dialogue series, Holly's ideas became more intricate and critical, with a stronger commitment to fostering equity in the classroom. She still stressed educational opportunities for everyone but with a particular focus on marginalized students who tend not to have the same privileges as the majority of students. Thus, she conceived inclusion as one means to protect students from being exposed to societal inequalities and to promote social justice in the classroom. Further, she warned that the teacher's effort to provide everyone with equal educational opportunities may become an act of assimilating the marginalized into the majority; instead, she suggested inclusion involve creating an environment in which students feel comfortable being who they are as unique individuals.

Despite the challenge related to inclusion that Holly had observed in her practicum, where students with disability got lost in learning basic academics, she at first believed that students with and without disability could build friendship through social interactions. For such friendship to become a genuine benefit of inclusion, she pointed out that typical students must not think they "help" students with disability. Another benefit she addressed after the discussions was aligned with her latter idea about the purpose of inclusion: The classroom could be a more equitable space for marginalized students with increased exposure to diversity for typical students. Holly explained that such exposure could also benefit teachers by lowering their discomfort with talking about certain topics like race, which she later also identified as a challenge. She anticipated the teachers would be able to better support students who are a different race than themselves.

As Holly initially pointed out, the lack of adults in the classroom was another challenge based on her observation, so she suggested that additional paraprofessionals would be helpful for teachers to facilitate inclusion by providing individual supports to the students in need. Later, she recommended individual teachers make an effort to reflect on their own privilege and weaknesses, particularly if they are white teaching students from different CLD backgrounds. Holly constantly prioritized building personal relationships with the students—to get to know them better—as an essential teacher practice, which should be the groundwork for lesson planning and making instructional decisions. Impacted by our group dialogues, Holly in her final interview stressed using a variety of books that represent students' diverse backgrounds and creating a safe space of non-judgment in which students freely share their ideas and feelings.

A major tension Holly identified included teacher practice that needs to balance the needs of individual students versus those of the whole group. At first, she was focused on the conflict related to simultaneously providing individual support to each student and instructing the whole class. Later, she emphasized that providing the same educational opportunities must not mean assimilating marginalized students into the majority, referring here to the issue of power.

Holly showed her evolving viewpoints on inclusion across the interviews. She maintained an overall positive belief from the perspective of an elementary teacher, claiming inclusive education should be the basis of education to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students. However, her first practicum experience allowed her to observe what actually occurred in the classroom and realize the downside of inclusion when implemented in practice. After participating in the group discussions, Holly started to struggle even more to understand inclusion as she was more attentive to the complicated issues and nuances around inclusion. Further, Holly became substantially reflective about herself as a white educator and committed to

striving for inclusion in the future, with a full awareness of race issues sparked by the murder of

George Floyd. In short, participating in the dialogue series enabled Holly to reflect on and

expand her perspectives on inclusion without fundamentally changing them.

Dana

Dana was a 19-year-old female sophomore in college at the time of the study. She identified herself as a white able-bodied cisgender and native English speaker with an intermediate level of proficiency in Spanish. Coming from a middle-class background, she grew up in the northeast of the United States and attended suburban public schools throughout her K-12 years. Dana was the only student in the group who was majoring in Secondary Education and English with a minor in Music. She had been an active member of a choir throughout high school and in college. Although I knew Dana before this study began, I was not aware of her love for music because we had not talked about her life outside of class until I surveyed and interviewed her as one of my research participants.

I first met her through my introductory special education course, *Working With Students With Special Needs* in fall 2019, a semester before this study was conducted. Another study participant, Holly, was also taking the course at the time. My impression of Dana in class was that she had a more rational than emotional personality, which was why I was a little surprised by her involvement in musical activities. Dana had strengths in both oral and written communication; she was articulate, logically expressing her thoughts and ideas. For example, when responding to the interview question about college courses relevant to inclusive education, Dana, different from the other participants who mentioned only the course titles, named three courses she had taken and stated the specific reasons of why they were relevant. For *Working With Students With Special needs*, without further elaboration she just said the materials covered were relevant, yet for the other courses, Dana explained that *Family/School/Society* was focused on "social justice issues and factors that may place students at a disadvantage in the classroom"

and that *Classroom Assessment* was "applicable to inclusive education" by addressing ways of "making assessment as fair, valid, and useful as possible for all students."

At the beginning of the 2020 fall semester, I met with Dana and Lauren on campus. Sitting at a table outside, Dana told me that she had switched her Secondary Education major to Applied Psychology and Human Development at the end of her sophomore year, considering to study Higher Education and Student Affairs in graduate school. I noticed Dana was hesitant to tell me that she no longer wanted to be a classroom teacher and guessed if it was due to my position as a teacher educator. To me, frankly, it is frustrating to see students leaving the field of education to pursue a different career path, yet it is beautiful to see students navigating and discovering what they really want during their college years. Thus, I affirmed Dana's decision, saying that she should pursue whatever felt right to her. Dana went on to explain that she had found her passion in higher education while working as a resident assistant in the residence hall during her sophomore year and that she felt more comfortable and inclined to working with young adults than the high school students she would otherwise deal with as a teacher.

Experiences With Diverse Populations

Growing up, Dana had some exposure to individuals with disability. The first involved classmates from elementary school, whom Dana labeled as having "behavioral disabilities" would act out in such ways as yelling or crying. She also had "a number of friends who have AD/HD," all of whom were taking medications. Entering college, Dana volunteered in a private special school on her college campus for the whole year. There, she sat around a class of 10 students with primarily extensive support needs and read a book aloud to them once a week. The most recent exposure occurred in spring 2020, when Dana was completing her first pre-practicum in a high school. Dana wrote she observed students with AD/HD, yet, later in our

follow-up conversation, she explained that it was her speculation based on "how they were acting" because she was not allowed to learn students' diagnoses nor have access to their IEPs or 504 plans. She was confident that those students had "trouble focusing."

Dana had some degree of experience with individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, mostly from peers. Although she had grown up in a town where the residents were predominantly white, Dana said she had a number of friends from her middle and high school who spoke other languages at home or whose first language was not English. But she did not encounter any language barrier with them because they spoke English "fairly well." Dana recounted, "I learned a lot about their cultures, though, from the stories they told about living in other countries and celebrating non-American or non-Catholic cultural events and holidays." Moreover, in our follow-up conversation, Dana elaborated on two friends, who spoke Greek and Arabic, respectively. The girl who was fluent in Greek moved to Dana's high school at the beginning of their junior year, and Dana only knew about her family's immigration history that they moved to the United States when she was around 10 years old and had lived in Philadelphia. Dana did not have any trouble communicating with her, since "she was already fluent in English" by the time Dana got to know her, but she noticed that she would speak Greek to her parents and sometimes on the phone as well.

Dana first met the boy speaking Arabic in sixth grade. She knew he was an immigrant to the United States but did not know his immigration history, including his birthplace, but knew he moved back to Egypt a couple of years later and returned to her high school at the beginning of sophomore year, when Dana got to know him better. In the middle of our conversation, when Dana was talking about him being fluent in both Arabic and English, I immediately responded, "so he's from Egypt." In return, Dana expressed a slight concern, "I'm pretty sure they speak

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Arabic. So that would be bad if I messed up the language." Dana recalled he would practice fasting for most days for a certain period of time, yet she was not able to name what that time (the holy month) was called. I asked Dana if she happened to know his religion, but she could not come up with the word either, commenting, "it definitely wasn't Christian. I think he might be Muslim." Having some knowledge about the religion of Islam, I pinpointed the holiday, "Ramadan?" Dana then got excited in response, "Yeah, that's it. That's exactly it. Ramadan. So, whatever religion practices Ramadan." Still, she could not associate Ramadan with Islam as her friend's religion.

Dana talked about her college experience of working as a resident assistant and noted that many of the residents were international or speaking a language other than English. She shared their difficulties in learning, "some of them struggled in class since they had a more difficult time following professors who spoke quickly in English." Dana also mentioned her experience of teaching students from CLD backgrounds in a kindergarten music class and a high school classroom for her pre-practicum in early 2020.

With regard to LGBTQ+ populations, Dana had a more personalized experience due to her uncles and aunts who identified themselves as gay. She indicated many of her high school friends and a few college friends, including her fellow resident assistants, belonged to the LGBTQ+ group. Similar to the other participants, Dana had very limited exposure to students identifying as LGBTQ+ in her practicum placement. She said there had never been a student who explicitly disclosed their sexuality; otherwise it was hard to know. Dana commented, "it's not an obvious characteristic. You can't see." Additionally, she reflected on her own position as a teacher candidate who had limited access to the information: "as a pre-prac[ticum] student or a substitute teacher, I'm not really the person that [students can] talk about it with."

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Teaching Experiences

Dana had relatively less classroom teaching experience than the rest of the research participants. In fact, it was comprised of a total of three months working in middle school and kindergarten classrooms in her first semester of sophomore year before she began her first pre-practicum in spring 2020. In the survey, Dana explained her teaching experiences in detail, and her account became even more fleshed out during our follow-up conversation, but the limited exposure to classrooms suggested to me that her perspectives and ideas about inclusive education relied largely on her conceptual understanding.

During the summer of 2019, Dana substituted in the middle school from which she graduated. She recalled being randomly assigned to any class whose teacher was absent to ensure the students were working on tasks already prepared by their teacher. She recounted, "I never really had to teach anything, so to speak. It was more just like playing a video or telling them to go work on Google classroom and then making sure that kids were focused and not misbehaving." For two months, Dana experienced multiple classes for academic subjects such as math and science, as well as the special education classroom where two special educators would "rotate through the subjects." She observed that while some students were there throughout the day, others were in and out, depending on their need for support. Dana also volunteered in an urban public elementary school during her winter break, observing and helping kindergarteners who struggled to learn music, such as "clap[ping] the beat." Hence, the first pre-practicum Dana was completing at the time of the study could be considered as her first official teaching experience in the classroom as a teacher candidate.

Dana considered a variety of her high school and college experiences as her teaching experience beyond classrooms, which included being a leader in the choir, a Sunday school

teacher at church, a volunteer in the special school, and a resident assistant. She explained that in her junior and senior years in high school, she taught after-school rehearsals once a month as a section leader of the choir. In high school, she also gave children short lessons on a biblical parable in the neighborhood church bimonthly for two years. In college, she was involved in a weekly volunteer program for a year where she read a book aloud for 30 minutes to the class of 10 students with extensive support. Her recent activity had been leading residence programs for 31 female freshmen since at the beginning of her sophomore year.

The Classroom Context of Dana's Current Practicum

Dana's first pre-practicum took place at an urban public high school, where the majority of students were students of color. She explained, "there were very few white students." Dana recalled what she had heard: "90% of students at this high school were characterized as high needs … and there were a decent number of students in the school who were on education plans. They're like a 504 or an IEP." She was placed in an English Language Art (ELA) class in the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classroom, but lost the opportunity to observe and teach the students after the first four weeks as the pre-practicum was suspended due to the COVID-19 outbreak. It was particularly unfortunate for Dana, I thought, given her limited exposure to practice.

In the SEI classroom, Dana's mentor teacher was a white female, who had 6 years of teaching experience and was licensed in Secondary English and certified in teaching English Language Learners (ELLs). There were four adults in the classroom, the mentor teacher and three student teachers, including Dana. The students she observed were 9th- through 12th-grade students on the English as Second Language (ESL) Level Three. Students' native languages included Spanish, Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, and Arabic, with the majority of students

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being Black or Latinx from South America. Thus, all 19 students had intersectional identities of being a student of color and an ELL. According to her "observation and best estimate," Dana suspected approximately five students might have had AD/HD, as she "noticed a handful of students who struggled to stay on task." In her survey, she noted that "there were never any paraprofessionals or aides in the classroom." Students' LGBTQ+ identities were unknown.

Dana's Conceptualization of Inclusive Education

The group dialogue series was definitely influential on Dana's conceptualization of inclusive education in that they helped expand her perspective. In her post-dialogue interview Dana reflected, "I think we talked about how the topics themselves definitely influenced my understanding and made it a more … I guess, broad or holistic definition of inclusion." She indicated that the discussions were "really positive" and her "favorite part" as she enjoyed hearing the varying perspectives of the other participants. Dana also recognized that not only did they share their ideas but also "buil[t] off of each other's ideas." What was addressed and discussed by her peers who had teaching experiences in a variety of contexts had become resources that informed Dana's future practice for inclusion, since she had "all these abstract ideas of how it will go." Thus, "the main takeaway" for Dana was that she had a better understanding of how to implement inclusion in the classroom.

When asked how to define "inclusive education," Dana responded that she still struggled even after the dialogue series because "it's hard to kind of wrap it all up in a bow since it is such a broad topic." Rather than concluding her thoughts about what inclusive education is and who it is for, she was still grappling with the concept. Nonetheless, Dana elaborated on the ways in which the group dialogue series impacted her understanding:

I think … what we talked about with inclusion is how important it is to get other people's

viewpoints and to have those like windows and mirrors. And I feel like we kind of

experienced that in the dialogue. Like I could see my beliefs reflected in other people and

the things that they were saying, but then I also, you know, sometimes the things that I

said were challenged in a way or the things that I were thinking were challenged by what

other people said, and it definitely helped me to sort of reform my opinions and, um,

informed my opinions.

She explained that what was happening during the dialogue sessions was the participants

experienced each other as "windows and mirrors," as they agreed on the idea that students should

have windows and mirrors in their classroom, which they thought was a big part of inclusion,

that is, understanding commonalities and differences between human beings.

Dana said that the supplementary materials such as readings or TED Talk videos helped

"to inform my opinions and helping to form my opinions in general." She added that having

moments of silence in response to a challenging question posed by me as a facilitator made her

think of what/how to say and what language to use. I noticed during the dialogue series that Dana

was not afraid of telling us that she had no idea or was not sure about the point she was trying to

make. She commented, "trying to be transparent about the thought process that I had was helpful

in navigating those more difficult conversations."

Dana was also an active listener and reconciled her initial thoughts with the different

opinion of others whenever her ideas were challenged by other participants. Further, the self-

reflection as our closing activities at the end of each session helped her organize and draw her

concluding thoughts about inclusion. She reflected, "After the group dialogues, there's a lot

running through my head … it was nice to sort of put everything that was floating around in my

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head onto paper and try to make it concise and fully come to some sort of conclusion after each dialogue."

In the following, Dana's initial and final conceptualizations of inclusive education from her pre-/post-journals and interviews are compared and presented according to the eight categories used for content analysis: Purposes, Features, Benefits, Challenges, Facilitating Factors, Teacher Practices, Tensions, and Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives.

Purposes

Inclusive education, to Dana, had to do with providing students with quality education in a broad sense. It aims at improving education that will "suit all students" and "trying to give everyone the best shot that they can at the best education possible," so that all students can receive "a decent chance at a good education." Taking a closer look at Dana's pre-dialogue interview, this quality education also addressed students' social-emotional learning, which included two respective goals according to the needs of the student population. For "the students who need the extra support," which Dana regarded as students with disability, the goal was to provide the opportunity to be in a classroom where "they don't feel as singled out" or to help them "feel less embarrassed" with the fact that they have extra needs for services. The other goal, for the students without disability, whom Dana indicated as "the other students," was to provide the opportunity "to engage with students of different learning styles and learning abilities" and to "foster an overall more inclusive mindset towards people of different backgrounds and abilities or disabilities." Dana mentioned that one concrete way of cultivating such a mindset was using person-first language and a strengths-based perspective.

After the dialogue series, Dana maintained her initial belief that inclusive education aims at providing all students with quality education, that is, "the best education possible," as a means

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to empower them. What differed from her initial interview was that Dana was focused on enhancing all students' positive feelings of being "welcomed and included." In her words, "each student feels like they have a place in the classroom." I viewed this statement as a different expression of a sense of belonging, which corresponded to Lauren's core belief about the purpose of inclusive education. Dana particularly viewed that an individual's sense of belonging creates a more inclusive environment for all students: "If each individual in the classroom is included, feels supported ... each student will want to work towards making the others feel the same way that they do."

According to Dana's reasoning, students having positive feelings and working toward others feeling the same way is grounded in the mindset of "recognizing and embracing differences in learning ability/disability, cultural differences, and different identities." One way to instill such a mindset was to provide students with windows and mirrors in the classroom, one of the key ideas the participants agreed upon and stressed during our group dialogues. Dana elaborated:

> Using a phrase from our group discussions, the goal of inclusive education should be to provide windows and mirrors for all students in the classroom. Mirrors will help students know they have a place in this inclusive learning environment, which will hopefully speak to their social-emotional well-being and success in that environment. Windows will provide students with the opportunity to learn about and develop ideas about cultures and lifestyles that they may not have previously known, allowing them to expand their worldview and help foster a society that embraces difference.

Overall, acceptance was consistently the core value of inclusive education for Dana. Before the dialogue series, she referred to acceptance as "the first word that comes to mind for

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me" and "definitely the big one." She also mentioned transferability of people's attitudes toward diversity. "When you start focusing on one aspect of diversity, it's usually kind of easy to transfer those same attitudes towards all groups," she claimed. Thus, fostering an inclusive environment for students with disability would extend to including students are diverse in terms of race, culture, language, or class, and ultimately contribute to "cultivating a culture of respect" for others and forming a classroom environment that promotes "full acceptance of all students."

Further, Dana constantly linked inclusive education to the development of an inclusive society. As Mei claimed that students learning to accept others different from themselves serves as a cornerstone to changing society to be more inclusive in the future, Dana thought similarly in her initial interview, "I feel like the more that you otherize, quote-unquote, someone, the worse society's going to be in the long run. So, you need to have experience with people who are different from yourself in order to move forward." After the dialogues Dana still thought that inclusion in the classroom would be transferred to the whole society: Inclusive education serves to create a "more welcoming and more inclusive" society from the experiences of students in the classroom where "they've learned from interacting with different people." Dana envisioned an inclusive society as "a better-functioning society" where "everyone feels included and supported" and "everyone feels like they have a place." Thus, Dana saw the ultimate purpose of inclusive education as the well-being of each individual student and of society, which reflects the democratic values of equity and social justice. She explained:

> I think that they [inclusion, social justice, and equity] all work together really well. I think that … it all goes hand in hand. Like you can't have one without the other. If you're seeking to include everyone, then hopefully you're advocating for social justice for these groups ... inclusion is a form of social justice.

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For Dana, inclusion was to "get them [all students] on the equitable playing field." She believed that equity and social justice are embedded in and nurtured through inclusive education, which ultimately contributes to promoting a better society.

Features

Focus of Concern. Dana repeatedly said that inclusive education has to do with quality education and student well-being in all aspects. According to what was noted under Purposes, Dana seemed to focus primarily on the social/affective aspect of inclusive education. However, she was attentive to the academic aspect as well. In fact, she believed that inclusive education helps students' success and increase their "access (to) the academic materials" in the classroom, by incorporating the UDL principles.

Dana supported inclusive education since it improves students' social-emotional well-being by creating an environment where all students feel "welcomed," "included," "respected," and "supported." I sensed that Dana was focused more on the social-emotional well-being of students with disability in her initial interview. This was substantiated by memory of Dana's high school experience. Thus, she brought up an instance that made her think that students with disability can be easily included in special classes or extracurricular activities rather than academically demanding classes. One year students with disability joined her choir with their paraprofessionals. She recalled that people in the choir welcomed them and that the students with disability made friends and enjoyed singing without interrupting the rehearsal. However, in her final interview, Dana spoke about the well-being of all students, not necessarily just focusing on students with disability.

Scope of Population. Dana initially believed that inclusive education is for all students. For example, during her initial interview, Dana implied her opposing stance toward the trend that

people in general view students with disability as the main population for inclusive education. She said, "you might automatically assume that it's for just the students with the disabilities." Dana continued, "I think in the setting of inclusive education, definitely you're thinking about students with … whatever disability they may have. That's an element of diversity." Dana supposed that students with disability are prioritized in the inclusive classroom setting. Nevertheless, she reiterated her idea that "ultimately, it's for everyone … at the end of the day, it's a potentially positive learning experience for everyone." She clearly supported that inclusion is for everyone to be "on the same playing field," which goes "beyond servicing the students who may need that extra support." Dana's perspective was in a way opposite of those of Lauren and Mei, who were more attentive to a certain student population rather than everyone. Nonetheless, Dana viewed students regarding the ability difference only.

After the dialogue series, Dana continued to believe that "inclusive education is for all" but with different angles. Dana was still at the stage of generating a more concrete thought given that her responses were not completely consistent. When asked the question of "whom do you think inclusion/inclusive education is for?," she responded, "it kind of depends on what." She came to understand inclusive education with two specific, but broad groups of students, students with disabilities, on one hand, and students with other identities, on the other. With the former group of students, inclusive education has to do with special education, "seeking to create the least restrictive environment for those students and to provide them with the best education possible." With the latter, Dana recognized different identities include cultures and languages, sexuality, or socioeconomic status (SES). For students with CLD backgrounds, in particular, she brought up the fact that in one of our group talks we discussed the idea of the norm in the discourse of inclusion with the white majority as the reference point who had never been

considered as the population to be included. Dana then referred back to the case in one of the reading materials for our dialogue sessions, Zora, a black girl in a white school, whose strengths were not recognized by her white teacher. Suggesting giving a leadership position to Zora, who might have great leadership skills given a strengths-based approach, Dana claimed "everyone is the majority and everyone is the minority." For Dana, in this regard, inclusive education was for everyone. Her point of view is fully illustrated in the section of Attitude/Beliefs/Perspectives.

Placement. During our initial interview, Dana began to talk about "full inclusion" as the ideal placement she generally envisioned. She thought placing "all students of all abilities in the general education setting" was ideal, where no one is pulled out of a general education classroom and all services are provided within the same classroom. I wondered and asked if she was a proponent of full inclusion. Dana responded, "I wouldn't say if I'm necessarily a proponent of it [full inclusion]." She emphasized that the pull-out system is "appropriate," because, realistically there are instances where students with disability need "significant extra support to the point where it will kind of hinder the rest of the class from progressing forward," or "extra time" for testing, which might be "better for them to take that in an environment where they're not surrounded by all the other students." According to Dana, one way to seek inclusion was that "even if they can't, for whatever reason, be in the English honors class," students with disability take special classes such as chorus, gym, or art, where "it's not as spaced out by ability." Eventually, Dana restated that "individualized instruction" outside of the general education classroom is sometimes better than full inclusion.

In her final interview, Dana excluded full inclusion as an ideal type, as opposed to her initial thought before the dialogue series. Rather, she began to talk about the least restrictive environment (LRE), connecting it to inclusion:

I like the idea that inclusion is for all students and seeks to make all students feel

welcomed and included in the classroom environment or in whatever the least restrictive

environment for their learning is. I still don't think inclusion is putting all people in the

same room and, you know, tailoring instruction, to all of them. I think you still need to

have that kind of individualized look at it. And for some students, the general education

classroom may not be the most inclusive environment. But in whatever environment

you're in, I think it's your job as an instructor to make sure that you're exposing students

to all those different lifestyles …

Dana did not specify "some students." But given what was noted in the Scope of Population and

what she mentioned during the dialogue sessions (e.g., "specialized schools—also part of

society"), I knew Dana meant students with extensive support needs. Acknowledging a broader

range of students for inclusion, Dana, in general, put emphasis on the environment in which

students are educated for inclusion afterwards. With students with disability, in particular, she

came to believe the LRE was the inclusive environment for them.

Benefits

Dana little addressed the benefits of inclusive education. She also stated the benefits as

the outcomes she anticipated rather than observed, as did other participants. The major benefit

she mentioned in both interviews was students learning about differences, which was

considerably similar to Mei's beliefs. She viewed inclusive classrooms as a way to provide

students with the opportunity to learn to "interact with people who are different from

themselves." Interestingly, like Mei, Dana also assumed a hypothetical situation to support her

idea in her initial interview:

It's a learning experience for everyone because if they're all put in this—in a place where

people around them are all of the same ability—no one really gets to interact with others

and we can't learn from each other. You can't communicate with each other. You can't

have the opportunity to see how other people think and you don't have the opportunity to

learn. But when you have people of all different abilities and backgrounds coming

together, hopefully it provides the opportunity for them to learn from each other and get a

better understanding of the way that different people think and see everyone from more

of a strengths-based perspective.

Dana drew attention to students' learning opportunity in a place where everyone is different from

each other, which can foster an "inclusive mindset towards people of different backgrounds and

abilities or disabilities." However, the type of difference she was attuned to was ability, which

implied the exclusion of students with disability and a deficit view of them, as Dana also

indicated typically developing students' learning to accept differences, that is, "cultivating

acceptance of students who maybe do need extra support, who typically have been among the

more marginalized members of society."

After the dialogue series, the core benefit remained the same for Dana—learning about

differences. However, in her final interview she did not focus on differences in ability, but rather

the belief system. Dana explained that in school students are exposed to, interact with, and

understand others who have different beliefs from those in their own family, so that they can

"learn about themselves and others." The other strong benefit was that students could realize

their own values as well as those of others by having windows and mirrors in the classroom,

which would ultimately result in a positive emotional experience and increased motivation and

engagement in learning. In fact, knowing their own values, she believed, would lead students to

feel "belonging" and "a sense of purpose" in the classroom and to acknowledge that "they are contributing to the classroom for who they are" so that they could "feel more engaged and more inclined to learn." This point of view was almost identical to Lauren's in her final interview.

Challenges

It was interesting to see how much more detailed Dana described challenges than benefits of inclusion in her pre-dialogue interview. I noticed from my coding chart that she articulated a list of challenges. Those addressed only in her initial interview included large class size, financial burden, negative teacher behavior, and high school setting. She conceived that with large class sizes, "it's not possible all the time [for the teacher] to provide students with individualized support in the general education setting." Referring to her high school that had a tight budget, Dana noted that financially struggling schools or districts could pose "a huge challenge" to being able to provide the necessary resources for students with disabilities. Dana also identified teachers' negative behavior as a challenge for inclusion, sharing her own experience of a teacher who "a lot of times would lose patience" with students who would exhibit misbehavior, and "yell at" or "try to discipline them publicly." She criticized such teacher behavior as it did not "solve the problem." Further, Dana pointed out the high school setting as a challenge to inclusion, particularly in terms of fostering "social-emotional inclusion." That is, in high school students have already built their own social circles through extracurricular activities outside of school, and teachers' influence on students' social-emotional learning is limited during their 40-minute class period. For example, Dana elaborated, "who your students sit with at lunch might not change based on the 40 minutes that they spend in your class," meaning that the physical structure of high school makes it harder to implement inclusion.

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Three challenges Dana brought up across the interviews were students' complex needs interfering with learning of whole class, teacher workload, and student attitude. She was concerned that sometimes students who require "significant extra support" may "hinder the rest of the class from progressing forward" or "end up derailing from some of the time with the full class." As a result, Dana thought it could be challenging for teachers to create a "well-functioning classroom" to achieve the academic goals of students with complex needs in the general education classroom along with providing for the majority of students' learning. According to both her direct and indirect experience, making all the extra supports available for students with disability, for example, accommodating them with "different materials" or "assistive devices," drastically increases teacher workload, especially as a solo teacher. As to the challenge involving student attitude, at first Dana reflected that students "who needed extra support" in middle school tend to socially be excluded by their peers compared to elementary and high school. Yet, after the dialogue series, referring to students who are "not receptive to inclusion and to the idea of accepting other people" due to their preexisting beliefs, for example, of a certain group of people, such as the LGBTQ+ population, Dana expressed that "it might be a little harder to get them on the inclusion train." This idea parallels the perspective of Mei, who considered students' preexisting norms and beliefs about differences as a challenge for inclusion.

Facilitating Factors

Contrary to how Dana elaborated on the challenges for inclusion in her pre-dialogue interview, she simply described her envisioned inclusive classroom as having "more than one teacher in the room" and allowing students to have "accessible materials" and "flexible seating." I wondered why Dana did not say anything about individual teacher efforts, although she wrote, in her pre-dialogue journal, that teachers "need to be agents in promoting diversity, respect, and

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acceptance" by executing lessons that incorporate those values (e.g., "using materials that represent students from all backgrounds and abilities"), and facilitating conversations about and modeling how to internalize those values (e.g., using "people-first language") in the classroom.

After the dialogue series, however, Dana expressed in detail her thoughts about what should be done by individual teachers, among teachers, and the whole school. She argued that inclusive education "should be the groundwork for everything" an individual teacher does. Dana continued to speak of teacher mindset as an advocate of inclusion, which will "influence the curriculum that you use, the discussions that you have, the things that you put up in your classroom, the way that you speak to your students." Like the other participants, Dana also recognized the importance of the assets-based perspective that "everyone [students] has something that they can bring to the table." Thus, Dana concluded that inclusive education "sets the foundation for [teachers'] entire pedagogy," which enables teachers to "highlight students' strengths" and value their "personal quality" and "experiences" in the classroom.

In addition, Dana referred to collaboration among teachers and whole-school change. She delineated a possible action plan from a more personal view:

> I would start probably by talking with the team of teachers that I'm working with and … so that'd probably be the English Department, trying to find an inclusive curriculum within the English Department and talk about strategies for inclusion, just within the department. And then hopefully everyone will start to implement it and we'll figure out ways that it's really effective ...

Dana clearly acknowledged the limitations of individual efforts to achieve inclusion, saying "I don't think that I alone can achieve inclusive education in the school," as well as the limited effect if inclusive education is only applied within the classroom. As a result, she suggested

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teamwork between teachers and whole-school efforts in tandem with individual teachers' efforts. As such, she envisioned that departmental efforts would begin to spread out and "grow" to the entire school as a "school-wide initiative" where "everyone is on board."

Teacher Practices

Instruction, climate/environment, and management were the three main areas of teacher practices Dana consistently addressed in both interviews. While she was attentive to accommodations/related services before the dialogues, she put more emphasis on curriculum afterwards. Interestingly, Dana barely said anything about personal connection except for one comment during her final interview, which was in stark contrast to the comments of the other participants, who foregrounded relationship building between the teacher and students.

Personal Connection. In Dana's view, as noted, building an individual relationship with students in the classroom to get to know them more on a personal level was not a priority for the teacher. It was unknown how she interpreted teacher practice; in fact, she might have thought it is mainly associated with specific teaching technique or expertise. The only comment Dana made about personal connections after the dialogues was that teachers should be "aware of all of [their] students' different identities and the intersectionality in the classroom." Although she did not explicitly claim the significance of personal connections between the teacher and students, she began to recognize the teacher's role of acknowledging the individuality of students that are impacted by multiple social factors. It was evident that Dana brought up what we discussed and emphasized during our dialogue series.

Curriculum. Before the dialogues, Dana's only stated inclusive practice for curriculum was "educating on various backgrounds and disabilities and using materials that incorporate people of diverse backgrounds and that sort of thing." After the dialogue series, Dana became a

little bit more detailed and specific. Her foundational thoughts of using "classroom materials and curricula that promote diversity" remained the same, but she had "a better understanding" of how to implement inclusive education as it concerned curriculum. As she reflected, "we talked a lot about the curriculum [during our dialogue sessions]," she placed a huge value on introducing a variety of books and materials that "depict a wide range of cultures and lifestyles." Dana further delineated:

> … making sure that I'm using books that include diverse characters and incorporating diverse authors into the syllabus. If I'm just giving students books written by white men from the eighteen hundreds, that's not inclusive. I need to make sure that I'm sending a broad variety of cultures and experiences through the literature that I'm having my students consider. Think of the high school setting as well, there's a lot of dialogue that can happen around that, or I can ask kind of the tougher questions about inclusion and the current state of the world and who's in the minority and who's in the majority and how we can we seek to remedy that. I think those are discussions that can happen at the high school level.

Dana shaped her idea in a very concrete way, presenting an antithetical example of inclusive education. She seemed to internalize the practices she would implement in high school, which included not only diversifying the literature but facilitating discussions on the power differential between the majority and minority.

Instruction. As noted, Dana tended to focus heavily on using the universal design for learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction before the dialogues, particularly due to her coursework of the year and the pre-practicum, which addressed these frameworks numerous times. In describing herself, she stated, "I'm kind of ingrained now whenever I start to think

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about special education or inclusive education, that's immediately where my mind starts to go." However, she was totally silent about UDL and differentiated instruction after the dialogues. As a result, it was unclear whether she was no longer in favor of those frameworks, had just became more intrigued by curriculum, or simply did not mention it even though it was significant to her.

Later, after the dialogue series, Dana was substantially concerned with the way teachers "approach certain topics that may be a little more sensitive when it comes to inclusion." During our dialogue session, Dana pointed out the sensitivity of LGBTQ+ topics due to "[each family's] political and religious messaging that gets associated with that." As such, one of the topics the participants struggled to respond to was LGBTQ+ issues, especially the case where some parents complained about the teacher who introduced different types of family. Having discussed how to address the tension, Dana, as a starter, shared her idea:

> … in discussion with the parents, probably what I'd try to point out was just, I wasn't pushing any agenda and I introduced to the kids to this topic and now you can impart on them whatever views or values you want to in relation to this. But, at the end of the day, there are families like that, and it's important for students to know about the differences (the fifth dialogue session).

After Dana made this comment, the other participants agreed with her idea that what needs to be taught should be confined to "the facts" about family differences, not imposing personal beliefs. This conversation must have solidified Dana's standpoint; in her final interview, she firmly stated, "it's not the teacher's place necessarily to like shove, you know, a correct, quote-unquote, belief down a student's throat." Rather, she reiterated that when introducing "different cultures and identities," teachers should be "just presenting the facts and not necessarily pushing a belief

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that might not be welcome to students" and have their students "share their own experiences with those topics and form their own beliefs" as an inclusive practice.

Accommodations/Related Services. Only were they brought up in her initial interview, Dana was well aware of basic accommodations and related services. Thus, she envisioned an inclusive classroom with resources being available to students in need, such as "assistive technology" and "extra specialists." She also identified testing accommodations, including "extra time" or a separate classroom and made references to the extra support programs for ELLs and students with disability in the high school where she was placed for her first pre-practicum. Here she had observed and heard that those students were pulled out for "more individualized instruction."

Assessment. Dana did not mention any practice related to assessment in either her journals or interviews.

Climate/Environment. Similar to Mei, Dana was primarily focused on physical classroom setup across the interviews. During her initial interview, she shared what she had noticed in her first pre-practicum: setting up a consistent classroom routine for clear expectations of what students were going to accomplish. For example, the teacher would begin her class by "going over what they [students] were doing and she'd have that posted." Dana also stressed the importance of teachers establishing "ground rules of respect" in the classroom, such as providing students "the implicit cues of using person-first language" or "explicitly talking about the importance of inclusion."

In her final interview, Dana stressed that the teacher should ensure that "every student has a mirror and a window in the classroom so that they can learn about themselves and others." As noted under Curriculum, Dana believed that having students read a variety of books that

reflect diverse lifestyles and cultures is one way to achieve that purpose. Further, Dana elaborated on "signage" as something she had enjoyed seeing recently. Not limiting herself to share what she observed, she went on to explain why she thought signage is important for inclusion. Indeed, while acknowledging that signage is only a "surface-level indicator," she believed that putting up signs of "Black Lives Matter" or signs that "welcomes LGBTQ identities" helps teachers "immediately set the tone" in the classroom and school, as they help create a welcoming space where "these conversations can happen and will happen" and convey a message that the teacher is "a resource person who's here to support and promote that [inclusion]."

Management. Before the dialogue series, Dana shared her perspective on (un)desirable and (in)effective teacher practice to deal with student behavior by contrasting the opposite examples from her schooling experience. She recalled:

I feel like it was a lot easier to pull out the parts where it was like, "Oh, that seems a little iffy," as opposed to like, "Oh, that's a really supportive practice." So, I remember like in elementary school, there were a couple of kids in our classes who would have—I think it was usually behavioral disabilities—and the teacher would a lot of times like lose their patience with them or they, you know, they'd yell at them or try to discipline them like really publicly. Um, and a lot of times that didn't really solve the problem. Um, and you know, there were times where they'd be like, "Okay, do you want to take a walk?" Or like, "Let's go get some water." And that always seemed to be a lot more, um, effective than trying to like force them, you know, to get over whatever they were experiencing and back into the routine. So, I feel like it's easier to kind of pinpoint moments where their strategies weren't effective versus when they were. Because when they were, you

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almost didn't notice it. It was, the problem was taken care of and then we all kind of

moved on, whereas one, the practice wasn't effective, it just made the problem worse and

delayed us even further, if that makes sense.

Dana reflected that teachers' emotional reaction to students was ineffective since it did not solve

but actually worsened the problem, whereas a calm attitude of communicating with the students

was more effective. Her point was interesting that teachers' negative practices are more

noticeable and, in fact, easier to remember.

After the dialogue series, Dana rethought the case, Zora's story—the only black girl in

the classroom, which we discussed for classroom management and inclusion during. Pointing to

the fact in the story that a white boy was the group leader, Dana claimed the teachers highlighted

students' strengths, proposing "why don't we give her [Zora] the leadership position in the

classroom?" Later, in our final interview, Dana brought up the case again and suggested,

"teachers … explicitly making someone a group leader and they rotate through, and everyone

gets a chance to be group leader." She valued providing students an equal opportunity to

discover and develop their potential as contributing members of the class.

Tension

Dana delineated tensions around inclusion in each interview. As noted under Challenges,

the example she brought up across the interviews involved the tension between individuals'

learning versus the majority's learning. Specifically, she expressed concern that students with

extensive support needs may be "inhibiting the flow of the classroom," but it also meant the

students might not be able to receive an appropriate individualized instruction in the general

education classroom due to the learning of the whole class. Obviously, from Dana's perspective,

it was difficult for the teacher to prioritize or sacrifice one over the other.

The other example of tension Dana expounded in her initial interview involved the tracking system. As she noticed that I was not entirely familiar with American K-12 system, she explained tracking to me as a system whereby "people were ranked," in Dana's words. As the only participant who was a Secondary Education major, Dana problematized the tracking system in high school, articulating why it evokes tension regarding inclusion using concrete examples. First, she compared two types of classes within a school, AP literature and chorus; not everyone can take classes like AP literature, whereas "anyone can enroll" in classes like chorus. She continued to explain how she perceived tracking:

> … a lot of the times, like in the higher-level classes, you wouldn't have students with disabilities, or if they had them, they were—it was something like ADHD and they were medicated, and it didn't manifest in a way that required extra support any more at the high school setting. So, I think it depends a lot on the high school, how the high school is, um, approaching education in general. If they're tracking, it seems like it would be more difficult to achieve inclusive education because tracks automatically separate people out, if that makes sense.

The tracking system results in classes that are exclusive to a certain group of students within the school. Furthermore, referring back to the high school where she was placed for her pre-practicum, Dana critiqued the city's public school system as not being compatible with inclusive education, in that the schools were stratified by student ability and SES. According to Dana, for example, schools that select students based on their test scores eventually end up with students from higher SES backgrounds and those without disability. On the contrary, schools that do not require test scores are open to anyone, thereby accepting all the students "who are left," including those from low SES, ELLs, or students with disability. Her practicum site was at a

school that did not require test scores. Dana went on to introduce me a newspaper article that dealt with a lot of issues related to the tracking system, saying "the more you learn about the way that the public school system sorts people out, it just makes you angry. It's not fair." From her emotional reaction, I felt Dana appeared to resent what was reported in the article, the unfair education system. In short, Dana was convinced that the tracking system is antithetical to the idea of inclusion, as it divides students into different groups by ability within and across schools.

What was more intriguing about Dana's perspective on the high school system related to tracking "structure" during one of our dialogue sessions. She explained its advantages, which was contrary to her initial statement and emotional reaction:

> if you're providing different leveled classes, that's a way that they can sort of individualize their learning so that, you know, I feel like in a middle school or elementary school setting, one of the disadvantages sometimes is that all students are kind of expected to work up to the same curriculum and same standard. And if that's not possible, or if it's posing a really significant challenge to some students in high school, they at least have the opportunity to, you know, reason, "Okay, I don't have to take AP English, I can take the Level One English class, and that's more suited to my wants and needs as a learner." So, I do see that there is a bit of a strength in there, in terms of how high school is structured that way (the fourth dialogue session).

Seeing it in a positive light, the tracking system provides students "options" to choose according to their academic needs. Dana spoke highly of the curricular flexibility in the tracking system, as opposed to the inflexible curricula in elementary and middle school, claiming that it would remain as an advantage as long as students could move between differently leveled classes; Dana only problematized the situation when students' academic path was "set in stone," which

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triggered another discussion among the participants. Eventually, what she elaborated later during the dialogue session alleviated her initial opposition to tracking system as the example against inclusion.

After the dialogue series, Dana brought up two other examples. First, she touched on the discrepancy between the ideal and reality regarding the inclusion of the LGBTQ population. Describing the ideal world as a place where "everyone would be inclusive of everyone," she hinted at this as an unrealistic expectation, due to politics and religion interwoven with the LGBTQ population, expecting "there's a lot of places where it could be kind of astray in the conversation." Next, she recognized the issue of power embedded in the discourse of inclusion, remembering what we discussed during our dialogue session, "we talked a lot about … in inclusive education, you have the norm and the reference point of the majority." Connecting this idea with cultural and linguistic diversity (CLD), Dana pointed out, "a lot of times you don't need to talk about how you can include the majority." Dana did not only problematize the underlying issue of power in the discourse of inclusion, which implies that the majority, as the norm and the reference point, are trying to include people at the margin, but also contemplate if the issue of inclusion maintains status quo, where the majority are in power and comforted by the fact that they are trying to include those who are powerless, whether or not it is intentional. Apparently, she was grappling with how to reconcile the tension. Dana referred back to our last discussion where she drew the conclusion that "it [inclusion] can be for all, and everyone is the majority in some way" as students have "windows and mirrors" in the classroom.

Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives

The most salient change in Dana was her attitude toward inclusive education, along with her reconciliation of the tension that existed in inclusion. Before the dialogue series, she was not

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entirely positive toward inclusive education, but she eventually had a substantially positive view. However, different from the other participants, Dana did not say anything that represented her commitment to enacting inclusive practices as a future educator.

Looking into this change more closely, Dana first expressed her concern that "it's [inclusive education] not effective all of the time for all students," even though she generally saw inclusive education as "a good idea" that "schools should aim for." In terms of "trying to give everyone the best shot that they can at the best education possible," Dana admitted that inclusive education can be "one way to help, try to give all students a decent chance at good education," but she clearly stated that it was not "the best way to go about that all the time." This claim was grounded in her initial perception of inclusive education as full inclusion, which is educating students with disability alongside typically developing students entirely in the classroom. In her mind, therefore, inclusive classrooms have more resources and supports than typical general education classrooms where no students necessarily require extra support, thereby remaining a traditional style of classroom. "Sometimes it's easier, or better, to have individualized instruction [for students with disability] outside of that environment," Dana continued. Given that view, it was understandable that she was uncertain about the effectiveness of inclusive education.

However, in her final interview Dana's stance had evidently shifted, and she began to see inclusive education far more positively. Despite a continuing degree of confusion and struggle with the definition of inclusion, Dana confirmed that she had "a much broader view of what inclusion in the classroom looks like." She now related inclusive education with all students' sense of belonging and learning about themselves and others by having "a window and a mirror" in any classroom where they are placed. Therefore, she not only considered inclusive education as something "super important," but also "believe[d] in it as a good practice" that should be "the

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groundwork for everything" in teachers' pedagogy and that should "continue to grow." This was supported by her vision that "the broader it's used, the better will be the result." Dana, in fact, assumed that everyone who experiences an inclusive environment would be more inclined to create a better society, thus, recognizing the potential of inclusive education leading to a society that is welcoming of everyone and that promotes equity and social justice.

Furthermore, Dana openly shared that the shift in her perspective occurred during the dialogue series, as she found the way to overcome the implicit power hierarchy between the majority and the minority embedded in the discourse of inclusion. Dana elaborated:

… thinking about who inclusive education is for, I think after the initial, our initial discussion … I was wondering if like inclusive education is for the majority to make them feel better about having people in the minority and try to bring them into the fold. And I think, for a long time, I was kind of struggling to like reconcile that, because you don't—you want inclusive education to be effective and you want it to be for everyone and you want it to be something that benefits the minority and that isn't just a construct, but the majority uses to like, feel better about being in the majority. And then the last discussion that we had where we were like, "No, there's windows and mirrors in it." It can be for all, and everyone is the majority in some way. I think that really helps to kind of challenge my belief that it's for … my concern that it's for the majority … and helped me kind of come to the conclusion that I like it better, and that I think it is more effective. So, it was one way that I saw my beliefs challenged, which was good, and I'm glad that they were.

Since our dialogue series also addressed inclusion from a critical perspective, Dana remembered that "we talked a lot about" the existence of "the norms and the reference point of the majority"

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in inclusive education. She particularly appeared to have been preoccupied by the fact that "a lot of times you don't need to talk about how you can include the majority." Dana raised this hidden issue of power especially related to cultural and linguistic diversity, and tried to reconcile the tension as she, through another discussion session, realized a way to blur the distinction between the majority and the minority. Referring back to the case we discussed together, Dana suggested that Zora "could be a majority" if her strengths were highlighted in contrast to the fact that she was a "cultural and linguistic minority" as the only Black girl in the classroom. As a concluding thought, Dana developed this new understanding of "everyone is the majority and everyone is the minority" as teachers take "strengths-based approaches" and provide students "windows and mirrors" to recognize each other's values.

Summary of Dana's Conceptualization

Dana, as a white female from a middle-class background, was a typical college student in a teacher education program. She was heterosexual, and had no history of having a disability. At the time of the study, she was a sophomore majoring in Secondary Education and English, as opposed to the rest of the participants who were majoring in Elementary Education. However, at the end of her sophomore year, Dana switched her major to Applied Psychology and Human Development, with a firm plan to study Higher Education and Student Affairs in graduate school. Compared to other participants, Dana had relatively limited teaching experience in the classroom for a few months, but she actively participated in discussions in addition to promptly responding to my facilitation.

The focal points of Dana's conceptualization before and after the group dialogue series are as follows. She constantly foregrounded quality education for all students as the central aim of inclusive education. However, her initial interpretation of quality education was providing the

opportunity, for students with disability, on one hand, to not feel singled out or embarrassed and, for typically developing students, on the other hand, to interact with those who have different learning styles and abilities and foster a more inclusive mindset towards them. Later, during her final interview, Dana connected quality education with enhancing all students' sense of belonging. Her rationale was that by providing windows and mirrors to students, teachers allow them to see themselves as valuable in the classroom as well as more willing to accept others who are different from themselves. Regarding acceptance as the key value students should nurture, Dana stressed the transferability of inclusion within and beyond the classroom. In fact, in the pre-dialogue interview she only explained within-the-classroom transferability, the idea of including students with disability would spread out to embrace students with different race or culture. Across the interviews, she believed that inclusion in the classroom serves to create a more inclusive society that impacts the well-being of all individuals.

Dana clearly supported the idea that inclusive education is for all students. In her initial interview, however, she envisioned full inclusion of students with disability in the general education classroom as an ideal model although she was not a proponent of it; thus, she tended to view student diversity from an ability aspect only. That was why she thought students with disability could be easily included in classes (e.g., chorus) where students do not need to be separated by ability. After the dialogues, she began to consider multiple identities of students such as CLD, sexuality, or SES, beyond ability. For students with disability she completely excluded full inclusion as a placement option; rather, she supported the LRE, that is, any environment in which students are placed beyond a general education classroom.

Students learning about difference by interacting with peers different from themselves was the major benefit of inclusion Dana constantly anticipated. She initially associated

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difference with ability but later changed it to stem from different belief systems. Dana believed that such learning would enable students to realize their own values as well as those of others. Interestingly, she expounded on challenges in her initial interview, such as large class size, financial burden, negative behavior of teachers, and high school setting, in comparison to her final interview and the description of benefits in both interviews. Nonetheless, there were three main challenges to inclusion that Dana was constantly concerned about. She supposed that (a) students requiring significant support may hinder the learning of the whole class; (b) teacher workload would be increased as they would have to make extra support available for students with disability; and (c) students may exhibit reluctance toward inclusion due to their immaturity or preexisting beliefs. Contrary to her simple envisagement of an ideal inclusive classroom where there are more resources and human capital available for students with disability, after the dialogues, Dana illustrated what should be done to facilitate inclusion. She suggested that inclusive education should be the foundation for teachers' pedagogy, including their mindset of understanding students from an assets-based perspective. Acknowledging the limits of each individual teacher, Dana further mentioned teacher collaboration in hopes it would spread to the whole school.

Although Dana later claimed the importance of inclusive education as an underpinning philosophy for teacher practice, she did not address relationship building at all, as opposed to the other participants who stressed it the most. Rather, what stood out to me was Dana's interest in classroom environment. At first, she mentioned physical classroom setup, that is, having consistent classroom routines and rules of respect, but, after the dialogues, she underlined putting up signage in the classroom to send a message of supporting diverse students. Another interesting point regarding curriculum was that Dana placed a greater emphasis on presenting

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factual information, as opposed to imposing personal beliefs, to students when teaching sensitive topics like family differences.

Without Dana, we would never have thought of tracking as conflict to the idea of inclusion. She problematized tracking in that it stratifies schools and students, thereby from the start excluding a certain group of students, typically those who need more support, from academically demanding schools or classes. She also recognized the issue of power in the discourse of inclusion, suspecting inclusion is for the majority by maintaining status quo and feeling better about themselves as they put in an effort to include the minority. For this reason and her doubt about the effectiveness of full inclusion, Dana was not an advocate of inclusive education before the dialogues. Yet, as she found a way to reconcile the tension, that is, inclusive education aims to provide students windows and mirrors in the classroom and highlight students' strengths, after the dialogues, she ended up developing a new, positive understanding of inclusive education: "Everyone is the majority, and everyone is the minority."

Lauren

Lauren was a 21-year-old female college junior at the time of the study. She identified herself as a white, cisgender, native English speaker who is monolingual. Growing up in an upper-middle class family in the northeastern United States, Lauren attended suburban and religious private K-12 schools. She has had a diagnosis of specific learning disability (SLD) and attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) since second grade. She described herself as one who "struggled a lot in learning academics throughout my elementary, middle, and high school."

I first met Lauren as my student in fall 2018, when I was teaching the introductory special education course *Working With Students With Special Needs*. She was always sitting in the front row and staring at me with a smile. She was a hard-working student and very responsive in class. She was not hesitant to raise questions or to meet with me in my office to request clarification on assignments. Whenever I told a joke in class, she would pleasantly laugh out loud. I felt she was full of positive energy.

Lauren was double-majoring in Applied Psychology and Elementary Education. Of the courses she had taken, those she thought were relevant to inclusive education were *Working With Students With Special Needs, Learning and Curriculum in the Elementary School, and Mental Illness: Social and Clinical Perspectives.* The former two courses were requirements for Education majors, relevant to special education and multicultural education, respectively. *Learning and Curriculum* is integrated with the first pre-practicum, so the students must complete a project involving working with an emergent bilingual student for a semester. *Mental Illness* is offered to Applied Psychology majors, and Lauren was the only participant indicating that the course was relevant to inclusive education. I did not ask her why she listed it, but

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speculated that she might have considered children and families with mental health issues as the population for inclusion from the perspective of a future clinical counselor planning to go to graduate school in Social Work. (After the data collection for my dissertation study was completed in summer 2020, Lauren, Dana, and I met on campus in the beginning of the fall semester. There, Lauren told me that she had dropped her Elementary Education major in preparation for going to graduate school in Social Work.)

Experiences With Diverse Populations

With regard to her personal experiences with diverse populations, first, Lauren had "a fair amount of experience" with individuals with disabilities in an out-of-school context. During the summer of 2019, she worked with a girl with cerebral palsy in her hometown, who was nonverbal and had limited mobility. Lauren played games and assisted the girl with daily living skills. Lauren also worked for a private soccer program, where she worked with children with special needs such as Down Syndrome.

Lauren seemed to have more exposure to individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds than those with disabilities or the LGBTQ+ population. She had two cousins who were adopted from Korea when they were very young. "Many of her good friends" were American-born bilingual, whose parents immigrated to the United States from various countries. As a student athlete, Lauren had two teammates who were descendants of families from India (male) and Taiwan (female), and learned about them; for example, the male teammate told her about his religious background, Hinduism, and how that affected him growing up in the United States. Lauren also learned a lot about the female teammate, whom she interviewed for a project in her *Bilingualism* class. In the process she learned about her educational upbringing as a child who fully spoke Chinese at home, such as how her parents' bilingualism and immigration

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experiences impacted her childhood and how she was picking up English independently and through school. Lastly, Lauren's experience with the LGBTQ+ population was relatively limited. The only person she knew who identified with that population was a teammate, who was transgender.

Teaching Experiences

Lauren had a variety of formal and informal teaching experiences before and during college. Her first informal teaching experience was to "babysit for numerous families" in her town, with children ranging from age 2 through 13. Since sophomore year in high school, Lauren had worked as a camp counselor in two different private learning institutes during summer break. There, she tutored children and guided them for extracurricular activities such as swimming, games, or arts and crafts. Her first official teaching experience began in her senior year in high school as part of completing a Capstone project. At that time, Lauren loved working with children and wanted to be an elementary teacher, so she volunteered in a kindergarten classroom, supporting the classroom teacher as an assistant for over a month and a half.

In college, as a teacher candidate in elementary education, Lauren completed her first pre-practicum in a suburban school in spring 2019, and her second pre-practicum in an urban school in fall 2019. By coincidence, I was her supervisor during her first pre-practicum, the following semester after she had taken my class. Lauren was assigned to a first-grade classroom and was working with an emergent bilingual student from China for one-on-one reading aloud in the hallway. The classroom where Lauren did her pre-practicum felt chaotic. Whenever I had a triad meeting with Lauren and the classroom teacher, the teacher seemed to be utterly indifferent to mentoring. Later I learned that Lauren had the same impression. During our pre-/post-dialogue interviews on inclusive education, she often referred to the classroom as "such a negative

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environment," and recalled the teacher's attitude towards us by saying, "We were like, an inconvenience."

One day, Lauren requested a meeting with me to discuss her future career path. I do not remember the exact date, but it was probably after she had completed her first pre-practicum, in her sophomore year. She shared her passion for working with children but not as an elementary classroom teacher. I speculate the reason for her change of mind was, in part, due to her negative classroom experience during the first pre-practicum.

Throughout her classroom teaching experiences, Lauren did not work with any students who were formally diagnosed with a disability. She suspected that a boy in her first pre-practicum who was constantly acting out might have had a disability and that five children in her second pre-practicum had AD/HD, but she was not sure about their disability status, nor did she look into it. Lauren did not have any experience working with LGBTQ+ students either. She had only heard that her classmate who was completing her pre-practicum in an elementary school had two students who were transgender.

During our follow-up conversation, I asked her about the diverse students she met during the practica. Lauren said that it was hard for her to remember specific information about the students because of her "really bad memory." She thought inquiring about the students was not necessary, and she had never thought of asking her mentor teachers. However, as a final comment, Lauren reflected that perhaps she should have asked because "maybe it would have given more depth to how they display themselves as students."

The Classroom Context of Lauren's Current Practicum

When this study was being conducted, Lauren was completing her third pre-practicum at the same school site as Mei. She was in a general education classroom for kindergarteners in an

urban private Catholic PreK-8 school. Her mentor teacher was a white female who had 10 years of teaching experience with an early childhood teaching license. There were three adults in the classroom: the classroom teacher, a paraprofessional, and Lauren as a student teacher. Of 18 students, four seemed to be on either an individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. Their disability type was unclear because Lauren was not informed of their diagnoses, nor did she ask the teacher about it. Lauren only assumed they "most likely" had AD/HD. Two thirds of the students were culturally and linguistically diverse. Lauren indicated that six students were English Language Learners (ELLs); the remaining six students of color. Specifically, three were Asians, two were black or African-Americans, and one was Latinx. She suspected that two of those students had intersectional identities, that is, students of color with a disability. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, unfortunately, the pre-practicum was halted in early March 2020.

Lauren's Conceptualization of Inclusive Education

Lauren's conceptualization of inclusive education was clearly impacted by the group dialogue series. During our post-dialogue interview, Lauren explicitly expressed her changed understanding of inclusion after the discussions, "from day one, I just kind of had this idea about inclusion as belonging and feeling welcome. But at the end of the study, I had like a whole different view." On her own, Lauren concluded that the reason behind the dialogues on inclusive education we had through my dissertation research was because "it is important to recognize that not all students are the same," as well as to support the students from a "needs-based approach," notably, which was a term she originated.

Lauren fully described how the discussions during the group dialogue series impacted her understanding of inclusion. She "really enjoyed" participating. Hearing peers' variety of ideas allowed Lauren to reflect on her own ideas and beliefs while the discussions were ongoing,

which was her "favorite part of the study." Lauren said she "love[d] the idea of reflecting and taking a step back and really thinking about my ideas and beliefs that may not be explicit," particularly "after they [the other participants] would say something or after a question was posed." As illustrated in this quote, Lauren acted on the opportunities provided by the dialogue series to shape her ideas more explicitly. In addition, participating in the dialogue series gave Lauren opportunities to think through others' perspectives:

> I think hearing other people's ideas kind of allowed me to—in a good or a bad way, like, 'Do I agree with their ideas? Do I not agree with their ideas?' And obviously I wouldn't always explicitly say if I disagree[d] with their ideas. But it was helpful in that hearing other people's ideas made me realize that there's not just one way to foster an inclusive classroom.

Lauren mentioned she questioned whether or not she agreed with the ideas of the other preservice teachers during the group dialogues. Regardless, it helped her expand her preexisting knowledge as she learned different teacher practices promoting inclusion.

To further delineate Lauren's conceptualization of inclusive education before and after the group dialogue series, I will make reference to both of her initial and final interviews and journals. I also report on her accounts according to the eight major categories of inclusive education: Purposes, Features, Benefits, Challenges, Facilitating Factors, Teacher Practices, Tensions, and Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives.

Purposes

First and foremost, the main purpose of inclusive education for Lauren was "a sense of belonging." Initially, she believed that all students should feel "they are a member of the classroom" and "have a sense of belonging in the classroom." Lauren also referred to inclusion

as meeting students' needs, yet not as much as she stressed a sense of belonging. She simply pointed out the importance of providing students "varying resources depending on their current needs." After the dialogue sessions, Lauren still paid most attention to a sense of belonging as the primary purpose of inclusive education. However, she now placed a greater emphasis on "meeting students' needs" than at the initial interview, naming inclusion as a "needs-based approach." Lauren explained:

> I think when I started off, I really had this idea that inclusivity and inclusive education is, it's just making sure that each student feels like they belong, like this big sense of belonging. And, while I do think that's true still, that each student feels like they belong ... I feel like I've really adapted this new, like needs-based approach to inclusivity and inclusion, and really ensuring that the needs of students are met. I think like every single week we've talked about, um, different qualities of students that they could be, um, offered different supports. And, so I think just a very needs-based approach is really important, making sure that each student is included.

A salient change should be noted here with regard to Lauren's emphasis on meeting students' needs: She made comments coded as "student purpose of learning," explaining that inclusion should aim at "fostering student purpose in the classroom" so that students "have a reason to be there." Her rationale for this claim was that having a clear purpose of learning—knowing why they are learning—motivates students and, therefore, is a way to foster student "empowerment." As a researcher, I wondered what made Lauren expand her idea of the purpose of inclusive education. I found the answer during our second dialogue session, the topic of which was "celebrating diversity." Here we addressed ways of genuinely celebrating diversity and the role of educators for that. In that conversation Lauren commented:

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Honestly, what Holly said was really what I was going to say about recognizing your own limitations and biases. But, in addition to that, I think it's really important that teachers continue to recognize … the things that are not in the cultural norm of the school. So, like, celebrating Hanukkah may not be normative for most, but it's still important to do so. And then I also think it's important that teachers recognize the *purpose* of why we're learning about other cultures. Because I think if students understand and are aware of the *purpose of doing* that, they will be more open to learning. But if they are kind of sitting there without a clue of "Why we are learning about other cultures?" They may totally tune out and be like, "This doesn't relate to me because it's not my culture." [emphasis added]

In this quote, Lauren stressed teachers' need to recognize their own limitations and biases, school norms, or their absence, and the purpose of learning. Although students having a purpose in this context was confined to learning about other cultures, she claimed that knowing why facilitates meaningful learning, as students are more willing to learn and relate to what they learn. Thus, I inferred Lauren's final conceptualization of the purpose of learning stemmed from this dialogue segment.

In short, Lauren significantly expanded her idea of the purpose of inclusion influenced by the dialogue series. She stated in her final journal: "My newfound definition of inclusion includes creating space where students feel respected, welcome, and that their needs are heard and attended to by the teacher." Although Lauren did not explicitly mention any values except "equity not equality" (in the initial interview), her responses in both journals and interviews suggested that equity was more weighted as a key value to be achieved through inclusion.

Features

Focus of Concern. Lauren repeatedly said, "If you walk into a room and don't feel like you belong, I don't think anything feels worse than that." As a sense of belonging is a huge value for her, her main focus of concern about inclusive education was on the social/affective aspect throughout. "Ensuring each student feels they belong in the classroom is important," Lauren emphasized. But, later, as she came to underscore the purpose of learning, she also acknowledged the academic aspect. That is, she believed that having positive feelings and knowing the purpose of learning would improve students' academic performance, because their awareness would lead them "[to] so much more likely to pay attention, to be motivated." Lauren associated social-emotional functioning with academic achievement.

Scope of Population. Initially, Lauren primarily referred to students with disabilities as the target population for inclusion. Disability, which she believed interferes with learning, was an important consideration for her because she believed that students with disability need more support in the classroom than those without disability, who are less likely to struggle in learning. When asked about the main student population for inclusion in the initial interview, Lauren responded, "disability is a really big deal, learning disabilities specifically. Because that can really impact a student's performance in the classroom. So, I think that is really what I immediately think of." As a person with LD and AD/HD, Lauren had "struggled so much in terms of academics" and benefitted from her teachers' individual attention and additional support. Her own experience as a struggling learner may suggest why Lauren referred to students with disabilities as the target population for inclusion.

Lauren did acknowledge, however, that inclusive education could also "apply to a variety of categories" of students and be manifested in "so many different routes" depending on the

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school context. For example, she imagined a situation: "This will never happen ... but if there's a classroom where not a single student has a learning disability, then what does inclusive education really mean in that classroom?" Answering her own question, she suggested that in a suburban school it could be students from different races. She mentioned students with diverse religious background as well. She was the only one of the participants who brought up religion, sharing her personal experience as a non-religious student at the Catholic university. Lauren admitted that she tended to ask herself, "Will I fit in here? Will I feel welcome?" Projecting her experience to a Muslim or Jewish student attending a K-12 Christian or Catholic school, she wondered, "What does that mean for that student?," which ultimately concerns an issue of belonging.

After the dialogue series, Lauren had a more expanded view of the target population for inclusion. Different from her initial view focusing primarily on students with disabilities, she stated "every student has different needs" for inclusion. Lauren described how she had changed her perspective on the target population, referring to our group discussions:

> …the more we discussed and the more we talked about different populations that needed to be included, for example, at first, I think I only mentioned students with disabilities and students with, like ADHD or learning struggles. But at the end, I realized, 'Wait, there's also students, LGBTQ students, students with low socioeconomic backgrounds, students with, like a variety of identities?'

Moreover, Lauren began to made a distinction between the ideal world and reality in terms of inclusion, arguing, "I think the easy answer is for all students ... inclusive education, if we're being more realistic, is really targeted to maybe the minority populations." Given "a variety of factors" that may impact students differently, she believed that inclusive education

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concerns students from marginalized groups, such as students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ students, or students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Placement. Lauren did not mention anything related to the subcategory of Placement in either interview.

Benefits

Lauren identified two benefits of inclusion. In both of her interviews she stated that inclusion is beneficial to students, as she associated students' positive emotional learning experience with academic excellence. Before the dialogues, Lauren spoke highly of the teachers from her own schooling experience who made her "feel more confident and comfortable in the classroom." For Lauren, those teachers were a "guiding hand," who would actively check in on and support her whenever she was struggling in learning. Equating this with benefit, Lauren greatly valued one-on-one relationships between teacher and students because she believed that the relationships "translate into their performance" and make students "go leaps and bounds." However, she narrowed it down to struggling learners: "Students who haven't struggled or maybe are always on top of the grass in terms of performance, I don't think they would recognize the benefits of that individual relationship as much."

Lauren maintained this stance after the dialogue series and further articulated how students can benefit from inclusion: Students can learn better, being more attentive and motivated if they become aware that "they have a reason to be there," along with a feeling of being "respected" and "heard" in the classroom.

The other benefit of inclusive education Lauren mentioned in the initial interview was community building. Inclusive education enables the school community to be "a whole kind of unit" beyond the classroom level to accomplish the goals set for all students. Lauren did not talk

about community building in the same way again in her final interview; yet, she brought it up as a benefit for teachers. Inclusive education is "cool" because "teachers have an opportunity … to get to know their students."

Challenges

Lauren spoke of challenges far more than benefits. Her first response to the question about challenges for inclusive education was, "There are so many challenges and I think that's why this topic is such a big, it's such a big discussion." In both interviews, her focus was drawn to teachers' negative disposition/behavior as a major challenge for inclusive education. At first, Lauren brought up the case of the classroom teacher in her first pre-practicum as an unfavorable example in which inclusion was not happening:

> It was not the best that it could be by any means. And I think the teacher was just very ...
> doing the bare minimum ... that could have been so much better if she created ... those
> individual relationships with each student. And that did not happen.

Clarifying how this represented a challenge, Lauren, again, referred to the same teacher unfavorably in the final interview:

> I don't think that that classroom was the most inclusive that it could be. And I think that's
> why it was such a negative environment ... that perpetrated the ... just negative behavior
> and the negative class climate ... just the lack of positivity in that room.

By censuring this teachers' indifference in building a meaningful relationship with each student and creating a positive classroom environment, Lauren stressed that teacher disposition/behavior was a challenging factor for successful inclusion.

Lauren noted teacher workload in inclusion as another challenge across interviews. In the final interview, she repeated that it is "very time-consuming" and takes "a lot of time" on the

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teacher's end, because they have to "go above and beyond all the time." Inclusion requires "a lot of patience" and "a significant amount of more work, more effort," thereby "overwhelming" teachers with "too much of a heavy load," especially when there is only one teacher for a large class.

The third challenge Lauren cited was related to the fluid nature of inclusion as a concept. Initially, questioning if teachers' effort truly leads to positive outcomes for all students, Lauren indicated the difficulty of gauging actual benefits:

I think another challenge is wondering if everything that the teacher is doing would make all students feel like they're included or not. And kind of wondering, is this worth it or is … like, what are the actual tangible benefits of an inclusive classroom? I think [it] could be really challenging for the teacher.

Later, Lauren acknowledged that "there is no right answer" to implementing inclusion in practice. She claimed that as a "negating factor" that may discourage teachers from willingly enacting inclusive practices:

there's no one-size-fits-all to education. So, I think some teacher could see, "Why should I strive for an inclusive classroom if there's never going to be the perfect inclusive classroom or there's never going to be the right way to do it?"

Lauren saw inclusion as a fluid concept, in that it is difficult to measure the actual outcomes and that no teacher's manual for inclusion exists in practice. She believed this nature of inclusion could pose a challenge to teachers.

Facilitating Factors

Before the dialogue series, Lauren viewed individual teachers' attitudes and efforts and whole-school efforts as facilitating factors for inclusion. Recalling her first pre-practicum, she

stated "the teacher can do their best to make an inclusive classroom," as she criticized her cooperating teacher's indifference to creating a positive environment. Lauren also believed that inclusion requires community building, "you should go back to the school as a whole." She elaborated:

> The teachers should collaborate on ways that they can facilitate inclusive classrooms … if teachers feel like they're not alone and they're all kind of in it together, I think that can create, like, a much better community feel than when a teacher is trying to make it [an] inclusive classroom but no one else is standing with her or him.

Lauren's answer implied that building a community has a stronger impact on inclusion than individual teachers' attitudes and efforts, as she explained that the collaboration among teachers as part of a whole-school effort facilitates a sense of community within the school.

After the dialogue series, Lauren further amplified the significance of individual teachers' attitudes and efforts. Inclusion is "up to the teacher's attitude and perception of their students." To support this claim, Lauren contrasted two teachers' attitudes:

> One teacher, I think, could see a student who misbehaves and acts out and is behind in the material as annoying, a nuisance, just disruptive, which is what I think that specific teacher did. And then another teacher could see, 'You know what, they act out. But let me dig into why they're acting out, let me see what the causes are. And maybe I can aid in that support so that they stop acting out so much.' Like I think it's very much the teacher's attitude of 'Can I make this classroom inclusive?' It's not the students. I think it's really the teacher's attitude.

Lauren believed that creating an inclusive classroom depends on teachers' attitude and perception of their students. As seen in the above quote, Lauren supported the latter teacher's

attitude and perception as desirable for inclusion when dealing with students' misbehavior. In this regard, Lauren noted an asset-based approach as an important teacher mindset. Teachers should acknowledge "each student has different assets that other students may not have" and pay attention to their "positive factors."

Further, Lauren addressed the ways in which teachers should attempt this, using a specific example to illustrate possible practices. She now perceived that inclusive practices begin with small tasks that can be done on a daily basis, which teachers might have been doing already:

> I think it's important for teachers to take baby steps, like one day, adding a bunch of new books that represent their students in the classroom ... and that's it. And the second day … [with] the three students and having one-on-one interviews to get to learn about them a little bit better ... The third day, pulling a few students aside who you know struggle in math and checking in on them and seeing their progress.

Although Lauren still acknowledged after the dialogue series that inclusion is time-consuming and that it places a heavy workload on teachers, she envisioned that teachers advocating inclusion would treat students from an asset-based approach and put a conscientious effort into supporting students. That is, she asserted that inclusive practices are simple, supportive daily practices rather than "one big grandiose action."

Teacher Practices

I inferred from Lauren's responses that she prioritized practices related to Personal Connection, Instruction, and Climate/Environment. While she constantly talked about those categories in both interviews, she never mentioned practices regarding accommodations/services and assessment in either interview. I speculate that the dialogue series influenced her to think

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about curriculum, as she only addressed it in the final interview, referring to other participants who talked about practice as to curriculum during one of our discussions.

Personal Connection. According to Lauren, the most foundational teacher practice for inclusion was to get to know and build an individual relationship with each student. "I think that's the basis," she said. Teachers should "learn them [students] individually," including personality traits, family background, strengths and weaknesses, and struggles in learning. In this regard, it is "a really big deal" for Lauren that teachers are "making an effort to seek out" struggling learners and sending them a message such as "I'm here for you. If you need me, I can help you out."

Later, Lauren repeated the importance of individual relationships in an assertive voice, "I don't think there's anything worse than just a disconnect between the student and the teacher, or the child and the counselor." She also said teachers should "recognize that not all students are the same," and should "hear," "listen to," "acknowledge," and "respect" students' different needs. Lauren defined personal connection as teachers' building individual relationships with their students. This is distinct from community building, a factor that facilitates inclusion, which is more associated with collaboration between teachers as a whole.

Curriculum. In terms of teacher practice regarding curriculum, after the dialogue, Lauren became conscious that "there are a variety of cultures and ideas in the world other than their [students'] own traditions." She suggested that it is teachers' responsibility to "raise up" and "provoke" such ideas so that students can be more open to different cultures. Recalling her second pre-practicum where the teacher had her whole class sing a Jewish Hanukah song instead of a Christmas carol, she described this experience as the moment of realizing her own biases. Without awareness, Lauren reasoned, students are likely to believe their own culture and

traditions are the norms and to form stereotypes about those who differ from their own culture. She suggested that teachers begin with a simple practice such as addressing students' different home cultures, multiple ways of celebrating holidays.

Instruction. In both interviews, Lauren claimed that providing appropriate resources is the fundamental teacher practice for instruction. The two resources the teacher could provide students were additional "attention and support." Lauren specified the ways certain students get those resources, including "being pulled out," working "one-on-one" with the teacher, or different groups working on different projects. In the final interview, Lauren mentioned that we had frequently talked about grouping during the dialogue sessions. The teacher can group students based on their "levels of academic achievement," so that students can receive "the scaffolded support" they may need based on their level. For example, the teacher can work individually with a group of struggling learners while the rest of the class is doing independent work. Therefore, Lauren claimed, separating students into groups according to their needs is an effective instructional strategy for academic success.

Accommodations/Related Services. Lauren did not bring up any ideas regarding accommodations/related services in any of her interviews or journals.

Assessment. Lauren did not address any specific practices for assessment in any of her responses.

Climate/Environment. Aligned with what she considered to be the main purpose of inclusive education, Lauren found it important for teachers to provide a "welcoming space," where all students feel a sense of belonging. After the dialogue series, she expanded on this as she recognized the significance of students having a purpose for learning. Citing what Brooke and Mei said during the dialogue, Lauren brought up the idea that the teacher can create a space

equipped with a variety of books, where the students can have "a chance to see themselves represented in different ways throughout the classroom." The teacher should also create a safe space where "students can share their ideas," knowing "no one idea or one culture is better than another." Lauren believed that in this way, students can feel assured that they are valuable members who can "contribute in a positive way to the classroom environment, to their home environment, to the school, to the world as a whole."

Management. As noted in the category Facilitating Factors, after the dialogue series Lauren contrasted two teachers' attitudes toward students' misbehavior, a topic that is fundamentally related to classroom management. The negative example was the teacher from Lauren's first pre-practicum, who was not concerned with positive classroom management but instead considered students with challenging behavior as "annoying," "a nuisance," and "disruptive." As a contrast, the positive example Lauren brought up was a teacher who tries to find out the causes of students' misbehavior and then tries to address them so that they no longer misbehave. Except for these examples, Lauren did not discuss any other specific practice for classroom management at any point.

Tension

A tension is a conflicting example of inclusion that might occur in the classroom and school. It could stem from instructional practices or be related to issues such as of ethics/values, power, and privilege. It could also stem from an existing discrepancy or challenging situation between theory and practice centered around inclusion. Given this operationalized definition of tension, Lauren in both interviews identified the fluid nature of inclusion embedded in the concept itself as a potential tension. The tension, which could arise from the gap between theory and practice, may pose a challenge to teachers when they implement inclusion in practice.

Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives

Based on the entirety of her responses from both interviews, what Lauren believed with certainty throughout was that inclusion means ensuring a sense of belonging for each student. In that sense, she consistently expressed her commitment to inclusion. "I want people to walk in the classroom or walk in the room and feel like they fit in," she said. She was focused on "ma[king] people feel welcome" in the beginning, and her personal value was further expanded to empowerment, as evidenced in the statement: "Whenever I'm working in, whoever I'm working with, regardless of the population, I want … for the child, the family … to feel really heard and really validated."

Lauren's most salient attitude toward inclusion before the dialogue was doubt about inclusive education. She said, "kind of wondering, is this worth it or is … what are the actual tangible benefits of an inclusive classroom?" That is, she was unsure about the actual benefits of inclusion and even questioned the worth of implementing inclusion. This reaction was understandable, given her belief that inclusive education is not necessarily the core element of school; as she expressed it, "It's not like it's crucial. Because there are many spaces that don't facilitate an inclusive classroom."

However, this attitude was surprising since Lauren also affirmed the benefits of inclusion using her personal experience as concrete evidence. She confidently explained, "for students like me … who struggled so much in terms of in academics, I really can speak to the benefits of that one-on-one relationship with the teacher." As has been noted, Lauren took the opposite stances when putting herself in the student's shoes versus the teacher's. As a result, her perspectives on inclusion seemed to be conflicting.

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After the dialogue, however, Lauren became more of a proponent of inclusion without any doubt, although she consistently remained concerned about "a multitude of challenges and hurdles" of inclusion posed to teachers in practice. She stated, "I'm like, it's [inclusion] great … I support it a hundred percent," and continued:

> I think most teachers, I would hope, want an inclusive classroom. But implementing the steps to reach an inclusive classroom I think can just be really challenging … I would like to say, "Don't go with the flow, obviously. Make your classroom as inclusive, as inclusive as it could be."

Moreover, Lauren suggested with assurance ways in which teachers should work for inclusion. Acknowledging the fluid nature of the concept and its manifestations, she eventually conceptualized inclusion as an endless learning process for teachers.

> It's a learning game. I think there's no right, one right answer to inclusive education. And you're always learning. But I think it's important for teachers to take those lessons that they learn and then apply them to make it a more inclusive classroom.

Thus, her emphasis was placed on "baby steps" as the key for teacher practice.

> if you try to achieve an inclusive classroom overnight, it's just not going to happen. Take small bites, and you slowly start to implement inclusive strategies and what not. I think that will end up leading you to definitely a more successful inclusive classroom.

In conclusion, Lauren's beliefs about the value of inclusion as promoting a sense of belonging remained unchanged throughout, and her degree of commitment to that value was unchanged as well. Her initial doubt about inclusion was alleviated by her conclusion after the dialogue series; Lauren became more supportive of inclusion despite all the challenges she believed about it throughout.

Summary of Lauren's Conceptualization

Lauren was a white female, college junior, from an upper-middle class family. She was majoring in Elementary Education and Applied Psychology but dropped the Education major later in her program in favor of going to graduate school in Social Work. Having been diagnosed with AD/HD and a learning disability in second grade, Lauren was a struggling learner who described that forming an individual relationship with the teacher was beneficial to her with additional attention and support. Lauren had a negative teacher model from her first pre-practicum, which she constantly referred back to during our interviews.

The highlights of Lauren's conceptualization before and after she participated in the group dialogue series are as follows. First of all, she constantly stressed that inclusive education aims at providing a space where students feel a sense of belonging. After the discussions, placing more emphasis on meeting the needs of students ("a needs-based approach"), Lauren explained the importance of students having a purpose for learning, which she thought motivates and ultimately empowers them. She prioritized students with disability for inclusion at first, despite her awareness that inclusion could look differently in each school depending on their context. She later argued that, realistically, inclusion is for minority populations, although ideally inclusion is for all.

Lauren paid attention to the impact of students' positive feelings on their academic performance as a benefit of inclusive education, believing that having one-on-one relationships with the teacher is the medium to enhance students' positive emotional experience. After the dialogue series she also thought of the benefits for teachers of this approach, affording them the opportunity to get to know their students through inclusive education. On the other hand, Lauren noted that teachers' workload and negative behavior are major challenges for inclusive education

as inclusion requires a significant amount of time and effort on the part of teachers. Nonetheless, Lauren constantly criticized the teacher in her first pre-practicum placement whom she perceived did the bare minimum to create an inclusive environment. Lauren implied that the fluid nature of inclusion could pose challenge for teachers to implement inclusion, because doubting the actual benefits and recognizing that there is no right answer to inclusion nor a perfect inclusive classroom may discourage their motivation to even try.

For Lauren, the major facilitating factor for inclusion was individual teachers' attitudes and efforts to build individual relationships with students and perceive them with an asset-based perspective. In the end, she had reached the understanding that inclusion efforts begin with doing simple, daily practices. Lauren, again, believed that creating one-on-one relationships with the students is an essential practice. She claimed teachers should provide additional resources—attention and support—to students, struggling learners in particular, according to their needs, and that one way of doing this was homogenous student grouping.

Aligned with the purpose of inclusive education, Lauren's focus on the classroom environment expanded from being a space that welcomes everyone to being a space where students feel welcomed and respected and know why they learn. After the dialogue series, Lauren addressed practices for classroom management and curriculum. She stressed that teachers should look for the rationale behind students' misbehavior. Additionally, teachers should introduce and incorporate various cultures into the curriculum so that students could discuss different ideas with respect and think beyond norms and stereotypes.

As Lauren identified the fluid nature of inclusion as a potential tension that could pose a challenge to teachers, she revealed her own conflicting perspectives from before the dialogue series. Assured of the benefits of inclusion for students, she simultaneously expressed doubt

about the actual benefits. Instead of raising doubt, Lauren later became more of a proponent of inclusive education. Regardless, Lauren consistently showed her commitment to providing a space where children and families feel welcomed and comfortable when working with them in the future. In conclusion, participating in the group dialogue series helped Lauren to clarify and expand her perspectives on inclusion, most notably on the purpose of who benefits from it, and the role of teachers with regard to inclusion.

Mei

Mei was a 22-year-old college junior at the time of the study. She identified herself as an able-bodied, cisgender female from a middle-class family background; bilingual, her first language is Chinese Mandarin. Born in China, Mei is technically an Asian American as her family immigrated to the United States when she was 5 years old. Mei attended both public and private elementary and middle schools in an urban area of the Northeast. After staying in the States for six years, Mei and her parents got naturalized as U.S. citizens and went back to China. There, Mei again went to public elementary and middle school as she repeated fifth and sixth grade. After graduating from an American international high school, she returned to the United States by herself for college and her future career.

Mei was double-majoring in Elementary Education and Computer/Science/Math as she was interested in teaching math. During our follow-up conversation, Mei told about her work study experience during her freshman year in a sheltered English immersion (SEI) classroom, where she went in the afternoon when students were learning math in small groups. This is where she realized that she liked teaching math and got excited about "finding new ways for students to understand it." Through math education courses, she came gained a "completely new way of looking at math."

Mei also had double concentrations in *Teaching English Language Learners* and *Teaching Students With Special Needs*. Mei had always wanted to teach English language learners (ELLs). She understood that most public general education classrooms are inclusive and felt she needed to know more about teaching diverse learners, including students with special needs. Therefore, she enrolled in college courses she thought were relevant to inclusive education and students with disabilities and ELLs: *Working With Students With Special*

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Needs, Educational Strategies for Students With Special Needs, Teaching Bilingual Students, and
Bilingualism in Schools and Communities.

I did not know Mei prior to recruiting her for my dissertation study, but I got to know her personally during the data collection period. Although it was a short period of time, I felt comfortable speaking with her and felt I understood her perspectives because we had a similar racial identity as Asians. From the follow-up conversation, individual interviews, and group dialogue sessions, I got the impression that Mei was a conscientious and thoughtful teacher candidate who was serious about her teaching.

Experiences With Diverse Populations

While Mei exhibited a range of experiences with diversity in schooling and in her own life, especially in terms of disability and culture, she had only limited exposure to the other type of diversity, such as LGBTQ+. Overall, during our follow-up conversation after the surveys, she demonstrated a positive attitude toward and intellectual curiosity about learning more about diversity.

Mei's experience with individuals with disability was primarily confined to the K-12 classrooms where she worked through college practica, as well as volunteer and work study programs. She had observed several students with disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), learning disabilities (LD), including dyslexia, as well as an ELL who had LD. Mei said that although the teachers did not always share their students' disabilities with her, "it became clear over time." She noted that ASD was the most common disability in schools based on her observation. In college, Mei had friends and classmates who had attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) and LD. These peers did not disclose their disability, but Mei found it

"interesting to see when they study they always have something in their hands," such as "eraser shavings" or "clay."

As to her experience with individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, Mei mentioned students of color with emotional or behavioral disorder (EBD), whom she met through the college volunteer program in the specialized school. In her classroom of six students, only one was Caucasian; the remaining students were from either Guatemala or Brazil and, thus, had intersectional identities consisting of a CLD background and a disability. Mei acknowledged that EBD is very disproportionately represented for students of color, which she speculated might have to do with their family backgrounds and life experience (e.g., unstable family situations) and diagnostic process. Mei also had Latinx students as the most predominant group in her pre-practicum classrooms.

Mei's personal experience with CLD individuals beyond the classrooms came from her own extended family, who was from China and spoke Chinese Mandarin or Chinese dialects. Mei explained she had difficulty communicating with her family members in China before she moved back to China at age 11, when she was not yet proficient in the language. It was interesting to me that Mei included family members living in China as examples of diversity. While I did not think of it at the time, when I was (re)writing her case I realized that I have never thought of my family in Korea in terms of diversity, given that their racial, cultural, and linguistic identities are the norms/majority in Korean society. I wondered why our perspectives differ in that regard. Perhaps it was due to fact that her parents were once immigrants in the United States and/or to the language barrier Mei once experienced with her family members in China, which I have never had. I was fascinated by how Mei's lived experience and identity were nuanced and intricate.

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As an Asian student in a predominantly white college, it was not surprising that Mei had a lot of friends from different countries in Asia, many of whom did not speak English at home. For example, her college roommate's life experience was very similar to Mei's, growing up in China and attending an American international school, which allowed them to have numerous conversations about cultural identity. Mei expressed her intellectual curiosity regarding diverse cultures: "I feel like I have been exposed to more cultures, but I still want to learn more and develop a deeper cultural understanding and appreciation for other cultures." Mei also spoke about some of her classmates in college and teachers in her pre-practicum sites having diverse backgrounds or coming from different countries, commenting "the teachers in diverse schools were more diverse." From her statement, I perceived that she is more conscious of teacher diversity than are her white peers.

Mei had no exposure to the LGBTQ+ students in her schooling or in any of her teaching experience. She interpreted that to mean that in high school or college it is normal to identify as LGBTQ+, whereas no elementary students do it outwardly. Mei described her friends with LGBTQ+ identities as being more open and comfortable talking about their sexuality and even "making jokes" about it. Having met more people identifying as LGBTQ+ in college, Mei realized that "their experience growing up and in college was really different than mine."

Teaching Experiences

I thought Mei had a relatively substantial amount of teaching experiences for a junior. For the previous two years and a half, she had continuously been interacting with students in a variety of settings. In addition to two pre-practica in both suburban and urban elementary schools, she had taught in another public school and a private school for special education through the work study and volunteer programs. That is, since her freshman year, she had

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worked as a classroom aide in each school once a week for the entire day and been exposed to a diverse student body. Even though she had almost three years of in-class teaching experience, Mei commented, "I definitely don't feel very prepared to lead my own classroom." I was surprised by her comment because in my view, she had a considerable amount of teaching experience for a junior. I should have probed her more about, but failed to do so. It is understandable that she might think that her experiences as an observant or aide were not enough to prepare her to be a classroom teacher for a whole class. However, in my supervision of teacher candidates for three years, I have never met anyone explicitly telling me that they were not well prepared. I speculate Mei's humility may been due to the Asian value of modesty.

Mei has continued to expand her teaching experiences using her summer break. For the past two summers, she worked at a private English tutoring institution in China, where she assisted the lead teacher with various activities or translating for students in an English-only tutoring classroom environment. She was supposed to do so again while visiting her family in the summer of 2020 if not canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak, but I have not heard anything back from Mei regarding her summer plan since then.

The Classroom Context of Mei's Current Practicum

At the time of the study, Mei was completing her third pre-practicum in an urban private K-8 school, as was Lauren. Unfortunately, it was halted in early March due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Mei was then placed in a sixth-grade general education classroom. Her mentor teacher was a white female with an elementary education teaching license and less than five years of teaching experience. Two student teachers, including Mei herself, were there in the classroom. Of 15 students, three who had AD/HD or ASD had either an IEP or a 504 plan and two of them were ELLs as well. In addition, there was a Latinx student, who had a CLD background.

Mei's Conceptualization of Inclusive Education

Among the participants in the current study, Mei's conceptualization of inclusive education was most considerably influenced by the group dialogue series. Not only was it evident in her responses in the pre-/post-dialogue journals and interviews when compared by qualitative content analysis, she also openly vocalized the impact of the dialogue several times while being interviewed after the sessions. The following quote is a representative example that shows its influence:

> I feel like we completely redefined it [inclusive education], and I think that it will change in the future. Every time I hear the word *inclusion,* I'm not going to think the same thing I thought before, and I'm not going to hear the same thing I thought before. So, I think definitely it [the dialogue series] changed my understanding and definition.

During her final interview, Mei, regardless of the format being virtual, spoke highly of the dialogue series as they "pushed" her thinking beyond what she had known. She characterized her initial idea of inclusive education as "simple" and "surface" understanding, but went on to say that it was deepened by addressing "challenging" topics with peers to which she "just never gave a second thought," along with my facilitation always posing questions such as, "What else?" "What could we do as an educator?" The dialogue expanded the scope of her thinking, so that at the end she considered things she had never thought of before. She ended up articulating a clearer, more organized thought in her final interview, as evident in the transcript, rather than an echo of what she had learned in her college courses.

The following is a detailed account comparing Mei's conceptualization of inclusive education before and after the dialogue series. The discussion follows the eight categories used

for content analysis: Purposes, Features, Benefits, Challenges, Facilitating Factors, Teacher

Practices, Tensions, and Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives.

Purposes

For Mei, inclusive education is "education that values diversity." She stated in her initial

journal, it provides students "the opportunity to interact with and learn from other students that

either have similar or different experiences" in both academic and social settings. As such, the

central purpose of inclusive education is that students learn to accept differences. Mei found it

important to expose kids to an inclusive classroom environment from an early age so that they

could become "more adept with working with diverse people for the future." Her beliefs was

grounded in her own life experience of having navigated multiple cultures since childhood.

Mei was a strong advocate for social justice, as she believed in the connection between

classrooms and society, claiming that students will make society more inclusive in the future as

agents of change after they learn to accept differences and work with diverse learners in the

classroom. I speculate that Mei's emphasis on accepting differences from a social justice

perspective might stem from her childhood experience as an immigrant child who was educated

in vastly different learning environments in both China and the United States. She indicated in

the initial interview, "… especially growing up, I think, being accepted or not accepted in the

classroom can really define." I think Mei may have felt she was different from the majority of

peers throughout her schooling experience as an Asian in U.S. schools and as a Chinese going to

an American school.

Mei maintained this perspective throughout, as she indicated in her post-dialogue

interview, "at the very core, it hasn't changed." She stated that teachers should be "attuned to"

the differences of individual students and create an environment where students can "interact"

and "work with" students who are different from themselves and ultimately "learn to accept their own differences and accept the differences of other," such as personalities, backgrounds, language, and ability. In her final interview, Mei furthered her idea of inclusive education as accepting differences, noting that it [inclusive education] is to educate students "knowing the differences, understanding the differences, affirming and celebrating the differences" based on the idea that "there's the norm that every student's just different" and "to help them feel comfortable about that."

Additionally, in both interviews Mei placed an emphasis on achieving equity in school as a core value of inclusive education: "We shouldn't be advocating for equality but equity." She rejected the idea of teaching all students in the same way, acknowledging that there is no "one-size-fits-all" education. Instead, she claimed that teachers should be "attending to the needs of [students]…and teaching different ways" and "structuring learning in a way that is accessible to everyone."

Features

Focus of Concern. Mei primarily conceptualized inclusive education from a social/affective aspect, as she constantly associated it with social interaction and acceptance of difference. She believed that student learning occurs through collaboration and, therefore, she focused on making a classroom environment where students "socialize with," "encourage," and "support" each other. This way, students can develop social skills that are necessary to bring about inclusion, and at the same time their social skills are further improved through inclusion. Mei's focus on social skills development in her initial interview changed slightly after the dialogue series. She became more concerned about "no one feeling left out" in the classroom, every student's positive emotional experience of having a sense of belonging. I assume she

might have thought that positive feelings outweigh social skills development, since the students who already have social skills may still feel excluded if they are not accepted by peers.

As noted under Purposes, Mei was also attentive to the academic aspects of inclusion at all times, relating inclusion to universal design for learning (UDL). She stated that inclusion involves differentiating "the way that the knowledge is presented to the student," which increases student access and helps students "learn the way that works best for them."

Scope of Population. In our initial interview, following Mei's ideas about the scope of population for inclusion was an interesting, but effortful task. On a surface level, Mei believed "inclusive education is for everyone" because it is about increasing access for all in teaching. Going deeper, Mei was trying to associate inclusive education with students with disability. I noticed that she had mixed thoughts on diversity and inclusion, which did not seem explicitly linear and organized. I think it was because she experienced cognitive dissonance between what she had learned in her coursework and what she had experienced in her field experience. Mei explained:

> I think, from what I've learned, it's mostly about social education and ability. Because I feel like for other things, there's, I don't know, we attach other terms to it, like bilingual education or cultural diversity. And, I think, that most people, even now in the [name of the school of education], just think of inclusive education as, like in terms of IEP and stuff … So, I don't think I've made that very strong connection, even though I believe in all of these things separately, like diverse classrooms. Thinking of diverse classrooms, I do think of both these things, like cultural and language. And it's crazy to me, because I guess this also has to do with the way that it's diagnosed. But the inclusive classroom that

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we were in were at [name of public school] for pre-prac[ticum] last year was the most

diverse classroom we've been in, in terms of culture.

This quote from Mei's pre-dialogue interview shows that she initially distinguished

between inclusive education and diverse classroom as she associated inclusive education with

students with a disability who have an IEP while tying diverse classrooms to CLD students. Her

reasoning was developed from what and how she learned in her various teacher education

courses, as she constantly referred to. However, Mei continued to express her own thought

processes regarding diversity and disability diagnosis, which she characterized as "crazy,"

revealing her realization that dis/ability is a type of diversity, although she was taught inclusion

and diversity were sort of separate entities. Further, she shared confusion stemming from her

practicum placement where she realized an overlap between inclusive and diverse classrooms.

Thus, I conclude that Mei limited the scope of population for inclusive education primarily to

students with disability and CLD students.

Later in her initial interview, however, Mei explicitly stated her standpoint that inclusive

education targets students with disability. She reiterated what she learned from her coursework,

implying that different education courses teach different terms in silos:

Teachers, professors would be like, 'this is an inclusive classroom or this is a specialized

school.' And in other classes we would use other words like, teaching for diversity or

multicultural, like those words … teaching for social justice, for sure.

Despite her recognition that those terms are "all connected" regarding teaching diverse learners,

Mei fixated on the way she was taught by saying, "I would associate it [inclusive education]

more with ability."

In our final interview, I realized Mei's thoughts had become more unified and organized than her initial ones. Mei's belief that "inclusive education is for everyone" remained the same, given her teaching philosophy that knowledge should be presented in a way that is accessible to all. She fully elaborated on how she expanded her idea of the scope of population for inclusion through the dialogue series:

> … starting from freshman year, I don't know, like our teacher courses, we're just, or even working in classrooms, everyone does refer to inclusive education as students in general education classrooms, but with students with IEPs. But then, I feel like we completely redefined it … I've just learned … to see a lot more factors. I think before I did see English language learners too, because I felt like I was one, and then, students with special needs. But there was so much more than we talked about that I never thought about before. I've never even thought about, you know, gifted students or LGBTQ+ in a classroom. Especially working with elementary school … I just never thought about those groups or how … one student could have the different, different identities, intersecting. So yeah, [it] definitely made me consider a lot more.

Mei reflected that she was focused only on students with disability and CLD students for inclusion at first, which she admitted was a "narrow group of students." Yet, she now believed that "it [inclusive education] could encompass every student." She acknowledged that students have a variety of intersectional identities that need to be considered by their teacher.

After the dialogue series, Mei further expanded the scope of population for inclusion beyond the student level.

I also think it's for … even the teacher, like the teacher can learn a lot from the students and then students can learn a lot from each other, and like students can learn from the teacher, of course. So, it's for everyone involved, like even all the school faculty.

That is, Mei included teachers as beneficiaries of inclusion as well. Everyone—teachers and students—not only "feel safe about their identities and feel accepted" but "learn from others, from their identities, too." This might be idealistic, yet Mei envisioned inclusion as having less hierarchical and more mutual relationships between the teacher and students only in terms of learning.

Placement. By and large, Mei's perspective on placement was consistent throughout. She viewed inclusion as "putting different learners together." She then stated the importance of students receiving extra support in and outside the classroom, which she referred to as Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), the term she had learned in her special education course. Nonetheless, Mei seemed to confine inclusion within general education placement, given her viewpoint that parents putting their children in a specialized school challenges the idea of inclusion itself. After the dialogue series Mei continued to have the same perspective, with her justification of students being pulled out from a general education classroom for extra support or services provided by specialists since "the teacher can't deliver that type of instruction, like each therapy or … language." She clarified her stance, claiming "the education that is happening outside of general education classrooms is still inclusive education." However, her perspective on inclusion outside general education—the more restrictive placement such as special schools— was still unclear.

Benefits

Aligned with her statements noted in Purposes and Features, Mei stressed the importance of students learning social skills, accepting differences, and understanding the value of self as well as others as the benefits of inclusion. She claimed, "positive collaboration and acceptance and encouragement of others are skills that are constantly honed through our interactions with others." She also said, "through interaction, they can learn to accept the differences … be more accepting of each other." As they interact with and accept others different from themselves, this process ultimately enables students to "see their own value" and have "positive thoughts towards self and others" in the classroom. All three benefits—learning social skills, accepting differences, and understanding the value of self as well as others—appeared to occur simultaneously in Mei's thinking. In her initial interview, she supported her claim with a classroom example where students were diverse:

> … if students are stuck in the same classroom with people like, the same ability, same race, everything, then they're not going to know how to interact with other people, and they're not going to learn those social skills that they'll need for positive interactions between people and when they go into society.

Mei explained, with certainty, her assumption that homogeneous classrooms are not beneficial for students; rather, heterogeneous classrooms are the place for inclusion where the students can learn to social skills, accept differences, and understand the value of self and others. She exemplified how inclusion is beneficial for all learners of different ability, commenting:

> kids with special needs, it's also helpful for them because they're not stuck with people that are the same as them, and then … they can learn to see that society can accept them

too because … their classmates will learn to accept them. So, I think it's learning for

everyone.

As noted in the above quote, Mei viewed students with disability being accepted by their

classmates (e.g., typically developing students) and the classmates learning to accept the students

with disability in the classroom as mutual benefits. However, her claim did imply the historical

exclusion of students with disability from school and society, which I speculated might mean

that Mei unconsciously acknowledged the existence of a power hierarchy between the two

groups of students, those with and without disability.

In her final interview, Mei also briefly touched on students' positive emotional learning

and experience as the benefit of inclusion. She claimed a sense of belonging that "no one will

feel left out," not only students but teachers too "feel safe about their identities and feel

accepted." It should be noted here that all the benefits of inclusion Mei identified were idealistic,

expected outcomes she conceived, rather than actual outcomes she had observed or witnessed in

the classroom. She did not seem to be aware of whether she was speaking about anticipated or

actual outcomes while being interviewed. This tendency continued as she talked about the other

benefits as well. Interestingly, as noted in previous case studies, it was a common tendency

across participants during their interviews, with the exception of Lauren, who questioned the

actual benefits of inclusion in her initial interview, and of Brooke, who explained some of the

benefits from her own experience of observing her students in the classroom.

Mei claimed that inclusion is also beneficial for teachers because it fosters teacher

learning. However, she focused on different aspects in each interview. At first, Mei said teachers

can "learn how to do differentiated instruction and ... come up with lesson plans that incorporate

different learning styles," knowing that students learn differently. After the dialogue series, she

shifted her thinking to the reciprocal relationships in learning between the teacher and the students, saying, "even the teacher can learn a lot from the student … from their identities, too." Mei envisioned that teachers and students could build more symmetrical, bilateral relationships, moving from asymmetrical, unilateral relationships, thereby creating a community where they can learn from each other.

Moreover, Mei mentioned students' academic achievement as the other benefit in both interviews. As Mei viewed UDL as the key framework for inclusion, she believed "it [UDL] really helps all students," in that students can "learn the way that works best for them ... and their needs" if the teachers incorporate UDL into their lessons.

Challenges

As noted under Benefits, Mei was clearly a proponent of inclusion. However, she identified several challenges for inclusion. First of all, she brought up teachers' negative behavior in our pre-dialogue interview, where she shared a story of a teacher she had heard about from a classmate. The classmate, who was completing her pre-practicum, witnessed a teacher asking a boy with AD/HD "Did you take your medicine today?" in front of everyone in his classroom. Mei criticized this ignorant behavior as a challenge for inclusion, since ignorance may lead to such reckless action of a teacher singling out a student (e.g., unconscious revelation of confidential information to the whole class).

Further, in both interviews, Mei was consistent in addressing lack of resources, teacher workload, learners' norms/beliefs about differences as challenges. Her understanding was that inclusion basically requires a lot of resources, which is "a big problem for most (public) schools" because they "might not have" the resources that are necessary for students with disabilities. Mei provided a specific example in her initial interview. For her pre-practicum, Mei was placed in a

classroom where there were some immigrant students who also had a disability. She thought that these students needed both "language and other types of support," but not even the language support provided was enough in Mei's perception.

When expressing her concern about teachers' heavy workload due to a lack of resources in most schools, Mei's language changed slightly between interviews; that is, from a negative tone in the initial interview, she switched to stating the importance of what teachers "need to" do in her final interview. At first, she said, "it is hard for teachers to accommodate students' needs" as a solo teacher in the classroom. She pointed out the reality that "one teacher can't really work with every student individually" since they have "no time" to do so while carrying out their lessons to the whole class. After the dialogue series, Mei called for teachers to be "flexible" to differentiate their instruction—critical practice for inclusion in Mei's beliefs. For instance, the teacher can give "different versions of the same worksheet." Still acknowledging that inclusion requires "a lot of work" on the part of the teacher, Mei noted that each teacher "needs to have all types of resources" in the general education classroom.

Mei was the only participant who talked about students' preexisting norms and beliefs about individual differences as another challenge for inclusion. Her logic was that although human beings are born *tabula rasa,* by socialization through the exposure to media, schooling, and the influence of family, we come to "think a certain way" and "believe what we believe today." As a result, some students refuse or resist accepting differences. Instead, they "highlight the differences in the classroom" or even "make fun of" certain people, due to their language difference if they do not speak well, disability (e.g., ASD) when showing lack of social skills, or sexuality that are not typical, Mei lamented. These student norms and beliefs pose a challenge for inclusion because "it's hard for teachers to change … how someone should be."

Facilitating Factors

Mei mentioned facilitating factors mostly in her interviews compared to her journals. In her initial interview, she recalled what she had observed regarding teacher collaboration as "the smartest thing ever." In the school where she did her pre-practicum Mei observed that a certain student's previous and current homeroom teachers shared information and instructional strategies by communicating and documenting "strengths and difficulties working with the student and what type of things they need from their experience over the whole year" in a shared document using Google. Mei was considerably impressed by such "collaboration between teachers" because she thought it is "helpful to attend to those needs" of the student, especially for the teacher who is responsible for the student in the following year. Mei explained that reading a student's documentation gave her information and insight about the student, which she otherwise would have not known.

Family engagement was another factor Mei substantially stressed as part of individual teacher efforts across the interviews. She spoke highly of a teacher she had observed in her pre-practicum, who actively included families into her classroom community. In our pre-dialogue interview, Mei complimented the teacher:

> I really appreciate is that, um, the teacher really gets to really communicates with the families, too. And not just PTA meetings, but I've known this teacher that she says she does home visits … I definitely appreciate that that teacher did that.

Mei found such engagement important because knowing students' living situation and condition informs the teacher's practice and decision-making with regard to types of support or homework to provide. In our post-dialogue interview, Mei brought back this teacher doing home visits and said, "if possible, I think that'd be really cool, too."

Lastly, Mei paid attention to individual teacher efforts. This facilitating factor stemmed from her own ideas, different from those noted above, teacher collaboration and family engagement, which were mostly based on her observation in practice. The emphasis was on teacher mindset with regard to asset-based approaches; yet, it was evidently geared toward different orientations before and after the dialogue series. In her pre-dialogue journal, Mei at first claimed the importance of teachers having "a growth mindset" toward students. She opined, "we should not have the thought that these students on IEPs or 504 plans are any less than the other students. Rather, we should fully embrace the diversity of the classroom and see the strengths that these students come with." After the dialogue series Mei continued talking about teacher mindset, but in terms such as to "see [students] beyond those labels, and really find out what the student is going through personally." She proposed her fellow future educators "realize that we're not always the teacher and they're not always the student," based on her assumption that "there's also a lot of things that students probably know better than teachers." Thus, Mei claimed teachers should be more open to "learn from students and let them teach."

Furthermore, Mei stressed the continuous effort for professional growth as a teacher. "We should not be teaching the way we were taught and from the environment we were taught in, because there is always room for improvement," wrote Mei in her post-dialogue journal. She also understood the fluid, complicated nature of inclusive education, saying "we weren't even able to get to a concrete definition" even though we constantly discussed it throughout our six dialogue sessions. Thus, Mei saw inclusion as "definitely something that will keep changing," and ultimately expressed her will to improve as a future educator: "I have to keep learning too, like in professional development or reading, reading up on issues." Such a response displayed Mei's

commitment to inclusion, which is addressed in greater detail in the category of

Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives.

Teacher Practices

Mei touched upon almost all the component categories of teacher practices in both

interviews—personal connection, curriculum, instruction, accommodations/related services,

climate/environment, management, and other practices—except assessment, which was never

addressed at any point. Of the eight categories, she mentioned instruction most frequently,

followed by personal connection. Mei elaborated more on teacher practices for curriculum after

the dialogue series.

Personal Connection. Mei placed a strong emphasis on getting to know each student.

Initially, she explained the need for "knowing that [everything about each student] really, really,

really well so that I can somehow provide different supports for different students, and teach in a

way that does that, too." Mei believed that only by understanding students, such as their

personality, backgrounds, needs, and potential, can teachers help and push their learning. While

maintaining the same perspective during the final interview, Mei added the importance of the

"teacher-student relationship" and communication with students beyond academic engagement.

She spoke about her future practice as a teacher: "If I noticed something that's going on or

something that might be going on, talk to them alone and ask."

After the dialogue series, Mei valued learning about and affirming students' different

identities as she began to "consider more factors" that influence the lives of students.

Recognizing "how that [student identity] works in society," teachers are responsible to reassure

their students with a message that "despite what's happening in the world ... it's okay for them to

be who they are," Mei claimed. I speculated that the George Floyd tragedy that occurred before

we completed our six dialogue sessions might also have impacted Mei's perspective on inclusive education. The account of Mei as to how this tragic incident affected her idea is further illustrated in the Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives category.

Curriculum. Mei elaborated on practices for curriculum after the dialogue series. As a strong supporter of UDL and differentiation, she mentioned nothing but one statement in her pre-dialogue journal: "Curriculum should incorporate differentiated instruction." But after the dialogues, Mei recalled that "we also talked about literature" during the dialogue sessions and noted having books that reflect varying identity factors in the classroom, such as "different family structures, socioeconomic backgrounds, gender and sexual orientations." She acknowledged the progress that schools have begun, for example, in terms of having books that represent diversity; however, at the same time she noted that still "[schools] haven't reached the point where ... a lot of topics are talked about regularly in the classroom." Thus, Mei suggested "open discussions" should follow after reading a book.

Instruction. Throughout, Mei highlighted that instruction should provide students with appropriate resources and teach students in different ways. She claimed inclusive education is "… not teaching the same way to help them [students] reach the same level, but seeing what they need and teaching different ways" and maintained that UDL makes it possible to teach students in different ways. Mei thought UDL was not only "one of the coolest things" she learned from her coursework, but also "perfect" to inclusion since "it benefits everyone."

Small groups/station teaching emerged as another effective teaching practice in her final interview. Mei recalled, "another thing we talked about was stations and small groups." As one of the main purposes of inclusive education for Mei was students having social interaction with

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others different from themselves, she perceived grouping students with different abilities or station teaching would provide "a chance for students to help each other."

Accommodations/Related Services. Mei was observant of accommodations and related services provided in school. In her initial interview, she listed extra resources or support given to students in and outside the classroom that she had "witnessed" during her pre-practica. Those included "designated areas" in the classroom where students could rest or calm down when they needed a break, "technology (e.g., iPads or Chromebooks)," "learning tools (e.g., checklists, transition cards)," or "a resource room." Mei also mentioned "specialists" or "aide teachers" (i.e., paraprofessionals) working with certain students. She later also talked about "specialists" who are "professionally trained" for therapies or language supports to justify a pull-out service delivery system as noted in Features. Mei was aware of the accommodations or related services she observed, but did not particularly share her perspective on those supports.

Assessment. Mei did not say anything about assessment in either interview.

Climate/Environment. Mei primarily paid attention to physical classroom setups in both journals and interviews and was detail-oriented. Before the dialogue series, she talked about a desirable classroom environment where "classroom routines are set in place and practiced over times," so that the students know clear expectations and have an easier time transitioning. She also mentioned "seating," which helps students learn according to their preferences and relationships, as well as a resting area in the classroom with "a bean bag chair," where any student could sit if needed. In addition to the physical classroom setups, Mei referenced the social climate; as noted under Curriculum, Mei stressed the importance of having a variety of literature in the classroom to serve as "windows and mirrors," whereby students could both learn about people different from themselves and reflect themselves through other people who are

similar. After the dialogue series, Mei spoke about classroom setups that enhance "access" to resources. For example, resources should be "labeled" to keep them handy for students, especially "for visual learners, there could be baskets with blocks, pictures, or other aids." Mei even considered different resources according to students' learning style. However, one salient difference in Mei's statement after the dialogue series was that she envisioned an ideal classroom environment as a safe space where students would be "sharing their concerns with the teacher" despite the power hierarchy between the teacher and students.

Management. Overall, Mei was concerned about classroom/behavior management. In her initial journal, she made it clear that "being aware of the social-emotional needs of the students" helps the teacher set clear expectations about student relationships, encourage collaboration, and address potential conflicts. During her initial interview, Mei exemplified the teacher practice she observed from her pre-practicum. Here, a student in the first-grade classroom had an "erasable card" indicating the routine of the day to help her transition and the students in general were able to receive different types of reward that reinforced their independent work. Mei pointed out that these practices also worked as accommodations for individual students and shared her surprise at how naturally it happened without any questions from the students. After the dialogue series, Mei was only focused on what she should do in the future as a teacher: "I think we talked about, or maybe read, there are sometimes negative comments that other students make … As a teacher, I need to address that, or make sure all the students feel comfortable." Mei was sensitive about backbiting and had a firm belief that "there's a certain way that we shouldn't be talking about other people or other thing."

Other Practices. Other practices are defined as those teacher practices not otherwise categorized that can be carried out in the broader school community beyond the classroom level.

Practices for family/community engagement, extracurricular activities, and teacher collaboration fall under this subcategory, for example. In both interviews, Mei mentioned "talking to their [students'] parents" to better support students in addition to learning about their personalities, interests, or backgrounds. During our final interview, Mei implied the importance of "communicat[ing] with families" in her educational philosophy, as she expressed her willingness to do so.

Tension

In her initial interview, Mei mentioned an example of tension that she had observed in higher education. She said, "I've heard *inclusion* used in social circles at [name of the university], like saying, I guess, a cultural club or a racial group … is more exclusive, instead of inclusive." Mei was here critiquing many undergraduate social clubs formed to enhance diversity and inclusion as actually being exclusive because they were only accepting individuals who corresponded with a certain culture or race.

In contrast to her initial interview, in her final interview, Mei indicated tensions between teachers and families around difficult topics. For example, with the LGBTQ+ related issues we addressed during one dialogue session she commented, "even though it was a safe environment, it was still hard to talk about for us." Moreover, she noted that if parents or families have "different beliefs" on those topics, "it is going to be really hard for the student if you're talking about something in class that their parents disagree with" because the conflicting opinions of the teacher and parents may cause confusion to the student's belief system.

The example of tension around placement that Mei brought up was specialized schools vs. public schools (general education classrooms). She related it to "parent choice" in her initial interview. If parents decide "it would better to put them [their children] in a specialized school"

from the early age, then children with disability lose the opportunity to be included in the general

education classroom. Mei then explained her stance in her final interview:

> I think for most people it [being in the general education classroom] is ideal … but it
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> does take a lot because then the teacher needs to have all types of resources, whereas if
>
> they [students with disability] were in a separate school or a separate classroom, they
>
> would not need as many different types of resources.

Her explanation suggested that Mei conceived this example as a tension existed in the idea of

inclusion. As indicated under Features, she associated inclusion with the general education

classroom. Thus, she was concerned that if students with disabilities were included in the general

education classroom, they might have to sacrifice the resources they needed, whereas having

appropriate resources might mean they were excluded from general education classroom.

Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives

With her strong belief that inclusion is all about accepting differences, Mei expressed her

commitment to inclusive education at all times. She articulated her initial thought:

> I think, especially growing up, I think being accepted or not accepted in the classroom
>
> can really define [students' experiences] … we'll just make the experience for the student
>
> a lot better, a lot worse … even though it's so hard. I really do hope students don't, don't
>
> really bring up the differences in a negative way … I would want to facilitate an
>
> environment where students accept each other.

Mei perceived that the students' negative comments about others is evidence of not

acknowledging and accepting differences. Her hope as a future educator was to foster an

inclusive classroom environment where "negative comments are very limited." After the

dialogue series, Mei claimed that "there should not be an idea of a norm, because norm makes

students feel like it is wrong to be who they are or wrong to experience what they have." Rather, the norm for Mei was that "every student is just different." She drew attention to creating an inclusive environment that normalizes difference so that "students feel comfortable about that [their difference]."

This was critical for Mei, as she believed that working toward inclusion in the classroom lay the groundwork for social change to make a more inclusive society. She claimed that "the classroom is the first exposure that students have to society besides their home or their family. So, what happens in the classroom is really important for how they will act when they're older." Therefore, throughout the project, Mei firmly believed that "the way social change can happen" begins with learning early ages in school. Claiming that school "prepares students for society," Mei analogized that "inclusive education can lead to a more inclusive society," as students are educated to be "more adept with working with diverse people for the future."

As such, Mei almost declared that "inclusion is a must." Education progressed to incorporate the idea of inclusion, and as a future educator Mei felt she should continue to reflect the value in her own practice. Connecting classroom and society tightly, Mei viewed inclusive education from a social justice perspective; she considered it important to expose children to an inclusive environment early on and prepare them as agents of change for a more inclusive society. She claimed:

Our society is so diverse, and there's a lot of power dynamics that still exist ... I think injustices … a lot of it is what we were taught or … where we were socialized from a young age. So, I think [it is important] if, from a young age, we break that cycle and start … accepting … or just knowing the injustices that exist and what we can do then.

I noticed that, as a strong advocate of inclusion and social justice, Mei's beliefs on social justice were strengthened after the dialogue series, and especially after the death of George Floyd. Although Mei did not fully articulate her claim, she emphasized the existence of injustice that stemmed from power dynamics and how to address it—from acknowledging the way we had been taught about injustice to fundamentally disrupting it.

Furthermore, Mei called for continuous reflection and learning as a future educator. She recognized that inclusive education has improved compared to when she was a child, but "there is still a long way to go." She commented that "we weren't even able to get to a concrete definition" of inclusion over the course of six dialogue series, due to the fluidity and complexity of the concept, which would "keep changing." This is why Mei believed that teachers should be lifelong learners; for instance, by keeping up with current issues and connecting them with inclusive education. As a concrete example, Mei explained that she was "reading up on anti-racist education," given "what was happening recently" and "what everyone's been posting." Indirectly indicating the George Floyd tragedy, she was trying to learn more about anti-racist education. Mei's final journal entry well captured her strong commitment to continuous learning about inclusive education:

> I believe that inclusive education and discussion about inclusive education does not stop here. I need to always be thinking about my definition and refining it when I am working with students and others. I need to consistently reflect upon my own practices and see how I can do better. I need to have more conversations with everyone, not just pre-service teachers, professors, and classroom teachers. Before, I had never really talked about LGBTQ+ students in education, remote learning, or anti-racist education. However, the world is constantly evolving, and we as teachers need to address those changes. We

should not be teaching the way we were taught and from the environment we were taught in, because there is always room for improvement. We still do not have a clear definition or have everything figured out. These conversations and learning should continue, because there are still more questions than answers, and more that we could do.

After our final dialogue session, the murder of George Floyd took place. I had the impression that Mei was particularly sensitive to it compared to the other participants, as she kept referring to the tragic incident and anti-racist education throughout the post-dialogue interview. We did not explicitly talk about her reaction; however, the reason I thought that way might be due to our common racial identity as an Asian, a person of color, and a minority in U.S. society. I thought her final reflection about inclusion was powerful, revealing her determination to not only constantly refine her ideas of inclusion but also reflect on her own practice for further improvement.

Summary of Mei's Conceptualization

Mei was a 22-year-old, heterosexual, able-bodied female. She was a junior, double-majoring in Elementary Education and Computer/Science/Math, along with two concentrations, *Teaching English Language Learners* and *Teaching Students With Special Needs*. Due to her unique life trajectory as an immigrant and English language learner in the United States, and as a child with a lack of proficiency in Chinese, who once struggled communicating with her own extended family, Mei enjoyed discussing cultural identities and exploring other cultures. Born in China, Mei had been an American citizen since her childhood when her family got naturalized. She moved back to China at the age of 11 with her parents and, as a result, experienced both countries' different school systems, societies, and above all, cultures. Upon graduation from high school, Mei came back to the United States on her own for college and future life. Mei was a

conscientious and thoughtful student and keen observer, who explained her ideas and thoughts about inclusive education based on her learning from coursework and observations in the schools where she worked through pre-practica and other programs.

Mei's conceptualization of inclusive education centered around the value of diversity; that is, students coming to accept differences through social interaction with others different from themselves, which she explained as the central purpose of inclusive education. As a strong social justice advocate, Mei claimed that what makes society more inclusive begins with creating an environment where students can learn to work with diverse people. As noted, Mei saw the social/affective aspect as the main purpose of inclusion, starting initially with students' social skill development and, after the dialogue series, changing to everyone's positive feeling of being included.

I had difficulty organizing Mei's initial ideas of the student population targeted for inclusion due to her nonlinear, crowded thoughts. On the surface, Mei believed that inclusion is for everyone; yet, she was trying to associate inclusive education with students with disabilities, while linking diverse classrooms only to CLD students. Mei then expressed confusion stemming from her realization that the inclusive classroom where she was placed for her pre-practicum was the most diverse classroom she had ever experienced. Demonstrating the benefits of the dialogue series to her, Mei later considered more factors comprised of student identities—based on the idea that inclusion encompasses every student—and claimed that inclusion is not just for students but for teachers, too. Mei consistently related inclusion to the LRE being within the general education placement. After the dialogues, she explicitly stated inclusion is not confined to general education classrooms but did not clarify her perspective on special schools.

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Mei believed that learning social skills, accepting differences, and understanding the value of self as well as others were the major benefits for students, aligned with her focus on social/affective aspect of inclusion. But she also noted teacher learning as another benefit; that is, the initial idea of learning differentiation shifted to the final thought of learning from students. Meanwhile, Mei conceived some major challenges for inclusion across the interviews: Schools' lack of resources increases teacher workload and students' pre-existing norms/beliefs keep them from accepting others. Parents-related factors could be another roadblock such as parent choice of a separate special school for their child or parents' beliefs that may conflict with those of the teacher. As to the facilitating factors, Mei stressed family engagement such as home visits the entire time. Her view on individual teacher efforts also differed in each interview. Her initial emphasis was on having a growth mindset—that teachers recognize and value the strengths of students with disability as equally as those without disability. Later, Mei called for teachers' continuous efforts to improve pedagogy.

Mei constantly claimed that getting to know students is the core practice for inclusion. Before the dialogue series, she found it important to understand students' needs, personality, background, and home culture to provide different types of support that work best for the individual student. Her focus then shifted to considering students' multiple identities and affirming who they are beyond labels. In her final interview, Mei mentioned having students read numerous books that reflect their varying identities for open discussions. Mei adhered to incorporating UDL in teaching, which she believed benefits everyone in the classroom. To meet students' needs, small group/station teaching was one concrete strategy she added in her final interview. Mei was well aware of accommodations and related services based on her observation in schools. Physical classroom setup was an important teacher practice for Mei, and later she also

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became interested in creating a positive environment where students can comfortably share their concerns with the teacher. For classroom management Mei exemplified a couple of practices she observed before the dialogue series, but afterwards she expressed a more internalized view of addressing students' negative comments in her future classroom. Communication with families was emphasized throughout.

Before the dialogue series, Mei criticized undergraduate social circles such as cultural clubs or racial groups as being exclusive. She later noted potential conflicts that may arise between the teacher and family due to opposing beliefs on some difficult topics, as discussed in the dialogue series. Throughout, Mei emphasized that classrooms must be tightly connected to society, and thus, students who learn to interact with and to accept other people different from themselves in the inclusive environment can ultimately make a more inclusive society. As an advocate of inclusion and social justice, her commitment to these values were strengthened after the group dialogue series, along with her deliberation of the death of George Floyd. Being aware of the existence of power dynamics that cause injustice, she not only personalized the significance of inclusion as a necessity, but also exhibited her will to be a lifelong learner and contributor to making a more just society.

Brooke

Brooke was a 22-year-old female at the time of the study. She identified herself as a white, cisgender, able-bodied native English speaker with intermediate proficiency in French. Growing up in an upper-middle class family in the northeastern United States, she had exclusively been attending private religious schools, including college. The only graduate student among the five participants, she was enrolled in a master's program (a fifth-year program) specifically for urban school teachers. Here she was majoring in Moderate Support Needs after studying Elementary Education and Applied Psychology in her undergraduate program.

In the survey, she responded that her college courses that she thought were relevant to inclusive education included *Working With Students With Special Needs, Teaching and Learning Strategies: Students With Moderate Disabilities, Human Development and Disabilities,* and *Interventions for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.* She did not elaborate on the reasons why she listed these courses; yet, it was obvious that all of them were related to students with disability. In retrospect, I wish I had asked her what made her passionate to become an urban school teacher for inclusion, given that her own K-12 schooling had been confined to suburban private religious schools.

It was through this study that I first interacted with Brooke. However, I recognized her face when we met virtually in our introductory meeting after she had given consent to participate in the study. I remembered that I had seen her a few times in the hallways of the urban school where she had worked for two years while I was there as a practicum supervisor during the 2019 fall semester. In the meeting, I learned she had been working there as an intern and that the placement had also served as her graduate practicum.

Brooke did not seem to have any personal relationship with the other participants in the study, she had contacted me on her own through the recruitment flyer I had asked my colleagues to share with the students in their graduate courses. Yet, later during our post-dialogue interview, she revealed that she knew Dana, another participant, and that they were in the same college club but were "never really friends." As the only graduate student who had the most extensive teaching experience and held her teaching position throughout the study, as opposed to the other participants whose pre-practicum was suspended due to the COVID-19 outbreak, she was actively engaged in the group discussions, sharing a number of concrete examples from her current practicum.

Experiences With Diverse Populations

Brooke's personal experience with individuals with disabilities seemed to begin with the exposure to her family members with disability. In the survey, she indicated her uncle had Down Syndrome and another cousin had autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She did not elaborate on, for example, providing information about their characteristics or her relationships with them, and I chose not to follow up with her about them thinking it might be too personal to ask. However, I speculated that she might have been exposed to the individuals with disability early on given that they were family members. She also had a volunteer experience with students with extensive support needs at the private special education school affiliated with her college. Interestingly, to her they were not just students she worked with; rather, she referred to them as "friends." Although her formal volunteer experience was over, she said she still volunteered in the school sometimes to hang out with her 18-year-old female friend who communicated with Tobii Dynavox, a speech-generating device for augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) commonly used by nonverbal individuals with cerebral palsy or ASD (Tobii Dynavox, n.d.).

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The other exposures were through her teaching experience in the classrooms and summer camps. She had worked with students with a variety of disability types, including attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), ASD, learning disabilities, communication disorders, developmental delay, hard of hearing, and intellectual disability, specifically Down Syndrome. Working as an intern in a third-grade inclusion classroom for the entire school year, she said she had access to and was able to read students' individualized education programs (IEPs). Her sharing gave me the impression that Brooke had strong affinity for persons with disability.

Based on her survey response, and given her K-12 school experience in not very diverse private religious schools, Brooke's first exposure to individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds appeared to have been in college. She indicated her best friends were both international students who came to the United States for undergraduate study from Argentina and the Philippines, respectively. In addition, many of her classmates in her graduate program came from multiple CLD backgrounds. From our follow-up conversation, I found Brooke to be open-minded to a variety of cultures, as she expressed about her perspective on the cultures of her classmates that were "a really strong part of their sense of identity" and commenting, "It's been really cool to just hear about their lives and stories as well." She also mentioned that some of her coworkers (i.e., classroom teachers) at the school where she did her internship/full-practicum had CLD backgrounds, but I did not follow up on that. Further, her experience with students from CLD backgrounds was primarily from her practica in an urban public school for several semesters. Especially in her current classroom, she said the majority of her students were emergent bilinguals speaking a variety of different languages other than English at home. Brooke, again, said that, "It's been really awesome just asking them about their

cultures and hearing about it from them and everyone being able to share about their home lives and their traditions and their cultures."

Brooke's personal experience with the LGBTQ+ population also started with family members, as was the case for Dana, another participant. Brooke noted that her aunt and cousin had the LGBTQ+ identities. She also mentioned that friends from her high school and college classes identified themselves as part of the LGBTQ+ group, including her past roommate, a good friend of hers, who was bisexual. Similar to the other participants in the study, she reported that she had never known any of her students to have LGBTQ+ identities. This might have to do with the grade she had taught, since she had only experienced younger elementary students, third grade and lower, which she thought was still young to know their sexuality. During our follow-up conversation, Brooke reflected that she might have had the students who belonged to the LGBTQ+ population, but she had never talked about "that kind of stuff" with her students and they had never brought up their sexual orientations in conversations, such as "I like girls, I like boys." Her comment revealed her general belief about the sexuality of younger students: "I think part of it is because they are younger and they might just not be thinking about that quite yet. I think it probably comes up more in the older grades."

Teaching Experiences

As noted, Brooke has the most teaching experience of all the participants. She explained in detail the variety of her teaching experiences during our follow-up conversation. She had completed all undergraduate practica, including three pre-practica (i.e., once-a-week site visits) over three semesters and a full practicum (i.e., student teaching for an entire semester) as a teacher candidate. She had experienced both suburban and urban public and private Catholic elementary schools for her practica. Her most recent classroom teaching experience was her

current internship as a graduate student for 2019-2020 academic year, which also met the requirements for her full practicum. I do not know how she was able to get the internship opportunity, but think that she made a smart move getting paid as an intern while completing her full practicum, although the internship had given her more responsibilities in the classroom beyond student teaching. Interestingly, Brooke had continued to work at the same K-8 urban public school since her third pre-practicum as an undergraduate student, for a total of two years. In addition to the field experiences, she also worked as a teacher's assistant at a private special school through her college volunteer program. She described her role as meeting the middle-school students' IEP goals by assisting them during the day with developing independence as well as academic and adaptive skills, helping them practice motor and communication skills and accompanying them to services such as physical therapy. I was amazed by her diligence working there two to three days a week for the entire academic year.

During summer and even on weekends, she did not take a break from being an educator. In the summer of her college senior year, she served as a teaching fellow in a college-bound type program offered by a private education company. Here she taught middle-school students from low-income families eighth grade chemistry for weekdays during six weeks. Prior to that, she had worked as a camp counselor for four years since her high school senior year. In those summer programs, she gained additional teaching experiences and skills outside the classroom by working with PreK-8 students for extracurricular activities. Further, she had been a Sunday School teacher for seven years since high school, which hinted at her faith as well; however, her faith did not come up at any time in the study. In short, hearing about Brooke's extensive teaching experiences in and outside of the classroom—whether they were mandatory or

voluntary—offered me an opportunity to learn about her strong commitment to education, particularly for students in urban schools.

The Classroom Context of Brooke's Current Practicum

This K-8 urban public school was known as an inclusion school. Since I worked at the school as a practicum supervisor from fall 2019 to March 2020 until the practicum was suspended due to the COVID outbreak, I was familiar with the broad context of the school, including three different types of classrooms: general education classroom, inclusive general education classrooms, where a certain number of students with disabilities are placed, and sub-separate (self-contained) classrooms only for students with emotional/behavioral disorder (EBD).

Brooke had been working in a third-grade inclusion classroom for the entire 2019-2020 academic year. According to her survey response, her mentor teacher was a white female who had 12 years of teaching experience and was licensed in Elementary Education and Mild/Moderate Special Needs. There were three adults in the classroom: the mentor teacher, Brooke as a student teacher, and a paraprofessional. I knew the student body at the school was diverse; but I had not expected to learn that there was only one white student in Brooke's classroom. Specifically, of the 18 students, 17 were students of color—six were Hispanic or Latinx, another six were Black or African American, four were Asian, and one student was interracial. Thus, the majority of the students in her classroom had intersectional identities, including 13 English language learners whose home language was Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese Mandarin, Cantonese, or Arabic. Moreover, seven students had an IEP or 504 plan due to their disabilities, which were ASD, hard of hearing, learning disabilities in reading or math, communication disorder, EBD, AD/HD, and developmental delay. However, Brooke did

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not find any student who had the LBGTQ+ identities, as was the case for the other participants in the study.

Brooke's Conceptualization of Inclusive Education

The group dialogue series did not have a dramatic impact on Brooke's conceptualization of inclusive education. In fact, in her final interview, she denied that the discussions had challenged her ideas completely or influenced her to have a whole new perspective on inclusion. Instead, she acknowledged that they helped her "process" her own thoughts about inclusion and feel her ideas were being "validated," as well as allowed her to "reframe" her existing thoughts and "think a lot" about or "rethink" specific topics of inclusion while hearing about the other participants' experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. She believed that, as a group, they "did have deep conversations" where "everyone was really authentic and vulnerable," despite the virtual format. Thus, the group talks definitely were the learning opportunities for her that deepened her sense-making of inclusion.

The topics that made Brooke think about inclusion "in a different light" involved gifted students and the high school perspective, in particular. In her final interview, she explained that those were the ideas she had "never thought of" before the discussions, because, first, as an elementary school teacher high school was not the primary setting for her, and two, she focused more on "struggling" students and "how to get them up to grade level." Yet, addressing those topics was a "valuable" opportunity for her to begin to inquire, for example, about "What do you do with kids who are gifted?" Another topic that she was made to think much about was LBGTQ+ issues related to inclusion. We talked about appropriate teacher practices in difficult situations in which, for instance, some parents were against the teacher reading a book about a child having two moms. Brook reflected:

I never thought about that issue in regard to inclusion. I kind of viewed it more as a social

justice issue more than inclusion? For me, inclusion again was more like special

education. But I think it really has to do with inclusion, because you want students who

identify as LGBTQ or who have a family member who is LGBTQ+ … like you want

them to feel included in the classroom and your school community; and you don't want

them to feel singled out or like, "Oh, my family is different. My family's weird." You

don't, you don't want that … that made me think about, Oh, yeah, what am I going to do

if parents ever approached me, "Why are you teaching this? My family doesn't agree

with this … I don't want you teaching this." How do you approach that?

Moments such as this case made Brooke bring up points she "had not really thought of

before" and prompted her to ponder about her own future practice if she encountered similar

situations. She began to see LGBTQ+ issues from the inclusion perspective, as a sense of

belonging, not just a matter of social justice.

Brooke found it helpful to have the discussions based on multiple case studies along with

the self-reflection activity at the end of each session. She explained that such discussions

provoked her to bridge theory and practice by thinking about "how I [she] would put it into

action and how it would look in the classroom" in that those cases were "very real situations that

could absolutely happen at any time when you're teaching." She further added that the

discussions closing with self-reflections solidified her synthesis of what she had learned.

In the following, Brooke's initial and final conceptualizations of inclusive education from

her pre-/post-journals and interviews are compared and presented in detail according to the eight

categories used for content analysis: Purposes, Features, Benefits, Challenges, Facilitating

Factors, Teacher Practices, Tensions, and Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives.

Purposes

Brooke thought for the entire time that the fundamental purpose of inclusive education was to build a community that values diversity. Her core belief was that students with disability should not be "excluded" from school and society as they had been in the past, but should be "incorporated fully into the whole school community," so that all students, regardless of their ability difference, could "work together" and be "learning and helping each other." Two specific goals were necessary to accomplish this overarching purpose, according to Brooke.

The first goal was related to exposure to differences. In her initial interview, Brooke stressed that inclusive education aims at "exposing everyone to different people, different ability statuses." Her rationale behind this claim was that typically developing students, with exposure to students with disability, could normalize disability as they understand "people learn things [in] different ways." As a result, students with disability would be recognized as equal members of the classroom community by their peers. She expected typically developing students would behave in ways that say, "reading is harder for her" or "she [who is hard of hearing] needs that for the ear," which were student behaviors that she had observed in her classroom, as opposed to pointing out "You can't read? What?" or "He has a disability." She also envisioned that students with disability, with that exposure, would "be able to socialize and become friends with" other students different from themselves as well.

In addition to the goal of exposure to—and acceptance of—difference, in her final interview, Brooke was also attentive to enhancing students' positive feelings. Considering students with different backgrounds and identities, such as race/ethnicity, sexuality, or religion, with students with disability still being at the center of her mind, she believed the goal should be ensuring everyone would "feel included" in the classroom community. Brooke stated:

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… it's a classroom community where every student is valued and seen and known and celebrated, and they know it and they feel seen and known and celebrated in the class. And they feel like they can succeed and will succeed in the classroom …

What Brooke explained above are the characteristics of a genuine classroom community, beyond simply being placed in the same classroom. In such a community, being exposed to and interacting with people different from themselves, all students' strengths and diverse backgrounds and identities would be recognized and acknowledged, varying abilities would be considered as human difference from an asset-based perspective. Therefore, everyone would feel a sense of belonging as a valuable member of the classroom, and feel confident and motivated to learn and make progress in school.

The other goal was meeting students' needs by helping them "be able to succeed" and "reach their potential." Brooke perceived that "necessary accommodations and modifications" should be in place for "all human beings," but it was particularly important for students with disability in the general education classroom due to their learning difference. In her final interview, she reiterated the importance of providing appropriate supports to all students, not just to students with disability, since everyone has "varying needs and ability levels." To create a classroom community where students work together, with an understanding that everyone learns differently, Brooke consistently highlighted that it requires teachers to make an effort to have "conversations" with their students about what they need and then provide them different supports.

Brooke viewed inclusion from the human rights perspective, referring to the unfortunate historical context of dehumanizing people with disability, in which they were "hidden away" from school and society, "sent away" to asylums, not given proper educational opportunities, or

their parents feeling "ashamed of" the disability label. She asserted that the human dignity of students with disability should be respected because "they are human beings as well." In that regard, acceptance was consistently the key value when Brooke made sense of inclusion. For her, acceptance in the classroom entailed not only students' understanding of each other's "strengths" and "challenges," but also teachers' acknowledgment of their students as they are. After the dialogues, Brooke additionally stressed the importance of acceptance given students' lives outside school: "In the real world, you're always going to come into contact with people that are going to be different than you, that are going to have different ability levels … different cultures … and different languages than you."

Equality and equity were the other values Brooke addressed with regard to inclusion. In her initial interview, figuratively speaking, she defined inclusion as "making room at the table for everyone" and "get[ting] you a chair that you can sit in" to make everyone become a full member of a school community and society. While she maintained her stance throughout the time, interestingly, the table metaphor was further elaborated in her final interview. She stated:

> But sometimes just pulling up a chair is not enough. Sometimes you need a bigger table … to make sure that they have a place at the table … But, if the table is already full or if the table's too high, too low, whatever, even though they're there, they might not feel included and feel as a part of it … you might need to change something about the environment to make sure that they are fully supported …

Her thoughts were centered around equality whereby everyone has the same learning opportunity in the classroom without being excluded from anything. However, she also took equity into account as she advocated that everyone needs to be supported according to their needs.

Features

Focus of Concern. Throughout, Brooke exhibited a balanced perspective on what inclusion should focus on. It was important for her to create a classroom community that impacts both academic learning and the socialization of students. Students with different abilities could help each other learn academic content together and learn from each other to build social skills. In such a community, students would have positive feelings, such as a sense of belonging and confidence, regardless of their identities. What was interesting was Brooke's explicit statement about the physical access as an important aspect of inclusion in her initial interview. She mentioned "a ramp or elevators in a building" as important for increasing access for people with physical disability. Yet, she did not say a word about the physical aspect in her final interview.

Scope of Population. As noted in Purposes, Brooke acknowledged that inclusion is for everyone, which has as its core value, acceptance of all people regardless of their differences. However, she gave her immediate attention to students with disabilities as the primary population. She said in her initial interview, "when I hear *inclusive education*, I think of inclusion in schools for students with disabilities." Grounding her thought in the inclusive classroom setting, in particular, she did not indicate all students with all different disabilities as the target population to be educated along with their typically developing peers. Only students with mild/moderate support needs, "who can still succeed in a general education classroom," were at the center for her as an intern in the inclusive classroom, noting that teachers should be attuned to the needs of students on IEPs and ways of supporting them in the classroom.

Brooke's initial thoughts remained the same after the dialogue series. Her heavy focus on students with disability for inclusion was pronounced in her final interview response as well. She commented, "I feel like before this [group dialogue], when I heard *inclusion*, I just, I knew I

thought of special ed. and I think I still do." However, she further explained her expanded point of view after the dialogue series:

> But I think it's more than that. And I feel like we talked about some things that I was like, 'Oh wait, yes, this also has to do with inclusion.' But it just wasn't at the forefront of my thoughts. And so, talking about LGBTQ issues, that's not something that I would normally think of when I thought of inclusive education, or gifted students. I feel like we usually think of the students that are struggling academically … But it could also be students who are well advanced academically and are bored and you need to challenge them in the class or kids might feel like socially isolated for whatever reason.

This was the focal point of her learning; the group talks called her attention to other groups of students beyond students with disability. Although Brooke still thought they are the primary target for inclusion, due to their history of exclusion and tendency to struggle more in learning, she began to take students with different identities into consideration as well. That is, she now understood student diversity as ability differences, as well as other social factors such as race, culture, language, and sexual orientation.

Placement. Overall, Brooke's ideas on the placement of students with disability remained the same regardless of the group dialogue series. Those were grounded in practice, her classroom experience, which may have impacted her to take the realistic, pragmatic stance she exhibited during the interviews as to the placement of students with disability. For Brooke, inclusion was associated with the physical space where students with disability are educated alongside with typically developing peers "as much as they possibly can." She was not a proponent of full inclusion, being well aware of the least restrictive environment (LRE) and the continuum of placement options. Thus, she spoke highly of "resource rooms" as she believed

that if some students with disability "would benefit from being pulled out and have small group instruction," they "absolutely should do that." Brooke firmly said, "it's still inclusion," in that those students still learn with peers for the rest of the school day.

What was fundamental for Brooke was teachers figuring out the needs of their students to ensure their success. As part of such effort, she delineated her personal judgment on the appropriateness of the placement for her six students in their IEPs. For instance, she assessed [full] inclusion was "the right place" for the students requiring mild supports, such as the boy with ASD who only needed to improve social skills, another girl who was hard of hearing and needed assistive technology (e.g., microphones), and another boy with EBD, whose behavior was easily managed by a behavior chart. For a student with dyslexia, she assessed his reading instruction should be delivered in a resource room. Brooke recommended a self-contained classroom for the other cases when the students had multiple disabilities and were "low" in learning academics, as they needed more intensive supports in a small group entirely.

For students with extensive support needs in self-contained classroom placements, in particular, Brooke exhibited conflicting opinions. She explicitly stated that a self-contained classroom was "not exactly inclusion" as students with disability and those without are separated from each other. However, she simultaneously claimed that placing students with disability in the general education classroom for inclusion is actually a "disservice" or "exclusion," if their needs are not met due to lack of appropriate supports or services. Further, she was clear that it is not inclusion if a student with disability does not have "access" to the lessons and materials and does not show any academic progress. Thus, Brooke stressed that a self-contained classroom for students with extensive support needs would realistically be "the ideal" if it is more beneficial for them.

In conclusion, Brooke's stance on placement was "a case-by-case basis" depending on the individual student. Her ideas about placement for inclusion were anchored in the general education classroom, based on her core belief that students with disability should be educated with their peers; yet, she felt that inclusion "shouldn't be forced" for all students with disability, as the most important consideration was meeting their needs with appropriate support and services. Although the placement decision should follow the LRE provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by and large, she drew a distinction between students with mild and moderate support needs and those with extensive support needs, thinking the general education classroom for the former group, as opposed to the self-contained classroom for the latter.

Benefits

For Brooke, the purposes and benefits of inclusive education were aligned, as the benefits could result from practicing inclusion. She addressed both academic and social-emotional benefits comprehensively for all students, as different students coming into contact with each other brings diversity into the classroom. Before the dialogue series, Brooke stated that inclusive education would benefit everyone in terms of academic learning. Citing her professor's claim that "every teacher should learn about special education because even if you don't have kids on IEPs, you're going to have kids who learn differently who have different challenges," she stressed that all students, regardless of whether they have a disability or not, could benefit from being taught "in different ways and having different resources and materials." The social-emotional benefit Brooke talked about included forming a collaborative, supportive community where students just accept and help each other without raising any question about peers' ability level. Brooke described what she observed in her classroom as "sweet." She, in fact, witnessed a

girl readily helping a peer who had a learning disability as they were sitting next to each other, saying, "I'll help her read this … We'll read together and I'll read it out loud." As students are exposed to differences they learn how to "accept each other for who we[they] are and how we[they] learn."

Comparing her responses, she elaborated on the benefits more in length in her final interview. She explained dividing students into two groups, students with disability and typically developing students, using the expression "two-fold." For students with disability, one benefit Brooke brought up had to do with their positive feelings. Her rationale was that being in the classroom along with their peers enables them to feel a sense of belonging in the classroom community rather than feeling "singled out," "different," or "excluded from society, from their classroom." In addition, students with disability could feel a sense of accomplishment or successful "if it's [inclusive education] done right," which Brooke interpreted as receiving the right supports.

The other benefit for students with disability identified by Brooke was that they are given opportunities to work with typically developing students for both academic progress and socialization. She exemplified a situation where a student who had learning disabilities in math could learn from a peer who was strong in math by working as a pair. Brooke implied that this type of heterogeneous partner or small-group work enables students to learn from each other, not only academically but also socially. She went on to provide a contrasting example in which students with dyslexia would "not learn as much maybe from their peers" if they learn by themselves although the targeted instruction may also benefit them. Students working together and helping each other contributes to forming a collaborative classroom environment, as Brooke mentioned in her initial interview.

The benefit for typically developing students, according to Brooke, included learning about differences and social skills. As many of the participants in the study did, she also thought that through inclusion typically developing students are able to interact with students with disability, based on her belief that "inclusion teaches the whole class that everyone is different, everyone learns in a different way, everyone needs different things to learn." She brought up a concrete example to further support her claim, which I thought might be based on a real case in her classroom. Specifically, she supposed a situation in which if a student wanted to use a hundreds chart in math class, the teacher would tell her she did not need it but other students might need it. As this student would learn everyone has different needs, Brooke believed, typically developing students could understand "everyone learns differently" and "respect each other" regardless of their differences in learning. Moreover, students without disability could also learn how to "work with" and "be friends with" people with disability who are "different than" them while working together. It should be noted that Brooke's emphasis on differences was primarily based on ability differences in "inclusion special ed. class," although she was aware of other type of difference, such as background.

Challenges

Brooke elaborated on the challenges of inclusive education despite her overall positive attitude and belief. She consistently brought up several concerning factors across the interviews, including the extensive and complex needs of students with disability, large class sizes that increase teachers' workload, lack of resources, and the reactions of peers to differentiation.

Brooke viewed that students with disability whose needs are complex and extensive pose a challenge to inclusion. She referred to a couple of students with disability who she felt difficult to support in her current grade classroom—a boy with developmental delay who exhibited the

characteristics of LD and EBD, and a girl who had both communication disorder and LD. She

described them as academically "very low" and being able to learn better in a more restrictive

placement, perhaps a "resource room" for reading and math, or a classroom only for students

with LD. For Brooke, an inclusive classroom was a general education classroom where a few

students with disability would learn along with a large number of typically developing students.

As such, the environment could not adequately provide intensive, appropriate supports to each

individual student, such as small group or one-on-one instruction.

The various learning needs of typically developing students was another concern with

regard to inclusion, although Brooke acknowledged that "heterogeneity is really good in the

classroom." The fact that many classrooms have large class sizes, more than 20 students, and that

not only students on an IEP but also students who are not eligible for special education have

varying learning needs poses a significant challenge for teachers, since it is, as Brooke indicated

in her initial interview, "really hard to balance all of the needs" at once in the classroom. In this

regard, students' learning needs would also increase teacher workload. In her final interview

Brooke expressed her frustration that there is "so much to do" for teachers concerning inclusion,

but there is only so much they can do as one person. She shared an anecdote of a friend who had

three students whose IEPs all indicated "preferential seating" in the classroom. Her friend was

absolutely frustrated because she knew there was no way that she could get all three students sit

next to her at the same time.

Another challenge stemmed from lack of resources in schools. Brooke commented that in

many cases "schools don't have the supports and materials and services that students would

benefit from in the classroom." And her current school was not an exception. Despite its status as

an inclusive school, she pointed out there was no "resource room" for some students with

disability to receive more intensified instruction on reading or math, although it had inclusive

classrooms and sub-separate classrooms specialized for students with EBD. Inclusive classrooms

in this school would have a main classroom teacher with at least dual licensure[19] and a

paraprofessional; however, according to Brooke, small group instruction was not always

possible. She emphasized that inclusion was "still challenging" even with three adults in the

classroom including herself, which she thought was "such a gift" to maintain a one to six

teacher-student ratio.

The last challenge was related to student peers' reaction to differentiation, including in

accommodations. She basically spoke about her same concern across the interviews, but the

explanation became more elaborated with concrete examples in her final interview. Due to the

varying needs of students, it was necessary to provide different learning materials and resources,

however it was difficult for teachers to "not make it too obvious," Brooke pointed out, as

students easily recognized and raised questions about different treatment. Some questions from

peers she highlighted were: "Why does she get blocks to help her with multiplication? Why

don't I get that?" "Why does he get a break? Why does he have a fidget toy?" Other questions or

refusals from students with disability included: "Why do I get something different all the time?"

"Wait, why do all these kids, why can they just do it? And why do I need this, too?" "I don't

want it [text-to-speech]. I'm not a baby." Thus, Brooke expressed her struggle to provide

appropriate, discrete supports to students without singling any of them out or making any of

them feel "inferior." She further explained that educating young students to understand that

everyone who has different needs should be respected was another challenge, due to their

immaturity.

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[19] This information was from the website of the school where Brooke worked for her practicum/internship.

Facilitating Factors

From Brooke's responses in both interviews, I inferred that she foregrounded individual teacher efforts to facilitate inclusion. While she did not generalize it to all teachers, at least for her it entailed constant "research" and "learning" about "different strategies" and "interventions," which improves her practice to help and support all students in the classroom. It also pertained to constant deliberation and reflection on her own practices, for example, what she would do differently or could do better in giving "lessons," ensuring she saw her students from a "growth mindset" and met their needs, so that all students would be academically challenged and experience success in the classroom. Individual teacher efforts were, in fact, interpreted by Brooke as "working twice, three times as hard to make sure that my [her] students are getting what they need in the classroom," while acknowledging the high expectations on the teacher as if they were "wearing 10 hats at once." Such beliefs also revealed her commitment to inclusion.

Additionally, Brooke emphasized that all [general education] teachers should "learn about special education" or "have to think as special educators the entire time." She repeated that students on grade level, not just those with disability, also have "varying ability levels, needs, and strengths;" therefore, teachers should constantly think about how to present what they teach "in multiple ways," which would benefit all students. Brooke's claim corresponded to differentiation and the universal design for learning (UDL) framework, which she considered as important teacher practices for instruction. More detailed explanation about Brooke's ideas on those concepts follows under Teacher Practices.

After the dialogue series, as part of the teacher efforts, she further explained her self-awareness as "a white educator in an urban setting" and the desirable attitude towards the students who have a different background than her. She claimed that it is important to

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acknowledge one's own identity and ignorance about students' lives. Therefore, Brooke continued, it is important to "listen to" their stories and "take the time to get to know them," rather than "pretending" to know their experiences or making "assumptions" about them.

Collaboration between a general and a special educator in the classroom was another factor Brooke brought up across the interviews. Introducing the co-teaching model in the charter school where a friend of her had worked, Brooke spoke highly of this as "a great model" for inclusion. She felt that students would be "better supported" by two full-time licensed teachers, through co-planning, collaborative decision-making, and frequent small-group instruction targeting their needs than by a general educator paired up with a paraprofessional, her current school practice. Due to her concern that a paraprofessional typically has less experience and expertise than a licensed teacher, she criticized the One Teach, One Assist Model: "one teacher is doing a lot of the planning and a lot of the teaching, and the para's just kind of there to support."

Whole-school change was the other factor Brooke added after the dialogues. As she addressed schools' lack of resources as a challenge for inclusion, she stressed resource rooms as a necessity in the school building. That way, school could provide "enough services and supports" to students with disability, and teachers would be able to utilize resource rooms to meet the needs of particular students while they "could still be in the inclusion classroom."

Teacher Practices

Brooke addressed teacher practices regarding personal connection, instruction, and accommodations/services in both interviews. Her emphasis on instruction in her initial interview moved to personal connection in her final interview. After the dialogue series, she touched upon inclusive practices as they relate to curriculum and climate/environment.

Personal Connection. In comparing her responses from two interviews, I noted that Brooke placed far more weight on getting to know students after the group dialogues. At first, she briefly mentioned that inclusive practices have to do with learning about the students, their "strengths," "challenges," and "where they are" in academic learning and social skills. However, she later elaborated on the practices in depth, with concrete examples of what she did and would do. She highlighted teachers getting to know their students "as person[s]," gaining a comprehensive understanding of not only their learning traits but their "identities," such as family, home language, religion, and favorite things, acknowledging that those identity factors serve to shape "who they are." Especially about students with disability, Brooke noted, "some students have an IEP and yes, that gives them a label right off the bat, but that's- it's just a label … it tells you something about the student, but not everything." She clearly expressed her perspective that getting to know students means seeing them more than a disability label as a label cannot define a student as a whole. The activities Brooke suggested to get to know students included filling out **"**All-About-Me sheet" or drawing "a family tree" at the beginning of the school year. She also shared her previous practicum experience where her students created a mini-report and shared their family traditions in class. Brooke thought such activities are "a really powerful way" for students to "learn about their identities" and for teachers to have "more of an insight into a student" on a more personal level.

Brooke further addressed the importance of giving students an opportunity to get to know their teacher "personally" as well and creating a reciprocal relationship between the teacher and students. Her rationale was that opening yourself up as a teacher by sharing your personal life "stories," including background and family, helps create a space where students might "feel safer to share" their stories with the teacher, as opposed to the unilateral demand from the teacher:

"I'm not going to tell you anything about myself, but I want you to tell me everything about you."

Curriculum. While at first Brooke did not mention any teacher practice related to curriculum, she did touch upon it after the dialogue series. The idea she brought up was to read aloud "books that represent your students" so that they can connect their life to the stories through discussion. She talked about it briefly in her final interview, but she elaborated further on using books in one of our dialogue sessions:

> ... in my classroom just trying to give students power and a voice too ... for example, we were reading a book in ELA, it was a true story, and it was about these girls in Afghanistan who couldn't go to school because girls weren't allowed to go to school, but they have a secret school and they were just pretending to read the Quran, but they're really learning whatever. A few of my students are Muslim and then saw in the pictures of the students, the girls were wearing hijabs, so some students had a question; and once it was like, "Oh, I know one." I was like, "Yes, you be the teacher, you be the expert, you are Muslim, your mom wears hijab, you know all about it." Just giving her the power and be like, "Yes, tell us about your religion" like that. It was just really powerful to be ... I feel like "I'm not the expert on this, but you are." And so, "Why don't you tell us about this? Because you know a lot about it." Just seeing the passion that came from her and how she was so excited to just share about her life and faith with the class. And so, I feel like having moments like that where you're admitting, "Actually I don't know a lot about this, do any of you?" and giving them the power in that moment [is important].

Brooke recounted her experience to explain how books can be a means to empower students given the current U.S. context in which white educators have been considered to be in the

position of power. This moment must have impacted the other participants, as I noticed that the majority of them, in their final interviews, stressed the importance of using children's literature that functions as "windows and mirrors" of students' identities. Especially Holly, one participant, pinpointed what Brooke said and affirmed that she would like to do that as well with her students in the future.

Instruction. Differentiated instruction was the core practice Brooke paid attention to in teaching students with varying needs, including those with disability. The different examples she described in the interviews suggested where her focus was. In her initial interview, she explained the existing practices in her current classroom and the future practice she was determined to carry out. One example was of her mentor teacher differentiating the difficulty level of "the spelling words of the week." Although all the students were supposed to learn "the same phonics rule," the teacher prepared "two different lists of words" so that the students whose reading skills were not on grade level or who were English language learners could learn through "second-grade words," instead of the words for the third graders. Another example she described in detail related to student grouping. During "WIN (i.e., What I Need) groups" block, the students were divided into several homogeneous groups to work on whatever area needed to be improved. What was interesting to me was that the teachers, including Brooke "frame[d]" the different grouping from the perspective that "everyone has something that is hard for them … we're going to help you get better at it," in response to the students' questioning of being in different groups.

Further, she emphasized that in her future classroom, she would "definitely pursue" station teaching for reading and math as a way to differentiate the lesson activities to benefit all students who are at different academic level, and to have small-group instruction for the targeted

group. Thus, her preferred way of doing stations was based on homogenous grouping by students' ability level.

In her final interview, Brooke talked more about her own current practice, which primarily corresponded to lesson adaptation. She recalled what she did as an intern to benefit multiple students, not just students with disabilities, trying to incorporate the UDL principles into her instruction. In one specific example, she pulled two students with dyslexia and two other struggling readers into a small group for a reading activity to see if that strategy would work for the other students although they did not have an IEP. The other examples were "watch[ing] a video" or "pre-teaching the vocabulary" as a whole-class activity before reading, or providing everyone with "visuals" in math. Brooke believed that these practices would benefit a large number of students although they were primarily intended to aid the learning of students with disability.

Accommodations/Related Services. Brooke began with a general statement on the necessity of accommodations, modifications, services, and supports being "in place" for individuals with disability. As we dived into several interview questions, she shared how she, as an intern, had provided accommodations to struggling learners, including students with disability, for their learning. She had also conducted small-group instruction for extra support in the classroom, which included "re-teach[ing]" a concept and using assistive technology such as "manipulatives" or "text-to-speech." She further brought up the idea that she would "type up the word problems and have the students listen to the word problems on the computer" for students with LD, who often struggle to read math word problems.

After the dialogue series, as noted under Instruction, Brooke paid attention to the UDL framework, which in a way covers accommodations for students with disability. However, she did not mention any specific accommodations or related services.

Assessment. During her initial interview, Brooke explained the diagnostic assessment (e.g., reading comprehension) as her school's current practice to understand students' readiness at the beginning of the school year. However, she did not mention any practice regarding assessment in her final interview.

Climate/Environment. Only after the dialogues did Brooke talk about practices for classroom environment. Aligned with the practice noted under Curriculum, she addressed being equipped with books representing the identities of students as a classroom setup. And she highlighted creating a classroom environment where mistakes are acceptable, as modeled by the teacher. For example, concerning students who were perfectionists, who would think "that [mistake] is the worst thing ever" and "it has to be perfect," or who would cry because of their mistake, she illustrated her reaction to the student by pointing out her own mistake while solving a math problem during class in the past. She recounted:

> I was like, "You're right. I made a mistake … And you know, it happens. I made a mistake. Thank you for telling me about it. No big deal. I'm going to fix it," to show them that I'm not perfect. I'm a human as well.

Brooke hoped to create a more humane classroom environment where mistakes are expected and accepted, so that students could feel comfortable and be more lenient to themselves, rather than being perfectionists.

Management. Brooke did not mention anything under this heading in either interview.

Tension

Brooke gave two main examples of what she thought could create tension around inclusion. Her ideas were straightforward as she reiterated the same instances in both interviews, which were already fully addressed in the categories of Features (Placement) and Challenges, respectively. To review, one example had to do with the concept that speaks for the inclusion of all individuals with disability in society. When it comes to inclusion in school, however, it does not serve all students in the same classroom, given Brooke's view on inclusion, which relied heavily on the physical placement of students with disability being educated in the general education classroom alongside typically developing students. For instance, regarding the placement of students with extensive support needs, in particular, Brooke conceived that inclusion "would actually be restricting" or excluding them because their needs would not be met in the general education classroom due to the insufficient resources, supports, and services provided. Thus, placing them in a more restrictive environment (e.g., "sub-separate classroom") would be appropriate and realistic, taking their complex "health" and "educational" needs into consideration. However, she made it clear that it is not inclusion if they are separated from typically developing students.

The other example of tension was embedded in differentiation—a pivotal framework for inclusion as it is intended to support students who have varying needs in the classroom, including those with disability. The point Brooke made was that tension may arise when the teacher wants to ensure students to receive the supports they need but do not want to single them out at the same time. As "students need different things," the teacher should differentiate their lessons, for instance, preparing "a different worksheet" or working "one-on-one" with those "disengaged" or "struggling," but the students, either those receiving additional support themselves or others,

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would easily notice it. Such conflict was Brooke's concern, which she believed would pose a challenge to teachers when they want to implement differentiation inconspicuously.

Attitudes/Beliefs/Perspectives

Brooke was a strong advocate of inclusion for students with disability. Although she acknowledged that there are many obstacles in practice to working towards inclusion, and thus it is challenging for teachers to do it right, the way she conceptually spoke about it was entirely positive throughout the interviews. She said:

> I think the idea of inclusion is great. I think that incorporating students into the general education classroom and being able to support them in different ways, I think, is absolutely great … I think inclusion is great. And I do think that inclusion should continue.

Brooke supported her idea primarily in light of the historical context of excluding people with disability from education and society. After the dialogue series, she became more aware of other student populations to be considered for inclusion, those who had a different background, race, culture, language, sexuality, or even religion than hers, for example, and thus her own identity as a white educator in an urban school who needed to be sensitive to not make assumptions about or stereotype those students. However, students with disability was always at the core. Thus, she believed that inclusive education is "the best model for special education," and considered it as "the ideal, the gold standard in a lot of cases." Brooke indicated that seeing her students with disability "flourish" in the classroom was a "rewarding" and "powerful" experience. She found one student was good at drawing although he struggled to read. She then had all of her students draw a picture as well during the writing activity and observed their joy and engagement.

As such, Brooke exhibited strong commitment to inclusion as a future educator. She was fully conscious of her responsibility, as an educator, of doing her best to support her students to "reach their potential." For students with disability, in particular, she stated, "they can survive and thrive in the general education classroom. And for students that can do that, I think that we should be making every effort to incorporate them into the general classroom." Although her responses implied that inclusion was limited to students with mild/moderate support needs, whose needs could be met in the general education classroom, efforts pertained to constant research on effective inclusive practices, working as hard as possible to ensure appropriate services and supports are given to each individual student, and creating a classroom that embeds the value of acceptance, so that everyone feel respected and a sense of belonging as a community, regardless of their difference.

It was impressive to see what she wrote in her final journal: "all good teachers should think like a special educator … All teachers should strive to meet the needs of all of their students, IEP or not." This statement was grounded in her belief that special educators prioritize individual students, how to meet their needs, with a comprehensive understanding of who they are as a person, their strengths and areas of improvement. As I deeply agree with her idea, I have no doubt that she will be a good teacher who thinks like a special educator.

Summary of Brooke's Conceptualization

Brooke identified herself as a white female, who grew up in an upper-middle class family. She was heterosexual, and had no history of having a disability, but some of her family members had a disability and were homosexual. As a typical college student in a teacher education program in the United States, she majored in Elementary Education and Applied Psychology as an undergraduate and was studying Moderate Support Needs in her graduate

program specifically for urban educators. Among our group, Brooke was the only graduate student in the fifth-year program, and she had the most teaching experience of all the participants. After completing all of her undergraduate practica, at the time of the study, she was doing her internship in a third-grade inclusive classroom at an urban public K-8 school, which also served as her graduate full practicum. She brought up a number of concrete examples from her current classroom during the dialogues.

The gist of Brooke's conceptualization of inclusive education was as follows. The central purpose of inclusion was building a community that values diversity. She envisioned that all students, with appropriate supports, learn with and from one another in the general education classroom as they are exposed to and interact with people different from themselves; their strengths and differences are recognized and valued, which ultimately impacts their positive feelings in the community. Acceptance, thus, was the key value of inclusion for Brooke.

Her viewpoint indicated that inclusion involves both the academic learning and the socialization of all students in the classroom. However, she gave her immediate attention to students with disabilities as the primary population for inclusion given their history of exclusion, although she began to consider identities beyond ability difference after the dialogue series. As to the placement of students with disability, Brooke consistently had a realistic, pragmatic stance: it should depend on the individual student. Believing in the LRE principle, she considered inclusion as a general education classroom in which students with mild/moderate support needs are educated alongside typically developing peers to the maximum extent possible. Rather than advocating for full inclusion, she spoke highly of a resource room where some students can receive intensive instruction by being pulled out. For students with extensive support needs, Brooke supported a self-contained classroom if it is more beneficial for them.

One benefit Brooke emphasized across the interviews was community building, as students with and without disability would be able to work together and progress both socially and academically. In her final interview, she explained the benefits for both students with disability and typically developing students, but her ultimate point was that they could help and learn from one another as a community, with an understanding of differences that was focused on ability. On the contrary, the major challenge for inclusion was the complex and extensive needs of some students with disabilities, whose needs Brooke thought were not met in the inclusive classroom. Schools' lack of resources also exacerbated teachers' efforts to provide appropriate supports and meaningful learning to these students. The varying needs of typically developing students, let alone those of students with disability, imposed another challenge to teachers, especially given large class sizes. In such environments, teachers tend to struggle in providing accommodations, because if those became obvious in the classroom peers might question why some were learning differently or those receiving accommodations might feel bad about themselves.

Brooke viewed individual teacher efforts as a fundamental factor in facilitating inclusion, which included (a) ceaseless learning about effective practices to support all students in their learning; (b) deliberation and reflection on one's own practice, with a focus on multiple ways of teaching; and (c) only after the dialogues, self-awareness of one's own identity—in her case, as a white educator—in working with students from different backgrounds. Another factor related to collaboration between general and special educators, which she thought would be better than the teacher-paraprofessional co-teaching model. Brooke mentioned whole-school change only in her final interview, thinking resources rooms in the school building could provide more intensified instruction to students in need.

Concerning teacher practices, Brooke was constantly attentive to personal connection, instruction, and accommodations/related services. She stressed getting to know students, and, ultimately, their multiple identities, which was expanded from her focus on ability difference before the dialogues. Differentiation was the primary consideration for her in teaching students with varying needs. With her preference for homogeneous grouping, she at first expressed an eagerness to use stations in her future classroom, but she later described efforts to incorporate the UDL framework into her lessons to benefit more students, not just those with disability. Her interview responses indicated her strong agreement with the need for services and supports for individuals with disability. In her initial interview, she shared some ways of providing accommodations to struggling learners, including students with disability, such as small-group instruction, re-teaching, and using assistive technology. Practices for curriculum and classroom environment drew Brooke's attention after the dialogues. She suggested a read-aloud of books representing the students' identities to help them connect the stories to their life and share their experiences with one another. Although she did not speak about the importance of books during the interview, she stressed the use of books as a means to empower students. Finally, she expressed the hope that her classroom would be a space where students could feel comfortable making mistakes.

Brooke gave two examples of tension around inclusion. She believed inclusion involves educating students with disability with typically developing peers in the same classroom and that, therefore, placing them in a different classroom is not inclusion. Nonetheless, she noted that substantially separate classrooms would be appropriate for students with extensive support needs as they can receive all the services and supports there. With differentiation, Brooke pointed out

that tension may arise when the teacher wants to ensure their students receive the supports they need but do not want to single them out simultaneously.

As a strong advocate, Brooke had an entirely positive attitude towards the idea of inclusion, particularly for students with disability who can succeed in the general education classroom, claiming it as "the best model for special education." She expressed her commitment to constantly strive to support each one of the students who has varying needs in her future classroom as she indicated, "all good teachers should think like a special educator."

Chapter 5.

Synthesis of Five Preservice Teachers' Conceptualizations of Inclusive Education

The single-case studies examined each participant's conceptualization of inclusive education before and after the group dialogue series. As such, their coded pre- and post-dialogue responses from their journals and interview transcripts were juxtaposed and compared according to the coding scheme, which was comprised of the following eight categories: Purposes, Features, Benefits, Challenges, Facilitating Factors, Teacher Practices, Tensions, and Attitude/Beliefs/Perspectives. In this chapter, I synthesize the case studies, focusing on the commonalities and variations of the five preservice teachers' conceptualizations of inclusive education after participating in the group dialogue series. By juxtaposing and comparing their responses primarily from their post-dialogue journal entries and interview transcripts, I paid attention to the participants' collective sense-making of inclusion/inclusive education, which are indicators of learning from the six group discussions.

While reviewing each case study, along with a chart consisting of codes and quotations from participants' post-dialogue journal entries, interview transcripts, and my analytic memos for each case, I noted emerging themes that could apply to all participants as well as to distinct characteristics of each participant. Three salient themes emerged from this cross-case analysis, which depict both homogeneous and heterogeneous conceptualizations of inclusion across the participants. These overarching themes indicated that the five preservice teachers conceptualized inclusive education collectively, influenced by the group dialogues in which they constantly interacted with each other to share ideas, as well as individually, by reflecting upon their own thoughts grounded in their unique personal and educational histories, experiences with diverse populations, and teaching experiences.

Overall, participants' conceptualization of inclusive education grew out of the group dialogue series, but to different extents. "A whole new idea would come up in my own head" while listening to others' ideas [she] "never even thought of," shared Holly. Her impression of the dialogues was that they led to "people actually talk about it [inclusive education] in depth." Mei similarly commented that the discussions "push[ed] me to think deeper" on some topics she "never gave a second thought," with challenging questions being asked by me, the facilitator. Lauren stated, "at the end of the study, I had a whole different view." She spoke highly of the opportunity to hear peers' ideas, which made her reflect on her own thinking and realize "there's not just one way to foster an inclusive education." Likewise, Brooke appreciated that the group discussions became a chance to hear about the other participants' thoughts and experiences, not only validating her own ideas, but making her "(re)think" about some ideas she "didn't think a lot before." Finally, Dana also talked about the "influence" of the discussion topics on her understanding of inclusive education. To illustrate, she related a learning moment that occurred for her in the middle of a discussion session: to summarize, her perspective was disagreed with by Lauren as she "phrased it in a different way or challenged what I [Dana] had said, obviously in this right way." This brought a new perspective to Dana, and a few turns later she told everyone that "my opinion has changed." Dana made a point that Lauren helped her to "think about it in a different light."

The aforementioned comments, as noted in each case study, suggested that the dialogues provided a space for learning where everyone deepened their understanding of inclusive education. Their ideas, thoughts, and perspectives on inclusion expanded and became more complicated, without their core beliefs being directly challenged. During each discussion session, the five preservice teachers actively exchanged thoughts and experiences, both similar and

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different. Hearing about others' ideas gave the participants the opportunity to come in contact with new perspectives, to process them, and then reflect on their own thoughts, ideas, perspectives, and beliefs for affirmation, clarification, or synthesis.

To synthesize the collective and individual learning of the five participants that occurred through the dialogue series, I present three themes: (a) Inclusion as a Channel to Prepare for Transition From the Classroom/School to Society, (b) Inclusion as a Means to Empower Marginalized Students Under the Rhetoric "for All," and (c) Teachers as a Mechanism of Inclusive Action/Enactment.

Inclusion as a Channel to Prepare for Transition From the Classroom/School to Society

Across all participants, the conceptualizations were focused heavily on stating the purposes of inclusive education. All preservice teachers sought the ultimate purposes of inclusive education—to improve society by fostering democratic values such as acceptance, equity, social justice. Regardless of the specific goals each individual teacher conceived, for example, a sense of belonging, exposure to diversity, providing the same educational opportunity or quality education, meeting students' needs, and fostering students' purpose in the classroom, they had a rationale for supporting/advocating inclusion. They tended to believe that inclusion in school contributes to advancing society to be more inclusive, equitable, and just for all people. Brooke insisted "integration" of individuals with disability into school and society was a primary purpose of inclusion, from her standpoint that was firmly grounded in the exclusion of this population in history. Dana emphasized transferability of inclusion from the classroom to society so that it becomes a "better-functioning" society that concerns "well-being" of its members. Mei saw inclusion in the classroom as preparing students to be agents of change for a more harmonious society where diverse people accept each other and work together. Holly thought the

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classroom should be an equitable space to protect the marginalized students from experiencing "the societal inequalities." In other words [adding my interpretation], she did not want her students to internalize those inequalities but to be more prepared for bringing "societal equity." Finally, unlike her peers, Lauren did not explicitly state that the role of inclusion was to prepare students to transition to society. Yet, she implied that if students understand "the purpose" of learning other cultures, for example, they would be more open-minded to live with diverse people in the future.

This tendency strongly associated with how the preservice teachers explicated benefits of inclusive education. That is, rather than stating positive outcomes of inclusion based on their schooling/classroom experiences, except for Brooke or Lauren, who illustrated what had actually occurred in the classroom for them as a teacher and as a student, respectively, the majority of participants' statements were expected or anticipated outcomes stemming from what they were hoping to see or achieve. This is understandable since all the participants—except for Brooke, who was doing her internship for the whole school year as a full-time student teacher—were teacher candidates who had relatively limited teaching experience. Thus, what they shared as benefits in their individual interviews and journals tended to be hypothetical.

Overall, the preservice teachers attributed the development of a more democratic society to the benefits, positive outcomes, of inclusive education. In fact, they expressed the conviction that with inclusion, students are exposed to multiple aspects of differences, not only in terms of ability but also race, culture, language, SES, sexual orientation or gender identity, and religion, and, therefore, learn how to socialize and interact with those who are different from themselves and normalize, accept, and respect difference as part of human diversity. In participants' view, students' skills, attributes, and positive attitudes toward difference grow and are nurtured through

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inclusion in the classroom, which ends up leading to the improvement of society, in which inequality, inequity, and injustice still exist for certain groups of people.

Nevertheless, the participants revealed inconsistent views on equality as a democratic value related to inclusion. First of all, I was unable to speculate how Dana thought about equality, as I could not detect any specific statement of hers related to it and, therefore, I did not even think of directly asking her about it. Holly and Brooke embraced equality, yet not so much as equity, since they stressed providing the same learning opportunities to students with disability as to their typically developing peers. Mei and Lauren, on the contrary, explicitly said they rejected equality as the value that should be pursued in inclusive education given their strong emphasis on which students should not be taught in the same way, given their need for different, more appropriate supports. Holly, Brooke, and Dana also believed in differentiated instruction, UDL, and providing tailored instruction, support, and services to individual students, but their responses varied in terms of the weight they placed on these concepts. In short, the preservice teachers believed that inclusive education functions as a means to improve society to be more inclusive and equitable, and this belief was how and why they had become advocates of social justice.

Inclusion as a Means to Empower Marginalized Students Under the Rhetoric "for All"

While all of the preservice teachers agreed that "inclusion is for everyone," for "all students" in the classroom, further investigation showed that what they meant by "everyone" and "all students" was different for each participant. For example, the scope of the target population for inclusion expanded as they began to consider a variety of identity factors that affect the individuality of each student. As such, they began to take students with LGBTQ+ identities and students who are academically advanced into consideration for inclusion. Yet, they still viewed

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students with disability as the main target for inclusion in comparison to typically developing students, a view that corresponds to the common perception of educators considering students with disability as the primary group for inclusion in the historical context of inclusive education.

Under the rhetoric that "inclusion is for everyone," the preservice teachers revealed subtle nuances regarding the population to be the most supported for inclusion. For instance, Holly associated "everyone" with "many different groups." However, she was more attentive to marginalized groups of students, including students with disability, who she thought tend to struggle more in school. In her opinion, the teacher should work on affording equal and equitable educational opportunities to those students, yet simultaneously try not to assimilate them into the majority of the students in the classroom. Dana also spoke about marginalized students who are powerless compared to the majority in a position of power, and foregrounded students with disability and those with multiple identities, in particular. Being fully aware of the power differential between students who are in the majority versus those who are in the minority, she reconciled the issue by claiming that "everyone can become majority" if their strengths are recognized. Lauren was straightforward. According to her, inclusion for all students was an "easy answer." Acknowledging its limitation in reality, thus, she stressed minority student populations whom the teacher should put more effort to meet their needs. Directly connecting everyone to students with intersectional identities, Mei claimed that the norm of inclusion is understanding that "every student's just different." Lastly, Brooke also began to consider other students with multiple identities, but still left students with disability at the forefront for inclusion.

The preservice teachers underlined the importance of the teacher practice of getting to know all students on a personal level in the classroom and building a strong individual

relationship with each student. By making that a top priority, teachers can learn about their students in more depth, for example, personality, strengths and areas of needs or improvement, family type, family background, home culture, language, and religion. As Dana commented, teachers should be "aware" of students' identities and intersectionality, and "affirm" their identities beyond labels, as they learn from the students who they are, Mei claimed. Mei even spoke highly of teachers making "home visits."

By getting to know their students better, teachers can provide appropriate support to each individual student according to their needs, which ultimately influences their learning and experience in school. Holly and Lauren thought relationship building has a huge impact on students' both academic and social-emotional learning. Their reasoning was that if students have positive emotional experiences and feelings (e.g., a sense of belonging, affirmation of who they are, and realizing a reason/purpose to be in the classroom), resulting from a strong, personal relationship with the teacher, their motivation and engagement in learning will increase, enabling them to make progress in academic achievement. Dana did not explicitly point out the importance of relationship building between the teacher and students, perhaps due to the high school setting in which her standpoint was mainly grounded. However, she similarly claimed that students realizing their own values leads to positive feelings and emotional experiences, such as feeling that "they have a place in the classroom" and a willingness to learn, and consequently has a positive effect on their academic achievement.

The other teacher practice echoed by all participants was active use of literature as a way to provide students with "mirrors and windows." They agreed that it was important to furnish students with and use books that represent students' multiple identities, diverse backgrounds, a variety of cultures, lifestyles, and religions, which becomes a mirror for students to realize their

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own values and recognize and understand the values of peers. Further, the participants stressed having open, vibrant discussions about the books without imposing the teacher's own beliefs or perspectives on students. Through the discussions, they claimed, students could share their knowledge, thoughts and feelings, and cultures relevant to the stories of the books in a safe environment. In this way, students could not only feel more acknowledged but also become more open-minded to learning from peers and able to accept and respect difference. Although it was not explicitly stated, the students whom the preservice teachers targeted to enact these teacher practices were the marginalized student population.

When it comes to acceptance of difference, however, the preservice teachers were still speaking from the position of power, anchoring their stance within the majority as a reference point. Thus, their conceptualization of inclusive education was not entirely free from the issue of who is including/accepting whom? Examining their statements more critically under the rhetoric that "inclusion is for everyone," it appeared that what the preservice teachers implied was that typically developing students should learn how to accept students with disability in the general education classroom or white students accept students from a CLD background. In other words, their acceptance of difference implicitly indicated that it is the students who are the majority who learn to accept the minority or the marginalized students as those who are different from themselves, which is unidirectional. Although the preservice teachers acknowledged the power hierarchy between the students at the center, the reference point, and those on the margins, who are considered "deviated" from the norms in the discourse of inclusion, they still gave a priority to marginalized groups of students for inclusion, again, to students with disabilities in particular, based on their beliefs that these groups of students need more support to be successful in school.

Thus, the perspectives the preservice teachers held as to the acceptance of difference revealed that inclusion implies inclusion into the mainstream white world.

Another interesting point was that the preservice teachers still categorized students into several groups when they thought of student diversity and identified the target students for inclusion. That is, despite the concept of intersectionality addressed during one of our dialogue sessions, they tended to view students as distinct groups rather than recognizing intersectional identities or the individuality of each student. For instance, the participants talked about students with disability, students from a CLD background (or English language learners), or LGBTQ+ students, not necessarily students who have intersectional identities, such as a student with disability who is Black, a student of color whose family is LGBTQ+, or an English language learner who has a disability. Their perception of students might have been influenced by the way we discussed diverse students in the dialogue series for the most part.

Notwithstanding the categorization of the marginalized students, the preservice teachers further divided students with disability into two groups: one with mild/moderate support needs versus the other with extensive support needs. When it comes to the students with disability who should or can be placed in the general education classroom, the participants only paid attention to those requiring minimal supports, whose needs, they thought, could be met in the general education classroom. The group needing more substantial support was not their consideration for inclusion. Holly, Lauren, and Mei did not even mention students with extensive support needs at all. Dana commented that students' complex needs may interfere with the learning of the whole class and that the students are still included in society despite them not being placed in the general education classroom in public schools, because they can learn daily living skills in special schools to become members of society. Brooke claimed that including students with

extensive supports needs in the general education classroom is actually "exclusion" or

"disservice" as their needs cannot be met in such a placement. Although the participants came to

support the continuum of placements, part of the LRE provision, as opposed to full inclusion,

they drew a clear line between students with disability who can be placed in the general

education classroom and those who, in their estimation, cannot due to their complex and

extensive needs.

Teachers as a Mechanism of Inclusive Action/Enactment

The preservice teachers became more reflective during and after they had participated in

the dialogue process in terms of making sense of inclusive education. They all noted that hearing

what their peers shared in the discussions, along with the self-reflection activity at the end of

each session, provided the opportunity to look back on their own thoughts, ideas, and beliefs and

gain a new perspective. This reflection led them to have a stronger commitment to inclusion and,

therefore, recognize the importance of continuous learning, the constant efforts teachers have to

make to enact effective inclusive practices.

Holly, Lauren, and Mei began to view inclusion as a fluid, complex concept, rather than a

static form that never changes. They acknowledged that inclusion can be manifested differently

in the classroom context, according to the teacher's view of inclusion and their student

population. Holly stressed teachers' "striving for" inclusion, describing it as "progress," not an

ideal, end goal that teachers should work toward. Therefore, she claimed that inclusive education

should be part of everyday practice, not special events in school. Lauren acknowledged that there

is no "one right answer" or a "perfect" inclusive classroom that all teachers aspire toward; rather,

it is up to the individual teacher's perception of and attitude toward inclusion and their students.

Similar to Holly, she claimed that inclusion is a learning process and that teachers should

implement small inclusive practices on a daily basis, as if they took "baby steps." Mei, saying that "inclusion is a must," pointed out that the value should continue to be embedded in her own practice. She also called for continuous learning and reflection for professional growth, (re)defining inclusive education and improving ways of teaching, since inclusion "keep[s] changing" and still needs to improve and evolve as the world changes.

On the other hand, Dana and Brooke did not mention inclusion as such a concept. However, they too emphasized that teachers have to make an effort to foster inclusion. Specifically, Dana suggested that the "entire pedagogy" of teachers should be grounded in inclusive education as advocates. Brooke noted the need for constant learning about effective practices and reflection on her own practice for inclusion. "Hard-working" seemed to be her motto as she held high expectations for herself as an educator and was fully aware of teachers' responsibilities, for instance, providing appropriate supports to students and helping them "reach their potential" in the classroom. Her personal recommendation to all teachers was to learn about special education and think like a special educator for each individual student.

To ensure students' successful learning experience in school, all participants underlined an assets-based perspective as an essential mindset of teachers. Each student should be seen and valued as "an asset" who can contribute to a classroom community, with their "strengths," "positive factors," "personal quality," and "personal experiences" being recognized and paid attention to. Brooke expressed it as "growth mindset" that students can learn, succeed, and grow. She further commented that she believed her students had a number of strengths and potential, despite their ability differences. One concrete example was her discovery that a struggling reader was good at drawing. Lauren also stressed the importance of highlighting the unique strengths of a given student that "other students may not have," which Dana thought would lead their "quote-

unquote weaknesses" to be accepted. Dana also believed that teachers understand that students have a "role" and "purpose" in the classroom, briefly touching upon the importance of teachers speaking respectfully to students with disability in particular. Mei opined that those with disability should be viewed as whole persons beyond any "labels" they may have, and that their identities and life experiences should be considered. Finally, Holly prioritized inclusive education as involved creating a classroom environment where students can "express who they are."

Holly and Brooke reflected on their own identity as white educators and expressed their conviction of what they should do, which could also be the direction suggested to fellow white educators. Given the context of their inclusive classroom for their recent practicum, where the majority of students, including students with disability, primarily had a CLD background, both were fully aware that their life experiences as white were vastly different from those of their students. Brooke referred to the need for sensitivity to differences between teachers and students, which prevents teachers from making "assumptions" or "stereotyp[ing]" their students. Holly, on the other hand, reflected on her privilege and limitation as a white, openly sharing her fear resulting from the ignorance about "how to talk about race." Pointing out the tendency of white educators refusing conversations about racial issues due to their ignorance or lack of knowledge, she called for incessant efforts to learn and become more comfortable about those topics as a teacher model. Furthermore, Mei, as a non-white, Asian American educator, brought up power dynamics between different groups of people, which cause injustice in society, and addressed what teachers could do for students to be able to recognize and fight against social injustice. Again, she suggested that teachers should be lifelong learners to constantly keep up with what is

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happening in society and connect it with inclusion. One concrete example of her effort was searching and reading about "anti-racist education."

Other factors also influenced the preservice teachers' conceptualization of inclusive education on top of those that emerged during the group dialogue series. Participants' personal history and life experience, including teaching experiences (e.g., practica), definitely affected their sense-making, as the socio-cultural contexts in which they had interacted. Social issues such as the tragedy of George Floyd, which occurred in May 2020 when our dialogue sessions were going on, may also have impacted their idea of inclusion to varying degrees. For Holly and Mei, in particular, it made them recognize racial issues and racism and begin to contemplate how to address those in inclusive education as a form of self-critique.

Study participants brought up several challenges and tensions around inclusion. The challenges to/for inclusion encompassed a wide range of issues such as student factors (e.g., the complex needs of students with disability, peers' negative attitude toward students who are different); teacher-related factors (e.g., workload, a negative attitude/behavior/disposition of teachers); family-/parents-related factors (e.g., parent beliefs different from those of teachers); and school factors (e.g., lack of resources). Examples of tension primarily pertained to conflicts that teachers may experience in the classroom, including simultaneously having to ensure individual learning vs. whole-group instruction. Tension may also arise from different opinions between teachers and families regarding certain topics (e.g., LGBTQ+ issues) that are difficult to take a neutral stance toward. Of all challenging issues addressed, the dominant one was teachers' increased workload related to supporting the learning of individual students as well as the whole class. Thus, they all acknowledged that it would be extremely hard to handle as a solo teacher, especially when there are not sufficient resources provided.

After witnessing the reality of inclusive classrooms during their field experience and discussing the challenging situations and issues of power around inclusion during the dialogue sessions, some participants, such as Holly and Dana, felt more confused and struggled to make sense of inclusion. Mei's comment about our dialogues partially confirmed their confusion and struggle: "We weren't able to get to a concrete definition." Nonetheless, they all exhibited a positive attitude toward inclusion and a commitment to it, describing it as "super important," "a great thing," "a good practice," and "the best model for special education." Lauren, who had doubts about the actual benefits of inclusion, said "I support it a hundred percent," and called for other teachers to do their best to create their classroom "as inclusive as it could be." Dana stressed that inclusive education should "continue to grow" beyond a classroom, and Mei further noted that the kind of conversations about inclusive education we had had should "not stop here," but "continue." Throughout, Mei and Brooke consistently and confidently took a positive stance on inclusive education.

In conclusion, the preservice teachers ultimately attributed the accomplishments of inclusion to individual teachers' efforts. Regardless of the challenges and tension teachers may face, the participants considered teachers as the main agents in working towards inclusion. Thus, they primarily referred to teacher practices that could be generally enacted within the classroom, such as getting to know the students, using books that represent diversity, implementing UDL and differentiation, whereas schoolwide initiatives, such as whole school reform or family and community engagement/partnerships, were barely addressed. Yet, in discussing teacher practices, they were completely silent about specific inclusive practices regarding assessment. It is noteworthy that their conceptualizations of inclusive education were primarily based on their ideas, thoughts, or beliefs, and less from their own teaching experience in the classroom. It is

reasonable to speculate that this was in part due to the fact that, as preservice teachers, the participants had yet to be actual classroom teachers. But this may also account for lack of specificity around teaching practices, except at a general level. Overall, it is clear that participants need to gain experiential and concrete knowledge and skills related to inclusive practices so that they can function as a mechanism of inclusive action in their future classroom.

Summary

This chapter addressed the commonalities and variations in conceptualizations of inclusive education across participating preservice teachers after the group dialogue series. Three themes emerged from a cross-case analysis of the five single-case studies: (a) Inclusion as a Channel to Prepare for Transition From the Classroom/School to Society, (b) Inclusion as a Means to Empower Marginalized Students Under the Rhetoric "for All," and (c) Teachers as a Mechanism of Inclusive Action/Enactment. With regard to the purposes of inclusive education, participants provided the rationale that inclusive education in the classroom and school is the foundation for achieving a more inclusive and equitable society. Thus, they believed that the student benefits they anticipated, such as social skill development and acceptance of difference, would ultimately prepare students to help bring about a better society.

It is noteworthy that the terms "inclusion is for everyone," for "all students" served as the rhetoric for the inclusion movement. In practice, the preservice teachers still had a specific student group(s) in mind regarding the scope of population for inclusion—marginalized students. After the dialogue series, this target group of students for inclusion expanded from the primary focus on students with disability to also include students with multiple identities, such as those with a CLD background and LGBTQ+ students. However, participants still tended to categorize marginalized students into several different groups, and even among students with disability,

they made a clear distinction between those with mild/moderate support needs, who they believed are able to be placed in the general education classroom, and those requiring extensive support needs. They either thought the latter group should be placed separately for more specialized and individualized instruction, or did not mention them at all. Lastly, and students with "intersectional" identities were still not part of their primary focus.

Regardless of the challenges and tension around inclusion addressed, the preservice teachers viewed inclusive education positively. Particularly following the dialogues, seeing themselves as future educators who should be the main agents for progress towards inclusion, they all stressed understanding students from an assets-based perspective. Despite insights from their reflections on their identities and practices, they the five preservice teachers need to gain experiential knowledge and skills to be able to function as a mechanism of inclusive action/enactment in their future classroom.

Chapter 6.

Preservice Teachers' Ways of Negotiating the Meanings of, Perspectives on, and Beliefs

Toward Inclusion and the Contribution of Facilitation

In Chapters 4 and 5, I reported the findings from my investigation of the individual preservice teachers' conceptualization of inclusive education before and after the dialogue series, as well as commonalities and variations of the conceptualizations across the five teachers after the dialogues. The findings suggested that the group dialogues provided a learning space where the participants could deepen their understanding of inclusive education.

In this chapter, I turn my focus to the group dialogues themselves and how the five preservice teachers interacted with each other to make sense of inclusion as a group. The specific research questions addressed in this chapter are as follows:

How do preservice teachers negotiate the meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs about inclusion during the group dialogue series when they face challenges around the concept and practice? (RQ 2)

How does facilitation—content/topics, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary materials and activities—mediate those negotiations? (RQ 3)

To answer these questions, I analyzed the transcripts of the group dialogue series using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) (excluding the first session transcript as it primarily consisted of an introductory activity for getting to know each other and setting discussion expectations) and reviewed accompanying artifacts such as the mind-maps and self-reflection journals. While thoroughly reading the texts several times, I divided each 1.5-hour transcript into segments that marked transitions that shifted the orientation of the discussion. This process of segmentation involved descriptive coding (i.e., "topic coding") (Saldaña, 2016),

where I focused on several specific topics we talked about under the broader topic of each group session. Thus, each segment addressed one specific topic that began when I opened the discussion with a guiding question as the facilitator and closed frequently with long silence, signaling that the preservice teachers had no more to say, or when I offered the next prompt after everyone had contributed to the exchange. In the 30 segments from the five group session transcripts, I marked instances where the discussion unfolded around the challenge regarding inclusion, arriving at 13 segments that illuminated how the preservice teachers had addressed the challenges. I further completed the three stages of coding (i.e., initial, focused, and theoretical coding), which resulted in five themes that revealed the ways in which the preservice teachers negotiated the meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs around inclusion as they addressed challenges around the concept and practice, as well as the ways in which the facilitation offered mediated their negotiations. The five themes were (a) Convergence, (b) Expansion Through Convergence, (c) Divergence, (d) Inconclusiveness, and (e) Multiple Patterns.

Preservice Teachers' Ways of Negotiating

Convergence

Convergence was a salient pattern exhibited by the preservice teachers during the group dialogue sessions. Convergence is understood as coming to a common understanding, whereby a discussion converges into one concluding thought; in this case, instances where the preservice teachers' exchange of ideas generated a resolution or reached an almost identical stance and perspective. This negotiation pattern might have been the result of the preservice teachers recognizing the question both asked and inferred merely labeling was problematic (although I, as the facilitator, did not expect their responses to be identical). Overall, the preservice teachers strongly agreed with each other's opinions, explicitly saying "I agree (with)." Another way of

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reacting involved repeating or rephrasing each other's statements or tying comments back to previous ones. I further noted that the participants rarely disagreed with each other and did not challenge each other's perspective on a topic. However, convergence rarely appeared as a way of negotiation, given that I found only one example that represented this category (See Table 14).

By way of background, the main topic of Session 3 was about inclusion of students with disability. As the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires to ensure students with disability to have access to the general education curriculum and be placed in the general education classroom "to the maximum extent appropriate" (IDEA, 2004), access to general education has become a basis for inclusive education. Before getting into the topic of labeling, we discussed the meaning of inclusion, for students attending specialized schools that are exclusive to educating students with disability. The discussion then shifted to the current topic, specifically the fact that only a few schools or classrooms are named "inclusive." I had observed this phenomenon in several schools and thought it was interesting to learn how inclusion was understood in practice and was only associated with the placement/education of students with disability alongside the majority of typically developing students. I asked if classrooms without the term, inclusive, do not have to be inclusive or convey a message to teachers that they are not necessarily responsible for making their classroom inclusive. I was wondering if the preservice teachers also recognized this issue. Thus, I raised a question during our group dialogue session with the grounded example I had observed.

The preservice teachers all criticized labeling schools as "inclusive" when they actually do not practice "inclusion." They shared their expectations of what genuine inclusive schools/classrooms would look like, referring to the situations where classrooms that are not labeled as inclusive still have diverse learners, including students with disability. Despite the

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different experiences and examples the preservice teachers put forth, they came to a common

understanding on the labeling issue: Inclusion should be more than just a "label."

Table 14

Group Session 3, Segment 4

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [59:00]	So, shifting our focus a little bit geared towards just majority in the general education classroom again, back to the regular schools. They are based on my observation, there are some schools, even though there are public schools, [that] specifically have inclusive classroom. Right? Some classrooms are just considered as classrooms, other classrooms considered as inclusive classrooms, some other classrooms are considered as SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) or a SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) classroom. It has different names within in one school. And some teachers [are] consider[ed] inclusive teachers, other teachers, just general teachers or special ed. teachers…right? Even some schools identify themselves as inclusive schools. What do you think of this- How do you think of this phenomenon? Is it right term to use indicating couple of classrooms as inclusive classrooms, inclusive schools? What do you think? (pause – 8s)
Mei [59:50]	I feel like maybe indicating that some schools are like that, it gives- shows that they have more resources and that they give more attention to this area. They probably have more specialists or special- or aides in the classroom. But, I still think even, even classrooms who don't say they're inclusive classrooms probably are, because they're just like the student demographic is that there will be a student on an IEP or 504 Plan in…in most classrooms.
Lauren [1:00:31]	I think maybe inclusive schools most likely have, I don't know exactly, but I like to think have more resources than your average school if they're claiming themselves to be an inclusive school? But I don't think that necessarily means that they execute inclusion better than the average school.
Researcher [1:00:53]	Then what do you think of this labeling then? Just like naming, you know, adding that word of inclusive?
Dana [1:01:04]	I feel like it's kind of a buzzword in education. Like, "Oh, it's inclusive, like it's going to be better for everyone, because we're all going to like-

everyone's going to have supports and, you know, if your student doesn't need those supports, they'll be able to interact with students who do and it'll be- you know, everyone will benefit from it," which I definitely think there's some truth to that in some situations. And then other times I feel like, you know, kind of what Lauren is saying, you just slap a label on it doesn't mean they're actually doing anything, but like, is beneficial. So, I feel like it is not one of those things where you can just kind of throw the word out there and if you have, you know, some semblance of a program, you can call it inclusion and people will maybe be drawn to that and see it as a benefit. But, at the end of the day, who's to say it's actually doing anything for people.

Holly
[1:01:52]
To build off of that, I really agree with that statement. Because I think you can't just slap that label on there and like say, "Oh, you're inclusive." That doesn't actually mean that you are nor does it mean you actually have the resources to make it a true inclusion program. Because kind of what Mei was saying, I feel like even if you're not specifically saying like, "Oh, this is an inclusive classroom," just the student demographic is probably going to have varying needs and varying abilities. So, therefore, it probably is whether or not you're consciously recognizing it. But in my prac[ticum], I was in a quote-unquote, inclusion classroom, and it really felt like they had less resources to me than a normal classroom that didn't say they had inclusion. So, it was like- they almost put added pressure on themselves to say they had like that inclusive environment that had all those resources where in reality it felt like they had even less than like a normal classroom would.

Researcher
[1:02:53]
I would like to listen to Brooke's opinion. But before getting there, Holly, why do you think that your classroom has less resources than normal, other regular classrooms?

Holly
[1:03:07]
Honestly, I'm not entirely sure. I think, in this case, I don't know if it was purely an economic thing? Because I was in [Name of the area] and it was a- it was not a Charter school. I forgot what it was. It was [Name of school], but I forget like a pilot [school], so I forget exactly where their money is coming from. But it was basically like a Charter, it was kind of a Charter school, public school mix. So, I'm not entirely sure where it was just a property taxes, economic thing. But it also was like they just did not have enough adults in the room sometimes or if they did, because like I said, my prac[ticum] had four adults including me and it did, but sometimes those adults would only do one thing or work with one student. And there was a lot more than one student who needed help in that classroom. So, it kind of felt like they were under-resourced even though they were claiming they did like inclusion things and I thought that was just my classroom but, it was- it was tough.

Researcher [1:04:22]	So, what do you think of that, Brooke? Because, obviously you're working in an inclusive classroom at [Name of school], right?
Brooke [1:04:31]	Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. I agree, just because you put a label on it doesn't mean that it really is like an inclusive classroom or a good inclusive classroom. The classroom that I'm in, it is an inclusion classroom, but like the teacher that I was with, it was her first year in inclusion and she was not the best inclusion teacher. So, even though we said it was an inclusion classroom, I think inclusion could have been done better in it, but just because it has the label doesn't mean that it's perfect. But even at [name of school] there are three third grade classrooms and two are considered inclusion and one is just a gen ed. classroom. But that gen ed. classroom has two kids who have IEPs, but they just get the resources from the resource room. And so, they would leave the classroom, you know, get supports for certain parts of the day, but those students are still in the classroom and the teachers still have to differentiate and she still had varying needs of students. I think her classroom is- could also be considered an inclusion classroom, even though the label just says, "Oh yes, you have the gen ed. classroom."
Researcher [1:05:33]	But the students on IEP in your classroom, which is inclusive classroom, are not pulled out?
Brooke [1:05:39]	No=
Researcher [1:05:39]	=They're just receiving everything. Okay. So that's how they differentiate just general ed. classrooms and the inclusive classrooms.
Brooke [1:05:48]	Yeah. Because also, I don't know if it's like a [name of the city] public school thing or an [name of school] thing or a national- I don't really know what the rule is, but at the [name of school], in every inclusion classroom, there can only be five kids on an IEP in one class. So obviously in the third-grade class, there are two inclusion classrooms, so that's 10 kids on IEPs, but there are more than 10 kids on IEPs in third grade. And so, what they do is the kids who only- who get their resources just from a speech teacher or a resource room teacher, they can be in the gen ed. classroom?! And then the kids who get their services in the classroom would be in the inclusion classrooms.

The discussion in this segment started with my explanation [59:00] as the researcher-facilitator of a phenomenon that I thought was problematic: that only particular classrooms and/or schools are named "inclusive." Mei [59:50] first spoke from a general perspective of what is considered "inclusive" schools. She supposed that inclusive schools/classrooms are those

equipped with more resources (e.g., more paraprofessionals and specialists) as they pay more attention to educating students with disability. However, she went on to argue that most classrooms are inclusive even without the name, as students with disability are placed in any classroom. Lauren [1:00:31], repeating Mei's statement, also thought inclusive schools have more resources than schools that do not use that term. Yet, she further pointed out the discrepancy between naming of inclusive schools and the actual implementation of inclusion, and implicitly critiqued the inclusive schools that do not take the expected action in practice.

Following Lauren's comment [1:00:53], I posed the same question again but rephrased the problematic situation as labeling. I expected the preservice teachers to provide oppositional views on the question as it was intended as a criticism. Dana [1:01:04], then, assertively expressed how she perceived the word, inclusion, as a "buzzword." In part, she acknowledged the benefits of inclusion, describing the common perception of inclusive education as being beneficial to students with disability by providing appropriate supports and to typically developing students by providing social interactions with those with disability. Yet, touching on Lauren's statement, Dana rejected the pretension and superficiality whereby inclusion becomes just a label, stressing the importance of action that leads to actual benefits for students.

As evident from the transcript, Holly [1:01:52] strongly agreed with the statements from the other participants. Repeating what Dana had said, Holly also denied that slapping the label of inclusion on a school does indicate that the school is inclusive or has sufficient resources for special supports. She also tied her comments back to Mei's thoughts, arguing that it is a matter of recognition since in schools there already are diverse student populations. She supported her claim by exemplifying the classroom from her practicum; it was called an inclusion classroom,

but it was "under-resourced" in her perception, including the student supports from paraprofessionals in the classroom.

With my question [1:04:22] directly pointed at Brooke, knowing that she was working in an "inclusion" classroom, she [1:04:31] responded in agreement with everyone else. She reiterated the lack of relevance between having the label and implementation of good inclusive practices, highlighting her mentor teacher's insufficient practice of inclusion. Additionally, Brooke explained the different classroom structures in her school, which was divided into two inclusion classrooms and a general education classroom for third graders. According to her, there were five students on an individualized education program (IEP) in each inclusion classroom who were receiving special education services entirely within the classroom. At the same time, in the general education classroom, two students on IEPs were receiving services by being pulled out. In line with Mei and Holly's statements, Brooke raised the point that general education classrooms should also be considered an inclusion classroom even without the term, since she believed that teachers in any classroom should meet the needs of their diverse learners. As closure, Brooke noted that teachers are not free from the responsibility to make their classrooms as inclusive as possible even if the classrooms do not have the label of "inclusive." All classrooms have diverse learners, and teachers should strive to enact inclusive practices for their students.

In this segment, we addressed the labeling issue with regard to inclusion. The preservice teachers generated a convergent opinion that inclusive practices should be genuinely implemented in the classroom and the school as a whole, moving away from having just a label as an inclusive school, inclusive classroom. They tended to associate inclusion with students who have a disability. Their statements altogether suggested that regardless of the classroom, whether

"general education" or "inclusive," teachers should acknowledge their responsibility of working toward inclusion of all students with varying abilities in their classroom.

Expansion Through Convergence

Expansion through convergence was the most salient theme in the preservice teachers' negotiation pattern during the group dialogue sessions. This pattern encompassed both convergent and divergent ways of sense-making, in that the preservice teachers not only converged to a point but also expanded their ideas around a topic. Thus, their negotiation pattern took a spiraling form, indicating both homogeneous and heterogeneous sense-making. The way the preservice teachers negotiated the meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs about inclusion was not limited to agreeing with each other's opinions (convergence); rather, they built upon each other's statements and added ideas that were new, developed, or elaborated (divergence). Their statements were connected back-to-back or followed each other in a thread. Similar to the theme of Convergence, the preservice teachers barely disagreed or challenged each other; rather, their discussion became more enriched. As noted, this collective action was a dominant negotiating pattern in the discussions. In the following section, I report four examples.

Development of New Ideas From the Critique. The first segment (Table 15) addressed inclusion in relation to classroom management using the story of Zora in the book *Troublemakers* (Shalaby, 2017). We were supposed to talk about this topic in the first group session, but ran out of time as we spent more time on the opening activity[20] than I had planned. Instead, I asked the participants to read two excerpts from the book before the second group

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[20] It was a true/false story where each participant was to share one true and one false story where upon the other participants were to guess the true story. The preservice teachers shared the stories regarding their experience with students with challenging behavior as the overarching topic was inclusion and classroom management.

session: a classroom event that occurred to Zora and the perspective of her white teacher (Mrs. Beverly) of Zora, the only a Black girl in the class (See Appendix G).

Briefly, the classroom event involved an activity where students had to decorate their writing folders in groups. Zora was talking loudly when she was supposed to be quiet, argued with Aiden after he gave her a signal as the group leader, and left her seat to get a folder from her backpack when it was prohibited. Consequently, she was reprimanded by the teacher, Mrs. Beverly. Mrs. Beverly believed that the purpose of classroom management is to change the behavior of students like Zora to be "normal, conforming, and compliant" so they can "fit in and belong as full, positive members of the classroom community" and not be "outliers."

At the beginning of our second group session, I asked the preservice teachers to talk freely about their reactions to the excerpt they had read and prompted them to make a connection between classroom management and inclusion while recalling the students with challenging behavior they had talked about in the opening activity of the true/false story in the first session. I then brought back Zora's story and had them discuss Mrs. Beverly's perspective. Their convergent response problematized the teacher's perspective as action rooted in white supremacy (DiAngelo, 2018). Expressing disagreement, they all criticized white supremacy and expanded the discussion by pointing out its negative consequences. Furthermore, they enriched the discussion by building on each other's ideas and adding new ideas related to teacher practices of classroom management and creating a classroom environment.

Table 15

Group Session 2, Segment 3

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [23:00]	Going back to Zora's story, the teacher, she has been so much experienced, she is not a teacher who is a novice teacher or who never taught before. She's actually like a couple- maybe two decades years of experience. So, what she claimed was that she, Zora, is going to live in a society that's called- I have to actually give you really, the exact term, a "White-Bread Americana School." Uh, that's what she said. And then, "she's going to live in a society that where the majority is white," right? So as a Black girl, a Black/Brown girl, the only Black/Brown girl in the classroom, the teacher thought she [Zora] needed to know what it looks like, the future society, because she is going to face. So, she [Zora] cannot just act or behave, whatever she wants. She needs to know how to conform to society's rules, and how to behave differently in different social contexts, right? Maybe that could be the reason Mrs. Beverly INTENTIONALLY kind of reprimanded or called Zora in public. (pause – 6s) Then, what are you going to say? What would you say to her [Mrs. Beverly]?
Brooke [24:06]	I feel like it's just really problematic to think that like whiteness is like the norm? and that like, how white people act is like the normal of everyone should be doing? Because that's just not the case? And, yes, I think that there are norms in the classroom and you have them in place with that, again, like kids can be safe and learn. But I don't think that she should be viewing like, Zora, I'm like, "Oh, well, you're going to be entering into a white world and so you need to play by the rules of white people." And I just feel like that, that puts white people on a pedestal and everyone else below them. (pause – 6s)
Researcher [24:42]	But, don't you know- if you want to be successful, don't you have to know the rules?
Brooke [24:47]	I feel like you need to know like the rules of like society of like, "No, you- you know, like in the classroom, like you should- you, you know, like, you shouldn't be like, just leaving the classroom whenever you want? Because that is a safety concern. And you should be raising your hand so that you're not speaking over anyone." But, I think viewing it, I don't know, I view rules as a way to keep everyone safe and to keep everyone on track so we can learn to the best of our ability, not in sense of, "Oh, well, this is just how, the majority of people in society like, are acting and so you need to like conform to their…standards?"
Dana [25:27]	I think it's important to not- going off of what Brooke just said, don't put a rule in place just because, it's a rule. Like, you need to have a purpose

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behind all the rules, keeping people safe and that sort of thing. So, you know, in society, if whiteness is the majority that shouldn't be influencing the rules in the classroom or the way that people are instructing behavior, because that's not…(sigh) I'm not- like, I don't know exactly how to frame it, but like, you can't make rules around that and you can't sway someone's behavior based around that fact. Because even if that's the majority, you still can offer a lot of positive things. And, you know, I'm expressing this horribly, but, (laugh) (Lauren laugh), um, yeah, there has to be some intentionality behind the rules and you shouldn't just accept something as a rule simply because it's always been a rule and that's how it is, if that makes sense.

Mei
[26:28]

Yeah, I also like, very disagree if that's the, um, sort of mindset that Mrs. Beverly has in, in classroom management? Because, like, I feel like, um, in the classroom, there shouldn't be any like…Or Zora shouldn't have any negative feelings towards her own race and other people shouldn't like create that environment where there are negative feelings. And, um, uh, like Mrs. Beverly reinforcing that in the classroom and creating that sort of environment is what will perpetuate like this sort of behavior in the future too when they do go out in society. So, if it's, I don't know, if like a better environment isn't formed from a young age, like it's very problematic in the future too, for the mindset of Zora and everyone else in the classroom.

Lauren
[27:27]

I agree with Mei. I think this really makes me wonder, like, if you're stripping kids of their, like individuality whether it be like their race or their personality, like whatever makes up the kid, then like, what are- what kind of like, inadvertent messages are we sending them- sending to kids that like, they're- they're not enough? Whether it be their personality or their, like whatever. Um…Yeah. I don't know.

Holly
[28:00]

I feel like that kind of defeats like the whole point of education and like being an educator in a sense. Like, I- cause- one of the things I always like, my professor has been talking about a lot in my *Learning and Curriculum* class is like, how, classrooms often times will mimic like society out in the world? And that's- that's obviously going to be true, but that doesn't mean that like, the society out in the world is the ideal one? Um, like, I think the best- one of reasons to be an educator is like to try to help make that better to an extent? And like, I just don't think that…I don't- I don't- Like, starting kids off early with that at an early age, I feel like is the best way to kind of expose them to the way that- there are other ways of doing things. Um, and I don't think that just like trying to mirror exactly what's out in like the real world is ideal, because then you are exposing them to inequities that are just going to keep happening over and over.

Dana
[28:59]

It's making me think about like, how she had Aidan as the group leader? I'm curious about what that system was, because Zora explicitly stated that

she felt like when Aiden shushed her, it was like a very, like gender-based, race-based action. So, like is the group leader system, like Aidan the group leader, because he is a white male and there are a lot of white males who are leading society, or does everyone in the group get a chance to be group leader? Because if, Aidan is a white male and they are, from third grade, seeing white males in leadership positions, that's only going to carry with them for the rest of their lives, and then you're never going to fix, like Holly was saying, the social inequalities and all these things that we are trying to improve in society. So, I think, you know, I don't know how the group leader process would've worked in that classroom, but that's one way that you can easily empower kids to accept, like, fill into their identities and, and use all their different strengths that they all each bring to the table in a powerful, and empowering way.

| Holly [30:03] | Yeah, I was- as you were talking about that, I started thinking like, what if you put Zora in the group leader position? Like, what's going to happen? Because I feel like it seems that she is only ever like, being led by other people and then she doesn't like what they're leading. But if the teacher entrusts some responsibility to her to lead other people? I feel like that could be very interesting. I feel like it could be kind of good for her just to kind of see that there ARE people who can do and be successful the way that she does things? And there are many different ways of solving a problem. |

After my opening prompt, Brooke [24:06] directly problematized white supremacy (DiAngelo, 2018) as entrenched in Mrs. Beverly's perspective, rejecting the idea that white people's ways should be the norm for other groups of people who are non-white. Brooke acknowledged the need for classroom norms but only for the safety and learning of students. She was concerned that the teacher imposing the rule of whites on Zora in turn reinforced a power differential between white people and the rest of the population. In response to her reaction, I [24:42] asked if knowing white people's rules is a pathway for success in U.S. society. Brooke [24:47], again, reiterated the safety and the maximization of learning as a reason for students to follow classroom rules, not to conform to the standards of white people.

Building on Brooke's rationale for the reason for rules, Dana [25:27] stressed the importance of examining the "purpose" or "intentionality" behind classroom rules before

teachers put them in place. She also explained her stance that the norms of white people, even if they are the majority, should not influence other people's way of being and knowing, as she saw their non-white counterparts from an assets-based perspective who "can offer a lot of positive things." Dana repeated her claim that teachers should be attuned to the rationale behind rules and warned against uncritical acceptance and conventional imposition of rules.

Mei [26:28] expressed her disagreement with Mrs. Beverly's perspective as she connected classroom management with creating a classroom environment. She implied that a classroom environment should cultivate students' positive feelings about self, and pointed out that the teacher did the complete opposite, reinforcing negative feelings about her students' race. Mei found it problematic that such a negative classroom environment would perpetuate students' "mindset" and "behavior" according to their race in the future society. In agreement with Mei, Lauren [27:27] further stressed, in the form of a question, that teachers need to recognize students' individuality to give them affirmation of who they are. Responding to Lauren's question, Holly [28:00] related recognizing students' individuality to the purpose of education. Referring to a professor's statement that classrooms mirror society, although she agreed that it is true, Holly said she was against the idea of students having to experience what society really looks like, *de facto* social inequalities, at an early age. Pointing out the role of educators as one of striving to make a better society broadly, she implied that educators should create a better classroom environment that does not reflect social inequalities, in line with Mei's perspective. For Holly, the ideal classroom was one in which students learn various ways of doing, which I interpreted would mean exposure to a variety of cultural norms other than those of white society.

Dana [28:59] turned her attention back to Zora's story by asking a question about Mrs. Beverly's rationale for giving a leadership role to Aiden, a white boy. To analyze what happened

between Aiden and Zora, she brought up both race and gender, inquiring whether the teacher's classroom management of assigning a group leader was a reflection of the social reality in which white men tend to be in leadership positions or merely a random rotation within a group. Dana warned of the negative consequences of white supremacy, especially gender-based stereotypes. Building her argument on Holly's view, Dana, again, problematized the teacher's practice as perpetuating social inequalities by unconsciously instilling in her students a fixed idea of white males being in a leadership position if that was what they only see in the classroom. She suggested that classroom management (e.g., different ways of assigning a leadership role) can be as a useful tool to recognize the strengths of each student and, therefore, empower all students. Holly [30:03] expanded on Dana's idea, wondering what would have happened if Zora were to be a group leader: A different consequence would be expected for Zora if Mrs. Beverly had acknowledged her strengths and various ways of problem-solving.

In this segment, the preservice teachers discussed how the teacher, Mrs. Beverly, used classroom management with students like Zora, so-called students with challenging behavior. She viewed classroom management as inevitable for disciplining those students into conforming and complying with social norms so that they can belong to a classroom community. Given that the teacher was white and Zora was black, this case study was intertwined with the racial and cultural difference between the teacher and students.

All the preservice teachers had a common understanding whereby they problematized Mrs. Beverly's perspective and action as deeply grounded in white supremacy, whether or not she was conscious about it. Building upon each other's ideas, participants shared additional ideas about the negative influences and consequences of classroom management rooted in white

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supremacy and teacher considerations when creating a desirable, positive classroom environment.

From One-Time Events to Daily Practices. The main topic of Session 2 was inclusion of students from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. The discussion around Zora's story created a smooth transition to the following discussions since Zora, as the only black student in the classroom, represented a CLD student. We first talked about who were considered racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Contrary to the typical perception of CLD students being minority due to their racial, cultural, and linguistic differences compared to the majority of white students, Dana and Holly shared their experience of being minority as white in their practicum placement because the majority of students in the classroom were of color. We then discussed specific school practices designed to celebrate/embrace diversity (i.e., students from different backgrounds) that the preservice teachers had observed, which was part of Segment 5. Their examples included a cultural day where students wore something to represent their native country, a teacher reading a children's book written in both English and Spanish, presenting literature introducing different places around the globe or same-sex couples, announcing Black History quotes every morning or introducing stories about famous African Americans in Black History Month, teaching about different types of families, Tuesday Spanish class, and teachers having a visible support for LGBTQ+ students on their lanyard.

After the teachers had shared examples, I challenged them by asking if such school practices were authentic ways of embracing or celebrating CLD students. I subsequently asked how they interpreted "embracing/celebrating diversity." I had observed that teacher educators and students in the teacher education program always emphasized that notion. I shared that as a

person who had come to the U.S. in my early 30s as an international student and part of the CLD

group, I had felt bothered by such trend, since the concept is taken for granted with regard to

inclusion and some of the practices seemed superficial to me, lacking a genuine effort to

understand students from a CLD background. That is, I wondered if the preservice teachers

acknowledged this and I wanted them to reexamine those practices.

The converging points the participants made altogether were a critique of current

practices as being insufficient, and that, instead, inclusive practices should take place on a daily

basis. Based on this converging point, the participants reinterpreted and suggested teacher

practices that celebrate/embrace diversity.

Table 16

Group Session 2, Segment 5

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [49:23]	…You mentioned about Spanish day [class], learning different literature that also…not only English but also Spanish words, celebrating these multicultural days or using Black History Month. You mentioned those different examples. Do you think those practices are actually the way to celebrate and embrace diversity or differences? (pause – 8s) And, in addition to this question, what does it mean by celebrating, embracing diversity?
Dana [50:06]	I feel like culture day is kind of ineffective because it can just turn into something very superficial. I think in order to like, truly try to celebrate or embrace diversity, you need to sort of engage with it, on, um, like a deeper level than just, "Oh, he plays soccer in your country, that's awesome." Like, something just like wearing a sports jersey or being able to recognize the flag to a different country isn't ENOUGH to get you to understand like the culture and the customs then, what that means to the person who's from that country, you know. So, I feel like, something like culture day does have the ability to, um- like it definitely increases visibility. And I think depending on like what your school does with it, it has the opportunity to get to that deeper level, but you need to be, intentional

about the engagement, with, culture in order for it to truly be a celebration of, um, diversity.

Lauren [51:03]	I agree. I think if there's a disconnect between the student's like home culture and then the school's culture, not home culture, the school's culture, um, they will just really start to like back away and kind of just like let that disconnect exist and not really feel the need. So, I think it's really important for, um, as Dana said to have like certain days, like cultural days, but also like, it needs to be present in the everyday curriculum, too. Because if it's not, then it will just be like "Oh, here's the-one day of the year or the month that we talk about it." But, like where else is it implemented?
Mei [51:45]	Yeah, I agree with Lauren and I- that it should be a, more like a daily, everyday thing. And I think, like celebrating and embracing should- like it should be like creating an environment to a point where students feel like they don't have to hide anything. They feel comfortable telling the teacher or other students about… like, what's going on at home, and, just having those discussions, and that environment, I think, would be really helpful.
Researcher [52:17]	So not as just a one day event, to kind of showing off, but actually embedded in the daily, everyday life and curriculum and then school/classroom culture?
Lauren [52:32]	Yeah, I think that goes back to like, the topic of inclusion, if it's like- they need to be included in the everyday classroom, like every other kid is. So, I think it really goes back to inclusion obviously. (pause – 5s)
Researcher [52:49]	Any other ideas from Brooke or Holly?
Brooke [52:54]	I feel like, for me, like embracing diversity in the classroom like means recognizing our similarities, we are all human, we all have feelings and recognizing that we are all similar, but we are also very different and we all come from different walks of life and different backgrounds, and that, that's nothing to be ashamed of...

<div align="center">[53:10] ~ [53:30] < Brooke's screen froze - irrelevant talk ></div>

Yes, sorry. Um, okay. Sorry. But, yeah I was saying how I think celebrating diversity in the classroom means embracing your similarities as a class. And like, we are a class, and we are all human, we all have feelings and we all need to be respected. But also like, honoring and respecting our differences, and you know, recognizing all of us are different, all of us have different, um, home lives, and cultures, you know, and families, and that is okay and that's great! And we should be able to celebrate our differences and share those differences with each other, and

	never be judged for them. But just like learning about each other, um, and about your life and your likes and dislikes and your culture and your language, because that's what makes…up who you are? Um…and just like, I don't know, just like having this like respect for everyone for your differences.
Holly [54:28]	I kind of think of it as like, like when Dana was saying like those culture days are ineffective, I think they are just not enough? Like, it's a "good idea" and I think it's a starting place? I think it just needs to be much more of daily thing. Um, and I think also a really big of component of making it a daily thing is seeing every kid for the individual that they are? Um, and seeing that like the background they come from, the language they speak, what their family does as tradition is like all going to make up who they are. Even kids who are from the same race or same background are not going to be the same person? And I think it's less of like representing the group that you are from necessarily, it's much more representing the individual that you are and how you identify with certain groups.

Taking a closer look at each preservice teacher's divergent statements regarding teacher practice for celebrating/embracing diversity, Dana [50:06] at first commented on the ineffectiveness and insufficiency of practices like cultural day. Claiming that those one-time events do not lead to a "deeper level" of understanding of diverse cultures, she suggested that teachers should be "intentional" in having students engage with other cultures, but did not further clarify what that meant. At the same time, she acknowledged the advantage of such events as they enhance "visibility" and may increase an awareness of the differences in cultures, thereby positively regarding the practice as a starting point for moving toward a deeper level of engagement in school.

Agreeing with Dana, Lauren [51:03] pointed out the limitation of such practices, leaving a "disconnection" between culture of school and that of students and their families. She suggested that students' home cultures should be "present in everyday curriculum," rather than highlighting diversity through one-time events, which does not help link school and home. In agreement with Lauren's claim, Mei [51:45] also stressed that celebrating/embracing diversity

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should be "a daily, everyday thing" that involves creating a classroom environment where students feel comfortable openly sharing their life with the teachers and peers. When I [52:17] responded to Mei and Lauren for confirmation by reiterating their statements, Lauren [52:32] brought back inclusion, echoing Mei, noting that it was a matter of students from diverse backgrounds being "included in the everyday classroom," and emphasized that her (and Mei's) claims were eventually a practice for inclusion.

After that, Brooke elaborated on her own interpretation of embracing/celebrating diversity in the classroom. According to Brooke, it should start from recognizing that we all are similar as human beings who have dignity and that we all are also different human beings in many aspects, including individual preferences, family background, culture, and/or language, which should be respected. For her, the true meaning of embracing/celebrating diversity involved seeing difference in a positive light and normalizing it, and students sharing and learning about each other's differences that make up their individual identity. Similar to Lauren and Mei, Brooke also stressed that it should be foundational in everyday life in the classroom.

Holly [54:28] returned to school practices like cultural days. She explicitly supported Dana's critique of those practices as "ineffective," commenting that they are "not enough" to be a daily practice despite their value as a starting point. She too expressed strong agreement with everyone else's ideas that inclusion should be a daily practice, further developing Brooke's statement. She underlined the importance of showing respect for students' individuality by recognizing each student as a unique human being—not only those representative differences between various CLD groups but also the fact that individual students are fundamentally different from each other even within the group.

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In this segment, the preservice teachers discussed the practices commonly used to celebrate/embrace diversity as ways to promote inclusion. Despite the multiple examples they brought up in the prior segment based on their observations in schools, we were only focused on one school event—multicultural days—in response to Dana's initiation. The preservice teachers converged whereby they all gave constructive criticism of the traditional cultural days as being one-time events without being further engaged in students' daily lives in school. Participants also expanded their convergence by adding new ideas and building upon each other's suggestions for how to understand and enact celebrating/embracing diversity as a daily practice.

Own Interpretations of Placement Based on the Common Themes. The third segment (Table 17) addressed the meaning of inclusion in relation to student placement, particularly given that the reference point is almost always a general education classroom when it comes to inclusion. In fact, not only are there students who are exclusively educated in self-contained classrooms in public schools, but there are specialized schools for students with disabilities. As a result, it looks like these students are not being "included" in the general education classroom alongside their typically developing peers. This, in turn, challenges the taken-for-granted notion that inclusion is for everyone in the classroom, because "the classroom" mostly refers to a general education classroom where the majority of typically developing peers are educated, despite the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) provision under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) calling for a continuum of placements. I wanted to challenge the notion that has been uncritically adopted by many in-/preservice teachers, including my research participants: Given that some students are separated from the general education classroom, how should we understand inclusion?

In this segment, the preservice teachers co-constructed the meaning of inclusion with regard to the placement of students with a disability. Convergent themes emerged as the preservice teachers agreed upon and reiterated each other's statements: (a) inclusion should be understood in relation to the LRE; and (b) the meaning of inclusion with regard to the placement of students with disability varies depending on the individual student, that is, the extent of support their disability requires. These common themes were supplemented by the preservice teachers' own interpretations of the meaning of inclusion, which expanded the discussion.

Table 17

Group Session 3, Segment 3

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [52:00]	Then what about school for- like there's a Lake School[21], right? Obviously, it's not general education classroom. There's school for- Waterfall School for the Blind[22], right? So, some folks prefer to go to school, the specialized school than going to the public school, right? Then, how should we understand inclusion for the folks and then as Mei, kind of shared in the very beginning, there's a Maple school[23] for children who have EBD, right? They don't go to public traditional schools. So, do we have to just exclude those group of students when we talk about inclusion, because the reference point is always a general education classroom, or we have to change our mindsets or idea when we think of inclusion? What do you think? (pause – 9s)
Brooke [53:03]	I feel like inclusion is seen as the ideal for a lot of people. But I think that for some, and like, it is for some students it is the least restrictive environment. But I think that for some students, being in an inclusive classroom could be restrictive for them because they wouldn't be able to get the supports and services that they need. And so, I think it's, just thinking like, yes, it would be an ideal world if all students could be in the general education classroom and be with their typically developing peers

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[21] I used pseudonyms to indicate the schools the preservice teachers and I referred to during the dialogues so as not to disrupt the flow of the discussion. Lake School is a private special education school for students with extensive support needs affiliated with the university that the participants attended.

[22] Pseudonym.

[23] Pseudonym.

	and people could develop relationships with people of all different ability types. But, like students at the Lake school, I volunteered there for three years of my time at [the university] and I love those students with all my heart, but they would not, they would be so restricted in a general education inclusion classroom. They would not be getting the medical supports that they needed, the academic supports that they needed. It just- for them being at a place like the Lake school, I think is least restrictive for them because they're able to get the supports that they need at that school. (pause – 10s)
Researcher [54:15]	Other thoughts?
Holly [54:22]	I think like kind of bridging off of that, it really comes down to the choice to be able to choose where you want to go. And you can choose to be in the regular classroom if you want to be, or you can choose to go to a specialized place. I think it's about where each individual person chooses is going to be the least restrictive environment for them? And I think that depends on each kid. And I feel like one of the things about inclusion is it doesn't necessarily have to be integrated into the main classroom if that's not what's going to include them the most. It comes down to them being able to choose and having that choice.
Dana [55:04]	I also, I feel like those specialized programs in schools aren't necessarily antithetical to inclusion? Like I don't think you need to- we need to see that as them not being included, because again, like everyone has been saying, if it is the least restrictive environment for them, then that's what matters the most at the end of the day. And hopefully coming from there, they'll be able to acquire skills that will allow them to kind of, you know, work and exist and function in broader society afterwards. So, in a way, like you're kind of working towards that inclusive goal at the end of the day when their education is done, they'll be in a place where they can, you know, use the skills that they've acquired to succeed in the world after that. So even if it's not necessarily like inclusion in the sense that we think of it in the general classroom, they are still gaining skills that will enable inclusion down the line, if that makes sense. (pause – 7s)
Researcher [56:10]	Lauren or Mei, do you have any idea? (pause – 10s)
Lauren	[56:13] No. (pause – 6s)
Researcher	[56:19] No?
Mei [56:22]	Yeah. I agree with what everyone said. I definitely feel like it's a case by case basis…yeah, depending on where the student is at, academically, socially, sometimes it's a lot harder to be in the general ed. classroom. And…even though…we probably would prefer everyone to be because

	that's the best model of like having said like broader society. Yeah, sometimes I think it's definitely more beneficial that learning to separate. The existence of those schools is also saying that you are part of society and we care about your education, which is why those schools exist, too. (pause – 8s)
Researcher [57:23]	(to Lauren) Anything you want to add to, more?
Lauren [57:26]	I was just going to say, I think I'm just having a hard time with this one because I don't really think there's any right way to kind of define what the perfect inclusive classroom is. So, I'm just not really sure what I think, but I do think that inclusion kind of means something different to everybody. Like Mei just said, and kind of like everybody's saying, for some it may be that they need to be pulled away from the classroom, because that's better for them. And others may think, "No, they should be kept in the classroom because that's more inclusive." So, I just don't really know.

With each preservice teacher given a turn to speak, Brooke [53:03] started by pointed out that the idea behind inclusion is ideal but unrealistic for some students with disability as it can be rather "restrictive." Behind her claim was the premise that inclusion places everyone with disability in the general education classroom alongside their typically developing peers. However, she noted that the LRE should be considered for some students with disability, namely, students with extensive support needs, as she strongly believed that their needs cannot be met in the general education classroom due to a lack of supports/services in that setting. Referring to her own volunteer experience at Lake School—with a deep affection for the students—Brooke stressed that it is more appropriate for them to be placed in separate, special education schools due to their medical and academic needs.

Building on Brooke's LRE statement, Holly [54:22] brought up the individual choice for placement—wherever the individual student chooses to go is the LRE, whether a general education classroom or a specialized school. She articulated her understanding of inclusion to mean that the placement for students with disability does not always have to be in the general

education classroom if that is not the most appropriate for their needs. Holly repeated her preference for students having an individual choice regarding their placement.

Connecting the meaning of inclusion with the LRE, Dana [55:04] explained her perspective that special education schools and/or specialized programs in schools are not "antithetical" to inclusion. Inclusion, from her standpoint, is more associated with students with disability eventually being part of society after transitioning from high school, being able to work and serve as members of society as they gain necessary skills to function. Thus, she opined that the goal of inclusion should be understood broadly as supporting students with disability to succeed in society beyond just being included in the general education classroom.

Expressing her agreement with the other preservice teachers, Mei [56:22] reiterated statements made previously. For example, in line with Holly, she emphasized that inclusion is should be on a "case-by-case basis" as the placement decision depends on each individual student's academic and social functioning. Similar to Brooke, she supported the idea that in some cases students with extensive support needs benefit more from learning exclusively by themselves in a separate special education school. However, this does not mean they are excluded. Tying back to Dana's point, Mei noted that such students are included in society in that special education schools still exist within society.

Lauren [57:26] disclosed her own struggle in understanding the meaning of inclusion, indicating that it is impossible to define what constitutes perfect inclusion in reality. Although she was unclear about her own thoughts, she was clear that inclusion can be defined differently depending on each student with disability, whether it means being pulled out or fully included in the general education classroom. That is, Lauren basically agreed with the other preservice teachers' perspectives.

In this segment, we discussed the meaning of inclusion given that a general education classroom is typically a point of reference for the placement of students with disability. However, considering that some students with extensive support needs attend special education schools, their separation/exclusion from the general education classroom may seem to be in conflict with the concept of inclusion. The preservice teachers negotiated this issue by coming to the convergent point where inclusion should be understood in relation to the least restrictive environment and that the meaning of inclusion varies depending on each individual student. As a result, the placement does not have to be a general education classroom given their needs and how they benefit from the placement. The preservice teachers shared their own interpretations of inclusion, seen primarily as a realistic placement for appropriate services and supports and individual choice, and with special education schools still a part of society.

Addition of Divergent Ideas. The final example for the second theme, expansion through convergence, comes from the fourth group session. The specific topic was the inclusion of struggling and at-risk students and the use of child-centered pedagogy. The literature on inclusive education has often referred to the Salamanca Statement as an important document in the historical development of inclusive education, as it declared education for all children and youth as their human rights (UNESCO, 1994). The document further proposed that schools are responsible for successfully educating and accommodating all students with different conditions, not only students with disabilities but also those from disadvantaged or marginalized groups, students experiencing learning difficulties as well as gifted students. Thus, the document emphasized a child-centered pedagogy that would be beneficial to everyone (UNESCO, 1994).

Aware that the student population for inclusion addressed in the Salamanca Statement was greatly expanded from just including students with disability—the primary target group in

the U.S. under the IDEA—I wanted to draw the preservice teachers' attention to struggling and at-risk students as those experiencing learning difficulties. (Unfortunately, Mei could not join the whole session because the Wi-Fi in her apartment did not work.) I first asked them to read an excerpt from the Salamanca Statement and then invited them to share their experience with struggling and/or at-risk students, along with their perception of those students. For the first 15 minutes, the preservice teachers, based on their classroom experiences, actively spoke about how they defined each term in the document and further problematized "at risk" as a term implying a potential failure in the future. As an alternative, they suggested "high-needs," which they thought indicated students need more support as they experience predicament due to "compounding outside factors" such as poverty, disability, and/or lack of language proficiency.

The following is the subsequent discussion in the first segment (Table 18). It was sparked by Dana's question about "the difference between a school where the majority of the population would be considered at risk or high needs versus at schools where only a few students might be." This question was prompted by her experience in the high school where she did her pre-practicum of a lack of individualized support to many of the students who were high needs. After a few speaking turns, I asked the group a more specific question about a teacher's perspective in two different settings. The common ground resulting from the participants' responses was that they all stressed the importance of the teacher's responsibility to recognize the difference between themselves as a teacher and their students, particularly in an urban school when the white teacher is expected to educate the majority of students with diverse backgrounds. The discussion became enriched with divergent ideas added by several preservice teachers.

Table 18

Group Session 4, Segment 1

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Dana [23:34]	I'm kind of curious about what is like the difference between a school where the majority of the population would be considered at-risk or high needs or whatever, versus at schools where only a few students might be. Because I know in my elementary schools and stuff, we would have paraprofessionals in the classroom and the kids who may be considered higher needs would get individualized and kind of extra support within the classroom, whereas being at Westwood[24], obviously it was a high school, so that was different, so I didn't see tons of paraprofessionals around. But it didn't seem like they had tons in place in terms of individualized attention and then a lot of students, if they were disengaged or not performing up to the standard, there wasn't a ton of support from what I could tell in place from the few classes that I did observe. But I feel like there's definitely a difference between schools and school types, high school versus elementary school, and then the overall demographic of the school in terms of spreading support to higher needs students.
Researcher [24:40]	Yeah, I mean, that's interesting question. I mean, do you think the reason that Westwood doesn't have much resource or support for the students is because there are just too many?
Dana [24:51]	I don't know, I don't know if it was integrated into the framework in ways that I couldn't see, immediately obvious to me. Or if it was that it's just the population of the school, and so that's what they're working with and it's too overwhelming to try to find ways to really address all of everyone's individual needs. I think, you know, they definitely, they're considered a turnaround school, so I know that [name of the city] public schools were working with them to try to help get the school and the kids themselves back on track. But, beyond that, I can't really think right off the top of my head of what was integrated to help work them out that I could see.
Researcher [25:37]	Yeah, I'm kind of curious what would be better for the students… struggling or being at-risk or high needs … just very few in a school where majorities are not in need or just majorities are high needs, because I don't know. So, what do you think of those differences?
Holly [26:05]	I feel like I'm just trying between me going to elementary school and me being in Prac[ticum] in Elementary school. When I was in elementary school, I'm from a very upper-middle class white area, I mean, most of the

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[24] This is a pseudonym for the high school where Dana was assigned for her first pre-practicum.

kids, I would think with our definition of high needs, probably wouldn't qualify for that. But there were a couple that did, and I feel like if they were kind of singled out in a way that, by students, not by teachers necessarily. Because all of the kids kind of knew who was a higher need person and we kind of knew who was who and what was what with them. And it kind of was alienating to them thinking back on it. When I was a student, I didn't really think much about it. But now thinking back, I can imagine how alienating that must have felt where everyone else is highly resourced and if you're not, versus when I was at Sunset[25], majority of those kids had some sort of like economic or family difficulty that they were going through. And it didn't really seem like any of them had trouble fitting in, because they were kind of all in the same boat? I guess one of the reasons that I'm like, kind of hesitating on that is I'm not entirely sure what qualifies as a high need student as opposed to a student who's just having family issues at home. So that's, I don't know, I feel like I'm having trouble differentiating between the two because where is the line of, you have a family struggle? Because we had one kid in my prac[ticum] class who his family was being threatened to be deported. And like, does that mean he's going to be a high need student, does that mean he's just having a family issue? I guess I'm having trouble differentiating between the two.

Researcher [27:53]   Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, usually it's a very blurry area. And you can't really just differentiate the so and so students are high risk because of X, Y, and Z. I mean that's a good point from student perspective, maybe it would be better to be in mixed group [in] the Sunset than the suburban school. But I'm also wondering then what would be...What about the teacher, teacher's perspective?

Lauren [28:27]   Teacher's perspective on what, exactly?

Researcher [28:30]   On your, for example, imagine yourself, you're in the suburban school where there are just a few students who are in high needs, whereas you're going to the urban school, like Sunset, [where] majorities are high needs.

Dana [28:49]   I feel like sometimes that might come back to the demographic that the teacher themselves comes from. I know for me in Westwood, I'm not from like that high needs quote-unquote background and you know, kind of like Holly, it's a white suburban area, upper-middle class that I'm from. So, I was definitely aware of the fact that I'm extremely different from the students that I was serving in Westwood and I didn't want that to inhibit my ability to help them or their ability to connect with me. So, I don't know, a lot of the teachers in the school I also observed were white and I don't know what their backgrounds were. But simply the racial difference

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[25] This is a pseudonym for the elementary school where Holly was assigned for her first pre-practicum.

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they're already in a position of power as the teacher over them and then having that kind of really exacerbated racial difference. I don't know how that really influences the dynamic in the classroom, but it definitely has an impact and it's something that you have to be aware of. So, I don't really know what I'm trying to get at there, but I think as teachers, you have to be aware of who you're working with and how your background intersects with the background of the students that you're working with. (pause – 5s)

Researcher [30:08]	Any other ideas? (pause – 6s)
Holly [30:14]	I kind of was going through the same thing Dana went through when I was at Sunset. Because I was one of the- out of the students, out of 20 kids, there was maybe one student who was white, and the only other people who were white in the classroom were adults? And the other kids were from very different backgrounds, and it was one of the first times I had ever been in a room that wasn't majority white, which is very weird to think about considering I'm in college. But I feel like just growing up in that bubble of just like the one race, I feel like it inhibits you in a lot of ways that I didn't necessarily realize, and I'm still trying to realize. And like, I'm a little worried as a teacher how that's going to impact me if I'm trying to teach students from diverse backgrounds, because I'm not from a diverse background. And one of the things we talked about in my *Learning and Curriculum* class was one of the ways that racism gets involved into the classroom is well-meaning teachers who are white, bring it in. And I guess I just worry about that personally as a teacher, 'What if I were to do that?' And I probably will do it at some point, and I don't know how to recover from that. (pause – 9s)
Researcher [31:34]	Brooke or Lauren, do you have anything to say? (pause – 6s)
Lauren [31:43]	Not specifically, honestly. But, because I agree with the points that are made. I think it's really important for teachers to acknowledge that they are different obviously. But I also in my *Counseling* class a lot this semester, we're discussing the importance of teachers doing their own research before they enter the classroom, so it's important to learn from students with different backgrounds, I think. But at some point, it's if you're always trying to learn from them, it's like you have to do some of your own research. But, yeah, I agree with Holly, I think it's just this- it's not obvious, but it's like- I don't know. Well, I'll just use the word, obviously, you're obviously different from a lot of the students if you're placed in that background, like you're now the minority. So, it is a worrying factor I think for a lot of teachers of how are you going to bridge that gap. (pause – 8s)
Researcher [32:46]	What about you, Brooke?

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Brooke [32:48]	Yeah, I feel like you definitely, like Lauren said, you want to be informed and you want to, I think you need to be aware of your own biases, and make sure, I mean try to fight against your own biases, but being aware that we all have our own biases and like, "Yes, you want to do your research on different cultures and different backgrounds, but also you don't want to stereotype, like "Oh yes, I read an article about students from Mexico and they all do this, so I know that you're going to do this." But they might not, and I feel it's a fine balance of being informed and knowing, learning about the cultures of students, but not like stereotyping them and putting them into boxes, which I feel like it can be a hard, it's a fine line and it's where does one stop and one start? I feel it's definitely a tricky balance, but I think just being aware of, "No, I don't want to stereotype my kids and get to know them as students, as humans, people..." is a good place to start.

I followed up by asking Dana to clarify her perception about Westwood. She speculated on the reasons for the limited support she had observed but acknowledged that she was not sure whether there simply was not any support system or whether the excessive number of students with high needs made it impossible for Westwood to provide individualized support. Ultimately, she was not sure about the school's improvement efforts as a turnaround school.

I went on to tweak Dana's initial question and asked the preservice teachers which setting would be better for students who are considered struggling, at risk, or high needs. In response, Holly made the unique point that just a few students with high needs in the classroom at a suburban school could be more alienated than in a classroom where the majority is high needs and, therefore, go through similar challenges. She interpreted the difference in relation to inclusion, particularly "fitting in," a sense of belonging. Holly then expressed her own struggle to differentiate the characteristics of students with "high needs" compared to students having family issues.

In retrospect, it was worthwhile to address Holly's point as an inclusion issue more in depth. Additionally, her question about the term "high needs" could have been further pursued. However, unfortunately, I [27:53] redirected the discussion towards the teacher's perspective in

the two different settings. Dana [28:49] pointed out teacher demographics as the cause of their different experience in a suburban vs. an urban school. Sharing her unique experience of being a racial minority in the school for her pre-practicum, Dana clearly realized the racial difference between most teachers, including herself, and the majority of the students, as well as the fact that being white put the teachers in a position of power that inevitably impacted the dynamics in the classroom. Thus, she stressed that the teachers must be aware of who their students are and any racial differences, so these issues won't interfere with building relationships with students or helping their learning.

Commenting that she had the same experience as Dana, Holly [30:14] described her prior life experience as "growing in that bubble," which had not given her many opportunities to be exposed to and learn about people of other races. She expressed her honest concern that she might unintentionally harm students from diverse backgrounds and that she had no idea of how to resolve the issue if that happened, referring to what she had learned from her college course that racist acts may be carried out by white teachers who do not have any bad intentions.

After a long silence, I turned my attention to Brooke and Lauren. Lauren [31:43] agreed with the previous statements and repeated the importance of teachers acknowledging the ways in which they are different from their students. Referring to what she had learned from her coursework, she emphasized the need for teachers to learn about their students from diverse backgrounds by studying the research as well as learning from the students themselves. Like Dana and Holly, Lauren also expressed concern about how white teachers as the "minority" would reconcile any tension or negative consequence caused by the racial difference between the teacher and the majority of students from diverse backgrounds.

Furthering Lauren's idea on teacher learning, Brooke [32:48] additionally suggested that teachers should be aware of and fight their own biases towards students from diverse backgrounds and keep a balance between learning about students in terms of their cultures and backgrounds and not stereotyping them based on their own biases, so that they can understand their students as individual human beings.

In sum, the topic of this discussion ended up centering around the white teacher's perspective on students from diverse backgrounds in an urban school, although I, as the facilitator, redirected the focus to the teacher perspective in the school where the majority of students are high needs and in the other school where only a few students are. Contrary to the previous examples in which the discussion was sparked by the facilitator's question, the orientation of the conversation in this segment was triggered by one of the participants, Dana, and her inquiry about the difference in those two different school settings. (Based on their dialogue, this question may have arisen from the tendency of the preservice teachers, especially those who are white, to feel challenged or overwhelmed in situations where they suddenly become the minority in an urban school and need to teach students who are mainly from diverse backgrounds). Interesting, the preservice teachers tended to associate students who are high needs with those from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds, based on their assumption that these student populations need more support as they experience more challenges in their lives. Thus, the convergent idea among the participants, who were all white, without Mei who could not join this session, was that it is important for teachers to enhance their awareness of the difference between themselves as white and the majority of students who are non-white. I wondered how the conversation would have unfolded if Mei had voiced her perspective and insight as the only Asian participant. Connecting and building upon each other's ideas, the

preservice teachers shared their concerns about educating students from diverse backgrounds and elaborated on possible teacher practices to deal with the issue.

Divergence

Divergence was another notable pattern of negotiation among the preservice teachers during the dialogue sessions. Divergence is defined as a heterogeneous sense-making, where participants did not come to a common understanding or had convergent ideas, perspectives, or beliefs (i.e., resolutions). In contrast to the previous themes of collective actions—convergence and expansion through convergence—interactions contributing to this theme represent instances where the preservice teachers did not fully agree with each other's stance. Rather, agreement and disagreement on a topic coexisted; that is, the participants contended with different views, challenged, or contested each other's statements, but always did so respectfully, "agreeing to disagree." Their interactions represented varying points of view, for example, one saw an issue positively while another took a negative view, and yet others remained neutral. Another type of divergent interaction entailed asking a further question or attending to an aspect of the topic that was not entirely relevant. Three examples fall into this category: varying evaluations of school practices, heterogeneous interpretations of inclusion, and multiple perspectives on inclusion with a reference point.

Varying Evaluations of School Practices. The first example of divergence as negotiation pattern occurred in the sixth segment of the second session and pertained to the tension between assimilation for a sense of belonging versus celebrating diversity. The preservice teachers first read five texts that illustrated contention with regard to inclusion. The first reading, an excerpt from the book *The Primates of Park Avenue* (Martin, 2015), explained the importance of belonging, pointing out the negative consequences of outcasts and social

outsiders in literature and the real world. Two readings were case studies about specific school

practices, *Multicultural Day Parade* and *Diverse Friends Day*, that encountered pushback from

some students. The other two readings included a vignette about a boy who resisted learning to

say hello in a different language (i.e., Arabic), one of my previous supervisees had shared it with

the group during my pilot study, and an excerpt from an NPR news story, about a Latina who

was a language learner and did not want to be Hispanic or speak her heritage language. Along

with these examples, I posed a thought-provoking question in writing, to push participants to

rethink "celebrating diversity" in terms of belonging, which is an important value of inclusion:

> Does being an educator in the United States of America mean teaching students to learn
> the way of being and knowing as "Americans"? Since we live in U.S. society, we have to
> teach them English as a primary language and American history, culture, and values,
> which seems to be the primary purpose of education that is intended to nurture everyone
> into American. Why do we have to celebrate/respect diversity? Don't they have to know
> the American history, culture, values and learn how to think and act in a kind of
> American way?

The core issue of inclusion addressed in the question and the reading materials was

conflicting values between assimilation as a sense of belonging, in other words, "fitting in," and

recognizing and celebrating difference (diversity). Contrary to my expectations, the discussion

after Dana's response (see Table 19) turned to the case studies exemplifying school practices,

particularly around *Diverse Friends Day*, at Mei's initiation. Their critical evaluation on *Diverse*

Friends Day indicated their varying, divergent perspectives and foci on a practice that was

intended to celebrate diversity.

Table 19

Group Session 2, Segment 6

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [1:12:53]	…How do you feel after reading those five? Like, the first one versus the rest four, how do you feel? (pause – 5s) That kind of prepared those sense of belonging and assimilation as a part of- to feel a sense of belonging versus celebrating and embracing diversity, but actually, that's not it, right? There's much more than that. So how do you feel…in terms of inclusion?
Dana [1:13:33]	And to a degree, it makes me uncomfortable, because you don't want to think like, 'Oh, you have to force kids to adjust to the American way of life in order for them to be included.' You never want to have to have someone change their culture or whatever in order to fit in. But, in these articles I feel like it makes it kind of clear that there is that component that can't be ignored. And for some people it is important to fit in and to change their habits and customs and whatnot in order to assimilate better. So, I don't know, it just makes me wonder if there is a way to like find a happy middle ground or something where you are not forcing people to abandon their traditions but, you are also giving them the tools to adjust to American society.
Holly/Mei [1:14:21]	I think....< cross-talk >
Mei [1:14:23]	Oh, go for it.
Holly [1:14:24]	You go, go ahead.
Mei [1:14:25]	I was going to talk about like the articles or something like, the *Multicultural Day* and *Diverse* [*Friends Day*] just feels really intentional and forced, like, kind of like, I don't know, like their culture's open just to have those events so that they can, kind of like say that their school has diverse practices. But, I don't know. And like, it even made the students feel uncomfortable. So, I don't think that it's the best way to go about it.
Holly [1:15:04]	I feel like, bridging off, because I was going to talk about, especially the *Diverse Friends Day* one, I feel like, it does make it forced and also it makes it into that one-day event again, um, where it's not a regular practice, it makes it into this big, huge deal. Like, "You're going to be sitting with someone new that you have never sat with before, it's like a whole new experience for you." And it's not normalizing it in any way, it's in fact doing the exact opposite. And it's making this like really big deal

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	out of something that you're trying to normalize and it kind of defeats the point.
Researcher [1:15:41]	Any other ideas? Any reactions, or thoughts?
Brooke [1:15: 45]	For the third one about *Diverse Friends Day*, I did like how the teacher handled it and how he noticed that some students felt uncomfortable and then talked to them separately AFTER. And didn't just like, be like, "Why didn't you want to do this?" like more just being like, "What do you think?" And the fact that a student told him, "I think it's racist." That shows she's comfortable telling him her thoughts. And I think it was good for him to see that what he thought was going to be like actually a great event like might be kind of not actually like inclusive and great, it could be kind of more singling out students. And the fact that he was able to hear that from the students and hopefully take that into account, and change the day or cancel the day, whatever he would, decided to do. But I think that- I like how he handled it, instead of just kind of being like, "No, we are doing this," or "No, I'm not going to listen to your thoughts on it."

Dana [1:13:33] tried to directly respond to the question, referring to the reading materials, as she expressed her discomfort about assimilation as a way of inclusion. She was basically against forcing students to change their way of life to "fit in," but she was also aware that fitting in through assimilation is important for some people. Indecisive, she was looking for a way to mesh the two opposite standpoints.

The other participants, including Lauren who was silent, did not express their opinion on the tension. Rather, they were focused on the case studies. Mei [1:14:25] and Holly [1:15:04] expressed negative views on the school practices. Their rationales, respectively, were that such events were forced and caused negative feelings among students, and that they were not "normalizing" ways to celebrate diversity as a daily practice. On the other hand, Brooke [1:15: 45] spoke positively of the teacher reaction that was very receptive to the student's blunt comment as a complaint about the event, which she believed verified how the teacher had built relationships with students. She also saw it as an opportunity for self-reflection—to rethink the event that brought about unexpected consequences, which would help in future decision-making.

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Notably, the participants did not overtly challenge or disagree with one another, they only responded indirectly, at most, to what the other had said.

In sum, the core issue I wanted to raise through the readings was the tension between assimilation to achieve a sense of belonging by fitting into the majority versus celebrating diversity regarding inclusion. (During the discussion, I got the feeling that the five supplementary reading materials were too much for participants to digest, a feeling I still hold).

The question I posed slipped away after Dana's response, as the focus of discussion shifted to the school practices in the case studies, centering around *Diverse Friends Day*. While Dana expressed her inner struggle to reconcile the two opposing stances for inclusion, Mei and Holly rejected those school events as inclusive practices, whereas Brooke brought up a fresh perspective, pointing to the teacher's open-minded, amenable attitude. Thus, this segment represented divergence as the negotiation pattern, as the preservice teachers exchanged varying perspectives during the discussion.

Divergent Interpretations of Inclusion. Another example of divergence as a negotiation pattern occurred in the fifth group session, where the central topic was inclusion of (a) students with LGBTQ+ identities and (b) students who are gifted. As before, I attempted to broaden the preservice teachers' perspective on the scope of target population through multiple examples. For the first topic, I presented a video of a student who had been transgender since age 2 and a case study that introduced a teacher reading a book about an LGBTQ+ family (having two moms); for the second topic, I distributed an NPR news article about a Latinx female student who were gifted but also a former English language learner.

The specific topic of the discussion in the segment presented below (Table 20) was the meaning of inclusion, as the term is often associated with one aspect of exceptionality—

marginalized students, such as students with disability, students from CLD backgrounds, and/or

English language learners, who are expected to struggle more in learning—while relatively

ignoring the other side of exceptionality, students who are gifted. I, as a facilitator,

problematized that the term, inclusion, might assume "inferiority" of students, since it does not

consider students who do not struggle but excel in learning.

In response to my question, the preservice teachers provided their own divergent

interpretations of the meaning of inclusion. All of them explicitly disagreed with my statement,

that is, inclusion accompanies a negative connotation of inferiority for target students. Some

expressed their positive perceptions of inclusion, while others exhibited more of a neutral or

mixed perspective, referring to an implicit meaning of inclusion that there are people on the

outskirts, which is not necessarily positive. Despite partial agreements between the participants

at times, their meanings of inclusion did not converge to a point or had a common understanding

where everyone agreed. They articulated their own interpretations of inclusion heterogeneously.

Table 20

Group Session 5, Segment 6

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [1:19:26]	Then what about the term inclusion itself? Because, when we talk about that, giftedness, I mean, although the giftedness itself is problematic, the excellent students never be on the table. When we talk about inclusion, we always talk about student with the disability, student with diverse background, English language learners, who are marginalized. So, is there any negative connotation in [the] term, inclusion, itself? What do you think? (pause – 6s)
Mei [1:20:15]	I think inclusion acknowledges that there are differences, doesn't imply that the differences are bad, but that they're just differences. And we need to, like everyone said, tailor and sort of meet the needs of the differences that students have.

Researcher [1:20:38]	Any other ideas? Sometimes I thought of inclusion, maybe that's attached with maybe, inferiority, although we are trying not to, kind of automatically. What do you think? Any other ideas?
Dana [1:21:02]	I feel like I guess the term inclusion and the fact that we're even talking about it kind of implies that there are groups that may not be included right away, or that there are populations who are on the margins that need to be kind of brought into the fold. I feel like if we were truly in an inclusive society or whatever, there wouldn't be a problem in the first place and we wouldn't need to have a term for it. Everyone would just be accepted and it is what it is. But, I do agree with what Mei said that. I think it speaks more to just acknowledge the differences and I don't feel like it automatically kind of labels any sort of population as like, negative or on the outs, which is a good thing.
Researcher [1:21:44]	Anyone else? (pause – 5s)
Lauren [1:21:50]	I think inclusion, it's unlike the word, gifted, in that it's not really separating the higher up students from, the…maybe average or less than students. I think inclusion is a positive word to use, because it's really emphasizing that every student, whether you're higher, like gifted, or lower, maybe with a disability, I'm not saying that's right, I'm just saying like, it's including all students, everybody, depending on their background, their learning abilities, their strengths, their weaknesses. So, I do think inclusion's a positive word to use.
Holly [1:22:27]	Yeah, I think, I think, I agree with that. I think it just like, it depends on the way that you use it. Because I think in the right context, it definitely is a great word to use, because you're trying to make sure everyone feels like they're a part of something? But I guess whenever I think of using terms like inclusion, like building diversity, I always start to think of my own identity? I feel like, as a white woman, how…much do I really know about those things? And how am I actually able to include people, like achieve inclusion or achieve celebrating diversity or integrating into the classroom? So, I feel like, in the right context it can be used that way, but like, I think sometimes I struggle to use it in the right way, because I think of my own, my own background and I'm kind of like, "How can I actually achieve this?"
Researcher [1:23:29]	And building onto that, because I felt like...so you're including people on the margin, to make them in the center. So, to where are they included to? To where? Like, to where the majority lives or where the majority's situated in? (pause – 10s)

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Dana [1:24:05]	Yeah, I would say that's probably the implication that it's for including, like people brought in toward, like [where] the majority lies, not necessarily changed and conforming to the majority, but more just like, accepted by the majority. I feel like- I think in one of our discussions, we brought up the concept of like, "Is inclusion for the majority or is inclusion for people on outskirts? Sometimes it feels like it's more just for the majority. The majority having to accept people with differences and bringing them into the mix and working with them. But, I don't know. It's hard to say. Again, these are all tough topics.
Researcher [1:24:47]	Brooke? Do you have any idea?
Brooke [1:24:52]	I feel like inclusion, you want to get students to a place where they are part of a community of learners and they're able to access the world around them. And just having them not feel like they're on the outskirts, but have them feel…for lack of a better word, included, you know, into something bigger than themselves and, "Oh yes, I am a part of this, classroom, I'm a part of this…learning community, I'm a part of this school, I'm a part of…this group," whatever. And just having them feel like they belong and that they aren't just on the outskirts by themselves with no one there to help them.
Researcher [1:25:46]	Any additional thoughts? (pause – 5s)
Mei [1:25:50]	Yeah, I think it is really hard. We spent so long talking about it. I think, in acknowledging that you have to include some students, you're also excluding students because you're saying like, "These groups of students need to be included." The specific groups we talked about, too. Yeah, I don't know, it is very conflicting. But I do, I agree with Holly. If you go about it the right way in the context, then it is better.

Mei [1:20:15] saw inclusion positively, noting that it is attentive to student difference.

Dana [1:21:02] took a more neutral stance, even while agreeing with Mei's interpretation. She

acknowledged that inclusion paradoxically implies the existence of marginalized populations and

reasoned from a hypothetical situation that we would not have to talk about it or need a term for

inclusion if no one was excluded in society. Lauren [1:21:50] then stressed her positive view on

inclusion, seeing it as a way of bringing everyone together. This was in stark contrast to the word

gifted as she thought of its negative connotation, stratifying students according to their academic

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achievement. Agreeing with and further elaborating on Lauren's statement, Holly [1:22:27] also viewed inclusion positively, relating it to a sense of belonging. But, it was conditional—only in the "right context." Reflecting on her own racial identity as white, she questioned how she could create a context where inclusion can genuinely be a positive word.

After those exchanges, I [1:23:29] prompted the participants to think more deeply about the direction of inclusion. Dana [1:24:05] immediately jumped in, pointing out the implication of inclusion, which seems to be for the majority to "accept" people on the margin. Brooke [1:24:52], without directly responding to my prompt or Dana's statements, articulated her positive interpretation of inclusion as meaning making students be a part of "community" to be supported, thereby making them feel a sense of belonging, not marginal. Emphasizing the complexity of the topic, Mei [1:25:50] ended up changing her positive perspective to be conditional like Holly, as she reiterated Dana's statement that inclusion implies exclusion.

To sum up, the preservice teachers divergently made sense of inclusion. That is, while Brooke and Lauren viewed inclusion in a completely positive way, Dana and Mei exhibited a not entirely positive perspective, since they acknowledged that inclusion implies the exclusion of certain groups on the margin and supports differences between students. Without further elaboration, Holly and Mei stated that inclusion is contextual so the meaning becomes conditionally positive, if used in the right way. Both Dana, Mei, and Holly expressed their internal struggle, acknowledging that inclusion was a challenging topic to discuss. The participants listened to and respected each other's divergent perspectives, rather than ignoring, criticizing, or refusing to accept those, but they did not come to a common understanding.

Multiple Perspectives on Inclusion With a Reference Point. The last example under the theme of Divergence was from the sixth session, the last of the group dialogue series. The

overarching topics of Session 6 were (a) inclusion and remote learning[26], and (b) inclusion, intersectionality, and power. When I was developing the design of the group dialogue series planning to collect data in Spring 2020, COVID-19 hit, and almost all of the universities and K-12 schools in the United States and a number countries around the globe almost immediately turned their class format into remote learning. Until then, in-person, face-to-face classes had been the norm, especially in K-12 education, including inclusive classrooms.

After the COVID-19 outbreak, the traditional way of learning in the physical classroom was no longer a taken-for-granted mode of learning, and educators and teacher educators were forced to rethink teaching and learning. For that reason, I wanted to bring up a question about how we should understand inclusion with regard to remote learning. Thus, although not originally not planned to be part of the dialogue series or this study, I included this topic in our last group session.

I chose the topic of inclusion, intersectionality, and power for the final session to encourage the preservice teachers to understand inclusion from a critical perspective, given the historical and theoretical development of inclusive education in research and scholarship. In the recent literature on inclusive education, researchers have argued that student diversity, including students with disability, should be understood in a more nuanced way (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016); for example, considering their intersectional identities of race and disability (Connor et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important for educators to pay attention to students' individuality rather than foregrounding a certain identity factor, which may categorize students into groups.

The discussion represented in the following segment came from a second part of Session 6 (Table 21). I had asked the participants to watch a TED Talk prior to the session, a story about

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[26] The term *remote learning* is used interchangeably with *online, virtual,* and *distance learning*.

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a Muslim man from the Middle East who was homosexual. Based on that, we addressed the importance of considering intersectional identities for inclusion as opposed to categorizing students into different groups. We then discussed our final topic, the issue of power in inclusion. I used a short excerpt from the book *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American law* (Minow, 1990). In her book, Minow explains that there are unstated assumptions when we indicate difference (e.g., people who are different from self, or diverse students), and one of these assumptions involves "an unstated point of reference" that determines "who is different and who is normal" (Minow, 1990, p. 51). From this argument, we can infer that the term *inclusion* is not a neutral term, as it implies the power hierarchy between the majority of students as a dominant group who is considered "normal" and the rest of students on the margin, those who are "different" or "diverse," who need to be included. In my prompt at [01:23:50], I pointed out the reference point embedded in the discourse of inclusion to raise the preservice teachers' awareness of power in inclusion.

The participants displayed multiple perspectives on this reference point. Whether explicitly or implicitly, they all acknowledged that there is a reference point in the discourse of inclusion: the majority of students who are in position of power in the classroom (No one denied that there is a reference point). Holly and Mei took a neutral stance, as they did not say whether inclusion was good or bad, focusing on the reference point within the word of *inclusion* that cannot be ignored; however, Mei explicitly acknowledged that inclusion is implicitly associated with "special needs students," a point Holly then affirmed. While Brooke saw inclusion negatively, commenting that inclusion implies the exclusion of some, Lauren took a positive view, validating that there is a reference point within the term. Dana's perspective evolved during the discussion. She initially took a negative stance like Brooke, being conscious of the

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power differential between the majority as a reference point and students on the margin.

However, she reversed her stance after hearing Lauren's idea, noting the inseparability of the

reference point and intersectional identities.

Table 21

Group Session 6, Segment 6

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [01:23:50]	Based on this unstated assumption, there's always a point of reference when we talk about differences. Based on this reading, the excerpt, what do you think of the term inclusion? Do you think it is a neutral term? Because, in my opinion, you have to acknowledge, this is my ideas, my personal ideas. When we talk about inclusion, we never say, "Oh, we have to include white middle class students," right? Always we talk about students on the margin who are different from us. Who's us? Where is the reference point when we talk about diverse students, those categories of students. Any thoughts? Reactions?
Dana [01:25:09]	I would say that the reference point probably is normally the majority in the class. So, including the people who don't fit in with that majority is kind of the point of inclusion and that doesn't necessarily entail, you know, you don't want to change that person or make them change themselves to conform to the majority, but you want to give them a space within the majority population, um, where they feel included. So, I do think inclusion is maybe a little problematic as a term in that regard. I think it's well-intentioned, but I think it does rely on the idea of having a majority as like the center and the norm.
Brooke [01:25:55]	I agree with that. Because I feel like when you say the word inclusion, I think of the word include and including other students, but that means that they were excluded at one point and you're now trying to include them. And so, who are you trying to include, why were they not included before? (pause – 10s)
Mei [01:26:21]	I think the word definitely- because all words, humans put meanings to them. So, then I think the word inclusion has been used in such a way that we just, we think of special needs students when we think of inclusion. So, I think unless like everyone redefines the meaning of inclusion, like maybe integration of differences, then there is going to be a point of reference. But it's because of the meaning that we attach to the word. (pause – 5s)

Holly [01:26:59]	I agree with that. I guess I just don't know how you would take away the reference point. Because I feel like no matter what term you put in, it's going to get some sort of conscious…conscious meaning......being …attached < cut off >

[1:27:09 -1:27:33] < Technical issue - Holly's connection was spotty > |
Researcher [01:27:46]	(to Holly) Could you say that again?
Holly [01:27:49]	I was just saying that I don't know what you would say instead, essentially is what I was just saying. I don't know what you would do because I feel like no matter what there's going to be some sort of reference point is essentially what I was saying.
Dana [01:28:13]	Just going off of that, it makes me wonder, I guess as a student who may have been considered in the majority, especially in elementary school, I remember there was kind of a push to, "Okay, you include the kids who have special needs or disabilities." Did the kids who have disabilities ever think like, "Oh, I need to actively include the kids who don't have disabilities"? Something tells me that maybe that's a thought that never crossed their minds. So, I guess you kind of need to restructure the system so that everyone is working to include everyone, and it's not just the majority that's getting the message, "Hey, you need to include the people on the outskirts." The fact that we even have the mindset that there is a majority and that there are people on the outskirts creates the problem. Like everyone should be...I mean I don't know, maybe I'm crazy, but I hope their goal is that everyone would kind of be in the same area and we're all working to keep each other included in the same area versus someone starts in the middle and then you've got people all around that you need to bring into the fold, if that makes sense? (pause – 9s)
Researcher [01:29:26]	Lauren?
Lauren [01:29:30]	I think, I don't know. I think when it- when the word, when I think of the word inclusion, I just think obviously we're going to have some kind of or need for reference point, just to kind of draw us back to the center of who we're really trying to include. So, although I think it's important to remind ourselves of who is the norm or who is the reference point, I don't think it's always a bad thing to have one, because I think it helps recenter us and draw us back to, "Okay, this is the norm. We do need to include these, a variety group of people." But I don't always think it's a bad idea to have a reference point to draw back to.
Researcher [01:30:13]	Why? (pause – 5s)

Lauren [01:30:19]	Because I think if we're talking about the reference point as like white middle class students or students who are white=
Researcher [01:30:30]	=Or maybe able-bodied.
Lauren [01:30:31]	Yeah, able-bodied students or students of the…who are English speaking if that's a primary language. I think if that's the reference point, it's requiring us to maybe draw more focus to the students who are not that reference point. So, students who are not able-bodied, students who are of the minority, because if the standard white middle class students who are able bodied and English speaking are the ones who are included, then who isn't included? It's everybody who isn't those people or who is not one of those students. So, I don't know. That's just my opinion. I don't know. I think it does help though.
Researcher [01:31:10]	Any other reactions? Because that actually reiterates the power dynamics between majority and those who are not majority, right? So, how do you think those power dynamics [that] are entangled in the discourse of inclusion and how could we deal with those power dynamics?
Dana [01:31:36]	I think, okay. I definitely agree with that. I think, again, it's reminding me of what we just talked about with intersectionality. If we take away the reference point and if we kind of pretend like everyone is on the same field, one, they're not, because power dynamics still exist. And when you do have, you know, a majority or the norm, if you negate to include that, then you're immediately invalidating the intersectional identities that we talked about. So, I think it is important to have that awareness, so that you can try to level the playing field a little bit more maybe in the end. But I don't- again, I never [inaudible] how to go about that, I guess.
Researcher [01:32:25]	Anyone else? Mei? Yeah.
Mei [01:32:29]	Yeah. I think acknowledging that there is a reference point and that we use the reference point and that a certain group of majority have the power and privilege will help, because, because it's there. And even in the classroom we should be conscious of it.

Dana [01:25:09] problematized the term, inclusion, as she identified the majority as the reference point, the "center" or "norm," as a basis for including those who are not at the center. She interpreted inclusion as only "giving space within the majority" without forcing them to change who they are. Agreeing with Dana, with a negative stance, Brooke [01:25:55] interpreted the meaning of inclusion as "including other students" who were once "excluded." Given her

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focus, those experiencing exclusion were more likely students with disability. Mei [01:26:21] did not provide a clear opinion. Instead, she highlighted the commonly accepted meaning of inclusion, which primarily involves "special needs students." She also pointed out the inevitability of having a reference point in the word, inclusion. In agreement, Holly [01:27:49] basically reiterated Mei's statement. Dana [01:28:13] then elaborated on her negative perspective of the meaning of inclusion, which signifies a dichotomy and power differential between "the majority" and "those on the outskirts," reversely presuming a situation where students with disability tried to include those without, which had never been "a thought." Hoping to resolve the power issue, she suggested restructuring the school system so that "everyone is working to include everyone."

Lauren [01:29:30] raised an entirely opposite point of view. She emphasized the importance of having a reference point in inclusion as a reminder that helps educators "re-center" their focus to include a variety of groups of students who should be given more attention and support, in comparison to the reference point that most likely denotes, for example, white middle-class students who are able-bodied, heterosexual, and native English speakers. Thinking of her explanation as defending the status quo, the "power dynamics" between the majority and those in the minority, I [01:31:10] asked the participant their thoughts and how to address those. Dana [01:31:36] supported Lauren's point, inferring that students' intersectional identities cannot be validated without a reference point. Therefore, she noted the importance of "awareness" of the existence of power dynamics in society. Mei [01:32:29], too, affirmed Dana's reasoning, as she called for teachers' being conscious of the majority being in a position of "power and privilege" in the classroom.

In short, the discussion centered around rethinking and scrutinizing the meaning of inclusion, considering the unstated assumption that there is always a reference point when we talk about diverse students to be included. Although all participants acknowledged the existence and inevitability of the reference point attached to the term, the discussion did not necessarily converge. There were partial agreements, but ultimately the preservice teachers did exhibit multiple perspectives on inclusion: while Brooke and Dana (initially) held a negative perspective on inclusion, Lauren entirely advocated it, and Mei and Holly did not clearly express whether it was positive or negative. Notably, Dana's perspective shifted after listening to Lauren's statement.

Inconclusiveness

Inconclusiveness was another pattern of negotiation among the preservice teachers during the dialogue sessions. Inconclusiveness entails insufficient turn-taking (exchange of ideas) to result in negotiation (sense-making). As such, it includes both intentionally and unintentionally disengaging. Although it is not always clear why participants disengaged, it might be due to a lack of ideas, since they had not yet formed a definite opinion to share on the given situation, or it might be an act of deliberately avoiding engaging. Other responses included (a) avoidance of answering the questions by maintaining silence and (b) derailing from the topic while saying something irrelevant, which, again, may have been intentional or unintentional. Such comments may be seemingly relevant, but they were not in line with the focus of the conversation. However, there were no observed instances of derailing from the topic. In interactions representing the inconclusive pattern, participants said "I don't know" as a frequent response, which I interpreted as a literal meaning of lacking ideas rather than the expression of lacking confidence or avoiding engagement. Thus, they openly shared their struggle, frustration, or

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uncertainty about expressing opinions. Furthermore, participants' agreement with each other was more surface level or partial. There are two examples under this theme.

No Consensual Alternative Term/Teacher Practice Generated. The first example representing inconclusiveness occurred in the fifth group session. As noted, the second half of the session was about inclusion of students who are gifted. The following discussion, which was part of the fifth segment, was prompted by material from NPR News radio entitled *Gifted, But Still Learning English, Many Bright Students Get Overlooked.* This article introducing a story about a Latinx student who was not only gifted but also a former English language learner, thus, also addressing intersectionality.

After listening to the program, we had an open discussion about the issues identified in the story while also sharing the participants' reactions. At one point, Holly problematized the term *gifted,* and we discussed how to resolve this problem with my further prompt. In response, the participants, except Lauren who remained silent, agreed that the term is problematic. Attempts to reach a solution, for example, by using an alternative term or some teacher practice to remediate the negative impact of labeling only certain students as "gifted" were inconclusive due to conflicting opinions between Dana and Holly, and no suggestions from Brooke, Mei, and Lauren.

Table 22

Group Session 5, Segment 5

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Holly [1:13:23]	I guess I like- I got to definitely agree with that. I guess I just like…the term gifted, to me, I feel like I have a little bit of a problem with. Because I feel like it just makes it seem like that kid is super special, every other kid is just not going to be able to do what they're going to be able to do. And if the kid is really smart, that's awesome, they definitely need to be challenged in the classroom. But that doesn't mean that they're above every other student, and that every other student isn't going to be able to reach that ability. So, I guess if I were a teacher, I would want to like- I would want to learn how to identify a student who is really smart, really capable, able to achieve really easily. But I guess, in my own mind, I wouldn't want to call them gifted, because I guess, I would worry that then I would treat unconsciously differently than every other student. Yeah.
Researcher [1:14:24]	Any reaction to that?
Brooke [1:14:28]	I totally agree with that. I feel like in one class, I read a study and I think, these researchers gave a test to all their students and then told the teacher, "Oh, these X amount of students are gifted or have a lot of potential," or something. They just randomly picked students. And then those students were the ones, the ones that ended up achieving the best in the class, because the teachers then had that like, "Oh, these kids are going to have a lot of potential? Okay, I'm going to challenge them and give them really high expectations." And then, that's what happened, and not- because it was totally random. And so, if you're told, "Oh yeah, so and so is gifted," you're going to want to work harder with them and challenge them. But if you're told a kid is not gifted and you think that they are struggling, then you might not challenge them as much. Because you're like, "Oh well, they're not going to be able to make it to this place." So, I think it's a really interesting concept of just thinking about like, "Oh, yes. These students are gifted and these students aren't," and then how you treat them accordingly.
Researcher [1:15:34]	Mm-hmm (affirmative). It's very interesting because when we talked about at- risk or struggling learners, you also thought that terms were kind of problematic, right? And, on the other hand, even though the giftedness itself is a positive term, but you also think this is problematic. So ... it is completely fine, just, kind of categorizing students, some type of students who have a disability, that's fine. So, instead of using at-risk or gifted students, how- what else should we, what other terms do we have to use? Just students?

Dana [1:16:29]	I was just kind of thinking about that. I feel like, at the end of the day, you kind of have to separate out your learners. Because you need to assign them work and give them tools that are going to help them out. You can't just assume that everyone's on the same level and throw a blanket lesson out there and call it a day, because it's not going to reach everyone in the way that they need it. I definitely agree that the terminology is problematic. I don't think that the concept itself is necessarily problematic. I don't really know how I'd fix it. Maybe assigning like, you know, if you're in an elementary school classroom, like… [inaudible] like my blue learners, who are like the really, advanced, quote unquote gifted ones, maybe giving them a harder book to read or something, and parsing out just by colors or assigning them as some random non...like something that doesn't have a connotation immediately associated with it. And then sort of tailoring independent work…to that. But it's hard to say (laugh). At the end of the day, I feel like kids pick up on where other people are, and, so…I don't know, it's difficult.
Holly [1:17:43]	Yeah, I was act- I was just trying to say that. I feel like, I- you definitely- I feel like you definitely do need to distinguish that maybe in your own mind, but I personally wouldn't want to attach those labels. I would just be like, "I want to give this kid this work because I feel like they're going to be challenged by it. I want to keep this work, this kid, this work, because I feel like this is what's going to suit their ability level and what I think they're going to be able to do." Because I just feel like the label is so strongly putting them in one category that's going to keep them there. And if you are calling your blue learners, your red learners, whatever, you can do that as a teacher just for you. But I feel like, if you do that and you label books with the little different colors, those connotations I feel like are just going to happen. In my prac[ticum], we had different letter learners. The farther along in the alphabet you were, the more advanced reader you were. And one kid was given, I think, an N book and he was like, "No, I can't have this, I'm an R reader." And I was like, "It's just a book." (laugh) Yeah. I just feel like you definitely need to differentiate the work, for sure. But, I just think personally as a teacher, I wouldn't want to apply those labels because they're very confining.
Mei [1:19:04]	I think the word itself is problematic and misleading to gifted. Because students are all gifted in different ways. Yeah, they all are good at something. So, I think it is really misleading calling a group of students gifted.

Holly [1:13:23] problematized the term *gifted*, expressing a concern about making a

distinction between students (e.g., having different expectations for students) as it might cause

teachers to stratify them by ability level and perceive students who do not have a label of "gifted" as less than those who have. Brooke [1:14:28] supported Holly's statement, recalling a study she had read about in her college course, which indicated that teachers demonstrated different attitudes and actions toward students according to their expectations of student ability. Paying attention to Holly's problem posing, I [1:15:34] prompted the participants to explore if there was any alternative, replaceable term.

In response, Dana [1:16:29] pointed out the inevitability of grouping students to tailor instruction according to their needs. She agreed with Holly but defended the concept of giftedness itself. To tackle the problematic term, she suggested differentiating each group of students by random labels that do not indicate a difference in abilities. However, she repeatedly noted her own lack of ideas, sharing the difficulty of tackling this issue, as she knew students in turn would figure out what those labels indicate. Holly [1:17:43] opposed Dana's suggestion as she problematized labels as well. Based on her own classroom experience, she warned of the adverse effect of labels on categorizing students and confining their expectations about themselves. On the other hand, Mei [1:19:04] criticized how the term has been used to only indicate a certain group of students. Although she did not comment on Dana and Holly's conflicting perspectives on grouping students using random labels, she provided a totally new way of interpreting "gifted" by stating every student has their own strengths. It is unknown why, but Brooke and Lauren remained silent and did not respond.

Uncertainty About How to Educate Students in a Virtual Environment. The other example was extracted from the third segment in the last group session of our group dialogue series. As I explained the main topics of this session under the third theme, *Divergence*, the discussion in this segment was focused on the meaning of inclusion in the virtual learning

environment, which has given rise to a number of problems in teaching and learning during the pandemic. At first, I shared three major reading materials: (a) the map on Coronavirus and School Closure (*Education Week*, 2020), (b) some excerpts from the teacher and student voices in the *NY Times* article "Teachers and Students Describe a Remote-Learning Life," and (c) the NPR News radio program entitled *Navajo Families Without Internet Struggle to Home-School During COVID-19 Pandemic*, and two other NPR News excerpts noting the impact of COVID-19 on the learning of students with disabilities and students of color, and the four NY Times article titles highlighting the learning disparity among the students. As an opening, I asked the participants to share their thoughts or takeaways about the impact of remote learning on students in general and on different groups of students.

I [44:00] then posed a question of how to understand inclusion without a physical space to learn, the actual classroom, which has historically been considered the norm in teaching and learning. The preservice teachers brought up a variety of concerns about the role of teachers in a virtual learning environment. Except for Lauren, they seemed to acknowledge that there is only so much teachers can do to tackle the challenges that may come up, for example, access to resources; provision of quality education, including support and services; student engagement; and keeping on a schedule to cover the curriculum. In doing so, the participants expressed their own frustration and struggle due to their lack of ideas on what/how to do for inclusion during virtual instruction.

Table 23

Group Session 6, Segment 3

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [44:00]	And then you will also see the disparity between public and then private school depending on the number of resources that they can access. Um…how do we understand inclusion in this era of distant learning? Now it's unavoidable. So how should we understand inclusion? Because it's always based on the physical space, which is school and classroom, right? So that was the point of reference when we talk about inclusion. But now we face this different period, different era, I think era would be the right term, different era where we can't avoid online learning. So how do you understand inclusion in this situation without physical space to learn?
Mei [45:00]	I think definitely distribution of the technology, like Chromebooks or iPads to students that need it is one of the most important things? And also, the food distribution and stuff, I think now the question isn't how to help them in the classroom, but how to even get them to be able to see the teacher? (pause – 5s)
Researcher [45:29]	How do you make students be ready to learn, right? Any other ideas or thoughts?
Holly [45:39]	I'm thinking about that quote that was like, "Imagine you get special education services all day in school and then now all of a sudden you don't." I guess I would say as a teacher you would get modifications for extra time for doing an assignment or something. But honestly, I feel like I'm really struggling to understand how students who need that extra help are really going to be able to get it in a virtual setting. Because you can do what Brooke said, you can do that one on one time, but the kid can just leave or get frustrated. There's no real way to simulate what's going on in the classroom. And I guess like, I don't know- honestly, I just feel very unsure of how to having inclusion when you're not actually there.
Brooke [46:28]	Yeah. It's so hard and I feel like…my teacher and I are not doing the best that we can, but also, we just don't know what the best thing to do is. Because it's so new and it's like, "How do we help these students who are on IEPs?" Whereas like two of the kids who are on IEPs have come to like one Zoom meeting since March, or two Zoom meetings since March." And it's like, we keep contacting and calling and calling and emailing and everything, but if they're not coming on, how can we give them the services that they need? And the speech therapist at the school is still having her groups, and so she has been in contact with those kids in my class who got speech [therapy], but one kid has not been coming at all.

	And it's like, "Well, then she can't get those services in. What do you do?" We keep calling and calling, but you cannot force them to get onto Zoom. You can do everything, you can try everything, but it might not work. And it's just like my kids who maybe don't get speech but struggle in math or in reading…It's just been so challenging and how do we give them the services? And yes, I've been doing some small groups and one on one with the kids, but it's not the same, and I don't even know what the best way to do this, and I'm thinking like what if we're online next year all year or for some of the year, which we probably will be for some of the year. As my first year of teaching, hopefully in an inclusion setting, like how the heck am I going to meet all my kids' needs online when I'm not in person?
Dana [48:00]	Right. I think it's especially hard in an inclusion classroom to be online, because the teacher is no longer the dominant person and school is no longer the dominant setting for each student. It's your home environment, whatever your parents or your guardian, whoever you're with is instructing you or not instructing you that takes precedence. So, if you don't have- if you come from a background where your parents are working and don't have the time to sit with you, you don't have that support at home, you know, why would you get onto a Zoom meeting? There's no motivation and there's no structure to enforce that, so it becomes very difficult. And like if the parents think it's too hard also, they're not going to put in that time either. So, if you don't have that support all around, there's nothing really that the teacher can do to provide that support since they're no longer the dominant figure or the person, like quote-unquote in charge in that setting. (pause – 6s)
Holly [49:02]	That actually just also made me think about, in terms of for the future, how are kids going to catch up? Because if they're not getting the services that you would normally be getting in school or you're not coming to Zoom meetings, they're going to fall even further behind. And if they already have an IEP or something, they probably are kind of behind already. I don't know. I guess I don't know as a teacher what you would do. How are you going to catch them up?

Mei [45:00] pointed out that the shift in teacher responsibility, from how to support students to how to give them access to education, had become an issue of distribution of resources. Holly [45:39] focused on ways to provide additional supports and services to students with disability in a virtual environment. Referring to Brooke's remote teaching experience and the limitations of the virtual learning environment, which cannot possibly be the same as a physical classroom, she candidly shared her struggle and skepticism about working toward

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inclusion virtually. Brooke [46:28] elaborated on her challenges, including what and how her mentor teacher and she had been providing services to students on IEPs and engaging them in learning on Zoom through small group or one-on-one instruction. With such a new, different environment than a classroom, she expressed her struggle not knowing the "best" ways to meet her students' needs. Dana [48:00] emphasized the need for support for student learning from the home environment, as she explained that student disengagement is caused by the change in the dominant authority figure and setting, which limits the teacher's capacity. Holly [49:02] jumped in, posing a question about how teachers should "catch up" the students who are further behind in learning curriculum. No one answered, including Holly herself. Lauren remained silent throughout the discussion.

Summary. In short, inconclusiveness was a negotiating pattern among the preservice teachers primarily indicating their lack of ideas to tackle the challenge being discussed. In the two examples of inconclusiveness, the preservice teachers talked about challenging situations for teachers, how to replace or resolve use of the problematic term "gifted," and what/how to do with regard to student learning in a virtual environment. I speculated that these topics may have been too new for them to suggest ideas on teacher practice that are convincing. Thus, their negotiation intentionally left a question mark about their position and their opinions.

Multiple Patterns

Multiple patterns denote a combination of the four single negotiation patterns that were previously reported. In instances of multiple patterns, there is a shift(s) in interactions from one pattern to another at some point during the discussion. There were three instances in the dialogue series that marked such shift(s): one shift in the first two segments and two in the third.

From Inconclusiveness to Divergence. The first instance, from Session 3, indicates a

shift from inconclusiveness to divergence in the preservice teachers' collective actions. As noted,

the overarching topic of this session was inclusion of students with disability. The following

transcript is from the first segment, in which we began with a discussion in which each

participant shared their experience around teaching students with disability in the classroom. As

Lauren brought up a grounded example indicating a tension between the teacher and the parent

about the child's learning, I further facilitated preservice teachers' thinking about possible

teacher practices to resolve the tension. After a few speaking turns, I intervened to ask about

their perspectives on getting help from paraprofessionals, given their comments on limited

teacher capacity. My question caused the shift in their negotiation.

Table 24

Group Session 3, Segment 1

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Lauren [29:42]	… I recall there was one student who, like her mom was insistent on her being in second grade and moving up to third grade like everybody else, and the teacher said, "No, I really think she should stay back a year because of all this evidence." But the mom insisted and so she was in with the rest of the class. So, long story short, she shouldn't have been in that classroom. But it was because of the mom who really insisted on her being there, and that set her up for a whole year of just being behind. So, that one piece of information of the mom wanting her to be there, I think, shed so much light onto why she's struggling so much.
Researcher [30:21]	I mean, so far basically what we've discussed was usually focused on the teacher-student relationship, right? how we give appropriate instruction or right support to the students. But like, yeah, Lauren brought up the piece of family, family should be also part of the conversation for inclusion. So, yeah, that's a tension, right? So, between teacher and parents, the inconsistency, what could we do? (pause – 10s)

Holly [31:06]	I mean, personally I think, as a teacher, there is only so much that you can do. In that particular case, the teacher can try to explain why she felt that the student should be staying back, but in the end, the parent has the right to decide what their kid is going to do. And it's supposed to be a collaborative decision. So, I think that even though teachers are professionally trained, that means not just totally discounting whatever the parent is saying. Because I think that, I think parents have a lot of influence on how their kids are going to think and what their point of view is. So, to completely disregard that, disrespects the parents and disrespects the kid in a way. (pause – 6s)
Researcher [31:56]	Any other thoughts?
Mei [31:59]	Yeah, I think it's going to be really difficult to change what's happening at home. So, the best way as teachers to approach it is to understand what's happening at home and how to best support that, based on what you know in the classroom. I know some teachers that visit, that does house visits too. So, I feel like that really sheds a lot of light. For example, a teacher would know that students aren't being fed at home and then they would bring extra snacks inside of the classroom and stuff like that. I just feel like it's very important knowledge to know.
Dana [32:43]	Kind of going off of that, I definitely agree with everything that's being said, but like we have limited power as teachers as to how much you really can shape the parents' opinion or change what's happening at home. But sort of going off the house visits idea, I definitely keeping up as much communication as possible as long as the parents are receptive to it and trying to keep an understanding, sympathetic sort of system going. I feel like the more that you can be in contact with the parents and the more information that you can give them on a regular basis, the more they're going to have to work with, when it comes to make a decision about the child's course of education, that sort of thing. So, I feel like definitely communication is key as long as, you know, it is a two-way street, so you need to have a receptive person on the other end, but, if you can, then that's helpful.
Researcher [33:33]	So, you mentioned- I mean, you guys mentioned about there's a limitation for teacher, right? to address all individual needs as the solo instructor. So, like, having more adults in the classroom, do you think, would that help? (pause – 7s)
Dana [33:56]	I know some kids are not receptive to adult hope at all. They see it as kind of like a burden or if they're the ones who are the only people who are getting one-on-one instruction from an adult, then it singles them out and it makes them feel bad. So, I don't know if like having more people in the classroom or more people, more adults there working one-on-one would be

Mei [34:24]	Yeah. I feel like it also depends on the relationship between the student and the adult. Sometimes students just don't like certain adults and then they're very against working with them or learning with them. And then…yeah, so definitely building a good relationship and seeing the…working together as a- or making them see it as a positive thing.
Holly [34:50]	I think, too, going off of that, it's also the relationship between the classroom teacher and whoever that adult is is going to be a big factor of it. Because if the classroom teacher is giving one rule or setting one example, and then that other adult is doing something completely different, and the kid is not really going to know what to do. And the classroom teacher only has so much power to talk to another adult. So that's kind of a tough situation to navigate.
Lauren [35:21]	Yeah, yeah. I also think there's something with a power in numbers, especially with teachers. And, even if there- the assistant teachers or aids aren't providing so much assistance and help, I do really think that having a few there, just kind of keeps the teacher in check and reminding them like, 'Okay, I'm not here alone, I'm not doing this alone.' I think that...really goes a long way.
Researcher [35:49]	Uh-huh. Kind of providing emotional or a social support that you're not alone.
Lauren [35:56]	Yeah (laugh).
Brooke [36:01]	Yeah, I agree. I think that having a lot of, not like, you know, you don't want like 10 teachers in the classroom, it's going to be like way too much. But I think that having a teacher and a para or a teacher and an aid I think can be really helpful because I think you can do so much more. In the classroom that I was in, it was myself, the teacher, and then an aid, so there were three of us? And so sometimes we could take our kids and put them in small groups and we could each run a small group. And like that, I have like- Just liked having that ability of, "Okay, we can each take six kids and do this activity, and these kids are lower so they need more help in X, and these kids have it so they need help in Y." And being able to kind of do it that way, that way no kid felt singled out because they were all in small groups. Yeah.

After Lauren raised the issue of the tension between the teacher and the child's parent,

with my prompt we discussed what could be done to handle the conflict. Holly [31:06] suggested

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that teachers need to respect parents' opinion given their significant influence on their child's life. Mei [31:59] stressed the importance of understanding students' lives outside of school with "home visits," for example. In agreement, Dana [32:43] further emphasized the importance of frequent communication with parents. Brooke remained silent. Holly, Mei, and Dana, all suggested ideas on how teachers should deal with families, however, their suggestions did not directly respond to the situation where the teacher and the parent held conflicting opinions about a student's grade level. That is, they did not have a common ground or generated a convergent point. Thus, the interaction between Holly, Mei, and Dana represented the pattern of inconclusiveness.

Being caught up with the point they made about limited teacher capacity, I [33:33], as a facilitator, then asked the participants about their perspectives on the helpfulness of having more paraprofessionals in the classroom. Dana [33:56] brought up some students' negative perception of receiving help from a paraprofessional, questioning its actual benefit. Aligned with Dana's point, Mei [34:24] stressed the need for relationship building between students and paraprofessionals to make students getting their help to view it positively. Holly [34:50] talked about the relationship between the main teacher and paraprofessionals; sometimes a power struggle between the two occurs and, in such cases, may cause inconsistent instruction that confuses students. Unlike Dana, Mei, and Holly, who saw the help from paraprofessionals somewhat negatively, Lauren and Brooke exhibited a positive stance. Lauren [35:21] believed a few more paraprofessionals in the classroom would give teachers social and emotional support by providing them a sense of security. Based on her current experience, Brooke [36:01] elaborated on the benefit of having a paraprofessional in the classroom, such as allowing the teacher to carry out small-group instruction for differentiation. As a result, the interaction

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involved the divergent pattern since Dana, Mei, and Holly recognized and focused more on the drawbacks of help from paraprofessionals, whereas Lauren and Brooked paid more attention to the advantages.

From Expansion to Inconclusiveness. The second instance, which is also from Session 3, indicates a shift from expansion through convergence to inconclusiveness in the preservice teachers' collective actions. This segment displays the dialogue exchanges to discuss the meaning of "access" to the general education curriculum for students with disability who struggle in learning, with the grounded examples the preservice teachers had described (students falling behind the grade-level curriculum standards).

I [42:57] prompted the preservice teachers to talk about how they make sense of access for inclusion of students with disability, reminding them of the two examples—a third grader struggling to do one-digit addition and a second grader who may benefit from repeating the grade. At first, the preservice teachers co-constructed the meaning of access by agreeing with and building upon each other's ideas. When I [46:18] posed a subsequent question of whether ensuring access is enough for inclusion, three participants did not respond at all after Dana and Holly shared their thoughts, which left a question mark in their negotiation.

Table 25

Group Session 3, Segment 2

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [42:57]	… as you [Brooke/Lauren] mentioned, there are students who doesn't understand five plus five, there are students who can't really be in the certain grade, right? But because of the parents [who] insist, insist she [a student] stay there for a whole year and then falling behind, any other cases like that. So, in that case, what does that mean for access, I mean, for those kids to have access? (pause – 5s)

Dana [43:33]	I feel like in the example that Mei gave about the student or was it Brooke? I'm sorry, whoever touched about the student who didn't know five plus five, you- at that point, being in the third-grade classroom seems like it is kind of a more restrictive environment for them? Because they can't access the material at hand. If you don't have the prerequisite knowledge, you're not going to be able to move on to the next concept. So, I feel like in that case you would need, like one-on-one support maybe outside of that classroom, in math in order to get the student back up to grade level and really hone in on the fundamentals that they're lacking. I feel like that's an issue. It can be very difficult to address in a full class setting when everyone else already knows what five plus five is. You're not going to go teach another lesson on five plus five, because that's taking time away from the standard that needs to be met. So, I feel like in that case, you kind of need to move beyond, like the full class environment and then try to figure out what supports you can individually give to that student, maybe outside of the classroom.
Holly [44:40]	I feel like, building off of that one, I think of access, I think of opportunity? It's like opportunity just to get, to be able to be presented with all the material and opportunity to learn it in whatever way works best for them. So, in the case that Dana was just talking about, I feel like it would be being given the opportunity to have individualized instruction if you needed it and being able to work with an adult or someone else to get you back up to where you have the opportunity to pursue the actual standards in that grade.
Lauren [45:16]	Yeah. I think access too is being prepared, being prepared for that student who may not know how to do five plus five, and having those resources accessible for them to use if- when that occurs? And I think access kind of aligns with knowing your students really well and knowing their strengths and weaknesses, where some students may struggle more in math, having those resources accessible to them and prepared for them to use. (pause – 5s)
Mei [45:51]	Yeah, I think, adding onto that, also being prepared, it's also being flexible? And seeing as the situation arises, like maybe, student needs I don't know X, like a different type of worksheet, a different- just like knowing that you might have to change it any time. (pause – 5s)
Researcher [46:18]	So, what do you think of this, do you think it's ensuring access enough for inclusion? (pause – 12s)
Dana [46:39]	I feel like access focuses so much on the academic material. So, in a way like focusing on access, yes, I think it does help with fully academic inclusion, but I feel like there's another piece of that, which is social inclusion and making sure that their student feel- feels welcomed in the

Holly [47:12]	I feel like too, access is a step one. Access is like, you have the chance to learn it, but then it's like- there's a whole other step of actually being able to understand it and retain it and apply it to the next lesson that you're using? So, I feel like, and what Dana was talking about too, also the social aspect of it too. So, I feel like access is a good, like foundational point, but it's definitely not the only thing that should be done. (pause – 12s)
Researcher [47:50]	Any additional thoughts? (pause – 7 s)

The preservice teachers articulated their ideas about access by connecting their thoughts to the preceding statement. Dana [43:33] referred to providing additional individualized support outside of the classroom so that the students can get back on grade level. Holly [44:40] interpreted it as having the learning opportunity that works best for students, whether materials that are accessible or working with a paraprofessional. Lauren [45:16] conceived access as meaning that teachers understand the characteristics of individual students and prepare and provide the right resources to help them learn. Mei [45:51], lastly, called for teacher flexibility in lesson adaptation. The meaning of access as expanded by the participants had a common basis: The convergent points the preservice teachers made included that students are able to learn the grade-level curriculum standards and that teachers meet the needs of individual students.

My subsequent question of whether ensuring access is enough for inclusion was a continuation of the discussion about the meaning of access. There was a long silence right after the question was posed; however, Dana and Holly eventually responded. Dana [46:39] argued that access should be considered holistically, both academic and social aspects, since every student needs to "feel welcomed" in the classroom while having access to academic materials. Holly [47:12] not only did she agree with Dana's statement, and talked about students' deeper

level of engagement in learning beyond just having the learning opportunity. Another long silence followed their responses, although I encouraged the non-respondents, Brooke, Mei, and Lauren, to speak. With their thoughts nonetheless remaining unknown, I concluded their negotiation pattern as inconclusiveness.

From Divergence to Inconclusiveness to Convergence. The third instance, which is from Session 5, indicates shifts from divergence to inconclusiveness and then to convergence in the preservice teachers' collective actions. As noted, the main topic of this session was inclusion of student with LGBTQ+ identities and gifted students. The following discussion in this segment primarily centered around a tension in teaching LGBTQ+ issues. I provided two cases, a short YouTube video introducing the book *I Am Jazz*, written by a student who is transgender, and a case study in which the teacher faced pushback—a complaint from some parents—after she read aloud a story about a child having two moms.

The discussion was focused on the latter case, with my question [26:40] about how to deal with the challenge the teacher went through. The first two exchanges, from Holly and Dana, which represented the divergent pattern, shifted to inconclusiveness because they noted that they were devoid of ideas in response to my question [29:19], by which I attempted to turn their focus into dealing with other children's negative reaction. Yet, as the discussion proceeded, they figured out the solution and converged to discuss how to deal with family/student resistance when teaching family diversity.

Table 26

Group Session 5, Segment 2

Speaker [Time]	Transcript
Researcher [26:40]	You know that Jazz, herself as a transgender, who figure out herself as [a] transgender when the age of two, and then she wrote the book about herself. And then the other case of two moms trying to teach those LGBTQ issues using literature, but she [the teacher] faced these complaints from parents. How would you deal with this situation?
Holly [27:19]	My first thought after reading that was like, maybe, before you had done the lesson, I think from the beginning honestly, if she had spent the time to actually plan out a lesson of what she wanted to say and what books she wanted to read to the kids, I feel like it would have been a little bit better executed, just because then like, because at first, she was like, "Oh, I'm not teaching this lesson about it, I'm just going to have it there." And then she kind of did pull together this last-minute lesson? So, I feel like if she had just been like, "Okay, I'm going to teach a lesson about family diversity," and then she read a couple books, like one about having two moms, one about like having a family where the child's adopted, one about like living with your grandparents, whatever it was, then it wasn't just focused on like there's only like...Because to me, that still felt like very exclusive, like you can either have a mom and a dad or you can have two moms, and that was it. So, I feel like that's just a better way to, just to unite all different kinds of family types, because in the end, as a teacher, you might not necessarily know. (pause – 7s)
Dana [28:29]	I don't really think the, what, the teacher and the way that she went about it in that case study. I feel like if I were in her shoes, honestly probably would have done the same thing and I wouldn't have sent a notice home, I would have read the book and I would have framed it as a...you know, she wasn't really pushing any agenda or anything, she was just educating the facts. And I think that's important to know and I don't think that that necessitates a letter home. So, in discussion with the parents, probably what I'd try to point out was just, it's- I wasn't pushing any agenda and I introduced to the kids to this topic and now you can impart on them whatever views or values you want to in relation to this. But, at the end of the day, it's- there are families like that and it's important for students to know about the differences. (pause – 7s)
Researcher [29:19]	Any other thoughts? ... Whether or not she has the intention to teach certain type of family, I don't think that was her intention. It's just like she wants to show different example of there are family diversity. But either way, what we need to focus on is another children's reactions in the case study. That some children say, "She's reading about weird family, weird

people." And then, on the other hand, a family who's probably religiously and politically conservative, complaining to talk about, "She's teaching something [that] shouldn't be taught." How would you deal with this tension or conflict? Because if you're teaching the family diversity and then every student's [saying], "Yes, that's right," and then they just accept like a sponge, there wouldn't be any problem. But probably in the reality, that wouldn't be the case. (pause – 10s) Lauren looks already exhausted.

Lauren [30:49]   No, I honestly, it's because I really don't know how I would properly deal with this. So, I'm not really sure what to say. Yeah. I don't know. (pause – 10s)

Dana [31:12]   This isn't really an answer to your question, but I feel like it is interesting how definitely at first, when the student was reading the book there, the other students kind of reacted as, "Oh, this is weird" and whatnot. But, then once she read the book out loud, I feel like the students kind of changed and were asking questions about it and trying to educate themselves more. I feel like that that example just kind of goes to show that a lot of times students, especially younger students, I feel like might use, you know, terms like, say micro-aggressions and stuff related to the LGBTQ plus community without knowing exactly what they're saying or what the context is. So, I don't know. I feel like in this case, it was kind of an ideal situation where it started out as an uneducated insult or that sort of thing, but then, you know, they all kind of came to see it in a different light and ask questions and whatnot once the book had been introduced. But in an actual classroom, I don't know if all students would have that reaction or if there would still be students who were resistant to it and unaccepting. And I don't know how I deal with that.

Researcher [32:22]   Any other ideas, Brooke or Mei? (pause – 6s)

Brooke [32:28]   I've been thinking about how if, in my classroom, it was a student who's like, "Oh, well, my family says that it's not good for someone to have two moms or two dads," what do you do? Because you don't want them to know, "No, your family's wrong," because they're growing up in a family and you don't want to fight against the family. But you also don't want to be like, "Okay, you just don't believe it and be hateful." You don't want that, either. And so, I also don't really know what I would do in that situation. I don't know, I maybe have more- a conversation of like, "Even if you don't agree with it, you still have to be respectful." But I honestly don't know how I would go about that, because there might be kids whose families tell them "No" because of their faith or their political background or whatever, telling them like, "No." And then you don't want to go against their faith or their background, but also you don't want them to be disrespectful and hateful towards groups of people. So, yeah. I really don't know what I would do either.

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Lauren [33:38]	I was just going to say that I actually watched *I Am Jazz* for a while and found it really fascinating, and she dealt with backlash all the time, and she had a very calm approach and response. I guess probably because she was used to it. But, um, and used to people not understanding maybe or not really fitting with their morals. But I think, as a teacher, it could be beneficial to take that approach and say, "This is my experience. This is why I think it's important to educate," and almost like an agree to disagree. Like "I do respect your opinions and your morals, but for my classroom, I do think it's important to be teaching this." Rather than trying to argue why it's important, just kind of stating, "I think this is good for kids to know," and just kind of moving on. Because I think once you start getting into the nitty gritty of "Is it really important? What are you teaching at home?" It's just opening up so many complicated doors that I don't know how I would deal with.
Researcher [34:46]	So, kind of just like touching upon the surface and then not really going in depth, because it's going to never end.
Lauren [34:57]	Right. I don't think it would ever end. No. (laugh)
Dana [35:03]	I feel like in a classroom, it's more like you introduce the facts of the situation, and then it's up to the families at home to decide what they want to do with that information or what messages they want to impart.
Mei [35:14]	Yeah, I agree, completely. I feel like it's really hard for students if the teacher is saying one thing's correct, and their parents are saying one thing's correct, and it's really conflicting whose side to be on for the student. So, I think, the teacher should just be like, "There's no standard type of family, there's just different families." Like family diversity, and just not- be sure not to say like, "This is the way things should be."
Lauren [35:43]	I agree with Mei. And I also think that there is fact and there is truth in that families are different, people are different, and these are ways that people are different. Like I don't- maybe someone can argue that, but I really ultimately, I do think that's true. And it's not stating whether you believe it or not. It's just like, people- these are different sexualities people have, these are ways that families are different. Kind of take what you want, and if you want to educate your kids further at home, you can.
Holly [36:15]	Yeah. I kind of agree with that. Because I was thinking what Dana said at the beginning where she was like, "I would just talk to parents and be like, I am just giving facts and not pushing my agenda." I feel like that's how I would probably deal with it. And, even with students, too, if a student raised their hand with, "Oh, my family said this wasn't good or bad." I would- I think I would try to say something about being respectful like Brooke said, I think that's important, but also be like, "I'm just showing

> you guys an example of what a family can look like," and kind of just leave it at that. So, it's like, it kind of introduces it to them and then you're not really offering an opinion either way. It's just, factually like, this is what a family can look like.

Holly and Dana showed opposite perspectives on the teacher's practice of reading a book about a child having two moms in the case study. Holly [27:19] argued that the teacher should have planned in advance to teach several different types of family diversity using multiple books, rather than introducing a single story of having two moms. On the contrary, Dana [28:29] defended the teacher's decision-making around the lesson, emphasizing that she educated only "the facts" about family diversity, as opposed to imposing any specific point of view.

Due to the silence after Dana, I prompted the participants again, elaborating on the challenge that arose from some students' negative reaction as well as parents' complaint, so that they could focus more on discussing ways to tackle such a challenge. After my subsequent question, the interaction among the preservice teachers became inconclusive negotiation given their primary position that they did not know how they would deal with the challenge. Lauren [30:49] just repeated she did not have any idea. Dana [31:12], knowing she was not directly responding to the question, pointed out that the students' attitudes positively changed after being educated in the case study and associated "micro-aggression" toward the LGBTQ+ community with students' ignorance and lack of knowledge due to the absence of education. However, she admitted that she did not know how to deal with student resistance if such change does not occur in the real classroom as a result of exposure and education. Brooke [32:28], too, did not know what to do as she explained her inner conflict that she wanted to respect all families' religious and political backgrounds but, at the same time, she does not want them to be hostile toward a family whose structure is against their own beliefs.

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Pay attention to Lauren's response. She said [30:49] she had no idea at first, however, after Brooke she [33:38] confidently articulated her opinion on the teacher's approach. Referring to the case *I Am Jazz* and her "calm approach" to people who do not accept others who are different from themselves, she suggested the teacher firmly state the importance of teaching the topic, not further elaborating the rationale of its importance. I [34:46] then rephrased her point that she agreed with. Lauren's statement triggered another shift in their negotiation, which converged. All preservice teachers, except Brooke, strongly agreed that teachers' responsibility should be confined to introducing family diversity, part of the issues for people with LGBTQ+ identities, only as factual information without imposing their own personal beliefs and leave what students ultimately believe up to each family, so that they can avoid any potential conflict with families.

Summary. In sum, multiple patterns refer to interactions that exhibit more than a single negotiation pattern. The three instances documented from the dialogue series indicated varying combinations of four single patterns, inconclusiveness to divergence, expansion to inconclusiveness, and divergence to inconclusiveness and to convergence. The first two discussions were from the third group session on inclusion of students with disability, the topics of which were the conflict between the teacher and the parent, particularly around the student's grade level, and the meaning of "access to general education curriculum" for students with disability. The last discussion, as part of the fifth group session, centered around the teacher's lesson about family diversity using a book, as one of the issues for people with LGBTQ+ identities.

The major shift in each discussion was caused by a follow-up question from the facilitator, me, which was posed spontaneously at that time without any plan or intent to switch

the orientation of the discussion; I just wanted to provoke the preservice teachers to think further.

However, the second shift reported in the last example was caused by a participant's utterance.

The Contribution of Facilitation

This section responds to the last research question, *how facilitation—content/topics, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary materials and activities—mediates preservice teachers' negotiations during the group dialogue series*. Throughout the dialogues, my intended purposes and practices of facilitation were sometimes altered due to larger contextual factors, such as the COVID-19 emergency, and the contributions of the dialogue series participants, through such means as raising topics I had not anticipated.

Before explaining the various mediation effects, I want to return to the design process. When designing the group dialogue series on inclusive education, I based my design on Vygotsky's theory of zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the role and effects of scaffolding (Collins & Kapur, 2014; Horn & Kane, 2015; Grossman & Thompson, 2008). This made it important to provide facilitation during the group dialogues, as opposed to having the participants freely discuss inclusion without any structure. Thus, the dialogue series were designed to incorporate a variety of ways of providing scaffolding to effectively facilitate the discussions among the preservice teachers. That is, the dialogue series consisted of intentionally selected content/topics, guiding and follow-up questions, along with supplemental reading materials to exemplify the content/topics to be addressed and auxiliary activities (e.g., mind-mapping and self-reflection).

As mentioned, each group session had a central topic(s) that involved a different student population that has commonly been perceived as marginalized and different meanings of and values related to inclusion. During the design process, I prepared several specific instances related to each topic, which reified tensions around inclusion as a concept and in practice through supplementary reading materials from multiple sources, such as text-based case studies, book

excerpts, newspaper articles, videos and audios (e.g., YouTube video, a TED Talk, and NPR News radios), and grounded examples I had observed in practice while working as a practicum supervisor. Those instances, along with the relevant guiding/follow-up questions, were brought up in each group session with the intent to problematize either a meaning of inclusion or a certain inclusive practice or to present conflicting values or tensions between different stakeholders, to challenge preservice teachers' preexisting meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs about inclusion. Additionally, those instances provided a particular school/classroom context that aided participants in thinking about the challenging issues through concrete examples that they may not have otherwise thought of due to their lack of teaching experience. The auxiliary activities further supplemented the main discussions. Thus, while my intended methods were performed, they were also shaped by factors both internal and external to our dialogue sessions.

Mediating Effects of Content/Topic Selection: Opening up a New Horizon

As noted, those sub-topics I prepared for each group session were not limited to students with disability, but those included students with challenging behavior, students from CLD backgrounds, students with LGBTQ+ identities, and students who are gifted. The sub-topics were intended to prepare the preservice teachers to think about inclusion more broadly, as Dana indicated, "I think we talked about how the topics themselves definitely influenced my understanding and made it a more … I guess, broad or holistic definition of inclusion." Those topics also gave participants an overall structure for each session, so that they could be prepared for what to talk about and where to focus when listening to the other participants' statements. Holly commented:

Then having people actually talk about it in depth, it was really helpful when you had sub-topics of what we were going to talk about. Because that kind of framed what I was going to say, and framed how I was listening to other people.

Provided the opportunity to discuss topics regarding LGBTQ+ students and students with giftedness—student groups the participants had never thought about, or very little, related to inclusion—helped them come up with new perspectives and begin to believe that inclusion as a concept does not necessarily involve the learning of students with disability. Mei stressed, "it's the topics and what people said about the topics." The dialogue series made her talk about the topics with her peers she had never thought of before or "never gave a second thought" in in-depth discussions, although she had learned some of the topics in her college class. Similarly, Brooke explained that she "never thought about that issue [LGBTQ+] in regards to inclusion" After the discussion, she realized that LGBTQ+ issues are a matter of inclusion as well as social justice, and that students who are above grade level should also be considered for inclusion to make them "feel included in the classroom and your school community." Thus, the topics chosen as content for the discussions helped the participants think of ideas they had never thought of, moving away from the commonly accepted notion that inclusion involves special education and struggling learners, and, therefore, broadened their scope of student population for inclusion.

Challenging Topics to Facilitate Learning. Already during the design stage, I struggled with how to structure the session about LGBTQ+ students, not having the appropriate materials at hand, or knowing what materials to choose to ensure a fruitful discussion. Although I was aware that creating an inclusive environment for the LGBTQ+ population has become an important issue for schools (Hope & Hall, 2018), not being a member of the group highlighted my ignorance. Thus, I reached out to a female colleague who has intersectional identities as an

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Asian American originally from the Philippines, Deaf with LGBTQ+ identities, to get help on what to address. With her ideas and my own search for appropriate resources, I completed the design and presented the relevant issues for the discussion.

One common comment from the participants during our post-dialogue interviews was the difficulty they had in addressing certain topics, primarily, students with LGBTQ+ identities and the issues related to the population. I had the same feeling at times during the discussion. I would have not been able to answer some of those questions myself. An example of how we were not successful in negotiating the challenges of this topic is clearly related in Lauren's self-reflection:

> Today we discussed how teachers can facilitate an inclusive classroom environment for LGBTQ+ students. Throughout our dialogue, I noticed many of us did not have "proper" answers for how to respond to LGBTQ+ issues and addressing them in the classroom. This demonstrated that there needs to be more fluid and open discussion among teachers regarding how to address these issues. Additionally, it is crucial teachers are transparent with what they are teaching in the classroom (specifically to parents). (Session 5)

Mei and Dana also commented in their final interviews how they helplessly responded, "I don't know what we would do" when asked, "How would you deal with that situation?" Yet, Mei perceived it as the learning opportunity that "challenges our [their] thinking," in which "we [they] think deeper." On the contrary, Dana reconciled her struggle attributing her not being able to answer to the "nature of the topic" that was "difficult to come to a conclusion." She just accepted not knowing the answer as she believed that "It's okay. You don't have to have the answers to all of the problems of inclusion and all of the challenges that inclusion might pose, now." Thus, this topic provoked them to be aware and acknowledge that issues related to students and/or families with LGBTQ+ identities can be thought in relation to inclusion.

On the other hand, the topic of LGBTQ+ issues kept one participant from actively engaging with the discussion. I did not realize it during the discussion, but Lauren, later in the final interview, told me that she intentionally refrained from expressing her own opinion,

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worried that her point of view would be negatively judged by the other participants or "sound offensive" to them. She was conscious of not wanting to "cause a disagreement" given the fact that the discussions were part of research and that they needed to meet again.

> One example I can think of on the top of my head is like the LGBTQ discussion? Just because, I don't know, like I, I- not to like share too many of my opinions, but I just- I think I have certain underlying biases when it comes to LGBTQ+, that I'm not saying are correct or incorrect? But I- the fact is that I do think I had these beliefs. And I don't want them to be seen as like wrong or like anti-LGBTQ, so I just don't share them. But I think that was just one, one example of a time that I just didn't really want to answer. And especially, because I think it's such a sensitive topic, too.

Her account explains why LGBTQ+ issues were perceived as challenging topics and why the participants exhibited the inconclusive pattern of interaction. In addition to their relatively limited exposure to the population compared to students with disability or those from CLD backgrounds, the LGBTQ+ topics were "sensitive" and were intertwined with an individual's political stance and religious beliefs, as all of the preservice teachers pointed out.

Holly, who believed that she had "a lot more experiences with LGBTQ populations" than people who are non-white, felt the topic related to race—"students from diverse backgrounds"— was the most difficult topic. She was clearly acknowledging that she grew up in "a sheltered environment" where she "never really learned how to talk about race" as a white person. While recognizing that she needs to push herself further to learn more, she made progress with the topic she felt uncomfortable talking about through participating in the dialogue series:

> I feel like the best way that I've learned is like, through these like really comfortable discussions where I was like, 'Okay, I might not be comfortable talking about this. Other

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people might not be comfortable talking about this, but it's important and we should talk about it.' I feel like that's helped me grow a little bit more.

Taken together, to different degrees, each participant felt challenged to discuss a certain topic, which pushed them to come up with new ideas and (un)share their opinions and perspectives on the issues. It was obvious that discussing the list of sub-topics under the overarching topic of inclusive education broadened their scope of populations to be considered for inclusion beyond students with disability and helped them learn more about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and the areas they need to invest more time to learn about as a future educator.

Mediating Effects of Supplementary Materials: Discussions Based on Concrete Examples

The variety of multimedia materials (not only the text-based case studies but also cases in a video or audio format) exemplified tensions around inclusion in a concrete way. Thus, through these sources, I was able to portray what I problematized in the materials (cases): the meaning of inclusion as a concept, the practice for inclusion, or conflicting values related to inclusion. The preservice teachers all felt that it was "helpful" to read the supplementary reading materials together as an introduction to each main topic of discussion. Particularly for Dana, they helped her "form my [her] opinions in general." Similar to the effect of the topics presented, the case studies made the participants think what they had never thought before and give them a new perspective. By learning how those instances were relevant to inclusion, participants made connections between the cases and the practices they had observed or experienced in the classroom and drew different takeaways.

For example, different takeaways can be seen from one case study that was powerful to most of the participants: Zora's story on the topic of classroom management and inclusion, and

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the specific issue of the white teacher's perspective on disciplining a black student, Zora. Dana explained how the materials helped her think about the topic from an angle she would had never thought of and form an opinion that she ended up sharing during the discussion. Her comment was particularly focused on Zora's story.

> I think they sort of provided examples, like concrete examples of inclusive education in real life, either how it's effective or how it's not effective … Zora story I don't think I ever would have thought of seeing, like 'who the group leader in a classroom' is as something that would be effective or not in inclusive education. But once I read that, it kind of dawned on me, 'Oh yeah, like that's a way that, that's a practice that can have roots in inclusive education, and that can seek to create more of an environment.'

As mentioned under Theme, *Expansion through Convergence*, the discussion from Group 2, Segment 3 showed that Dana made a connection between classroom management and inclusion, as well as issues with race and gender. She claimed that classroom management should be intentional and a means to empower students, raising an issue about the rationale behind the teacher's giving the white boy power as a small-group leader. In the same case study, Holly paid more attention to the different perspectives on classroom management between the teacher and the student:

> …what I remember the one that was like, it was like from the student's perspective of why she was acting out and it was like the teacher's perspective. And just how there was like that vast difference between the student feeling the teacher didn't really care about her, but then the teacher was like, "I definitely care about her. I just am trying to make sure she's disciplined." Because I feel like that just made me think of how you can, do-you can have classroom management, but also not make it, so it's like the student feels

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you're constantly picking on them. So that material specifically really made me think about that.

Taking a more reflective stance, Holly reminded herself of the possibility that students could "interpret" teacher action differently from the original intent. She agreed with Dana's claim and stated there are various ways of problem-solving, which I speculated came from her takeaway that perspectives are different between the teacher and students.

Unlike Dana and Holly, it seemed that Zora's story was not as powerful for Mei as Asian American, although she contributed to the discussion (Group 2, Session 3) by advocating for the use of classroom management to create a learning environment that cultivates positive feelings of students (and their race). She commented in her final interview:

> if like we did a reading that…I don't know, maybe Asian student instead of a Black student, like maybe that would have, um, affected me more, and like…my- yeah, affected my comfort to talk about it.

While Mei did not articulate her thought explicitly, she made the point that she would have felt more comfortable engaging in the discussion if she could relate herself to the topic. Nonetheless, during the negotiation, Mei generated her own takeaway that was built upon by Lauren's comments, which ultimately involved the pattern of expansion through convergence.

Benefits of Multimodal Materials. The multimedia materials, such as the TED Talk, worked particularly well for Lauren. Based on the model studies and implications from my pilot studies, I intentionally incorporated multimedia resources to diversify the format of supplementary reading materials to make the discussion more interesting and engaging in hopes of fostering active participation in the discussions. Lauren's comment in her final interview on the materials indicated that the different format of supplementary materials and varying means of

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presentation facilitated the preservice teachers' participation and engagement in the dialogue series. She stated:

> I really just like, personally I love audio and I love hearing people speak. And I also love hearing individualized stories. I- That's definitely the most impactful for me. So, I really like hearing how like a single person was impacted by something in their life … I love watching Ted Talks in my free time too. That's just my favorite thing. But I think that's why I liked it the most.

I did not pay special attention to or know Lauren's preference ahead of time. In retrospect, I speculate that the reason she was more responsive to the multimedia materials may have been that given her disabilities, AD/HD and LD, multimodality was a more effective way for her to process information than text-based reading materials. I realized the importance of Universal Design for Learning as the framework when designing the dialogue series to facilitate participant engagement.

Mediating Effects of Guiding/Follow-Up Questions: Pushing Thinking to Enrich Discussions

To facilitate discussions among the preservice teachers, I participated in the discussions as a facilitator, primarily inserting questions that were problem-posing or thought-provoking. The purpose of asking these types of questions was, again, to highlight instances that contested inclusion as a concept and in practice so that the preservice teachers were challenged in their taken-for-granted notions, perspectives, and beliefs around inclusion. I had prepared and created major guiding and follow-up questions in the design period and provided those at the beginning and during the discussion as I introduced the supplementary reading materials. Additionally, as the facilitator, I spontaneously posed questions (prompts) at certain moments of the discussion

while actively listening to the participants' comments, to further push their thinking and, ultimately, enrich the discussion.

Altogether, these questions and prompts served to open, intervene in, or close the discussion, keep the discussion going, and switch the direction and/or topic of the discussion. Further, my other actions as a facilitator—for example, encouraging the participants to speak or say more, commenting or rephrasing what participants said to affirm or clarify their statements, or asking for elaboration—shaped the discussion by responding to what was said and, sometimes, what was not said in the sessions. For the most part, I tried to be discreet when responding or intervening in the discussion so as not to lose momentum or push their thoughts further, and was intentional about not interrupting the flow of a discussion that was underway or cut off a speaker. Unfortunately, there were times when I missed opportunities to further prompt the preservice teachers' thoughts and ideas to enrich the discussions, as I will further explain in the final chapter.

The guiding, follow-up, and subsequent questions attempted to provoked the preservice teachers to (re) think deeply and critically beyond just accepting their initial ideas or surface level of thinking. For example, Mei appreciated that the discussions constantly posed questions and "enriched my [her] knowledge." Although the discussion began with "initial reactions" to the reading material, it went "deeper" as we continued, with "the follow-up to follow-up to follow-up questions that go off each other." The two questions Mei referred to that I frequently asked were, "So what can we do as educators?" and "What else?" She described them as also being challenging questions, because she "never really just sat down and thought about before," and the issues we talked about highlighted "problems that are cracks that we see in the classroom."

Dana and Lauren, respectively, elaborated on how challenging questions pushed their thinking. They both reflected on their own thought process. Dana, especially, walked through how she would shape her thoughts during the moment of silence and be re-engaged in the discussion.

> I think, you know, when we take time to sort of think about, you know, you'd ask a question and sometimes we would just kind of be silent. At a lot of times, that was me kind of sitting there trying to think of, 'Okay, what can I say about this? Or how am I going to say this? What's the language I want to use?' And then even, like, you know, I think there were a couple of times where I was- I started to say sentences, and then I would just start to kind of go off and I'd say, "I don't even know what point I'm trying to make anymore. I don't know if you understand what I'm making, but just being clear about, like, this is. That was kind of words in the head." And you know, being honest with the fact that I don't have the answers or I don't know exactly what the point I was trying to make was, but that was what I was thinking…yeah, I think that was just kind of trying to be transparent about the thought process that I had was helpful, in navigating those more difficult conversations.

Dana's strategy for dealing with challenging questions was to organize her thoughts and be "transparent" and "honest" when she did not have the answers. Such sharing of her thought process might have given the other participants new insights.

Lauren used a slightly different approach:

…again, it really allows me to reflect on my own ideas and beliefs. Like, 'Why is that difficult for me to answer? Or why do I not want to answer that?' So, I don't think I really dealt with it in a specific way, but I do think that it aided me with this new kind of

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thinking of, 'Hey, you should probably check on why that is so difficult for you to

answer. Is it because you've never had an experience like that? Or is it because you're

uncomfortable and you don't want to answer it for a specific reason?'

The challenging questions helped Lauren critically evaluate her own thoughts and stance and

further examine why she was thinking in a certain way. Her approach may not have enriched the

discussion if she had not shared her ideas with the other participants. However, as she said, this

critical self-evaluation at least helped navigate her own thoughts.

Facilitation From Preservice Teachers. Facilitation did not just come from me, the

researcher. Of the 13 discussion segments selected for analysis, five indicated that the questions

and/or instances of addressing tensions around inclusion were posed by the participants (see

Tables 16, 18, 22 24, & 25). The preservice teachers brought up the challenging issues around

inclusion from grounded examples they had in/directly experienced in the classroom for their

practicum. Those questions or instances were then clearly referred back to by me, as the main

facilitator, during the discussion (I was not always successful in rephrasing their point precisely).

Given that the participants also significantly contributed to facilitating the discussions, with each

person being more knowledgeable than the others, we co-created a learning space to deepen our

understanding of inclusive education.

One impactful topic brought up by Dana was the issues surrounding inclusion in high

school, which enlightened us and led to further discussion. Brooke commented, "Dana, talking

about it [inclusion] from high school perspective is something that I really just did not think of,

because that's not something I'm going to go into." Except for Dana who was majoring in

secondary education and completing her first pre-practicum in an urban public high school at the

time of the study, everyone else was involved in elementary education, including myself as a

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former elementary school teacher, and had taken for granted that elementary school is the primary setting for inclusion. So, after Dana brought up inclusion in high school, we began to think and talk about it. Dana also made a connection between tracking systems and inclusion, which sparked a disagreement. (Her reasoning on the issue was delineated in her case study. See Chapter 4). Holly commented that Dana's support of tracking systems made her think about it more critically in relation to inclusion.

> I guess the first one that came to mind was like when we were talking about tracking systems? because Dana was talking about like how they are beneficial and I think they can be, but I think there's a lot of implications for them not to be, and there's a lot of downsides to them. And I think the way that I kind of addressed that was like, "I totally agree with you on so many things, but like there's also this to think about?" Well, I was trying very hard. Like I don't want to be unkind or like make her feel like her opinion is not valid because it totally is. But like, I also wanted to like, give my actual sense of what I've learned about tracking systems. So, I feel like it's kind of like a hard balance to totally disagree with someone. But, I think like I was trying really hard to listen to like other people's point of view and be like, "Yeah, there's definitely some good aspects to whatever we're talking about, but I also think this."

Tracking gave rise to a disagreement between Holly and Dana. Holly viewed tracking systems as being against inclusion as they separate students out by ability from the beginning, whereas Dana believed that it gives students choices to take the curriculum according to their academic performance. Their negotiation to understand tracking system in terms of inclusion entailed heterogeneous sense-making with opposite perspectives and pushed our thinking,

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thereby, enriching the discussion. Further, her explanation showed how Holly tried to articulate her ideas when needing to disagree without invalidating the other's point, including Dana's.

Mediating Effects of Auxiliary Activities: Fostering Collective and Individual Sense-Making

The other way of facilitating the discussions was the use of mind-mapping and self-reflection journal writing. Specifically, the purposes of those activities were to make the group dialogue series more engaging in addition to having discussions and aid participants' learning by (a) providing opportunities to visually co-construct key ideas around inclusive education as a group (mind-mapping) at the beginning and end of each session (from Session 3) and (b) reflect on what was discussed and organize their thoughts for 5-10 minutes as the final activity of each session (self-reflection).

In particular, the mind-mapping activity helped elicit any relevant ideas (keywords) the participants brainstormed after I provided them with the central keyword(s) regarding major sub-topic(s) at the beginning of each session. Using the online software program *Popplet*, preservice teachers could create a mind-map together[27]. At the end of the session and before the self-reflection journal writing, I asked the participants to go back to the mind-map to change or add any other keywords that had come up during the discussion, so that they could see whether or not their initial thoughts had changed. Dana indicated that the activity helped her generate possible ideas under the topic of each discussion: "I think it helps inform a lot of our discussions, and set the tone for what we could talk about for each topic, which was cool."

The software features enabled the preservice teachers to see each other's keywords while they were simultaneously creating their own and to link, by drawing a line, the keywords that they thought were closely related. Lauren was more of an observant in terms of "finding an idea"

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[27] We did the mind-mapping acitvity under our real names. To preserve anonymity of the participants, the mind-maps are not reproduced in this dissertation.

that she could attach to rather than creating her own keywords. Holly at first added keywords "randomly" based on her knowledge. Later, like Lauren, she began to connect her thoughts to the existing keywords on the mind-map. Here is Holly's comment on the way she did the mind-map activity:

> I spent a lot more time reading other people's [keywords] as I did posting things because it wasn't just me being like, 'Oh, what can I say?' It was more of just like, 'Oh, what has everyone else been saying?' And like, 'How can I add to that?' Or 'How can I challenge that?' Or anything like that.

Such co-construction of the mind map allowed the participants to visualize how much we had expanded our ideas on inclusive education. Lauren succinctly pointed this out: "It was good to see kind of like our progression from day one, to the end of the study. And I liked the idea that, there's a variety of connections between different ideas that we had." The artifacts from the mind map activity were the evidence of the learning progress, but combining it with the dialogue series made a stronger impact on deepening the preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education. Lauren, again, explained how she became to elaborate on the importance of a practice after the discussion. For example, she only thought of presenting books to students for "windows and mirrors" in the mind map before the discussion, she later stressed the "why" behind the keyword, "why that really is important for students to be represented in that way" with regards to her own beliefs as a future educator.

Dana highlighted how the mind mapping activity fostered a collective sense-making of inclusion by linking each other's keywords. That, in turn, led to the reflection of her own thoughts. She explained her thought process:

… I'd look at it simultaneously and think, 'Oh, Brooke wrote this. Like I would never have thought of that, but yeah, she makes a point.' Like now I'm starting to think about, 'Okay, what are things related to Brooke's thought that I also share?'

After the discussion when I asked them to go back to the mind-map, she then checked whether or not her opinion had "changed" while reflecting on what was discussed. Thus, for Dana, the mind mapping activity helped her generate ideas related to the others' and reflect on her own thoughts.

In short, the mind-map activity, according to several of the preservice teachers, fostered collective and individual sense-making of inclusion. It helped shape the participants' ideas together before the discussions and co-construct the meaning of inclusion by being able to read and link others' ideas with their own. It also functioned as self-reflection that made the participants think about their thoughts again.

The other activity, self-reflection journal writing, was heavily focused on individual sense-making of inclusion. At the most basic level, it helped the participants retain what they discussed, as Mei noted. Similar to the mind-map, which allowed her to see the "progression" of their thinking, Lauren recognized that her ideas emerged and developed over the six sessions. However, the main effect of self-reflection, according to Dana and Brooke, was to aid them to write down all the "floating" thoughts and "synthesize" them in a concise manner to "fully come to some sort of conclusion after each dialogue." Similarly, Holly used the self-reflection not only to "gather" what she learned and what she was thinking afterwards but also to reinforce her commitment as a future educator in word and deed by writing "what I would want to do as a teacher in the future" so that she could become "more responsible" for actually doing what she wrote in the future.

Impact of Virtual Dialogue on Preservice Teachers' Sense-Making

It should be noted that due to the pandemic, all of the group sessions were held in the virtual environment through Zoom, a videoconferencing software program, and, thus, facilitation was also delivered virtually. Different from my initial concern, the participants perceived that the virtual format did not have a major impact on the way in which they participated in the dialogue series and the quality of the dialogue series. Brooke commented, "everyone was really authentic and vulnerable on Zoom," and "I think that we did have deep conversations as a group, virtually." Holly, similarly, indicated "the level of genuineness and openness that everyone else was showing" which made her feel "comfortable" sharing her authentic opinions. Even Dana, who otherwise had noted that she was totally against "anything virtual," mentioned feeling "like we [they] ended up with a really great group and people were willing to contribute" being "open-minded" even virtually. Lauren liked the format because it was a small group, and Mei even pointed out it was better to "focus" with fewer distractions.

In reality, we cannot compare the pros and cons of virtual discussions to those of face-to-face discussions, which we did not have. Thus, the participants were only able to assume that it would have been beneficial to be in person as to relationship building and "bonding experience." From the position of the facilitator, I had also felt that we were maintaining a high-quality discussion due to participants' their devotion and passion (whether due to the preservice teachers' willingness to learn more or the fact that the research project could not proceed without their cooperation) and that we were openly sharing our vulnerability, except for Lauren. At times, she looked distracted or was not as actively engaged as the other participants. (As noted, she later told me that she did not share her entirely honest thoughts about the LGBTQ+ issues.)

As to facilitation, I found it very convenient to carry everything out online, including the provision of supplementary reading materials as electronic copies through a cloud-based drive that was easy to access and implementation of auxiliary activities. Particularly the mind map program, was simple to learn, although I am not technology-savvy, and made it convenient to see the keywords the participants were creating at once. I could not find an alternative tool for this activity immediately after the COVID-19 outbreak, which is why we did not begin the activity until the third session. The same was case for the self-reflection activity. The preservice teachers typed their reflection on the online document that was shared with me, so I automatically had access to their journals and could see instantly what they were writing.

Summary

The findings were presented under five themes that emerged as a result of an analysis of the discussion transcripts of 13 segments from five dialogue sessions. Although the specific ways in which individual preservice teachers interacted with (reacted or responded to) each other in the discussions varied widely, those five themes—(a) Convergence, (b) Expansion through Convergence, (c) Divergence, (d) Inconclusiveness, and (e) Multiple Patterns—represent the particular ways of negotiations (collective actions) among the preservice teachers as to the meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs about inclusion when they faced challenges around the concept and practice.

In negotiating around the challenging instances regarding inclusion, the preservice teachers (a) came to a common understanding by strongly agreeing upon each other's statements (homogeneous sense-making); (b) co-constructed meanings of inclusive education by building upon each other's statement that was grounded in the convergent point (both homogeneous and heterogeneous sense-making); (c) held different degrees of divergent perspectives, where they

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could not generate a convergent point (heterogeneous sense-making); (d) did not engage in negotiation (sense-making) due to insufficient turn-taking manifested in silence or appeal of their lack of ideas; and (e) used a combination of the four single patterns that marked a shift(s) in the way of negotiation. Collectively, these varied patterns document the ways in which the group dialogues impacted the preservice teachers' conceptualizations of inclusion.

The mediating effects of facilitation on the preservice teachers' negotiations were reported according to (a) content/topics, (b) supplementary reading materials, (c) guiding/follow-up and subsequent questions, and (d) auxiliary activities (e.g., mind-mapping and self-reflection). These components played a key role in aiding the discussions, each of them similarly and differently mediated participants' responses. Primarily, the content/topics helped open up a new horizon for preservice teachers to begin to think of new ideas and broaden the scope of student population for inclusion. The supplementary reading materials, as they reified tensions around inclusion, helped the preservice teachers think through concrete examples that they would otherwise not have thought of and discuss their different takeaways and perspectives as they associated the instances with the practices they had observed or experienced in the classroom. The questions primarily posed by the facilitator, me, pushed the preservice teachers' thinking below the surface level so that they engaged in enriched discussions. Lastly, the auxiliary activities fostered preservice teachers' collective and individual sense-making of inclusion, as they co-constructed the mind map, which visualized their expansion of ideas on inclusion, and organized and synthesized their thoughts in writing.

The findings reported here shed light on the mediating effects of facilitation on the negotiations among the preservice teachers. The variety of ways of the facilitation (a) set the context for the preservice teachers to think through concrete examples in practice, provoked

them to (b) develop new ideas and perspectives on inclusion and (c) (re)think about the issues deeply and critically with thought-provoking and/or problem-posing questions that highlighted the tensions around inclusion, (d) fostered their collective and individual sense-making, and (e) created a safe space where they could also problematize a phenomenon and articulate their thoughts and thought process. Thus, facilitation contributed to advancing the preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education.

Chapter 7. Discussion

Given the context in which inclusion has been critically discussed by researchers and scholars in the United States and around the globe (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Trent et al., 2002), I initiated this research project based on my awareness that preservice teachers need to deepen their understanding of inclusion as a fluid and complex concept, which ultimately will impact the provision of appropriate inclusive practices for their future students. Acknowledging the potential of dialogue as a learning tool, as well as a dearth of research on the utilization of dialogue to push participants' thinking about a given topic, I explored the impact of dialogue on preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education. To this end, I purposefully designed and facilitated six structured group discussion sessions that consisted of sub-topics, guiding/follow-up questions, and supplementary reading materials and activities, aligned with the overarching theme of inclusion.

Results of the study illustrated (a) the ways in which the five preservice teachers individually conceptualized inclusion before and after the group dialogue series, (b) the commonalities and variations in their conceptualizations after the dialogues, and (c) the ways in which they negotiated meanings of, perspectives on, and beliefs about inclusion during the dialogues when faced with challenges around the concept and practice, as well as the effects of dialogue facilitation on their negotiations.

In this final chapter, I highlight three discussion points drawn from the findings in relation to inclusive education and teacher education: (a) Dialogue and Preservice Teachers' Multiplicity of Meanings Related to Inclusion, (b) Dialogue and Preservice Teachers' Critical Consciousness, and (c) Dialogue With Facilitation as a Powerful Learning Tool for Preservice

Teachers. I then discuss the implications of the study, followed by limitations and recommendations for future research.

Dialogue and Preservice Teachers' Multiplicity of Meanings Related to Inclusion

The findings demonstrated that the participants had multiple points of view with regard to their understandings of inclusion (Bakhtin, 1981), influenced by the larger sociocultural context in which they were situated, including the dialogue series in this study, which allowed for social interactions (Wells, 2000). The in-depth descriptions from the case studies and synthesis (Chapters 4 & 5) suggested that the preservice teachers' overall conceptualizations of inclusion were influenced by their sociocultural contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Miyake & Kirschner, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978), including personal, educational history and background, their contact and engagement with diverse populations, and their teaching experience. In particular, their understanding of inclusion as a concept largely relied on their teacher education program (Burke & Sutherland, 2004). Thus, they often referred to what they had learned from college coursework and what they had seen, heard, observed, and done in their field experiences. Consequently, they had a lot in common in terms of their experience as college students who were being educated in the same teacher education program—in a private Catholic university in the northeastern United States. For example, they all had taken the same introductory special education course and been instilled with a social justice perspective emphasized within the university and the teacher education program. Therefore, it was expected that their ideas on inclusion would, in a way, depart from the unifying belief that inclusion is associated with the education of students with disability and their placement in the general education classroom alongside typically developing peers, consistent with the initial meaning of inclusion in the early development of special education (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Zigmond et al., 2009).

However, at the same time, the multiplicity of their field experiences became evident, which were unique and specific to the individual participants. None of the preservice teachers was assigned to the same classroom as a teacher candidate, and their exposure to and experience in practice, prior to and at the time of the study, varied depending on their specific classroom context(s), entailing different teacher and student bodies, their relationships and interactions, and teachers' practices, for example. Thus, despite some overlapping ideas and beliefs, inclusion was interpreted and conceptualized heterogeneously both within the individual participants and across the group in breadth and depth.

The multiplicity of meanings of inclusion held by the preservice teachers reflected the variations of its definition during the historical and theoretical development of the discourse on inclusion (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). The heterogeneity embedded in the word *inclusion* also confirms Bakhtin's point of view, "no living word relates to its object in a singular way" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). The study findings contested the assumption of literature reviews (Avramidis et al., 2000; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; de Boer et al., 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996) and existing studies exploring teachers' attitude, beliefs, or self-efficacy toward inclusion, in that those studies were conducted based on the singular, traditional definition of inclusion (Cullen et al., 2010; Forlin et al., 2011; Loreman et al., 2007; Sharma et al., 2012). The present findings revealing the co-existence of various meanings, values, beliefs, and perspectives held by the preservice teachers are aligned with previous studies on teachers' understanding of inclusive education in various ways (Kozleski et al., 2015; Lalvani, 2013; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017).

The findings also indicated that the preservice teachers' advancement in their post-dialogue conceptualizations, to varying degrees, was a consequence of their participation in the

group dialogue series (and the George Floyd tragedy). The group dialogue series provided the preservice teachers a space for learning—a space for co-construction of knowledge based on mutual understanding (Wells, 2000) and a space for (re)constructing each other (Wegerif, 2008) by sharing language and world views between self and the others (Linell, 2017). The preservice teachers' advancement in their conceptualizations was due to dialogicality (Bakhtin, 1981), whereby their different ideas, thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs were exchanged to address challenging issues (tensions) around inclusion during the dialogues. Thus, dialogicality enabled the preservice teachers to search for new meanings or interpretations (Markova, 2003), whether coming to a common understanding, expanding their interpretations based on convergent ideas, diverging perspectives, or remaining inconclusive as they engaged in the activity of sense-making of inclusion collectively as well as individually during the group discussions. Thus, after the dialogue series, the meanings of inclusion reflected in their conceptualizations were not only heterogeneous but also homogeneous, indicating the co-existence of agreement and disagreement, as seen from the three themes that emerged from their post-dialogue conceptualizations.

Additionally, as a result of the group dialogues, the preservice teachers gained a deeper understanding of inclusion, which entailed inconclusive meanings of inclusion as fluid and complex, as opposed to a fixed or static concept. In other words, they came to realize that inclusion has no clear, singular definition; rather, its implementation and manifestation vary depending on the teacher and students in the classroom. Inclusion is process, progress, and constantly evolving. They also understood inclusion in relation to social justice, meaning that its progress is up to teachers' effort and action.

Such findings resonate with the perspectives on and values of inclusion rooted in research on inclusive school improvement and reform (Ainscow et al., 2006; Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Further, they expand research on inclusive education, particularly in the area of teachers' understanding, simultaneously responding to researchers' call for teachers to develop a critical understanding of inclusion in order to move away from the dominant discourse (Lalvani, 2013; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017).

Dialogue and Preservice Teachers' Critical Consciousness

The study findings indicated that the preservice teachers increased their critical consciousness during the dialogue series although it remained at a nascent stage. Consistent with Freire's theory of problem-posing education that considers dialogue as a means to transform reality (Freire, 1970; Rule, 2011) by engaging students in action and reflection as critical thinkers who are more conscious about reality (Freire, 1970), the group dialogue series, which included facilitation, provided a space for problem-posing education, which stimulated the preservice teachers' critical thinking. Thus, they engaged in discussing challenging issues around inclusion as a concept and in practice and, in the process, realized that finding a resolution was not a simple task.

The dialogues also problematized the preservice teachers' taken-for-granted notions; they, consequently, became more aware of inclusion as a tension-filled concept that carries different meanings, histories, and values (Bakhtin, 1981). In particular, the group dialogue series enabled them to acknowledge that inclusion involves the issue of power—conflicting values between school and families in terms of LGBTQ+ issues, assimilation to achieve a sense of belonging vs. celebrating diversity, and the hierarchy between the majority who are already at the center with power and privileges and those on the margins who need to be included.

By being introduced to such tensions through concrete examples and looking for resolutions in the discussions, the preservice teachers engaged with critical thinking, which enabled them to bring up other challenging issues that they problematized and critiqued with new perspectives without my prompts. That is, they not only responded to prompts but also actively contributed to the discussions as they became more conscious of the problematic reality surrounding inclusion (Freire, 1970).

As noted, the group dialogue series provided the preservice teachers with opportunities to exchange and share ideas, values, perspectives, and beliefs through interactions/negotiations. In other words, dialogicality (Bakhtin, 1981) allowed them to listen to ideas and perspectives different from their own, and simultaneously contemplate, gauge, and articulate their own ideas and perspectives—even thinking processes. Through perspectives that were different from their own, the preservice teachers came to see their own ideas and perspectives as "otherness," thereby enhancing their self-consciousness and critical reflection (Penlington, 2008). While the preservice teachers were talking about the challenging issues around inclusion and possible resolutions as future educators, they became more aware, conscious of, and reflective about their own ideas, thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs, as well as their identities, privileges, limitations, ignorance, and vulnerability.

The preservice teachers' increased critical consciousness (on inclusion as tension-filled concept and on self) as a result of the group dialogue series is in line with the extant literature, which has shown the positive outcomes of dialogue. As such, the dialogic inquiry was a space of "consciousness-raising" in that it increased the white preservice teachers' consciousness of their own racial identity as white and whiteness (McIntyre, 1997). The dialogue, both pair and group conversations about social justice, allowed the preservice teachers to gain an in-depth

understanding of themselves and other students' standpoints by being more attentive to peers' voices and perspectives (Damrow & Sweeney, 2019). Dialogue also stimulated them to become reflective practitioners, recognizing their own capacity and increasing agency to teach English language learners regardless of external demands and, therefore, become more confident (Wallen & Tormey, 2019). Some of the participants became more committed to working toward inclusion after the dialogue series. However, the study was not able to confirm Penlington (2008)'s argument that dialogue has the potential for improvement or change in practice as it increases teachers' self-consciousness and critical reflection.

I should admit that as a by-product, some of the preservice teachers ended up raising their critical consciousness on race issues and anti-racist education. I did not intentionally intend to increase their awareness of those topics through the dialogues, although I prepared the topic related to students from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, when the dialogue series was heading toward the end, a shocking incidence occurred, the murder of George Floyd, which triggered the preservice teachers to increase their awareness on issues related to teaching students of color, given their own racial identities.

Dialogue With Facilitation as a Powerful Learning Tool for Preservice Teachers

The dialogue provided a space where the preservice teachers made sense of inclusion as a fluid and complex concept that entailed multiple and changing meanings and increased their critical consciousness of inclusion as a tension-filled concept, while at the same time allowing them to make sense of their own ideas, values, perspectives, and beliefs. These findings echo the extant literature on the role and effect of dialogue for teacher learning (Penlington, 2008; Rule, 2011; Wegerif, 2008; Wells, 2000).

Dialogue has the potential to deepen preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education. However, for dialogue to be a powerful learning tool, it needs to be accompanied by facilitation as scaffolding. Scaffolding is support given to the learner or group of learners from a more knowledgeable other (Reiser & Tabak, 2014). A variety of forms of facilitation utilized in the group dialogue series—guidance from me as the facilitator, including provision of the sub-topics and questions, supplementary materials, and auxiliary activities—enriched the discussions. I, as a facilitator, participated in the dialogues to guide the preservice teachers' sense-making of inclusion and constantly interacted with them by prompting to elicit more responses or to request further elaboration all the while trying to maintain a balance between intervening and responding to their utterances during the sessions. I acknowledge, however, that my analysis of the group discussion segments does not directly indicate the effects of facilitation as a research finding; rather, the preservice teachers indicated its contribution in their post-dialogue interviews.

The study findings confirmed the results of extant research underlining the importance of facilitation, particularly from a facilitator. For example, Wallen and Tormey (2019) that a facilitator was necessary to yield more profound and deliberate dialogue among the teachers for their professional development, specifically to improve knowledge and expertise in teaching language learners. In their study, the facilitator's open-ended questions provoked the teachers' deep reflection and collaborative meaning-making. Similarly, in explaining the difference in the quality of teacher collaborative talk for teacher learning, Horn and Kane (2015) argued that the active engagement of a facilitator is a crucial component in fostering teacher community for improvement in practice. The quality of conversation in their group of teachers evolved and became more sophisticated with facilitation by an instructional coach. In my study, it was evident that dialogue with facilitation, that is, the structured group discussions, helped create the

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learning space that provoked the preservice teachers' co-construction and heterogeneous sense-making of inclusion and critical consciousness, and led to their in-depth understanding of inclusive education.

Finally, the study findings support the notion that dialogue fosters learning through social interactions with a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). The preservice teachers were a more knowledgeable other to each other, bringing up a multiplicity of ideas, thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs based on their own history and experience. They learned from each other (Damrow & Sweeney, 2019) as a collective zone of proximal development (ZPD; Horn & Kane, 2015).

The facilitation was, in part, initiated by the preservice teachers, who sometimes brought up an instance of tension around inclusion from their experience, which blurred the demarcation between the facilitator (researcher) and the facilitated (participants) and made the facilitator learn from the preservice teachers' input. Our collective efforts created a vibrant space that allowed dialogue to be an "open-ended process" (Morson, 2004, p. 331). Thus, the group dialogue series—that is, the facilitated group discussions—confirmed the significance of facilitation as a source of scaffolding to make learning profound and deeper.

The relationship between facilitator and participants is noteworthy. Trust relationships are the foundation for open, honest dialogue (Damrow & Sweeney, 2019; McIntyre, 1997). Especially in the virtual environment, establishing interpersonal relationships could be more difficult since interlocutors are supposed to talk only through a screen. I was fortunate not to have to worry too much about building trust relationships with my participants since I had already established close relationships with a few of them as students in prior courses. Some of the participants had also been acquainted with each other through their college courses and clubs.

Finally, it was a small group. I speculated these were the reasons why they were able to feel comfortable openly sharing their ideas on Zoom.

Implications of the Study

This study highlighted the potential and capacity of dialogue as a powerful learning tool to deepen preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education. Thus, the group dialogue series, as facilitated group discussions, provided the preservice teachers the opportunity to collectively and individually make sense of inclusion as a fluid and complex concept and raise their critical consciousness through critical thinking about inclusion in practice and self-reflection on their own positionality as future educators.

In the following, the implications of this study will be presented are across three dimensions: research, teacher education, and practice. I believe that the findings shed light on the ways in which researchers, teacher educators, and (pre/in-service) teachers can advance the field of inclusive education and teacher education, both in theory and practice, by developing the knowledge base around inclusion and improving inclusive learning environments and the quality of education for all students in the classroom.

Research

Acknowledging that much of the published research on inclusive education has defined inclusion narrowly, associating it with the placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, Artiles and Kozleski (2016) called for broadening the research agenda. Specifically, attending to the complexity, tensions, and contradictions of inclusion in practice, considering students' intersectional identities, associating inclusion with the social justice movement, and reexamining educators' notion of inclusion. Moving away from conducting research that corresponds and supports the dominant discourse of inclusion, the narrow

definition, this study was an attempt to deepen preservice teachers' understanding through a series of group dialogues by addressing the complexity and tensions around inclusion, which challenged the dominant discourse. To my knowledge, this study was a first to thoroughly explore and document preservice teachers' conceptualizations of inclusive education with pre-/post-comparison through qualitative case studies. With the design and implementation of the group dialogue series that explicitly addressed tensions around inclusion with varied means of facilitation, the study showed that the preservice teachers broadened the scope of the population for inclusion by considering not only students with disabilities as their primary focus, but also students with intersectional identities, and that they began to see the complexity and fluidity of inclusion, all of which was provoked by the group dialogue series.

As far as I know, none of the previous studies had initiated dialogue and examined its impact on advancing preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education. My study offers empirical evidence of multiple ways of negotiation among the preservice teachers and the critical role of facilitation, which enabled them to gain new ideas and perspectives, deeply and critically (re)think about issues, reflect on their own thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs, and discover new instances of tension around inclusion by problematizing what they had been taken for granted.

Designing and implementing group dialogue series, separate from course preparation, required a significant amount of time and effort. But although it was a challenging task, the study showcased the potential of such an approach, including the sense-making process among the preservice teachers during the group dialogue series facilitated by the researcher. In that regard, this study adds new support to dialogue as an avenue for instructional methodology in inclusive education.

Teacher Education

My research yields insight into ways of preparing future educators to be more critical and to push them to carry out their inclusive practices more consciously and intentionally for all learners.

Need for Courses on Inclusive Education

Given my positionality, I highly value a dedicated course on inclusive education aiming to complicate preservice teachers' understanding of inclusion and help them synthesize knowledge, skills, and values for the purpose of implementing inclusive practices for all students, considering their intersectional identities in the classroom. This is because I see one of the core learning outcomes in teacher education as preservice teachers being prepared for high-quality education, which encompasses creating an inclusive learning environment for every student in their future classroom, regardless of the educational setting. The main activity of the course would be group discussions with the instructor's facilitation, integrated with field experiences. Through the course, preservice teachers will come to better understand inclusion in relation to students' intersectional identities and individuality, rather than thinking of students through categories such as students with disability, language learners, or CLD students in different disciplines. Preservice teachers would advance their theoretical knowledge of inclusion as a fluid and complex concept, discussing tensions around inclusion with concrete examples in practice so that they can be more prepared for what is anticipated in the real classroom. Lastly, preservice teachers would integrate/synthesize the knowledge, skills, and values (e.g., equality, equity, social justice) they learn from multiple disciplines as they proactively enact inclusive practices of all students.

Dialogue as a Core Learning Method for Preservice Teachers

Dialogue, as facilitated structured discussions, can be used in course design (or the design of learning environments) to facilitate preservice teachers' learning. Depending on the topic and objectives of the course, teacher educators can search and collect appropriate sub-topics, guiding questions that are problem-posing or thought-provoking, and supplementary reading materials and activities that spark the students' interests. Examples should contain problems of practice or issues that include challenges, tensions, or contradictions, which generates a number of discussion points that lead to a collaborative dialogic inquiry. The role of facilitator and the interpersonal relationship between the facilitator and students is critical to make the discussion profound and authentic.

Practice

Facilitated group discussions as a requirement helped maximize the effectiveness of preservice teachers' field experiences. As such, they increased learning opportunities to connect theory and practice through discussions based on classroom experience and allowed preservice teachers to exchange and share a multiplicity of ideas and perspectives, as well as to reflect on their own ideas and perspectives, to improve their practice (Penlington, 2008). The study findings also implicate the possibility and positive impact of dialogue for in-service teachers' professional development, as other research has noted (e.g., Horn & Kane, 2015; Wallen & Tormey, 2019). For example, facilitated group discussions can be used to deepen in-service teachers' understanding of inclusive education and their enactment of inclusive practices in their classroom.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contribution to the field, there are several limitations to this study. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the participants' practica were suspended after the first few weeks, except for Brooke, who was able to work in the classroom because she was hired as an intern. The participants appreciated Brooke's perspectives that spoke from her relatively abundant teaching experience compared to the other participants. The participants might have felt they were equally contributing if they had been able to successfully complete the practicum.

The participant demographics might have been a limitation. Except for Mei, who was Asian, the participants were white, and their sociocultural backgrounds were considerably homogenous. They all attended the teacher education program at the same university (although two of them switched major after the data collection was completed), which may have affected the way they think about inclusion, perhaps making it easier to agree with each other based on similar perspectives and beliefs instilled in college.

A limitation related to data collection might have been due to the fact that the dialogue series was facilitated by a non-native speaker, whose culture and language were different from those of the majority of the preservice teachers. I was fully aware of the language barrier. While reading the discussion transcripts for analysis, I realized that, as a facilitator, there were times where I could not clarify, articulate, or sharpen my question or response to be precise and/or critical enough, or I missed the right timing to intervene or further prompt the preservice teachers, which might have hindered the depth of the discussions.

Another limitation involved the authenticity of the discussions. Although the participants were satisfied with the group dialogue experience and the extent to which they felt comfortable openly sharing their thoughts and perspectives, Lauren was self-conscious about expressing her

opinion on the LGBTQ+ issues, and she was not fully vulnerable due to her concern of being judged. All participants knew that this was my dissertation study, and three of them had built a personal relationship with me prior to the study. Some of them already knew each other before the study. This might have allowed them to either be more authentic or hide when we talked about difficult topics; it was impossible to know.

The other limitation had to do with the selection of the materials chosen to represent "diverse" students. Mei mentioned that she could not resonate much with the story of Zora, the Black girl, we discussed. I did not include any materials exemplifying Asian student populations. Perhaps we could have talked about a case whose learning opportunity may be overlooked due to the model minority myth (Oluo, 2019).

There are also limitations related to the analysis. I was as transparent as possible in documenting my analysis procedure and process to ensure the trustworthiness of my study. However, I dropped initial/final lesson analyses from my analysis plan, which was an instrument I had requested the participants to do along with journal responses to compare individual participants' pre-/post conceptualizations of inclusion. I was not able to capture their ideas on inclusion with these artifacts. The segmentation of the discussion transcripts to select the appropriate segments that included instances of tension may have been arbitrary, despite my transparent documentation of the analytic process. Analyzing parts of the discussion from those selected segments rather than the entire transcripts poses the possibility that I might have missed an important discussion where the participants addressed the challenge. However, the results of the analysis of the complete six group discussion transcripts would likely still have corresponded to the current findings, as the participants demonstrated the same negotiation patterns across the dialogue series. Yet, a complete analysis would have more richly captured the various

perspectives of the participants concerning inclusion, as they (critically) discussed other educational concepts in relation to inclusion. Lastly, the analyses of the mediating effects of facilitation were partial; they were primarily from the participants' post-dialogue interviews, not necessarily from the analysis of the discussion transcripts. In addition, the artifacts from the mind-mapping activities and self-reflections were only reviewed.

For future research, I suggest more attempts to challenge and disrupt the dominant discourse on inclusive education. Future research should aim to problematize and advance (pre/in-service) teachers' understanding and conceptualization of inclusive education through dialogue for teacher education or professional development, so that they can think about inclusion critically. One possible way is to investigate (pre/in-service) teachers' learning process regarding inclusion, particularly with teachers who have multiple identities themselves. The extant research does not provide much information on demographics (probably because the majority of the teachers were white in North America); rather, they distinguished participants according to their specialty (general education or special education). With more intentional recruitment to diversify the participant representation, I think we can hear the multiple voices due to dialogicality. Further, based on findings from this qualitative study, a survey could be developed to explore the ways a large number of (pre/in-service) teachers conceptualize inclusion.

Critical consciousness should lead to action to transform reality. There is lack of research on the actual implementation and enactment of inclusive practices, although teachers are perceived as the main agents in enacting inclusive practices or pedagogy. Even among researchers and practitioners, there is not consensus on what is considered inclusive practices (Florian, 2014). More research is needed on how inclusive practices are implemented by the

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teachers who develop a deeper understanding of inclusion in their classroom. One exemplary study involved examining the ways in which teachers used what they learned from listening to what their students talked about their own learning (Florian & Beaton, 2018).

Further, there should be more research on the design/process/effects of group dialogues on preservice teacher learning using facilitation. It appears that more research has been conducted on teacher dialogue in teacher professional communities or as part of their professional development. However, dialogue has the potential to open the possibility to deepen learning of preservice teacher.

Conclusion

The goal of this qualitative case study was to explore the impact of dialogue on preservice teachers' understanding of inclusive education. With the intention to deepen their understandings, I designed and implemented the group dialogue series as facilitated structured discussions with five preservice teachers. I provided an in-depth description of how dialogue addressing inclusion as a tension-filled concept profoundly deepened, complicated, and advanced preservice teachers' understandings of inclusive education.

The study findings confirmed that dialogue provided a space where the preservice teachers made sense of inclusion as a fluid and complex concept that entailed a multiplicity of meanings and raised their critical consciousness, which, in turn, deepened their awareness of inclusion implying the issue of power and self-reflective on their own identities, privileges, ignorance, and limitations.

All five participating preservice teachers were passionate, willing to learn more about inclusion, enjoyed hearing their peers' experiences and perspectives, and reflecting on their own experiences, including their struggles. By serving as participants in this study, the preservice teachers simultaneously gained an opportunity to deepen their understanding of inclusive education. I believe that more studies such as this will contribute to advancing research on inclusive education and creating an effective learning environment in teacher education.

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Informed Consent Form

Boston College Lynch School of Education and Human Development
Informed Consent for Participation in a Dissertation Research Study:
Exploring Pre-service Teachers' Understanding of Inclusive Education
Principal Investigator: Haerin Park, Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty Research Supervisor: David Scanlon, Ph.D.

Adult Consent form

Introduction
- You are being asked to participate in a study aimed at exploring pre-service teachers' understandings of inclusive education during group dialogue.
- The purpose of this study is to understand how pre-service teachers make sense of inclusive education during group dialogues.
- You are invited to voluntarily participate in the study because you are at least 18 years old and currently studying in the teacher education program and are completing/have completed a field experience (at least Pre-Practicum 1).
- Please read this form. You can ask any questions that you may have before you agree to be in the study.

If I Agree to Participate in the Project, What Will Happen?
- If you agree to participate in this study, you will: 1) participate in 6 sessions of approximately 1.5 hour-long group dialogues to discuss various topics on inclusive education with peers, which will be audio-recorded; 2) write two journal reflections, before and after participating in the dialogue series; 3) be interviewed, audio-recorded before and after participating in the dialogue series, for approximately 30 to 45 minutes by in-person appointment, or via a video conference call; 4) might be asked to have follow-up conversations with me during the period of group dialogues being held, audio-recorded; 5) complete brief surveys on your background.
- All the artifacts (e.g., concept maps, a list of questions) you generate while participating in the dialogues will also be collected.

What Are the Risks to Being in This Study?
- There are no expected risks. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

What Are the Benefits of Being in This Study?
- The benefits of being in this study are that you will have learning opportunities to expand and deepen your understanding of inclusive education (e.g., concept, knowledge, perspective, pedagogy, relevant practice) as you discuss various topics and issues of inclusive education with your peers and reflect on your own thoughts and practice.

How Will My Data Be Kept Private?
- The records of this study will be kept private. Only the researcher will access the original records.
- Research records will be kept in a locked file. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file.
- No information that will make it possible to identify you will not be included in any sort of publication. Rather, pseudonyms will be used.
- However, the Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may have to review the records. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless I am legally required to do so.

What If I Choose Not to Take Part or to Leave the Study?
- Your participation is voluntary.
- If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with the Lynch School.
- You are free to withdraw your participation at any time, for whatever reason. Data generated from your participation will not be included in future publications. However, in this case, you will not receive compensation.
- There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not taking part or for quitting.

Are There Any Costs to Participate in the Study?
- There is no cost to participate in this research study.

Will I Be Paid For Participating in the Study?
- Participants will be provided light refreshments during group dialogues.
- Participants will also receive up to $50 in a gift card for their time. If participants miss any session(s) for group dialogue, they will receive a partial amount of compensation.

Whom Do I Contact If I Have Any Questions?
- You can contact Haerin Park at Boston College, who is the researcher in charge of this study, with questions or for more information concerning this study. She can be reached at (917) 496-3299 or at haerin.park@bc.edu.
- If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu.

Will I Get a Copy of This Form?
- Yes, you will be given a copy of this form to keep your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:
- I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form. I have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to be in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Signatures/Dates
Study Participant (Print Name): _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Recruitment Scripts

Email

Hello!
I hope you are well.

Are you interested in learning about inclusive education more in-depth through dialogue? Here is a unique opportunity for you! I am currently looking for a small group of participants in my dissertation research project. Below is the description of the study:

The purpose of this study is to explore pre-service teachers' understandings of inclusive education through dialogue. To this end, I am planning to hold 6 meetings for group dialogues. Each session will last for approximately 1.5 hours. I will facilitate each dialogue with guiding questions, other necessary materials, and/or short readings if necessary. However, I am expecting that the participants will actively discuss inclusive education with each other. Additionally, You will write 2 brief journal reflections and be interviewed twice by me for approximately 30-45 minutes. Lastly, you will take brief surveys for your background information.

The benefits of being in this study are that you will:
1. Have additional learning opportunities to expand and deepen your understanding of inclusive education (e.g., concept, knowledge, perspective, pedagogy, relevant practice) as you discuss various topics and issues regarding inclusive education with peers, and
2. Reflect on your own thoughts and practice as a future educator.
3. Build relationships with peers and with me as we interact as a small group.

If you are participating in the group dialogues, there are additional compensation:
1. You will be provided light refreshments OR dinner depending on the scheduled time in every session.
2. You will receive up to 50 dollars in a gift card (Starbucks or Amazon) according to your participation.

Would you like to learn more about inclusive education through in-depth discussions with peers? If you are currently completing Pre-Practicum this semester or have completed at least one Pre-Practicum, you are eligible to join us!.

Please respond to this email if you would like to participate in my study, or have any questions for more details. I can send you an informed consent form that includes every detail of the study. If you agree to participate, we will meet in person so that you can sign on the consent form.

Thank you!
Haerin Park

Flyer

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION THROUGH DIALOGUE?

I am looking for "teacher education majors who are completing or have completed at least one Pre-Practicum" to participate in a study that aims at exploring pre-service teachers' understandings of inclusive education through group dialogue.

FOOD will be provided in each session.
After you complete participating in the study,
you will be given up to $50 in a gift card.

"How do we make-sense of Inclusion? Is it for students with disabilities? English Learners? Culturally diverse students? Is it a way to achieve equity & social justice?" If you are interested in discussing the topic with peers, please join us!

For more information about the study, please scan the QR code. Please contact me at haerin.park@bc.edu if you are willing to participate in the study.
Principal Investigators: Haerin Park, Ph.D. Candidate

Understanding of Inclusion Haerin Park haerin.park@bc.edu
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Understanding of Inclusion Haerin Park haerin.park@bc.edu

Thank you for your agreement to participate in my research project. The purpose of this survey interview is to get to know your background. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can skip the question. The survey will take less than 30 minutes.

Your Name: _____

1. Could you tell me your age? (   ) years old.

2. How do you identify yourself in terms of gender? what pronouns do you prefer?

   _____

3. What is your race/ethnicity?
   a. White/Caucasian   b. Black or African American   c. Asian
   d. Hispanic/Latix   e. American Indian/Alaska Native   f.   interracial
   g. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander   h. Other: _____

4. Are you an international student? Yes/ No

5. What is your first language? (   )
   a. Are you able to speak any other language? _____
   b. If so, please indicate your proficiency level: beginner,   intermediate,   advanced

6. If you self-identify your socioeconomic status, how do you consider it?
   a. Upper class   b. Upper-middle class   c. Middle class d. Working class
   e. Lower class

7. What year are you in the school of Education?
   a. Freshman   b. Sophomore   c. Junior   d. Senior

8. When you grew up, what type of schools have you experienced? (Please circle all that apply)
   a. Public (urban, suburban, rural)   b. Private (urban, suburban, rural)
   c. Private (Catholic, Boarding)

9. What is your major in Teacher Education?
   a. Elementary   b. Secondary (Please specify a subject:)

   9-1. If you are double-major or have minor/specialization, please indicate:

   _____

10. Do you have any Practicum/teaching experience in the classroom?
    a. If you are currently completing Pre-Practicum, please indicate your level (   )

b. If you have other teaching experience beyond Pre-Practicum, how many months/years have you taught? (   )
      i. What were your roles? _____
     ii. Did you get paid or was it volunteer work? _____
c. What other teaching experience do you have outside classrooms?

          _____

Question 11-13. The questions are not limited to teaching
11. Do you have any experience with students with disabilities? Who were they?

          _____

12. Do you have any experience with culturally and linguistically diverse students? (Including English Language Learners) Who were they?

          _____

13. Do you have any experience with LGBTQ students? Who were they?

          _____

14. Have you taken any courses which you think might be relevant to inclusive education? Please specify:

          _____

          _____

          _____

APPENDIX D

Survey 2 Protocol

Your Name: _____

1. In what grade classroom are you working/did you work? (   )
2. What is/was class size (the number of students)? (   )
3. What type of classroom are/were you placed?
   a. Regular (general education) classroom   b. Inclusive classroom
   c. SEI classroom   d. SLIFE classroom   f. Other: _____

4. Can you tell me the years of teaching experience of your supervising practitioner (SP)?

   _____

5. Can you tell me your SP's areas of licensure? Circle all that apply.
   a. RIamIEEarly childhood   b. Elementary   c. Secondary (Subject:
)
   d. Special Ed (mild/moderate)   e. Special Ed (Severe/profound)   f. ELL (ESL)
   g. Other: _____

6. How many adults are there in your classroom? (   )
   a. Do you know who they are? Circle all that apply.
      a) Para   b) special educator   c) reading specialist
      d) student teacher   e) Other: _____

7. How many students are on IEP or 504 plan, if any? (   )
   a. If you know the disability types of the student(s), please name those disabilities:

      _____

8. How many students are ELLs, if any? (   )
   a. If you know their nationality/ethnicity and/or home language, please name them:

      _____

9. How many are students of color (SOC), if any? (   )

10. Do you know how many students fall into multiple of these groups?

    a. IEP/504 plan & ELLs : _____
    b. IEP/504 plan & SOC: _____
    c. SOC & ELLs: _____

Semi-Structured Individual Interview Protocol

Pre-Dialogue Interview[28]

Thank you for your agreement to participate in my research. The purpose of this interview is to understand your initial understanding of inclusive education, as we begin our group dialogues. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can skip it. The interview will be completed within 30 and 45 minutes.

1. Please tell me anything you know/learned about inclusive education.
2. How would you define inclusive education/inclusion?
3. What does inclusive education mean to you as a future educator?
4. What do you think of the purpose of inclusive education?
5. Whom (among students) do you think inclusive education is for?
6. How should inclusive education be implemented?
7. Please tell me any teaching practices you know/observe regarding inclusive education
8. What do you believe about inclusive education?
9. What/how would you do as a future classroom teacher to pursue inclusive education?
10. What do you think would be challenging factors to accomplish inclusive education?
11. Tell me what you think inclusive education is all about.

12. Optional: Tailored questions that emerge from each participant's initial journal reflection

---

[28] The pre-dialogue interview will take place at some point after the participant write initial journal reflections and before we begin our first group dialogue.

Post-Dialogue Interview[29]

Thank you for accepting my invitation for the post-interview. The purpose of this interview is to understand your final understanding of inclusive education after the series of group dialogues, and to examine your experience of group dialogue series for sense-making of inclusion. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can skip it. The interview will be completed in approximately 45 minutes.

Questions about Inclusion:
1. Please tell me anything you know/have learned about inclusive education.
2. How would you define inclusive education/inclusion?
3. What does inclusive education mean to you as a future educator?
4. What do you think of the purpose of inclusive education?
5. Whom (among students) do you think inclusive education is for?
6. How should inclusive education be implemented?
7. Please tell me any teaching practices you know/observe regarding inclusive education
8. What do you believe about inclusive education?
9. What/how would you do as a future classroom teacher to pursue inclusive education?
10. What do you think would be challenging factors to accomplish inclusive education?
11. Tell me what you think inclusive education is all about.

12. Optional: Tailored questions that emerge from each participant's final journal reflection

Questions about your experience of group dialogue series:
1. Tell me about your experience with participating in the group dialogues.
2. Which part of the group dialogues was helpful to advance your understanding of inclusive education? (Various topics & contested issues, guiding questions, activities, readings, discussing with peers, etc.)
3. How would/did you resolve the situation if you have a different or opposite perspective than your peer(s)?
    a. If you didn't/couldn't resolve the situation, why did you decide not to contest/reconcile/negotiate with your peer(s)?

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[29] This interview will take place individually (in-person or via conference call) after all sessions of group dialogues have completed and the participants write their final journal reflections.

Overall Structure of Group Dialogue Series (Session 1)

#1. 4/9/2020 10:00 -11:30 AM

<First 30 minutes>

1. Introduction
    a. Introduce yourself
    b. Getting to know each other: True/False story
       (Lautenbach, Möhwald, Korte, Heyder, & Grimminger-Seidensticker, 2020)
       i. Sharing one true/false situation you've experienced in the classroom during your practicum.
          - Provide them with clear instruction - not just to bring something funny
       ii. Reasons for sharing the story which is true
2. Setting the tone for the group dialogue - in terms of the ways we discuss
   Watching TED Talk by Celeste Headlee "10 ways to have a better conversation" (11:44)
   (Damrow & Sweeney, 2019)
    - Link:
      https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation
    a. Note-taking while watching the talk
    b. Discussion
       i. Which of these communication skills are you already good at?
       ii. Which would you like to improve?
       iii. How can you apply these tips to this project (our group dialogue)?

<5-minute Break>
For the rest of the time, we're going to talk about students and classroom management since classroom/behavior management is of the utmost importance for the majority of pre-service teachers.
*Task: Recall one or two students in your classroom while you were doing Practicum
  - Create a Google document and share it with me.
  - Please jot down about the students who you think would require classroom/behavior management.

<55 minutes>

3. Your experience with students (who gave you a hard time)
    a. Discussion
       i. Who were they? What have you noticed? How did they act/behave? Please share the student(s) you have observed.
       ii. What made you think these students would require classroom/behavior management?

      iii.   How did you/your teacher address their behaviors? (Did they use classroom/behavior management for them?)

      iv.   Who do you think would be students with challenging/disruptive behaviors?

      v.   How do you think we as educators should address the students' behaviors? Should students' disruptive/challenging behaviors be "controlled", "punished", or "reprimanded" for the sake of the learning of the majority?

4. Discussion based on the Reading "Troublemaker" (Shalaby, 2017)
   a. Sharing the excerpt from Chapter 1
      i. The student/classroom event
         - A girl, Zora, 2G, only brown face (Dad: Black, Mom: Puerto Rican)
         - Group work: decorating a writing folder
      ii. Teacher Intention (purpose/reasons for the classroom management)

5. Classroom/Behavior Management & Inclusion
   a. The teacher, Mrs. Beverly, views that classroom management is for children's quality of life; she believes Zora needs to be normal, conforming, not an outlier, so that she can fit in the school/classroom culture (social norms) where the majority follow and be accepted as a full member of the classroom community. What do you think of the teacher's perspective?
   b. How can you make connections between classroom/behavior management and inclusion? What are your thoughts about classroom/behavior management in terms of inclusion? (How do you think the purpose and teacher practice of classroom/behavior management and inclusion could work in tandem?)

6. Wrap-up (10 minutes)
   a. Self-reflection: write down your thoughts/takeaway from the group session today on your G-document.
   b. Your ideas about inclusion/inclusive education:
      i. What would be the component of inclusion?
      ii. Are there any questions/topics you'd like to discuss regarding inclusion?
   c. Initial survey to be done by the 2nd session (Next Wednesday).

APPENDIX G

Sample Supplementary Reading Material (Session 2)

Mrs. Beverly is on point when she talks about the teacher she would like Zora to have in third grade, a teacher who is capable of seeing Zora's goodness: "Well, I think, here is a child who is loud, who is impulsive, who is a distraction to others. You've got to be able to like that kid. And if you can't like that kid from day one, she's not gonna feel that you like her or accept her in the room. And that sends a message to everyone else. As hard as I am on Zora, everyone knows that I like her. It's clear. It's even clear to her, and I think I'm harder on her than anyone. So, she needs someone who on day one is going to make her feel, *You are part of this classroom. I'm gonna stand by you. I am gonna scold you or I'm gonna guide you, but it's for your good. It's not because I don't like you.* And I think that, luckily, Zora is a likable kid. She is bright and funny and entertaining, but there are times where you want to strangle her because she is doing something that's absolutely not acceptable and taking six kids with her down that path."

Despite the obvious frustration that accompanies a difficult-to-manage child like Zora, Mrs. Beverly insists on the teacher's responsibility to stand by the child, to insist on her full participation, to like her. Still, though, and ironically, accepting the child means

forcing the child into a particular definition of acceptable. To fully participate in the classroom community, to belong, Zora needs to be a point on the normal bell curve of behavior—not an outlier: "In a mixed-grade classroom, that behavior doesn't look so different because you get little kids in here who are still working on things. But in the third-grade classroom, it's gonna show more. In a straight-grade classroom, that spectrum of learning isn't as long as mine is. Straight-grade teachers are not as used to working on outliers, and Zora is an outlier in several places. She's made a lot of gains, but she's still an outlier, just in terms of habits of mind for school."

Some teachers work hard to manage children's behavior because they worry about how poor management will reflect on them as teachers. It is a self-interested motivation. For Mrs. Beverly, a veteran teacher with much experience and confidence, this is not at all the case. She has Zora's best interests at heart, even as she struggles with whether or not her constant redirection is problematic. "I see it as a quality-of-life issue," she says. "It must be exhausting to be so distracted and extreme, to have several movies always going on in your head at once."

Mrs. Beverly wants for Zora not to be an outlier. She wants her to be more normal, conforming, and compliant, so she can fit in and belong as a full, positive member of the classroom community.

Finalized Coding Scheme for QCA

Categories	Sub-categories	Descriptions (Operational Definitions)	Anchor examples
Purposes (Why)		**Ideal status for which inclusive education serve/ Orientation or direction to which inclusive education is headed**	
	Goals	The reason for which inclusion should be done in a certain way within education (Proximal goals)	*The safe learning environment should be cultivated in such a way that no students feel alienated or uncomfortable with who they are.*
	Democratic Values	Values (principles or standards of behaviors) realized in and resulting from inclusive education the student teachers mentioned (distal goals) (e.g., Equity, Equality, Diversity, Social Justice)	*I think that it has the potential to create a better society, um, in a more equitable society and promote social justice.*
Features		**The operational characteristics or components of inclusive education**	
	Scope of population (who)	The targeted population for inclusion (e.g., everyone/all student, students with disabilities, CLD students, students w/o disabilities, teachers, etc.)	*I think inclusive education, if you're working in, you know, like a suburban school, then it maybe could associate- be associated with race, making sure students of different races feel included.* *Students differ on both micro and micro levels. For example, students come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and may have different experiences with race, religion, culture, and other topics.*
	Focus of concern (What)	Dimensions where the intention was weighed in the inclusive classroom	*where students learn in different ways, where students are given multiple ways to learn a*

		(e.g., physical*, cognitive/academic, behavioral, social/affective) *physical: setting features (e.g., elevator, ramp, classroom structure, microphones, chair, etc.)	*concept (academic)* *So like, I think that like having in, like a ramp or elevators in a building can be considered inclusion because you are allowing people in wheelchairs to access that building. (physical) but they're able to socialize and become friends with other children their age, who, you know, and just who have learned differently from them (social)* *inclusive education is ensuring they have sense of belonging in the classroom, I think specifically. (affective)*
	Placement (Where, to what degree)	To where and to what degree should the targeted population be included in a certain classroom (appropriateness) (Not just student teachers' perceptions of appropriateness in terms of student placement, but also compliance with regulations) - Broader than the physical aspect	*I know that inclusive education for a lot of students is the least restrictive environment,* *So I think inclusion is a good place for him as well.* *And for some students, um, the general education classroom may not be the most inclusive environment,*
Benefits		**Positive gains/outcomes during and/or after inclusion are implemented** (e.g., academic achievement, social/affective outcomes)	
	Academic achievement/St udent Success	Related to academic learning	*But inclusive education, if students are all given the resources they need and could use to succeed, then they can go leaps and bounds.*

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	Learning social skills	Interactions between people, forming friendship, help/support/collaborate with each other… (academic social skills/general social skills)	*students learn to cooperate with each other despite differences in abilities and needs*
	Emotional learning/experiences	Emotion/behavior-regulation, self-esteem, confidence...	*they can feel really like accomplished and feel like they're reaching their potential, succeeding in the classroom*
	Community building	Resulting in building a community/whole classroom change	*I think the benefits would be that like, if it's done right, it's that like students who have disabilities ... feel like a part of ... a bigger a classroom community.*
	Learning values	Learning moral values (patience, acceptance, etc.)	*I feel like it's more the students who don't need the extra support, cultivating acceptance of students who maybe do need extra support*
	Learning differences	Learning difference between each other	*for students that don't have any disability, but inclusion's also really good for them because it exposes them to students, to like peers of their own that are different than theirs*
	Understanding their own values	Recognizing values of self	*the student themselves can also see their own values, because, um, I feel like then they have the chance to show their talents more and be accepted for it.*
	Teacher benefits	Benefits for teachers	*What's cool about inclusive education is that it really gives the teachers an opportunity, I think, to get to know their students.*
Challenges		**Difficulties/barriers to the implementation of inclusion and/or negative consequences** (e.g., negative outcomes for target students or peers (academic/cognitive, physical,	

		socioemotional, behavioral); administrative concerns; teacher concerns (time, training, resource, etc.); physical environment)	
	Complex needs of students		*the two students I'm kind of iffy about is the student with the developmental delay. Um, because he, academically is very, very low and no matter what we try, it's still like, he just- it seems like he has a very strong math learning disability, um, and maybe even like an emotional behavioral disturbance, and he works better in small group. And I feel like we're not able to meet all of his needs right now.*
	Learning gaps among students		*my student with dyslexia, like he needs like very, a lot of phonics instruction. And in third grade we are doing phonics, but not as much. And it's like more advanced, whereas he needs like almost first grade phonics*
	Teacher disposition/behavior not using inclusive practices	Unwillingness, discomfort, Negative reaction toward students, etc.	*I think part of the problem is the teacher I am working with this year. She is not the best inclusion teacher and does not differentiate much work or offer supports for students who need them.*
	Large class size		*not many schools- like not many classrooms have three adults in and then 18 kids with a one to six ratio, which I think is like amazing?*
	Lack of resources		*there is not…from not of- none of my students get. If there is a resource room, which I don't, I don't think there is. If there is one, none of my students get any resources from it.*
	Teacher		*You have a lot of students who all have differing*

	workload		*needs and it is a lot for one person to do.*
	Student behavior	Negative behavior toward differences, resistance…	*another challenge is that a lot of students, um...are, are very aware of differences and make, and really highlight the differences in the classroom.*
Facilitating factors		**Elements that facilitate teachers' implementation of inclusion** (e.g., teacher capacity; school/system change; teacher collaboration)	
	Appropriate supports and resources	Given to teachers & exist in school	*I think using resource rooms when, when applicable, I think is important. I feel like, like I look at the [name of school], that's not something that happens much or often.*
	Individual teacher effort	Initiatives/mindset/motivation (look for information/seek out resources)	*in whatever environment you're in, I think it's your job as an instructor to make sure that you're exposing students to all those different lifestyles* *The mindset of the teacher is also important. Teachers should step into the classroom with a growth mindset.*
	Teacher collaboration	Teachers' working together	*all the inclusion classrooms have two teachers, not like a teacher and a para, but two full-time teachers, one gen ed teacher, and one special ed teacher. And then they work together, they collaborate, and they figure out that, and they decide how they want to do it,*
	Whole school effort/change	Broader context for collaboration beyond teacher level (e.g., admin, other teaching staff)	*But in order for it to have the most effectiveness, I think it needs to be like a school-wide initiative.*

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	Family/Community engagement	Communication with families, collaboration with other professionals	*maybe talking, talking to their parents in the beginning, too*
Teacher Practices	**(How)**	**Instructional strategies a teacher uses (or a student teacher would use) for inclusion**	
	Personal Connection	Student-related; relation	*I think definitely, um, like teacher–student relationship is really important, like talking to them individually and like, not just about their academic work. Like if I noticed something that's going on or something that might be going on, talk to them alone and ask.*
	Curriculum	What to teach	*I think I have a better understanding of how I can implement that through like the use of classroom materials and diverse curricula and, um, you know, holding special events to celebrate diversity, that sort of thing, um, which is important and helpful.*
	Instruction	How to teach	*So, I think it's up to the teacher to provide those resources for them to succeed.*
	Accommodations/Related Services	Specially Designed Instruction (Supports/services) provided to students in need	*being aware that they may need more supports and more services and having those freely available for those students and people*
	Assessment	Methods/Tools to evaluate student performance	*Knowledge should be assessed frequently both formally and informally.*
	Climate/ Environment	Physical classroom setting and routines and/or social/emotional features	*Teachers also shape a classroom culture of inclusion, promoting the use of person-first language and the importance of acceptance.*

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			Ultimately, the inclusive setting provides all students with the opportunity to engage with people different from themselves, cultivating a culture of respect for and acceptance of others.
	Management	Classroom/behavior management and disciplines	*if the teacher kind of explicitly make someone a group leader like, and they rotate through and everyone gets a chance to be group leader.*
	Other	Other practices that don't fall into above categories or done for in a broader school community (e.g., communication with parents, working with adults, extracurricular activities, etc.)	*I also do want to, um, communicate with families too*
Attitudes/ Beliefs/ Perspectives		**Preservice teacher's perception and view on inclusion**	
	Committed		*And for students that can do that, I think that we should be having every effort to incorporate them into the general classroom.*
	Concern		*I was wondering if like inclusive education is for the majority to make them feel better about having people in the minority and try to bring them into the fold. And I think, for a long time, I was kind of struggling to like reconcile that, because you don't- you want inclusive education to be effective and you want it to be for everyone and you want it to be something that benefits the minority and that isn't just a construct, but the majority uses to like, feel better about being in the majority*

	Certain		*I mean, I think it's super important. I think that it should kind of be the groundwork for everything. (importance)*
	Positive Beliefs		*I feel like it can be so beneficial and students can go leaps and bounds with it implemented.*
	Suspicion		*Um, and kind of wondering, is this worth it or is…like, what are the actual tangible benefits of an inclusive classroom?*
	Uncertain/ confused		*but I didn't know for sure if that was like the right quote unquote definition of inclusion?*
Tensions		**Conflicting examples of inclusion that occurred in the classroom/school (This might be practices or related to the issues of ethics, power, and privileges)**	*I think obviously like, you want every student to be in the least restrictive environment for them and for a lot of students, that is inclusion. For some students it's not inclusion, inclusion would actually be restricting. Cause then they wouldn't be getting the need- their needs met in an inclusion classroom.*